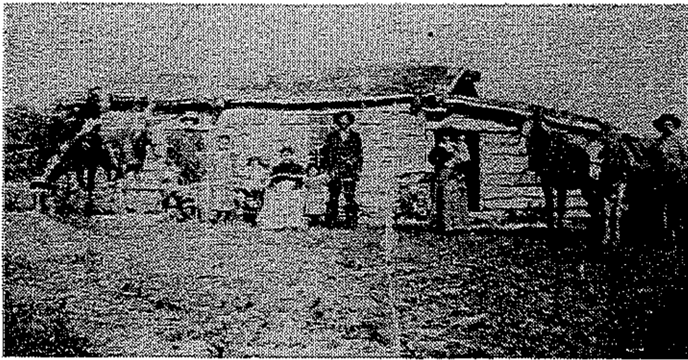
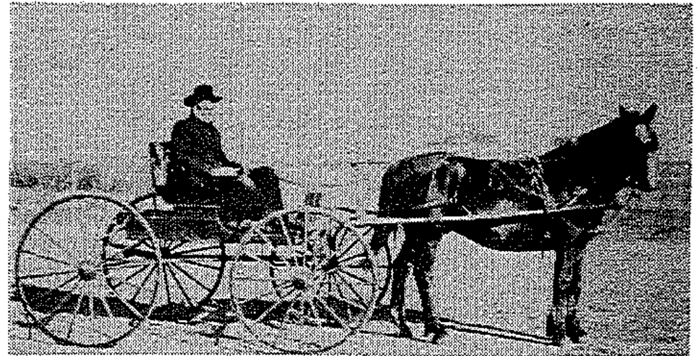
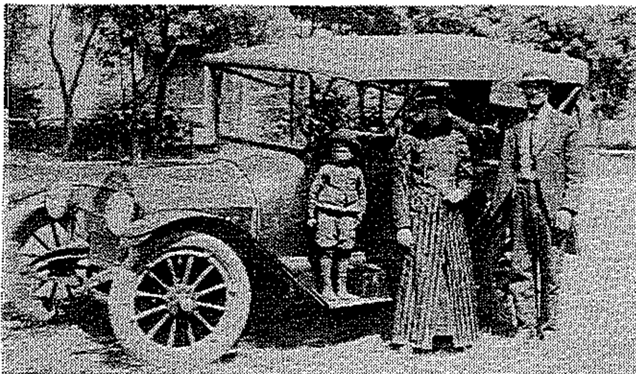
History of the Turtle Mountain People

Courtesy of Manitoba Archives







The following are some events which had a great impact on the lives of the Turtle Mountain people and which must be included in this history.

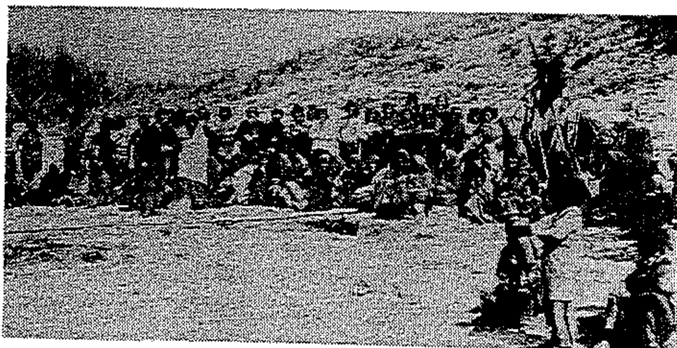
BUFFALO HUNTS

The buffalo, properly called the bison, was the mainstay of the Indian in this region prior to and for some years after the advent of the white man. He depended on the buffalo for clothing, food, shelter, implements and even toys for his children. Covering for the body was made of the tanned skins; buffalo hides, or robes, provided additional covering and the tanned hides were used for tipis. Implements and toys of buffalo bones have been found in mounds and were in use long after the whites came to the country.

The annual buffalo hunts in June and November were not only the great events in the lives of the Indians, but later engrossed the attention of the mixed-bloods and even the whites. These events were more than hunting trips; they were great expeditions in which adventure, romance, excitement and thrills were plentiful. Numerous descriptions of buffalo hunts have been written.

Before dealing with any of these, it is necessary to explain that the Chippewa of the Turtle Mountains had formerly been woods Indians in Minnesota and there had been able to obtain a diversity of food and materials for clothing and shelter. Those who came to North Dakota soon found that the buffalo, of which there were millions when the first whites arrived, must become their principal means of existence. They had known the woods buffalo in Minnesota but had not relied on it so completely. The Sioux, on the other hand, had hunted the buffalo from time immemorial, but the Chippewa soon became as adept as their neighbors.

When drought or other causes drove the buffalo far from their usual haunts into enemy territory, the Indians, deprived of the hides and meat, suffered keenly. Fortunes rose and fell with the success of the annual hunts.



Courtesy of Manitoba Archives

Wedding Ceremony -- Voyageur with Indian Maiden; Blackrobes in background.

Chaplain on Hunt

In the decades from 1840 to 1870 the Metchif hunters came mostly from Manitoba, being joined on this side of the line by American Metis, Indians and sometimes a few whites.

They followed a more or less regular route on their summer and fall expeditions. The Dogden buttes marked the boundary of the hunting grounds at one point, and it appears that McHenry County generally was the most western country hunted by the Metis and mixed-bloods of this district. The limits of the area hunted were fixed by fear of the hostile Sioux. The Chippewa did not fear the Sioux in battle, but, being peaceable, did not wish to clash with them.

Schools were conducted on these expeditions for the children of the families accompanying the hunters. Since many of the French-Canadian and the Metchif were Catholic, a priest normally accompanied the hunting party. The priest performed the rites of the church in cases of birth, marriage, and death, and conducted Masses. There were regular church services, and stops were made at different points, sometimes for a considerable time.

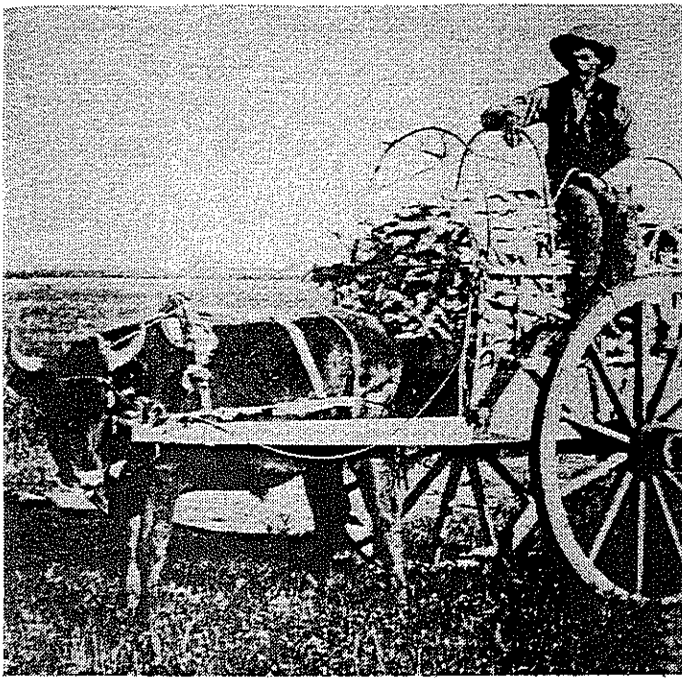
In winter, dog teams were sometimes used to draw toboggans over the snow and overtake the heavy animals which tried to escape through the drifts. Sometimes the buffalo were killed with spears or stone hammers when being worried by the dogs.

In 1850 one of the last large buffalo hunts took place in the Turtle Mountain area. The Metchifs from the Red River Valley attacked a buffalo herd at the east end of the Turtle Mountains. In 20 minutes the hunters had killed 800 buffalo. A name prominent in the Pembina history around 1850, in the buffalo hunting days was Wilkie. The Wilkies, Martins, Demontignys and the Joe Monette family are descendants of Chief Wilkie of Pembina. Joe Monette's mother, Philomene Wilkie Monette was his granddaughter. A story of the buffalo hunting days by Gregoire Monette, born 1855, father of Joe Monette, as told to a reporter of the Langdon Courier in 1917 appears in another section of this book.

RED RIVER CARTS

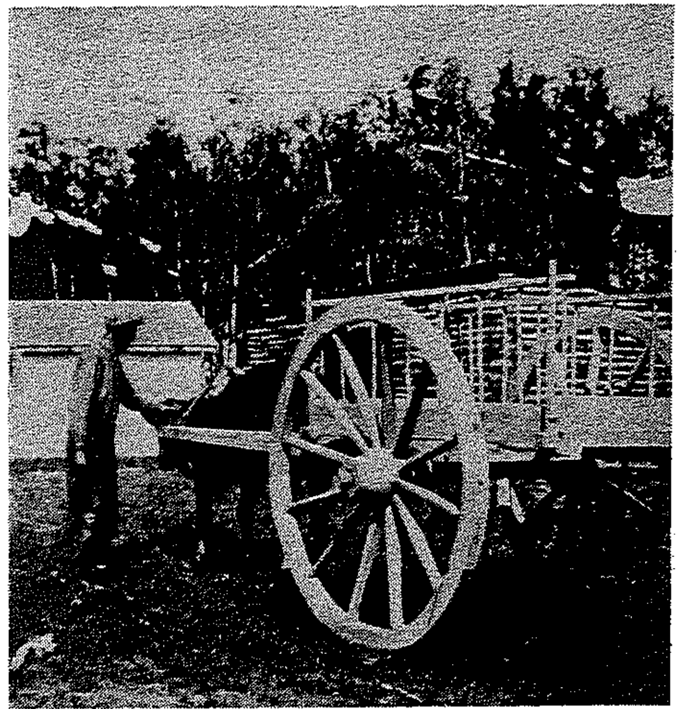
The Plains Ojibwa were designated "the cart-using Indians of the Plains.' It was around 1803, when Captain Henry surveyed the Pembina Mountains, that the famous Red River Cart seems to have made its first appearance, to help in developing the brisk fur trade. The Plains Ojibwa exploited the buffalo herds by means of two-wheeled carts instead of travois, to transport their tents, their dried buffalo meat and hides.

