

Catherine Lena Pascal Rondeau. (b. July 18, 1849)
Grand Daughter of Chief Little Shell II

Catherine was born on July 18, 1849, the daughter of Madeleine Little Shell and Dan Pascal (married in 1829). Catherine married Joseph Rondeau (d. 1907) on June 5, 1866 at Fort Garry. Joseph received Metis Scrip in 1873.

Grand Forks Herald, April 28, 1935.

Pembina North Dakota: In this historic border village lives Mrs. Catherine Lena Rondeau, 86 years old, granddaughter of Little Shell (II), noted Chief of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa in the early half of the nineteenth century.

She was born in a tepee on the site of Dunseith, North Dakota on July 18, 1849, and her life has spanned the long period from the late exploration era to the present; she lived the life of an Indian maid until she was well along in her teens and in that time her diet was confined almost exclusively to pemmican.

These facts cloak her early life with romance and make her memory a rich storehouse of information about that period. She also has memories of Father Belcourt in whose house she lived at Walhalla in the 1850's.

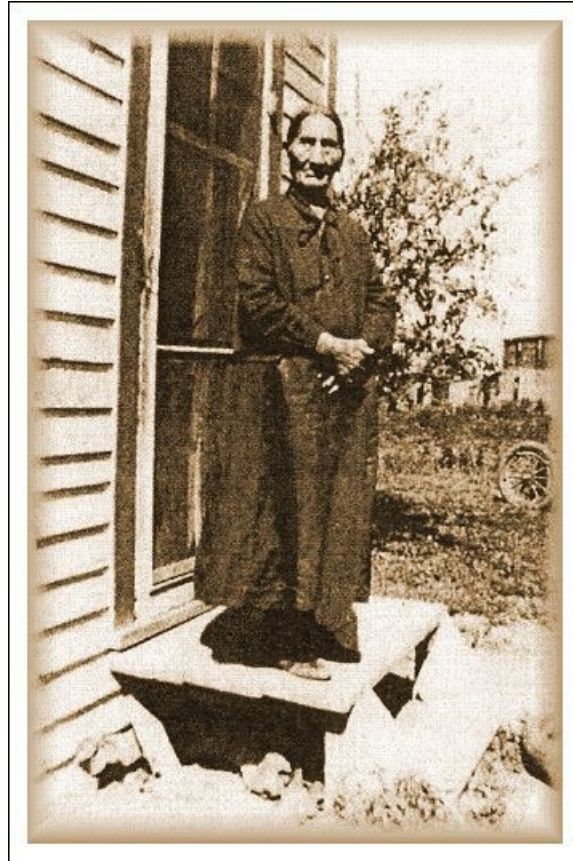
"Yes, I was born in a tepee made of buffalo hides." There was nothing around Dunseith then but scattered Indian lodges. "Buffalo were numerous there when I was a little girl. Later I went to live with my grandfather, Chief Little Shell, near Walhalla. My parents went out on the buffalo hunts each fall. We never had to go farther than Rolla to get all we wanted."

'My mother, was a daughter of Little Shell. Her English name was Madeleine. She had an Indian name which I have forgotten. My father was Dan Pascal, a Quebec Frenchman. My father was away a great deal hunting and trapping and working as a voyageur and mother and I lived in grandfather's lodge.

In the Indian camp we subsisted almost entirely on pemmican, although in summer we would find wild turnips and some other wild vegetables and berries. The Chippewa had

lived better many years earlier in Minnesota but, driven out onto the prairies and into the Turtle Mountains. They depended on the buffalo for food, clothing and shelter as the Sioux did.

"I had not tasted potatoes, tea or coffee, sugar, pepper, milk, or butter until we went to Fort Abercrombie at the time of the Civil War when I was about 14 years old. Father Belcourt set up a flour mill at Walhalla in 1856 and while I must have eaten some of the bread made from this flour I do not remember it. I know that the fine, white bread we had at Fort Abercrombie seemed marvelous to me."



Mrs. Rondeau thinks her grandfather, Little Shell, died when she was about four years old. He knew death was imminent and arranged for Catherine enter the home of Father Belcourt. Fortunately her mother, Madeleine, was able to accompany her as housekeeper

"But there wasn't much housekeeping to be done" Catherine chuckled. "The priest lived in a tiny log house without any floor and piles of buffalo robes and blankets served as beds. Nearby was a larger log structure which served as a mission and school. It stood on a slight eminence just west of Walhalla. There about 50 mixed bloods and Indian children were taught catechism and there were some simple school lessons. I attended this school and I remember that Father Belcourt was assisted by two nuns. All three were French and as there were many French mixed bloods among us, most of us knew that language but the priest and the two sisters had mastered the Chippewa language also".

The records show that Father Belcourt about this time erected a mission building 28 by 50 feet with a full basement in which he lived. Mrs. Rondeau remembers this structure but asserts that the others also existed.

Mrs. Rondeau recalls Father Belcourt as a kindly, active man, who traveled about a great deal ministering to his Indian charges. At that time there was little contact with the older American settlements. Joseph Rolette and Anton Gingras, who had opened a store in St Joseph, now Walhalla, Norman W. Kittson, Charles Cavileer, W. H. Moorhead and others made trips to St Paul and St Anthony by oxcart or dog team but there was no steamboat traffic on the Red River until 1859 and little until the 70's.

When Mrs. Rondeau was a girl, Indians and mixed bloods sold furs at Fort Garry. Winnipeg did not exist then. But they could obtain little in the way of supplies, chiefly guns and ammunition, although many Indians still used bows and arrows. Trips to Fort Garry were made with oxcars and travois, the latter being a pole, one end attached to a pony's side and the other dragging on the ground. Freight to be carried was attached to the pole high enough to clear the ground.

Father Belcourt was recalled to eastern Canada in 1859 and the Catherine returned to the Indian camp. A few years later she accompanied her parents to Fort Abercrombie where the wonders of civilization were unfolded before her in a startling array.

"I could hardly believe my eyes when the clothes and dishes and food of the white women were shown to me" Mrs. Rondeau confided. "It was all so unreal to me that I was bewildered for a while".

Mrs. Rondeau explained that the season's styles did not interest Indian maidens of her time. She said the women and girls in the camp at which she lived wore waists and skirts and sometimes a one piece garment of woolen cloth woven in a form similar to blanket material.

The Indians knew nothing of the art of knitting and women's stockings were leggings made of the blanket-like material. At first the leggings were wrapped with strips of hide or cloth and later buttons were obtained from the whites. Moccasins and beads completed the costume, except on certain occasions when gaily decorated skin suits were worn

There was a young French voyageur at the fort from Montreal after a suitable courtship they were married at the fort June 5, 1866, by Father Jenny and went to live on a claim taken by the young husband on the Cheyenne River about 20 miles west of Fargo. After a few years the husband became blind. Fifty-eight years ago the couple moved to Pembina and there Mrs. Rondeau supported her husband and provided for her children by washing and performing other menial tasks. Rondeau died 28 years ago. Of the 12 children only four are living - Mrs. Lucy Blondin, Mrs. Caroline Bouvette and Thomas, of Pembina, and Dan, Devils Lake.

Mrs. Rondeau had one brother, Frank who lived in the Indian camp, and three half-brothers, Theodore, Joseph and Louis. She is the only one of the children living.

Source:

Bouvette Family Website;

http://www.bouvette.com/family/PASCAL_Catherine_Lena_1849/



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