

François Jeannotte (Jannot). (1806-1905)

François was born in 1806 on the Mouse (Souris) River, eight miles west of what is now Bottineau, N.D., at a place the Chippewa called Edge of the Woods. His mother, Assiwenotok, was a Chippewa member of the Turtle Mountain Band. His father was a French Canadian, Jutras Jeannotte, originally from Montreal. He had spent many years west of the Red River both north and south of the border. At the age of seven Francois lived on Beaver Creek, a tributary of the Assiniboine, and here his twin sister was waylaid by a band of Grosventres and left lying where she was afterwards found later, still alive but scalped and having fourteen wounds. At this time the Grosventres had a village at the junction of the South Antlers and the Mouse rivers. The two sons of the war chief were White Cow Buffalo Robe and Four Bears.

Many years before his marriage to Assiwenotok, he was coming down the Qu'Appelle River with a load of furs, accompanied by his first wife and son when they were attacked by a party of Grosventres. His son was killed and his wife was scalped and left for dead. He himself fell into the water badly wounded, and as he struggled to save himself from drowning a Grosventre attacked him by clubbing him with a flint-lock musket. Jeannotte was able to pull himself out of the water by clinging to the gun, and then wrenching it from the Grosventre he killed him with it.

In 1818 Francois, after his father had returned to Montreal, accompanied his mother to the Pembina River, and during the next two winters they stayed at the Big Salt and Little Salt rivers, as the Hudson's Bay Co. had a post nearby with "Arrelles" as post trader and Burke as clerk. At this time also there were two trading posts at the mouth of the Pembina River, one established by the North West Company in the charge of McDonald¹ with Grant² as clerk, and the other operated by the Hudson's Bay Co. at about the same spot where Kittson's fort was afterwards built. He remembers distinctly, the Selkirk Settlers with a mixture of Swiss, German, Italian and Orkney Island men. In 1820 he and his mother returned to the Mouse River and wintered at the big bend of that river. During the winter of 1820-21 it was reported that a Chippewa war party that went to the foothills of the Rockies, found a few miles south of present day Minot, N.D. an "American" trading post established by traders from the Little Missouri and in charge of "Gravelle" with the half-breed Keplin as interpreter.

In 1822, he met a travelling civil engineer from Europe at the junction of the South Antlers and the Mouse in company with two half-breeds, Jack Spence and Jack Anderson. At this time the Grosventres had abandoned the place for a good many years, but there was plenty of evidence of their occupation still to be seen. The Grosventres had quarreled about the ownership of some horses that had fallen into the hands of their ancient enemies. Subsequently, the Chippewas, Assiniboines and the Crees, had gradually driven them southward until they reached the shelter of the Missouri river.

¹ John Macdonell was for a time the leader of the NWC's La Souris fort. He is mentioned in David Thompson's journals and in "Diary of John Macdonnell" in *Five Fur Traders of the North West*, University of Minnesota Press, 1933.

² Robert Grant

Francois was twenty-seven years old at the time of the great meteor shower of 1833, and remembered it very well. He resided on the Turtle Mountain Reservation for a number of years and died in 1905.

Source

State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Biography of Old Settlers." *State Historical Society of North Dakota Annual Report*, Vol. 1, 1906: 339-340. Downloaded March 23, 2010 from:

<http://files.usgwarchives.org/nd/rolette/bios/jeannot7nbs.txt>

Chris Vickers³ makes the following observation:

Francois Jeannotte, a French Halfbreed who was born on the Souris River in 1806, and who was in the Antler Creek district in 1822, claims the (Grosventre) site had been abandoned for a good many years, and adds that the Hidatsa were driven out by a combination of Chippewa, Cree and Assiniboine. Nickerson, in commenting on the Jeannotte claim adds, "Careful search has not yet disclosed the location of the Grosventre (Hidatsa) village mentioned by Jeannotte, unless here they did not build the earthen lodges typical of this people in Dakota."⁴



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³ Chris Vickers, "Aboriginal Backgrounds in Southern Manitoba." *MHS Transactions*, Series 3, 1945-46 Season.

⁴ Nickerson, W. B., "Archaeological Evidences as applied to Southwestern Manitoba", Ottawa, 1914.