Ox-carts, however, were not as familiar in the Turtle Mountains as on the adjoining prairies: first, because horses had become more common when the main settlement period in the mountains began, and second, because these carts could not easily thread the tortuous paths that were the first mountain trails. The early carts of the hunting expeditions usually skirted the mountains and only later did cart and wagon trains take furs from the region south and east of the mountains to the Red River.



Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Collecting Buffalo Bones -- Ox-drawn Red River Cart



Courtesy of Manitoba Archives

Red River Cart

Joseph Rolette and Norman Kittson inaugurated ox-cart traffic between Pembina and St. Paul. Long trains of carts, each drawn by a single ox, carried furs to the St. Paul markets. These carts were made without using a single piece of metal.

In making these carts only the simplest tools were available: an axe, an auger, a chisel, and sometimes, a homemade draw shave which was made of a gun barrel. Solid wheels were made by cutting off sections of logs. They had to be heavy to stand heavy strains. The hubs were made of elm — if it could be obtained. The foundation was four or five inches thick. A large sapling made the axle. The spokes and body were made from small oak saplings fastened together with wooden pins. Sometimes the wheels were wrapped with tough buffalo hide called "laganappe" to make a sort of tire. The shaves and body were of light wood but the sticks on the side were made of oak.

A well-made cart could stand a load of 1,000 pounds, and when the fur trade was at its best (1844), as many as 1,000 carts were in use. A Journal of Louis H. Morgan reported that in 1861, 800 of these carts crossed the Red River at Georgetown, Minn., in one day.

The wooden axles were not oiled and squeaked loudly. In some instances, rawhide rims which were installed creaked like new shoes, adding to the noise which heralded the approach of a train.

Louis Allery, born at White Horse Plains in 1857, manufactured them. As a boy Louis went on hunting trips with his father with the cart trains. They made their winter homes on the Red, Assiniboine, or Pembina rivers and worked at making new carts during the winter months. These they sold for about $20 each. Louis Allery followed the trade of cart making until the introduction of wagons put the cart out of business.

Albert Laviolette was also an expert cart builder. Dana Wright was instrumental in having two of these carts placed where they will be preserved. Both were built in the Turtle Mountains. Louis Allery built one for the Pembina Airport and Albert Laviolette made one for the State Museum in Bismarck.

For all purposes the ox-cart was preferred to the prairie schooner which in this region was usually simply a single-box wagon with a canvas or other cloth covering, much less elaborate and somewhat smaller than the regular prairie schooners of the type used by the pioneers who crossed the eastern mountains into the central states.

The covered wagons here traveled in groups of two or three as a rule, or even singly in contrast to the big trains that crossed the plains. These latter, like the earlier ox-cart trains here, had their brigade commander, wagonmasters and other functionaries.

After the passing of the fur era fewer carts were seen. But they were still used to haul merchandise and household goods.
(Courtesy of St. John History book 1982 and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians - Historical overview and Tribal Government, Management Concepts, Inc. April 1980.)

WORLD WAR I

Europe had been at war since 1914. The United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917. It was a sad day for families whose young sons were called to serve their country in those war years. Many

young men between age 21 and 30 from Rolette County, including the Turtle Mountain Reservation, were inducted. Several volunteered to go. Most of the men were sent to France and served under General Pershing. The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, and the war ended. The boys came "Marching Home Again, Hooray." When news of the end of the war reached Belcourt, church bells rang, the fire siren blew and people in the town of Belcourt were thanking God and dancing for joy that the war at last was over and their sons would return. Their joy was short-lived as no sooner had the war ended when the flu epidemic of 1918-19 began which was believed to be a direct result of the war.

THE FLU EPIDEMIC OF 1918-19

One of the most disastrous occurrences on the Turtle Mountain Reservation was the flu epidemic of 1918-19. Whole families were wiped out by this devastating disease which spread throughout the whole country. The disease caused 20 million deaths in the United States. The reservation was likewise probably more severely hit by the influenza epidemic because of lack of medical attention and lack of sanitation and poverty conditions. At that time there was only a contract doctor who came to the reservation periodically. Most of the sick therefore had to care for themselves. Stories of the flu have been recalled and passed down of how people were so ill they did not have the strength or will to get themselves out of bed. There were a few people who were immune to the flu germ and did not get the disease. These heroic people went into the homes of the sick, bringing them kettles of hot soup, chopped wood for them and made fires to keep them warm and tried to keep things as sanitary as possible. It was most disheartening and discouraging as each day people died, sometimes two or three in a family, until whole families were destroyed. In such cases the house and all in it was burned down to keep the disease from spreading. Some of the old folks still living have given accounts of the flu epidemic. One account is that perhaps there may have been a small pox epidemic at the same time. William Schindler tells of a family who had large sores all over their bodies. They all died. He believes they had small pox. There is a cemetery on the Martin land near William Schindler's home where those who died during this epidemic are buried. There was a small school house near that cemetery which was converted into a makeshift hospital. The old people in that area who were living alone and who were ill were brought there so they could be cared for. Alexis Wilkie and wife were among those who helped care for the old people but they too got the disease and died. Mr. Wilkie died October 27, 1918. He and his wife and young daughter are buried in that cemetery. Also buried there are the teacher who taught in that school and a young boy. The flu and small pox epidemic ended in 1919 leaving several hundred Turtle Mountain people dead.

When a family member was known to have the flu all were quarantined. A quarantine sign was put on the house by the police. Those who died were carried away in covered wagons covered with black.

THE DEPRESSION OF THE THIRTIES

The depression years were not really that traumatic a time for most Turtle Mountain people. Accustomed to struggling for a living and making do with what they were able to supply for their household from hunting, fishing, trading and bartering, selling wood, these years were just an extension of what they had always experienced. Throughout the years of hardships, faith and prayer gave these people courage. Prayer was foremost in their lives. It was this deep faith and devotion that sustained them in these difficult times.

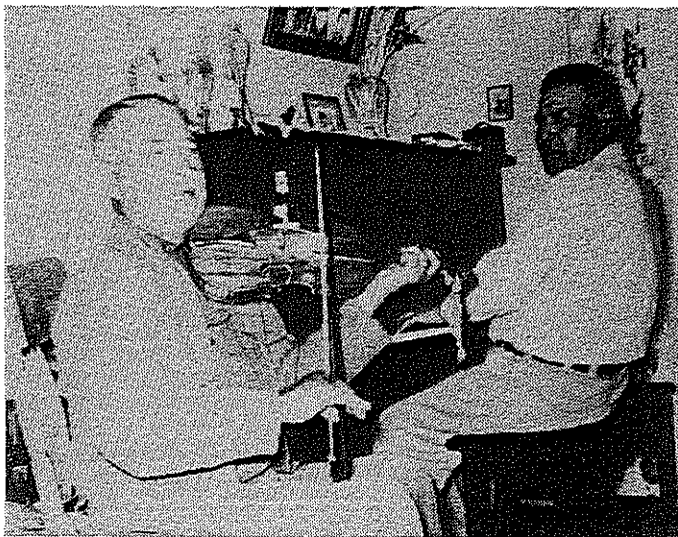
When the spirits of most of the nation were at an all time low the people of Turtle Mountain found ways to entertain themselves and to stay cheerful during these trying times. Much of their idle time when there was no work to be had, was spent visiting and many a long winter evening in the little log cabins on the reservation was spent listening to grandpa or an uncle or aunt relate to the youngsters gathered around the warm pot bellied woodstove, homespun tales handed down to them by their ancestors. One soon learned that it was not a good idea to sit too close to the story teller for sometimes the story became so animated that a swinging arm might get you in the eye. Some space also had to be left in the middle of the room for the story teller to roll, dance or jump around to illustrate his story. No TV or movie projector was needed to bring to mind the antics of these lively tales.

Though poverty was in every home, mother seemed to always find something for a snack for the group of listeners. Sometimes is was chunks of "too-roo" (a cake made of ground pork cracklings, brown sugar and raisins or chokecherries), sometimes "Le-gren Pelee" (ground chokecherry cakes) or other homemade delicacies. Head cheese was a great lunch meat served with homemade bread, bangs or gallette. Peanuts cost only 10 cents for a large bag and it seems there were always peanuts for snacks. Home rendered pork lard was a favorite spread, on a piece of bread sprinkled with a little salt and pepper and a slice of onion, it made a tasty snack. Sweets were not indulged in too often but once in a while there was a taffy pull or popcorn balls. Homemade fudge or divinity was a once in a lifetime treat.

Storytelling finished and a fiddle handy strains of a Red River jig started the dancing blood flowing and soon the scant furniture was moved to the sides of the small room and the jigging competition began. It seemed almost every home had a fiddle,

John B. Lattergrasse, Sr. -- Fiddler

John L. Desjarlais -- Fiddler



William Davis Sr. - Fiddle - Gregory Davis at the piano

some homemade, some very expensive European made obtained by trade for a pelt or two at the trading post. The fiddle was a treasured possession carefully put away in a white flour sack when not in use and tucked away in a safe place where it could not be damaged. Most of the males learned to play the fiddle. Some, of course, better than others. John Louis Malaterre was the best of all fiddle players. When he played "The Mocking Bird" you could almost see the bird. Some of the other fiddle players were John B. Longie, John Lattergrass Sr. and Jr., John B. Page, Charles and Francis Vivier, William Davis Sr., John Louis Desjarlais and many others.

Cub Scouts Dog Derby, February, 1935

While card parties and whist tournaments were engaged in by the elders, youngsters spent countless hours outdoors sliding on their homemade sleds, hitching up old Rover for a sleigh ride, building snow forts and having snowball fights. The young ladies busied themselves helping in the kitchen learning the culinary arts of their mothers and grandmothers. Quilt making, knitting, crocheting, and sewing, all must be learned if a girl was to become a good wife and mother. The girls also helped take care of the babies in the family and learned child care at an early age.

Because of the cold winters and no school busses, children stayed home during the winter months and went to school during the spring, summer and fall, up to Christmas then started again after Easter. The summer months kept those who went to school well occupied. Schools raised gardens where the youngsters learned gardening. Each family also had a large garden and the whole family spent summer evenings pulling weeds, hoeing. Water was hauled from the well or a nearby pond to water the garden. Rain barrels were placed around at the corners of the house to catch rain water to use for sprinkling the garden and also to wash clothes.

WPA Days

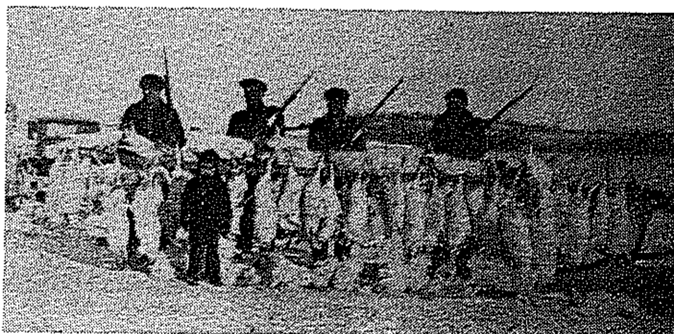
During the term of Franklin D. Roosevelt beginning in 1933, emergency work projects were started to help needy. Prior to 1933 people were near starvation at times living only on what little they could scrape up. There were no welfare programs and no jobs to be had. People existed on food produced in their gardens, wild berries, some raised a few pigs, chickens and a head or two of

livestock, what they could kill hunting small game, and rabbits. The sale and trade of wood for food helped some.

In 1933 emergency work projects brought work and funds to the hungry people of Turtle Mountain Reservation. Work projects were primarily to give work to needy Indians and at the same time performing a work of improvement of public places and buildings and roads. As many as possible were given employment on PWA, WPA, IECW, and CCID. New roads were constructed throughout the reservation. Men with their teams of horses worked on the roads. No heavy equipment was in use in those days only horses to haul and move dirt. Men did conservation work on the agency grounds, around the lakes, Peace Garden, planting trees and beautifying the grounds. There was also home improvement work and building of new homes. Several small two or three room houses were built to replace the one room log cabins. Women were also given work and training in sewing, cooking, canning and gardening projects. Home Economics and Agriculture teachers and other teachers worked evening hours teaching in these projects. The projects brought many improvements and prosperity and an atmosphere of cheer and brighter outlook into reservation homes and life.

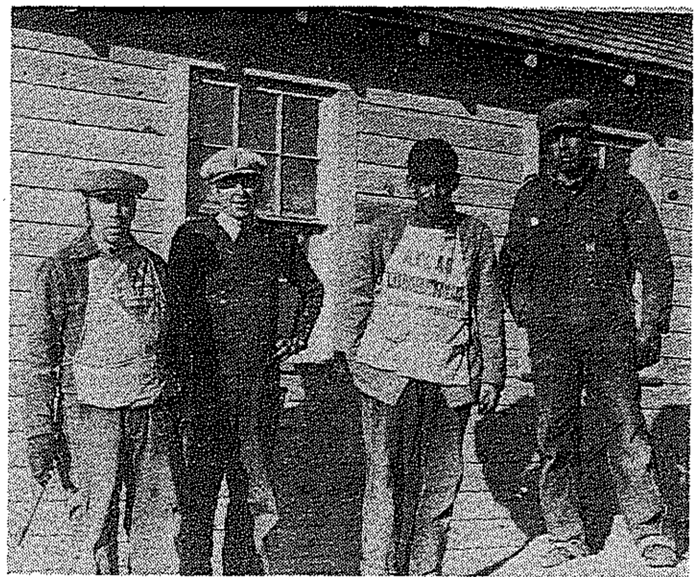
Courtesy of Betty Drapeaux

W.P.A. Workers at Turtle Mountain Agency, 1937

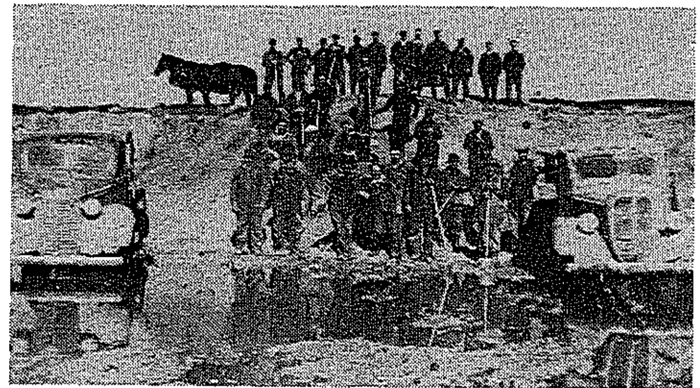


Courtesy of Hazel Demontigny Franz

Jack Rabbits killed near Belcourt -- William Frederick, Pete Turcott, Robert, Alex and Billy Frederick, Jan. 22, 1934



Working on Julia Azure's House: Julian Peltier, Gabe Demontigny, Albert Houle and Pete LaFrombois



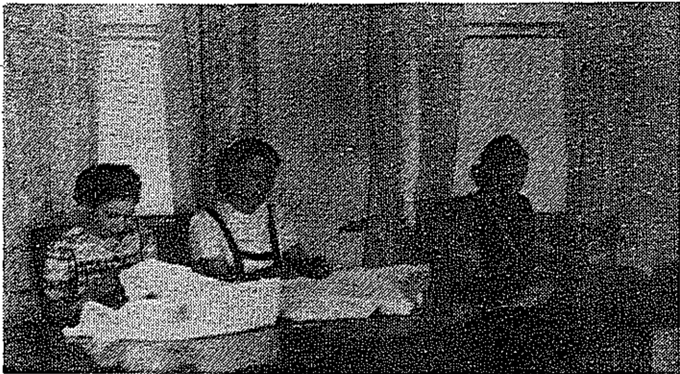
Courtesy of Elaine Rodland

W.P.A., March 1940

Courtesy of Roy Trottier

Building Culverts, 1937 -- Francis Delorme, Joe Trottier, Herman Marion, Severt Montriel, Jack Martin, Jim Wallette.

W.P.A. Picnic, June 20, 1936



Sewing Class -- Edna Lillie, Marion Nicholas and Emma Malaterre, May 10, 1939

Preparing Berries for Canning. Berries were picked and bought from TM Indians. Isabella Morin, Veronica Poitra, Lorraine Delorme, Flora Azure, July 27, 1939

Rug Weaving from Surplus Materials -- Edna Lillie, Eliza LaFournaise, Laura Morin and Marion Nicholas

W.P.A. Sewing Projects -- Ranked the highest in the state of Noth Dakota for 10 out of 12 months

Sewing Class at Belcourt School, May 1940 -- Mary Decoteau, Mary Martin, Pauline Montour, Mrs. Art Longie, Mary Thomas, Mrs. Norman Dubois, Mary Jane Poitra, Mary Boucher, Rose Jeanotte, Christine Boyer, Emma Enno, Mrs. Allard, Alvin Blue and many more worked on the sewing projects. Kay Harris was County Supervisor.

Hunted Buffalo Here Fifty Years Ago

By: Gregoire Monette of Langdon, N. Dak.
Interpreted by Judge H.E. Dorval
Transcribed by Mrs. John Mahon
April 1917
First printed in the **Courier-Democrat** at Langdon 1917.

Note: The **Courier-Democrat** ceased publication in 1923. There are no known file copies of the publication after 1914. This particular story, along with a number of others, was throught lost. However it, and the others were "discovered" in June 1978 in the archives of the University of North Dakota. These stories had been pasted into an old ledger book from the Mahon Lumber Yard, a pioneer industry at Langdon, which has now been closed for many years. Sometime after 1927 the book containing these stories became the property of Cecil Mahon in Canada. When the University requested valued historical materials from their alumni, Mr. Mahon, an early alumnus of UND, contributed the book to their collection. This particular story then became a part of a series, "Sourcebooks of Cavalier County History," and the pages which follow are taken from Volume I, pages 157-183. No effort has been made to edit or change the material. The spelling of names used in 1917 has been copied in this edition.

Gregoire Monette (1885-1931)

Mr. Monette was born at St. Joseph, 1855, in the then Territory of Nebraska. Minnesota was not admitted as a state until 1858. This district was known as the Paubian District for many years afterwards. (1979 Note: St. Joseph was the original name of LeRoy, later the original name of Walhalla and still later the name of the township in which these towns are located in Pembina County.)

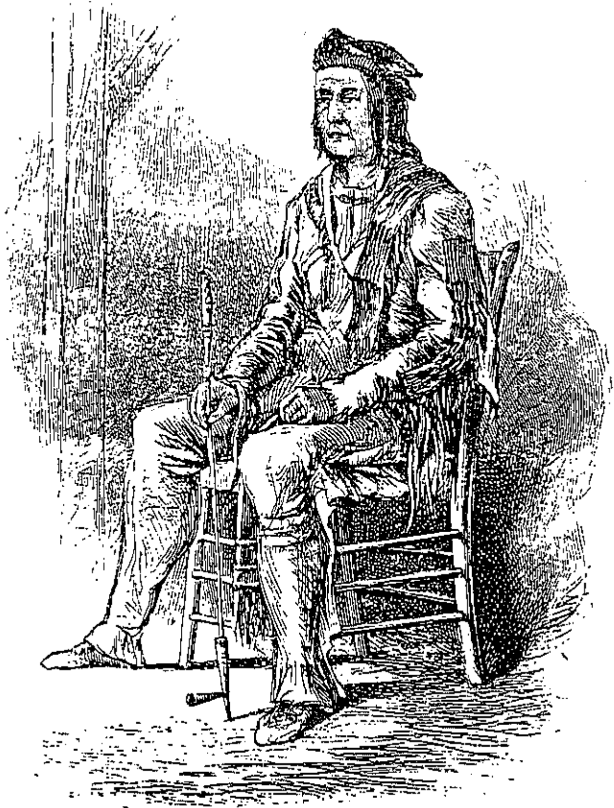
Our subject was the second youngest son of Michael and Susan Briere Monette. His father was born on the White Horse Plains, twenty-five miles north of Winnipeg and was of pure French ancestry. Mr. Monette, Sr., married for his first wife a pure blood Chippewa Indian, a sister of Chief Shell who was the father of Little Shell of Turtle Mountain fame. Mr. Monette's father with his first wife crossed these plains in 1835. with an ox and cart. They went to Missouri, Montana, where Mr. Monette obtained a government position at a trading post. He held this position until 1843, when the Sioux Indians (with which her people were at enmity), killed his wife. Taking his family of five small children he started back to join the Chippewa and half-breed hunters of the plains. With no better means of conveyance for his family than half-breed ponies, and many of the children being too small to ride (as the mother was killed while in the act of nursing her infant,) he conceived the idea of putting the smaller ones in sacks each two balancing the other over the pony's back.

They met the band near Devil's Lake and joined the camp, which was made up of several hundred Indians and half-breed hunters from Turtle River, Walhalla, Pembina, St. Joe, Souris, White Plains, Elm Point, etc. After the hunting season was over, he went with the hunters home to "White Horse Plains," where he chose a second wife, Susan Briere Monette. She was Chippewa and French. They returned the next year bringing with them six children — Michael, Josette, Oliver, Antoine, Margaret and Batiste, who was the first child of the second wife and oldest brother of our subject, who is one of seven children, namely Philomene,

Philomene Wilkie Monette (1863-1926)

Modiste, Genevieve, Gregoire, Bastian and William. Those still living, Antoine, 91 years old and his wife, Catherine Bouvais Monette, live in

Pembina (the latter a sister to Mesdames Moorhead, Goodfellow, Daniels and Rolette). They raised a family of seven children. Batiste lives on his homestead in Montana, has a son and daughter. Toussan lives at Olga, has a wife and five children. Bastian lives on the reservation near Belleson. Our subject, Gregoire, lives in Langdon, has had a family of 13 children, nine of which are alive and will be mentioned later.



Drawing of Jean Baptiste, Grandfather of Philomene Wilkie Monette.

His wife, Philomine Welkie Monette, was also born at St. Joseph, in the year 1863. She was the granddaugher of the distinguished Chief Welkie, who was for many years chief of all the Chippewa Indians and half-breed hunters of the Paubian and Turtle Mountain regions, at least one thousand square miles of territory. His son, Batiste Welkie, Jr., became the father of Mrs. Monette. Her mother, Isabel Pattenaude Monette, was of Chippewa and French extraction. The Monettes, as was the custom of that time, were married very young. He was 22 and she was 15 years old. They were married at St. Joseph in the log chapel in the woods on the 16th day of February 1877. Father Filion, a priest from St. Jean, Manitoba, officiating. The day as described was like a beautiful day in autumn. It was an open winter, no snow, not even frost on the ground. The plows were running during the month of January. As the day left nothing to be desired, the guests arrived in full force — 200 relations and friends were in attendance and the sports and festivities lasted two whole days. In the daytime such outdoor sports as different hand ball games, riding, etc., were played. They also engaged in archery, test shooting pigeons and grouse with bow and arrow (powder was then sold at $100 per pound and was for more serious use. Caps were also one cent each.) The feasting, singing, dancing, etc., which was the order of entertainment for the evening, was held in Mr. Welkie's large log house.

Moral standards then (says Mr. Monette) were very much higher than at the present time. They would have been ex-communicated had they dared to dance some of the present day popular dances. Dances approved by the Christian people of that time were four and eight hand reels and jigging. The company was seated in the assembly hall, the girls with their mothers on one side, the men and boys on the other. The young swain must salute the ladies asking permission to speak with or dance with the young lady. Drinking in those days was confined to the old men, it would not be tolerated in young men by decent people. Deference and respect to parents and elders was a marked characteristic of the time, due respect was accorded the parents and their consent gained to the marriage of their daughter, even if she be 35 years of age. The young men too conferred with their parents about these affairs. Before accepting permanent work they got their parents' consent, the father usually consulting with the employer regarding the terms, services, etc., to be rendered. The parents were not expected to work and elderly people were seldom seen to do so. They gave advice and supervision, were counsellors rather than helpers. In this way a standard was set before the young. They knew if they were people of character and honor, capable and having sound opinion a place in the heart of the family would be due them, too. Such was the community spirit, declares Mr. Monette, that each man went out anxious to bring back all he could, not for his own or his family's use, but for the larger group or family with which he was connected. Each son that got married brought his wife home and the abode was rearranged to suit the needs. Mr. Monette believes it was cheaper and better so, and states that in his opinion when they were scattered, each man having to look out for himself, they were unhappy and usually poor.

Another feature of the social life in the community of those early days was the fact that money was not necessary. Demand and supply was regulated by what they had for exchange. If a man should die and there was no money to pay the priest the burial fee, his clothes or other belongings were turned over to the church. If a young man was prepared to get married and wanted an elaborate service, he could bring a calf or a pony according to the sort of service desired. There were no stove bills nor pew rent; at church seats were free and all made welcome. On the other hand, the best of the hunt was sent to the Rev. Father's house and they

also saw to it that his home was abundantly provided for.

Their custom was to have their winter home at the foot of the Paubian hills (now known as Walhalla). Here A. Henry and the Kittsons had kept trading posts for the Northwest and Hudson Bay Fur Companies for a period of forty years. They were rivals for the fur trade and at times caused almost civil war among the people. Amenable relations, however, were established in 1858, as we shall see later. This was the winter home of the hunters and they left in May for the first hunt.

At first Mr. Monette remembers only hunting in Pembina and Cavalier counties, but the hunters drove the buffalo farther and farther away until the hunting was too poor to sustain the band here and the Turtle Mountains became the goal. They had two hunts each year. The first was from May to July at which time the products of the chase, such as hides, pemmican, muscle and dried meat were brought back. They remained at Walhalla long enought to store these tons of supplies and left for the second hunt about August 1st, remaining as long as the weather was fit for the families to live out on the plains. The entire band went on these hunts, 800 to 1,000 people, men, women and little children, practically the village, though precaution was taken in case they meet the Dakotas or Sioux with whom they were at enmity, or that they might visit St. Joseph in their absence and kill the helpless ones.

Reverence for their religious leaders was the same whether in the village, on the battle field, or in the chase. The priest held services before and after every hunt — also instructing the women and children and ministering to the sick or giving sacrament to the dying. In all he did in Christ's name, he was referred to as a man of God. If he was called away they sent some one to meet him on his return as much as ten miles they would run to bear him company home. In the same way they bid him God speed when he left for a journey. If they met him going to attend the dying and carrying with him the articles for hold sacrament, they fell on their knees and remained in an attitude of prayer until he passed by. Socially they felt him as much their superior as we do our president. The Sabbath was kept sacred, shooting was not allowed. Before the hunt special services were held when all would say their beads praying for a successful hunt and a safe return.

Strict justice was enacted, they were thoroughly organized, obeying implicitly their commanders. When the buffalo were in sight the chief hunters held council, captains and leaders were chosen and they consulted as to the best method of procedure. Usually a capable man was chosen for a scout and he was sent out to find out the position and number of the herd. Instruction was then given to all as to how to act for the success of the hunt and the safety of the hunters. No one was allowed to rush into the herd with the best horse killing and scaring the herd, all must start at a signal and every man was encouraged to kill his full share. They protected the game as best they could. They were instructed to aim only at the fat, well developed animals and never to kill a calf. Hunting was done altogether on horseback, the horses apparently enjoying the sport as much as a race horse now enjoys the track.

When all is in readiness the band starts off no faster than an easy trot, the buffalo trotting too, this pace is steadily increased and the buffalo are on the run and the horses almost up among them, until the most advantageous position to the herd is obtained. The hunters then drop their reins on the ponies necks to handle their guns, loading and shooting as they go and all the time guiding the pony by the swaying of their bodies. The herd will never run with the wind, but will invariably turn and face the wind. They usually run the herd six or seven miles, killing as many as possible. The dust was often so dense as to make it hard to see the buffalo although they might blacken a large piece of country.

Mr. Monette tells of returning from one of these hunting expeditions in 1871. He and Josette, an older sister, had been hired by his brother-in-law, James Fidney, to hunt with him that year. They had started back to St. Joe and when one mile below Olga, on the bank of the river, they saw two buffalo lying sleeping. They crawled up and shot one as it lay and the other as it attempted to rise. As they had all the load their carts could hold, they covered them up with fresh raw hides, made scarecrows out of their coats to frighten the wolves and went on home. Coming back the next day, they found them all right.

The Carrivoix house stands now very near the spot where this occurred.

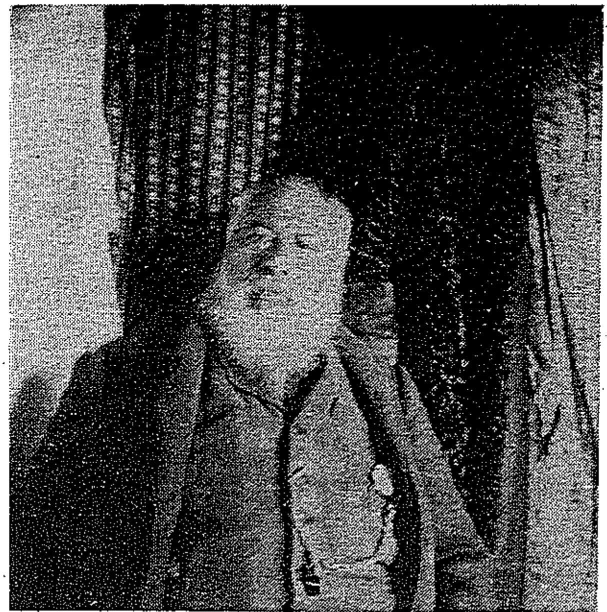
The largest herd of buffalo Mr. Monette ever saw at one time was in 1875, when he went to winter at the Milk River. He would like to say he saw "millions," but believes they did number a great many thousands. He compares them to the shocks in our wheat fields, as far as the eye could see they covered the landscape. He and two old hunters had gotten separated from their party, when this great herd came in sight. This was on the line between Montana and Canada, the animals were feeding quietly most of the time and they were not alarmed, but they really suffered for want of water in those two days. There were so many of them and they constantly walked in the river so that the water was riled and unfit for drinking. On the second day and just before leaving, the buffalo became strangely agitated, bawling in an uneathly manner, biting with their teeth dead buffalo carcasses, which were still lying on the ground from a previous hunt. These they trampled with their feet, sometimes throwing large chunks of flesh into the air. At times they would rub their head and breast to the ground, making hideous noises, and in every way indicating great distress. The old hunters

were in great sorrow because they knew it was a sign to them of the leaving of the buffalo. They had seen these indications in other places and it always meant their disappearance, and with them would go all their happy life. Mr. Monette declares the buffalo did the same sort of leave-taking from this country and believes that instinct made them wise to the fact that their days here were numbered. Being conscious of this they were almost frenzied.

Mr. Monette's brother, Antoine, also bears testimony to this fact and also to having hunted buffalo on the ground now occupied by the city of Langdon, killing many in Cavalier County, especially on its western side as late as the year 1868. In that same year their party killed many in the vicinity of Devils Lake. The deep ravine running through Langdon was known to them as "Sioux Coulee," and was a favorite camping ground for the people of the "Ten Nations." For many seasons previous, they had as many as three to four hundred lodges. They also had great numbers of ponies and dogs, and a caravansary of two hundred or more vehicles. In addition to this, when on the march, they used their lodge poles upon which they stretched rawhides. These were drawn by dogs, or runners, and carried the small children, who were not able to march. The banks of the ravine afforded protection from the cold and wind and also concealed their whereabouts and hid them from their enemies. Here in the coulee as well as in small lakes near by plenty water could not only be had for their animals but enough to attract plenty of wild fowl and game for their use.

The meeting place of the Chippewa tribes and their associates, the half-breed hunters, was between Cando and Devils Lake. Each rival party felt their only safety was in keeping the band together, and each was in constant fear of the other. No one dared to get far from the large company on either sides. The Chippewa and half-breed hunters under Chief Wilkie had one great advantage, they were expert gunners, while the Sioux depended largely on bow and arrow warfare, handling the guns more clumsily, and in order to load they had to stop their ponies. The half-breeds were especially fine riders, it is said they could ride and sleep or fight without rein or bridle if necessary, or riding at full speed they could reload their guns and keep on firing the powder horn and caps they had attached to a string about their necks.

As we have already stated, each side was afraid of the other and each kept scouts continually on the watch lest they should be surprised and overcome by the others. In this connection Mr. Monette tells an entertaining story of the late Gabriel Dumont, a familiar figure for many years in this county as he sought refuge here after playing an important part in the Riel Rebellion in western Canada. Gabriel, as we will call him, married the daughter of Chief Welkie and was with his father-in-law for many years buffalo hunting. He was the scout and after watching all night saw something of which he



Gabriel Dumont, picture given to Gregoire Monette.

was suspicious in the clearing as the grey dawn of the morning came. He secreted his horse and taking along his gun and rawhide horse-whip, he watched what appeared to be a wolf, but seeing a horse hid in the slough he decided the wolf was a Sioux. He was soon rewarded by seeing the wolf pull off his skin, fold it into a pillow and lie down at the back of a great stone. After his night vigil he was soon asleep. Gabriel then crawled across the prairie and seeing the man perfectly naked decided on the best way to treat this case. He took the gun which lay beside him and hid it, then brought his buckskin whip down with all the force at his command along the body of the enemy. This woke him up and standing, quivering from head to foot before him he was given another cut of the whip. Gabriel then told him he could more easily have killed him had he wished to do so, and that were he not a white man he would have done so. After this he gave him his gun and told him to go back to his people and take from him some tobacco to the chief, telling him how the white man's whip felt. Some years later Gabriel called on a Sioux chief living in a fine state and having several wives. Recognizing the man, Gabriel asked him if he were not the man he had whipped. The chief admitted that he was, but begged that the matter be kept secret for said he, "I told my people that I whipped the white man, and took the tobacco from him. For this brave deed they made me chief."

Mr. Monette relates many other incidents of Gabriel's sagacity in dealing with the Indians and adding that he was (as far as the time would permit him to be) a very humane and brave man, a great trapper and hunter, no one could equal him in making plans, finding the best fighting ground, etc. He believes he had the superior intellect of the white man coupled with the alertness and instinct of the Indian. In order to put an end to the suspense, fear and worry of watching the enemy, the half-breed

hunters and Chippewa Indians under Chief Welkie decided to send a commission to Washington to interview the president and find out how to obtain peace between these tribes. Chief Welkie and Peter Grant were the men chosen. So well did they impress the authorities at Washington, that President Lincoln told them they could have all the ammunition they needed for their protection. He asked them at the same time not to induce trouble but to go to them as brothers taking with them the bravest and best to make parley for peace. This was done and Chief Welkie, Peter Grant, Gabriel Dumont, Joseph LaFramboise, Antoine Fleury, and seven others were chosen. They went direct to the village of the Dakota's or Nadouissouix and direct to the lodge of the chief. This they found surrounded by a guard of soldiers. They reported to the chief, and he asked them to be brought in. The rabble had gathered about the lodge and threatened to kill them, but the soldiers would not allow them to do so saying that their chief was a brave man and honored brave men who would dare to come alone to a hostile camp. The crowd was so envious and angry that with their knives they slashed the tent cloth in the lodges. Although they were admitted to his presence the chief was very austere. They told him their mission, and being very tired and thirsty, Gabriel asked for a drink of water. This was refused which was known to be an indication of trouble. Chief Welkie became alarmed and sadly dropped his fine bearing. Gabriel, his son-in-law asked him "What is wrong with you?" When the old gentleman told him his fears, he became very angry. He began at once to load his gun, saying, "I won't die before I kill my full share," and again demanded water which was brought immediately and due respect was shown their high commission from that time forth. When asked to fully explain their mission, as spokesman Chief Welkie said, "We are enemies wasting the good gift has bestowed upon us through nature. We are preventing each other from trapping and killing the animals. There is plenty of room and much provisions. Let us help each other as brothers, let us have peace together." When the council was concluded, the pipe of peace was ordered to be brought. This was a very long pipe, ornamented with human hair so long as to reach the floor, bear claws and porcupine quills were also a part of its decoration. The tobacco was cut by his first lieute nant, this was mixed with several herbs, and kinnikinnick. This mixing of the tobacco was to indicate the fusion of their interest and harmony of the whole people. The pipe was then handed to the Sioux chief, who took three draws and passed it to Chief Welkie. In this way it went around the lodge. Three times the pipe was filled and solemnly smoked and peace thereby established.

Chief Welkie then distributed to them gifts of tobacco, tea and sugar. They were then given a great feast at which they told how sad they were and afraid when they thought they were going to regret their friendship, and asked how they should get safely home. The chief said with great dignity, "I will give you safe conduct; I will send my soldiers with you to your lodge and nothing will harm you. You have seen here some of my bad children, you may meet them on the way, but if they attempt to harm you, kill them, and I will protect you." The above took place on Grand Coteau, forty miles west of Devils Lake.

Before leaving Chief Welkie invited the Sioux to send a delegation to visit his people, setting the day and hour for their arrival. When the time came near Chief Welkie bearing in front of him a white flag, went a mile out to meet them. About one hundred came, the chief and his staff were quartered in Chief Welkie's lodge, the common people were scattered so as to get better acquainted. When the time came for them to go, they, as a sign of their friendship and brotherly feeling traded all their horses taking back none they had brought with them. Much good was accomplished, although there were still bad children (perhaps on both sides).

Sometime later the wife of one of Chief Welkie's hunters in gathering wild turnips, went a little too far from the camp. Four Sioux carried her off keeping her for three days. She was guarded day and night by two of these, finally the third night the guards relented and they let her go. She walked to Winnipeg, being afraid to go toward the camp, which was near Cando for fear they would catch her. She met her husband, Mr. Dauphinneas, in Winnipeg. He and friends had searched for her and given her up for dead. She is still alive.

Carting the goods to St. Paul and returning with settlers or provisions for the settlement was an interesting and adventurous experience. The carts were clumsily made as they were altogether of wood, no nails or iron was used in their construction and they had to be strong enough to stand heavy strains. Oak wood was used, from this the hub, spokes and foundation for the wheel was made, the latter was four or five inches thick. A large sapling made the axle. The spokes and body were made from small saplings, the thills were made from sapling too. A well made cart could stand a load of 1,000 pounds and when the fur trade was at its best — 1844 — as many as 1,000 carts were in use. Two hundred might be seen in a single train en route for St. Paul. There were three trails from Ft. Douglas (Ft. Garry) to St. Paul; one followed the river closely to Ft. Abercrombie (fifteen miles north of Wahpeton), a second was the Georgetown trail. This escaped the terrible sloughs of the river road. A third trail was cross road from Georgetown northwest through Cass and Traill, this connected with either of the other two, made an unbroken trail with St. Joe and Winnipeg.

Dog sleds in winter and carts in summer were the means of conveyance of passengers, the dog sleds were built of thin slabs of tough hard wood curved upward at the front end. They were about fourteen inches wide in front and twelve inches at the back end, by about eight feet in length.

The Hudson Bay Company had the exclusive right to the fur trade in the land of the Canadas for 28 years — 1838-1858. Although the line dividing the two countries was made 1823, the Canadian traders refused to see it and usurped the rights in the Pembina district for many years to follow. The Northwest Fur Company was a powerful rival to the Hudson Bay Company and whenever either found the other had established a trading post they too sent a detachment of men to build in that district.

A trading post at the foot of the Hare Hills was one of a line of such holdings established by Alexander Henry for the Northwest Fur Company in 1799. The spot chosen was just above where Walhalla now stands, tucked in close to the hills, where the river, then called Paubia, flowed out and crossed the country to Pembina, where it joined the Red River. These rival fur companies with their "Rum" for exchange with the savages, made a country where there was no written law, anything but a paradise in which to live. Murder and rapine were of common occurence among the natives of the village.

The villagers commonly divided their sympathies between the two rival fur companies, which kept the whole people in a state of semi-civil war. At some stage in every transaction furs became the medium of exchange and decided the terms. Evading the authority of the large fur companies became the legitimate pastime of the small or independent traders. As the monopolistic grind of the former became more and more intolerable, free or independent traders were given greater encouragement and finally their goods came to be sent regularly overland to St. Paul. The Hudson Bay Company's charter expired in 1858 and they then had to fight for their share of the trade.

N.W. Kittson, their manager, was equal to the occasion and devised a plan by which he could bring supplies in by way of St. Paul and the Red River, taking back each time a load of furs. To this end a steamboat, "The Pioneer," was launched on the Red River in 1861, a year later another, the "International," was added and the two rival fur companies began to co-operate and work together against the interests of the small traders, who were rapidly gaining ground. In the year 1872 Captain A. Griggs and J.J. Hill established a steamboat and barge line. This line merged with the Kittson and became "The Red River Transportation Company" a few years later. Against all this the small independent trader had to compete and they conceived the idea of getting together too. Whether his carts numbered ten or two hundred he had to take the same chances of meeting roving bands of savages, who might rob him or overtake and kill his party.

The stampeding buffalo and other wild animals were dangers to meet or be avoided. The larger the cart train the more safe they would feel. It was more economical too as one man could take care of several carts — three to five. The small traders sold out to each other, one man becoming responsible for the whole enterprise — Joseph Rolette is given as a type of this. The traders started the train out usually with 60 to 100 carts. When they had several days start of him he would follow. In his "prairie schooner" he soon caught up, keeping with the train until within a day's drive of the city, then going ahead to arrange for the accommodation of the party, finding buyers for the furs and buying goods for the settlement. It took three months to make the round trip. The drivers had to walk both ways as the carts in which the furs were brought were used to bring back settlers or their effects or provisions for the village. Thirty dollars was considered good wages for this trip and popular traders were often able to interest young men of the time to make the trip for their expenses. Sixteen miles was considered a good distance to make in one day. Every cart train had its violin and their evenings were spent in singing, jigging and fancy dancing before the camp fire.

Mr. Monette gives a vivid description of camp life. There were many classes of society then as now. The sober and thrifty, when their surplus goods were sold invested and money in carts, ponies, oxen, etc. Others spent their money freely and when the incapable hunter, the lazy or spendthrift, went up for the hunt he might have but one or two outfits while others might own 20 to 30. Each was allowed to bring back all their conveyances could carry. Only the choice part of the meat was taken because they seldom could bring back all they killed. Preparing the meat for the use of the families was done by the old men, women and children, who did not run the buffalo. They stayed at the tents and did all such work as curing the hides (which will be described later), cutting up the latter and drying the meat and preparing the pemmican and bagging it for summer use.

They were constantly changing their camping round when on the chase and not being long in any locality they had very few flies. This fact together with the pure air, wind and sunshine made meat curing a short and pleasant occupation. The result of a successful hunt could be cured in a week. It was necessary in camping to select a place near trees or posts would have to be provided upon which to pin the meat for drying. The meat was cut in thin large slices and when dry would pack as compactly as a bale of hay. Pemmican was made by cooking this dried meat over a very slow fire. This fire was made in a hole dug for the purpose. Over this smouldering fire the meat was placed and allowed to cook until thoroughly tender. It was then taken out and pounded with two sticks like a flail. When fine it was mixed with the buffalo tallow which had been previously tried out. This was put into bags and would keep indefinitely. The pemmican bags were made from scraped and dried raw buffalo that had been previously dried. Carts and sleds were used to convey the meat to the

tents — the latter described as being much like a toboggan and was drawn either by a pony, ox, dog, or native woman. The pony size was 10 by 12 feet long. That for the dog or woman was six to eight feet. They used a harness which was attached to a collar, traces and a wide strip of rawhide along the back were also necessary.

A dog team consisted of several dogs in harness hitched one in front of the other. As much as the meat of two buffalo or 1,000 pounds could be packed upon one of the large sleds. Pemmican bags, bales of meat, or a yet more common use for the sleds was on the hunting ground where the load was flesh. A raw pelt was first spread on and the flesh piled on this and sewed up, then another and another until the load would be complete.

Mr. Monette remembers when black and silver foxes were hunted on these prairies. Silver foxes were very plentiful, but he can recall to mind that the black fox was more rare. The pelts of these sold for $300. Very much more numerous yet was the cross fox, which was in appearance a cross between the other two. Black, with a silver cross upon its back, this species brought $20 per pelt. The silver fox brought $35. The yellow or red fox brought only 75 cents or $1; mink, $2; bear $4; buffalo $1.50 to $5.00. While they shot for the fur all fur bearing animals such as fox, mink, weasel, muskrat, rabbit, wolf, skunk, badgers, lynx, elk, bear, they valued most the flesh of the deer and buffalo, the latter as we have seen were heavy on foot and were easily run down and killed. The deer were much harder to get, and although there were several varieties, and herds, numbering several hundred, might be seen, none but the very best hunters could shoot them.

The winter hunt, from October until March, was depended upon for the fur — we have seen that the yearly supply of meat for the families was prepared in the summer season. In the first place fur is never at its best when the animals are poor, which is usually the case when they are rearing their young. This was especially so in the case of the buffalo as for their very best robes they used only the cow hides or young bull hides. In the fall when the families had to get to warmer quarters for the winter, the hunters formed from their numbers two or three bands or squads, some hunting out from Walhalla, others from the camp at Devils Lake, Souris, etc. At these camps they built for themselves low log huts, the door of which was made from a hide pinned on a frame; there was a hole through the door which the latch string, a rope, could be put out. The window was a hole over which a skin scraped so thin as to be like parchment, was pinned admitting the light.

The chimney, in one corner, was four feet square at its base running up to a hole two feet square at the roof. This was open in front part way up. The chimney was built like a ladder, of poles on each side. On this mortar made of clay and long straw was piled thickly. Beds were made by driving holes in the logs with an auger and using poles for a frame. On this buffalo skins or feather beds were used. A beam in the ceiling over the fire place had a large hook on which they hung the meat to roast. This could be turned as it cooked so all sides would get done.

When they left the huts for a chase they carried teepees with them. A party of eight men left the camp at Souris to make a trip to Walhalla to get munitions and other necessaries. They traveled with dog teams, each man had his snowshoes, sled and team of several dogs. When the road was new or unbroken one man went ahead on snowshoes to guide the dogs. Whenever the road was discernable or possible the dogs followed the scent and so anxious were the teams to start that it was with difficulty sometimes that the men got onto the sleds and one of the precautions against getting left was a long rope trailing behind the sled. As soon as the dogs took up the scent they went like race horses until they had to be curbed.

About a day's journey from the camp they met a small herd of buffalo. The buffalo always face the wind so they were coming right toward them. The hunters knowing their habits and that they were not easily deflected from their path, they decided to try and see if they could kill each a buffalo by hand and without a horse. Before the band reached them all but three had backed out, Gabriel Dumont and two others made the attack but only Mr. Gabriel accomplished his purpose. To shoot at only one-buffalo was against the unwritten law of that time as single hunters shooting into a herd scared the animals causing quite a loss to the community. This was a very daring deed from every standpoint. Gabriel being a leader and at that time about 30 years old, had also the best team of dogs of all the hunters. Up to this time he knew no fear. The herd was followed until driven into a low place with deep snow. Gabriel saw his advantage and leaped upon the back of a cow. She floundered about in the snow for a while then backed out onto the clear road and began to buck. He could not reach for his knife for he had to fasten his hands in the mane of the cow and hang on. The herd was followed at full speed until the fat, heavy animal began to be exhausted and Gabriel was able to let go one hand, drew his knife and stabbed her in the loin, killing the cow and saving his own life. It is said of Gabriel that he was always impressed with the foolhardiness of this adventure.

Mr. Monette's father while running buffalo near Devils Lake at this time was thrown from his pony. The animal had slipped in a badger hole and falling threw his rider. Mr. Monette had already shot the buffalo that he was giving chase to and his gun lay on the ground a piece away. The wounded beast turned upon him trying to trample him and did break his leg.

In order to save his life he feigned being dead and believing him to be so, the buffalo made no further attack. He lay perfectly still not venturing to

reach his gun until the returning hunters saw the danger and shot the enraged beast.

Another experience which Mr. Michael Monette had while acting as guide and interpreter for a government party near Missouri, Montana, was as follows: The expedition consisted of 47 men. They were not half-breed hunters and Mr. Monette does not now recall their business further than the fact that they had with them the government mail en route to St. Louis. They had a captain or leader and carried their provisions, amunitions, etc. packed on mules. They met 200 Sioux Indians. In the fight which ensued the Sioux killed two of the party and the captain fled believing he could escape with his life. They shot him and cut his body to pieces before his fellows. Being out of munitions, the Sioux started using arrows by which Interpreter Monette was severely wounded, the arrow hitting him in the neck. The Indians very soon ran out of arrows and fled for their lives leaving 40 of their men dead on the field.

As we have already seen, winter hunting was done principally for the furs. The animal was killed and the pelt taken, leaving the carcasses to the wolves, foxes or other wild animals. They turned these carcasses to account by spreading poison on them and reaping the harvest of peltries from the unsuspecting victims. The hides were sent to the camps where the old people, women and children did all the work of scraping by hand and tanning them for market. The workers became very expert in this. Only the choice hides could be sold for a price worth while shipping. Bull hides were too coarse and the pelt too stiff, they brought only $1.50 each and were very heavy to haul. Cow hides and hides from the young bulls were the first choice and brought $5.00 each.

The process of preparing and tanning the hides was as follows: The green hide was stretched on a strong square frame made from four rails. Holes were cut along the edge of the buffalo skin and by this means laced and made very taut. A serrated iron scraper, made fast to the wrist was used, with which to scrape every particle of flesh from the hide, this knife being about four inches wide. The frame was supported by a heavy rail, held in place by two crotches about four feet from the ground. With the frame in this semi-upright or tilted position they stand and do the scraping. It was then allowed to freeze hard and then another instrument like a small hoe was used. This was sharp and required skillful handling to make the pelt of even thickness and not cut it any place. The next process is to rub into the pelt the liver of the animal, when this has all been absorbed, the brain is rubbed in as an oil or softening fluid. It is now folded with the hair outside. A rope made of sinew is fastened to the ceiling and to the floor. Around this the hide is passed and by hand rubbing and manipulation the skin is dried. When dry it is pulled through a serrated iron hoop to raise the wooly nap seen on a good soft well tanned hide. To insure its being perfectly dry it is hung on a pole a day in the wind and sun.

Such an important part of their life business was this preparing of the pelts that when Mr. Monette was asked how many buffaloes a hunter must shoot each season to be considered an expert hunter, he replied that there was never any question about being able to shoot the animals. There would, with any ordinary hunter of that time, be a line of dead buffalo marking the way with only the distance it required between for re-loading. The vital and only question was how many women and children he had to take care of the meat and hides.

The variety in foods fifty years ago was not great. Meat, he tells us, was the principal ingredient in every dish. With this they had wild turnips, onions, garlic and wild rice. Chokecherries, June or buffalo berries and cranberries were put up in great quantity to be used with the meat. They were gathered and put pits and skins included into a stone bowl and with a round stone they pounded the whole into pulp, the pits then were not worse than seeds. This was dried in the sun and shaped into thin flat cakes. It is said pemmican with this cooked with it for a relish was a most appetizing and delicious dish. The acid would also make tender the meat as well as assist in its assimilation. Wild plums and winter green berries were plentiful as well as many kinds of nuts and roots, which they dug out of the ground. As late as 1878 the strawberries were so abundant as to make red the shoes when one walked through the prairie grass. This not only helped their larder, but furnished a revenue from their sale. Fish, too, made a change in the meat and was used freely in the spring of the year. Very little bread or potatoes were used but tea and sugar was a great necessity. Flour was coarse and they did not make bread as we know it. Mr. Monette describes it as more like hard tack and says it was made by using a small amount of buffalo fat with water and flour and almost no rising. (1979 note: This is the bread commonly called gullett.)

Fish in the Pembina River, running through the village (of Walhalla), was very plentiful. It was not necessary to use a bait or net. Fish gates, barries, or traps were better. Each two families could have a small trap. A large trap would often have 400 or more fish in its meshes. These traps were made by driving into the ground in the river bed two rows of stakes. Between these willow gads were laid and when full they were trampled down and more added.

The Fish Trap that still exists in this county, Mr. Monette declares is of more recent date, being constructed after Mr. Mager's mill was built at Walhalla in 1872. The River is very wide at this point and although very shallow is quite rapid. The whole bed of the stream for some distance is covered with large boulders. Round racks were made from bent poles and willow gads were placed

over these stones and obstructed the progress of the fish so that they could be taken out by hand or with a spear.

This beauty spot needs only to be seen to be appreciated. The hills rising on either side to a height of several hundred feet to the level plains above. Down here in the quiet of the hills all is still, no picture can do it justice. The feeling as one looks at the primitive structure is one of a past age prevading the whole place. The landmarks are fast passing away and little is left of its ancient industry.

A mill was built here at the Fish Trap about 25 years ago (1890), which seemed to spoil for a time the quiet grandeur of the place, but it was removed to Bathgate perhaps 20 years ago. Today the same little Paubian, now called the Pembina, winds its way over the stones through the hills to Walhalla, where in former days it fed the fish traps along its border.

(1979 Note: The Fish Traps mentioned in the first paragraph refer to the ones at Walhalla which were discontinued after John Mager built his mill in 1872 as the mill and the fish could not co-exist in such shallow water. The Fish Trap in Cavalier County spoken of in the paragraphs which followed, was built about two or three miles northeast of Vang. It was a well-known picnic spot for many years and apparently the structure was still standing about 1940. The road is now closed to this area, the site is now on private property as much as the shore line of a river can be private property. Access is very difficult and the best view is said to be from the slopes of Frostfire Ski area which has recently been opened on the east side of the River.)

The village life at St. Joe centered around the Catholic Church in which the Monettes were married. The building was made of logs 28x50 feet with a thatched roof of mud and willow. The whole was built under the direction of Father Belcourt, who also built a dam and a "grist mill" as well as a large log residence for the priest's home. The community center was the basement of the church. Here they could come to get warmed, visit or smoke. The auditorium upstairs held 400 people. Here too they had a school and the priest presided until in later years the priest's residence was built. It was Father Belcourt's intention to build a convent and create a new order or sisterhood and for this purpose he brought a number of nuns from the east. Added to these were a number of native girls, here for some years in training. During this time a school was maintained and Father Belcourt made an exhaustive study of the Indian language, compiling a grammar and a dictionary for their use. Eighteen hundred to 2,000 were living at the fort at this time. The priest now had a commodious log residence. A dam and grist mill had also been erected. Water from the dam furnished the power and a site for the mill was chosen on the river. The stones for the mill were two feet across and were brought overland in carts from St. Paul.

When the priest's residence was built it was thought necessary to enclose the whole church property within a stockade. As Mr. Monette remembers it an acre or more of ground was within the enclosure. Square posts, 12 feet high of solid oak 4 inches thick standing on end pegged together, with gates of the same, completed the fortification. A heavy padlock was used for the closing. This protection was necessary not only on account of the lawlessness of the country, free whiskey from the traders, fights of the rival fur companies, but also roving bands of Indians were continually prowling about. For the same reasons every house was fitted with hard wood shutters which, though admitting light, would be impervious to the arrows. When the men were on the hunt the women and children lived within the enclosure. They took further precaution to protect themselves by using very little light at night, usually no light but that from the fire place. For special occasions they used tallow candles made from buffalo fat, with cloth for a wick.

The life in the village was regulated by two bells, both of which it is thought were brought from St. Louis by Father Belcourt. A small bell on top of the church was rung for prayers, school, catechism, etc. The larger bell was for mass, funerals and larger meetings. It was supported by a standard built for it about 40 feet from the ground. This bell was cast in 1845 and brought to St. Joseph in 1847. Its weight was 300 pounds and its tones were and still are said to be wonderfully sweet. It is of peculiar shape and fine workmanship. Raised figures surrounded its base typifying science, art mechanics, music, astronomy and husbandry. In 1874 the bells and also the church were moved to LeRoy, now St. Joe's parish, a distance of several miles, but so highly were they valued that there was lots of dissension between the people of the two towns over who should have them. Father Genin finally decided that they should belong in their original setting and they were carted back to Walhalla by an uncle of Mr. Monette's, Andrew LaRocque, who is now living in Fremont Township of this county. The large one, however, was cracked at LeRoy. The other one is on the church at Walhalla (April 1917).

It was the custom of the villagers in the spare time between the hunts or on the long winter evenings to make by hand such things as wooden shovels, hoes, harrows, drags, ploughs, ox yokes, carts, and sleds, for which only hard wood was used. At this time two raw hides were cut into strips, dried, softened and made into harness, ox collars etc.

Something of natural skill in caring for a wound is seen in Mr. Monette's description of his mother's care of his hand after an accident. In 1865 when he was but ten years old, while shooting rabbits the gun went off in his hand tearing out the flesh and the third finger completely. It now has the appearance of a fine piece of surgery and when

asked who did it, Mr. Monette said, "My mother cut off with the scissors all the mangled flesh and skin that was hanging to it. It had already bled until I had fainted from loss of blood and it was still flowing so rapidly nothing would stop it," Dust and cobwebs and all other of the early day remedies had failed when an old hunter came up and said to scrape the inside of an old felt hat. One application was sufficient. The wound and hand were badly discolored from the powder, for this they took the inside bark of a white wood tree, boiled it and cleansed the hand with the juice. She bound it up with a salve made from the juice of three roots, wild cherry, willow and plum, mixed with bears grease. The pain for a few hours was most intense, but it healed very quickly and is not at all unsightly.

Mr. Monette witnessed the coming and going of two great plagues, grasshoppers and doves. They both came to a climax in 1871. The grasshoppers came gradually. Year after year they came to different localities, each time a little more numerous than before. Wherever they chanced to light all green vegetation disappeared. Finally they rise up like a cloud almost obscuring the sun, polluting streams, open wells and even getting into the houses. In some places they were over four or five inches deep on the ground and in many instances real want was felt. Mr. Monette tells of a 25 acre field of barley standing ready for the sickle. Not a spear of it was left, they ate the straw completely, letting the heads lay on the ground. These were gathered up by the people and thrashed with a flail. (1979 Note: a similar infestation of grasshoppers came to the same area in the late 1930's. At that time they were fought by burning the fields to force the insects further on and destroy their eggs.)

The doves came in the spring, the grasshoppers in the fall or harvest time. The pigeons or doves were by the million eating every green thing in sight. Trapping was one mode of killing them. A net was set up on poles. This was fastened up and grain scattered underneath. The birds collected for the grain, the poles were dropped with the net attached and sometimes as many as 60 birds would be in the trap. Shooting and poisoning was also resorted to, but their numbers, continued to multiply. When all had failed the priests called the people together, formed a line and marched out over the country being devastated making all the time earnest prayer to Almightly God for deliverance from the plague. They disappeared as mysteriously as they came and have never returned.

Justice of that time is well typified in two stories. On July 6, 1873, five Sioux Indians in war paint but pretending to be friendly, came to the neighborhood. They were all carrying rifles and went to the home of Pierre Delorme, two miles south of Walhalla. They found that gentlemen and his wife there, three sons and their daughter, Mrs. Annie Moran and her husband all together. It was just dinner time and the family insisted on their eating with them. They ate a little, but seeing the guns got up and proposed a trade. When they got a chance to handle the guns, they saw that they were not charged and so said they would not trade. Mr. Delorme, Sr., had shot a Sioux in a fight at Souris River, the previous season and they came to avenge the death. They went out as if to leave. The Delormes anxious to appear friendly went out with them. The Indians turned abruptly and shot Louis Moran in the breast. Louis Delorme turned to go back for his gun and they shot him between the shoulders, both men fell dead. The old man who was the object of their spite was shot twice and then slashed fearfully about the head with a tomahawk. The wife of Louis Moran escaped with only a few cuts. She fled into the woods and hid in a hollow tree. They did not find her for three days, she being almost insane when they found her. She had seen them kill her husband and leave for dead her two children and had not had anything to eat or drink for three days. Mrs. Pierre Delorme, when shot had suspended on a string around her neck a crucifix of silver. She, in trying to protect herself, put her hand across her breast, the little finger was shot off by the bullet but her life was saved. This crucifix was afterward sent to the Smithsonian Institute at Washington. Her maiden name was Gurenon, and after this she was clubbed and cut with a tomahawk. The Sioux had apparently run out of ammunition for they tried to kill the mother Delorme by trying to break her back. They beat her with their guns on the head and left her insensible thinking her dead. Two young boys, Bernard and Patrite, aged about 10 and 14, escaped in the excitement unnoticed and gave the alarm resulting in messengers being sent to Pembina after the sheriff and also to Ft. Pembina for the militia. The church was in session and nearly all the people were there, those who were not there and heard the shots paid no heed as the day was the 6th of July and shots were not so much to be wondered at. It was about twelve o'clock when the massacre took place. The young boys had walked over the river to Antoine Gingras' after church and here they met the two Delorme boys bringing the news of the massacre. Mr. Monette and some of the other boys were on ponies and so were at the scene in a few minutes. Those who went with him were Culbert Grant, Patrice and Leandre Guernon, Ouesiuce Berger and Cuthbert Chartrand. When they got there the victims were all lying where the Indians had left them. The father and the mother were not yet dead and Mr. Monette and Cuthbert Chartrand were sent to bring the priest, Father LaFleau, from St. Joe. The priest refused to go as he said if they were all dead there was nothing he could do. When the boys returned the bodies were all in carts ready to be taken over to the Gingras home across the river. The old gentleman died on the way over. The old lady survived and Mrs. Moran later married a Mr. George Baker and they at present live near Devils Lake. (1979 Note: later editions of this story list the massacre at the Joseph Delorme home one mile east of Walhalla, July 4, 1864.)

We have already seen that Chief Welkie was a man of great influence, also preserving peace and harmony among the people under him. Hundreds of men worked together for the benefit of all. He was satisfied that peace was permanently established and wished to get better acquainted with his brothers, the Sioux. Therefore with the very best intentions he invited to his lodge ten of his new friends, but the green eyed monster stalked in among them quite unexpectedly. There were none of the Chippewa invited. — at this time there were about a thousand Sioux camped in Walhalla. The Chippewa determined to get revenge for this insult and exterminate the rival guests of Chief Welkie. One of the Sioux had walked out to see a friend and in his absence the fight began. Powerless to stop it, Chief Welkie gave to his trusting guests all the guns and ammunition at his command and told them to defend themselves, saying that he would go out and do all he could. Being within the shelter of the house was a great advantage and while they only lost one man they killed six Chippewa Indians. Under the cover of the night the Sioux that was out visiting, returned and creeping up under the window gave his signal to those inside, telling them to make their escape through the window into the woods or they would all be killed as the crowd was already gathering. So enraged were the Chippewa at the escape of the Sioux that they sought satisfaction in burning the body of the one they had killed. The old chief's sense of honor was sadly outraged by the whole proceeding.

Antoine and Gregoire Monette both recall having heard their grandfather tell of the battle at Olga. It was the worst in their history and was between the Indians of many nations. They say it was common talk among the people of the White Horse Plains but they were too young to tell a connected story of it. (1979 Note: This battle is generally believed to have taken place in 1848 a short distance west of the present town of Olga, N. Dak. It is sometimes called "The Battle of O'Brien's Coulee" although Mike O'Brien did not settle in that area until almost 35 years after the battle. It was fought over hunting rights in that area and is considered the last big battle in that part of North Dakota between the Sioux — who thought their rights were being encroached upon — and the Chippewa and mixed-bloods. It is assumed that the Sioux lost as following that battle there are few records of Sioux hunting or living permanently in that area.)

Mr. Monette, being as he was the last of the hunters, represents to us two distinct civilizations. His childhood, boyhood and young manhood as we have seen was all spent under tribal or communal conditions with only unwritten laws and the savages to enforce them. The natives, by the incoming British and Americans, were forced to take whatever was given them for their produce and were still forced further and further west being always kept in the uncivilized part of the country after the buffalo.

Finally all this failed, the animals returned no more and the hunters must seek other employment. They must scatter and become individually responsible for their own and their families' support. The food and fur bearing animals had to be replaced by domestic animal culture and grain raising. The people only partially realizing that a great change was being wrought until it was fully upon them. Without knowledge of agriculture or domestic life, such as we have it, this abrupt change must have entailed great hardships. They were misunderstood by those who did not know their former life. They were not too lazy to work for a living as we sometimes thought they were but only incapable of adapting themselves at once to the changed conditions.

We find that within two years after Mr. Mager built his mill at Walhalla, 1872, only 900 bushels of wheat were ground and that was all that was raised from Scratching River, Manitoba to Two Rivers, Minnesota, and the Big Sault in North Dakota. Standards of life had to be all readjusted. The Indians had previously lived altogether on meat and meat-related foods and now had to live almost as exclusively on grains, cereals and legumes. In them, too, the social instinct was strangely developed, living in bands or tribes, the family was their unit, not the individual. Many now had to fend for themselves or live apart from their tribe.

Joe Monette, Emma Delorme, Delima Nielson, Clara Landry, Rosalie Grant, Petrolene Grant – son and daughters of Gregoire and Philomene Monette, 1963.

Notwithstanding all this, the Monette family has survived and are apparently happy, self-respecting and law-abiding. Their children go through school with as much credit as any in the community. They are most considerate and affec-

tionate to their parents. Mrs. Monette has been ill for some time and has had to have good nursing. Her children remembering her years of toil in days work which she willingly did that they might have all the comforts which the father's work alone could not command for them, married sons and daughters came long distances to be of comfort. The nine living children are as follows:

Patronville, now Mrs. Willian Grant, lives at Belcourt, N. Dak. They are farmers.

Rosalie, now Mrs. James Grant, lives at Devils Lake. He is the expert farmer in the government school at Fort Totten.

Fred, married Miss Elise Delorme and lives at Rolette.

Clara is Mrs. Patrick Vandal. Their home is in Rolla.

Emma is Mrs. John Delorme. They live in Langdon.

Joseph married Miss Caroline Gladue, their home is in Belcourt. Mr. Monette was a farmer.

Delima, Bernie and John are at home at present. The later is a junior in the Langdon High School.

1979 Note: Sometime after this story was first included in the Sourcebook series, we were able to bring the family up to date a bit more. In December 1978 Emma Monette Delorme died at the age of 89. She was survied by one brother, Joe Monette of Belcourt, and a sister Delima Neilson of Glendive, Montana. All of the other family members listed above have now died as have the parents. The family as a whole moved west some years after the writing of the story and several settled in the Belcourt area. John Monette, who was married to Loretta Schwartz at Langdon, died some years ago. His widow, daughters and a number of grandchildren still reside in the Langdon area.

1985 Note: All are now deceased. Joe Monette died at age 87, April 6, 1981 and Delima Neilson died June 1983, at age 84.

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Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation

Belcourt, North Dakota