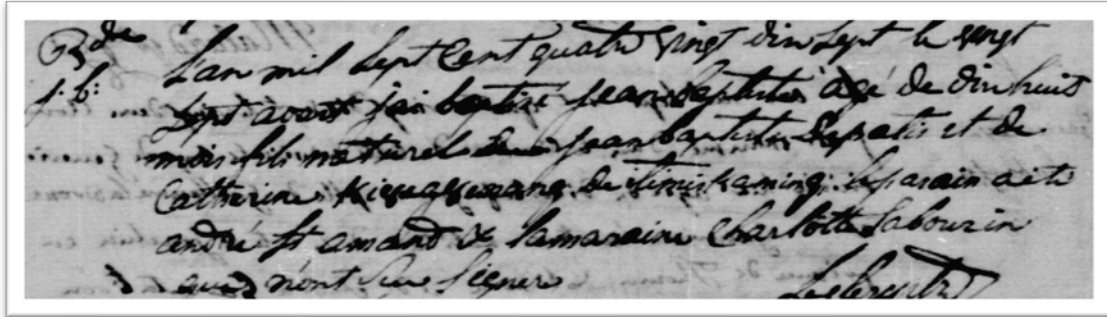


## Jean Baptiste Desportes (McKay), St. Paul Church Founder

On 27 August 1797, Jean Baptiste Depatis, a half-breed, was baptized at the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Oka, Quebec.



“Jean Baptiste Depatis, son of Jean Baptiste Depatis and Catherine Kiowegouenang, an Indian, was baptized on 27 August 1797.”<sup>1</sup>

The baptismal surname eventually became Depatie, Dupati, Dupaty, Desportes, and sometimes Desportes McKay. In this narrative, it is spelled as found in the source documents.



Location of Oka

**St. Paul Church founder.** In the 1830s, eighteen French Prairie settlers (fifteen were former Hudson’s Bay Company employees) felt the need to have their marriages blessed and their children baptized by Catholic priests. Because of their efforts, the St. Paul Catholic Church was established. Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay was one of these men.

## Fur Trade

On 20 September 1817, Jean Baptiste Depatie signed a contract with the Northwest Company (NWC) to work as a hunter on the coast. He married Marie Catherine Ochikabawike, a Nipissing Indian, on 27 October 1817 at Oka, Quebec.<sup>2</sup> A son was born to this union after Depatie left Quebec. In 1834, the son wrote to the Hudson's Bay Company from Lac des Deux Montagnes to learn if his father was still alive.<sup>3</sup> Notice the location of Deux Montagnes to Oka on the map above.

In 1821, the Northwest Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company. He was stationed at Fort George (Astoria).<sup>4</sup> At Fort George, he was in charge of a crew of six other men who built canoes.



He subsequently worked as a freeman hunter in the Upper Willamette and Umpqua Country, a trapper on the South Party, and a hunter on McLeod's Umpqua Expedition.

Alexander Roderick McLeod was a Chief Trader for the HBC. In 1826, Dr. John McLoughlin sent him from Fort Vancouver to southern Oregon on an exploration and mapping expedition. The objective was to locate beavers. The company included eleven Canadians, five Owyhees (Hawaiians), two Indians, an interpreter and a clerk. Most men were accompanied by wives, children, and personal slaves. Botanist David Douglas, who was searching for new specimens for London's Royal Horticultural Society, accompanied the group. Two freemen (independent trappers) joined the group – **Depaty dit McKay** and "little Ignance," an Iroquois Indian.<sup>5</sup>

**Note:** No explanation was given for adding the "dit" name.

The following items from David Douglas's diary refer to our man.

"On the 20th February [1826], Jean **Baptist McKay**, one of the hunters, returned to the establishment from his hunting excursion on the Multnomah; [the Willamette River] he brought me one cone of a species of *Pinus* which I requested of him last August when there.

"As McKay was going in that direction I asked him to bring me twelve cones, a few twigs, and a small bag of seeds and some of the gum. He informed me that the seed was all gone before he went in the autumn, and he only brought one cone to show me."<sup>6</sup>

"The cone measures 16 inches long, and 10 inches round at the thickest part. The pine is found on the mountains two degrees south of the Columbia in the country occupied by the Umpqua tribe of Indians. He is in a few days to start."<sup>7</sup>



[“20 February 1826, cont.] As I have offered **McKay** a reasonable compensation to bring it to me, lest it may be impossible for me to visit that quarter myself, I am pretty certain of gaining more information of this very desirable tree. From the same person I obtained an elk snare a netted purse, made of a desirable sort of grass, I think a different species of Helonias. This being also a plant worthy of inquiry, I am to receive a quantity of seed and grass of the plant; from the little I have seen I have no doubt it will prove Helonias. I have furnished him with a few paper bags, a little paper, and some fine shots to procure me some small birds which will be sent to me in the course of the summer. I was much indebted to Mr. McLoughlin for the trouble he took to explain to him what I wanted, and at the same time enjoined him to obtain them for me by some means or other.”<sup>8</sup>

“Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1826. On arriving at the old camp I found Michel Laframboise and **Jean Baptist Mackay**, who informed me the Indians were far from being friendly disposed ; we were therefore under the necessity of keeping a vigilant watch. My new guides behaved in every way I wished, and I paid considerably beyond what I promised, which pleased them well.”<sup>9</sup>

“Oct. 7, [1826] I bargained with **Batiste McKay** for a skin of a very large female grizzly bear which he had killed seven days before. I gave him an old small blanket and a little tobacco. This was to make myself an under-robe to lie on, as I found it cold, from the dew, lying on the grass. MacKay is to endeavor to kill me male and female, so that I might have it in my power to measure them if not to skin them.”<sup>10</sup>



--Grizzly bears<sup>11</sup>

“Oct. 13, [1826] Here I found **Baptiste McKay** who had gone on before yesterday for the purpose of hunting. They brought two small deer, a male and female, entire, so I had an opportunity .of, measuring them. McKay’s hunter. returned this evening from the Umpqua River, but in consequence of some misunderstanding he only brought a few seeds baked in the embers.”<sup>12</sup>

“Oct. 16, [1826] Morning foggy, dull, and raw... Mr. McLeod and I took the lead and were followed by **Baptist MacKay** and two hunters, hewing down the branches that obstructed the horses from passing. Marched seventeen miles. Mr. McLeod and **MacKay** went out in the hopes of killing a deer.”<sup>13</sup>

“Oct 17, [1826] “Having nothing for breakfast, Mr. McLeod and **Mackay** and myself went out on the chase. The deer wounded last night by Mr. McLeod was found, the ball having passed through both shoulders and a second was still necessary before she could be taken. Mackay made a fine shot at the distance of two hundred yards, his ball passing through the chest, upon which the deer took to the water and was swimming to the opposite side when he passed a second in at one ear and out of the other. Arrived at the camp at twelve o'clock, in fine spirits.”<sup>14</sup>

“Oct 17, [1826] **Baptist Mackay** has given me one of his Indian hunters, a young man about eighteen years old, as a guide; of what nation he belongs to he does not know but tells me he was brought from the south by a war party when a child and kept as a slave until Mackay took him : he is very fond of this sort of life and has no wish of returning to his Indian relations.”<sup>15</sup>

*Note: Slavery was a part of life for Northwest Indians. Slaves could be captured during war parties, traded, or sold. The price for a slave was eight to fifteen blankets. Slaves were expected to cut wood, hunt, fish, and do whatever else they were asked to do.*<sup>16</sup>

“November 1, [1826] Wednesday, November 1st. Heavy rain until two o'clock. In the afternoon **Baptist Mackay** returned from the coast, who tells me he hardly ever experienced such bad weather; he had not a dry day. We felt a little relieved to think our small party getting strong, particularly such a one as Mackay, as he will soon procure us fresh food. Evening cloudy.”<sup>17</sup>

## French Prairie

By 1831, Jean Baptiste was settled on French Prairie but continued to work as a trapper for the Fort Vancouver Indian trade, providing furs and grain to the fort.<sup>18</sup>

In February of 1833, John Ball, a young man who came west with the Wyeth expedition, decided he would start a farm on French Prairie. On 23 February 1833, he wrote to his parents,

“I shall have to begin farming with a few tools, and accommodations. But mind you, my farm is cleared, and I have the choice of a tract as large as the whole State of New Hampshire, except what is taken by seven other farmers. I shall settle in the neighborhood of those already there. I have this week returned from looking out the place; find good soil, most of it prairie; still there is timber in abundance for fencing, fire, building, etc., well dispersed over the country. The white oak often grows on the plains like an orchard, and there are groves of pine and other timber. The same fir you have grows to a great height and three or four feet through, answering for all the uses you put the white pine to. There is another tree, called the red fir. The timber is like the yellow pine and grows immensely large.”<sup>19</sup>



--Oregon White Oak<sup>20</sup>

The DesPortes family was one of Ball's neighbors. On 15 September 1833, Ball wrote to his parents, saying,

“I boarded the first three months at J. B Desportes, a half breed, whose family consisted of two wives, besides one absent, by all seven children, four or five slaves and two or three hired Indians, beside cats and dogs without number. All inhabited one room in common.”<sup>21</sup>

Ball's account of Desportes family numbers is the first we've had. As previously noted, Desportes left a wife in Quebec (Marie Catherine). She could be the “one absent,” but that is unlikely. Based upon the later St. Paul church records for his children, his three wives were Catherine Chehalis, an unnamed Calapooia woman, and Marguerite, tribe unknown.

Polygamy was common among Northwest Indians. Stephen Dow Beckham, PhD, the noted Oregon Indian historian, tactfully wrote, “Wealthy men might have several wives.”<sup>22</sup>

Ball suffered several malaria bouts. He left his farm on 20 September 1833, sold his produce to the HBC, and boarded a ship for home.

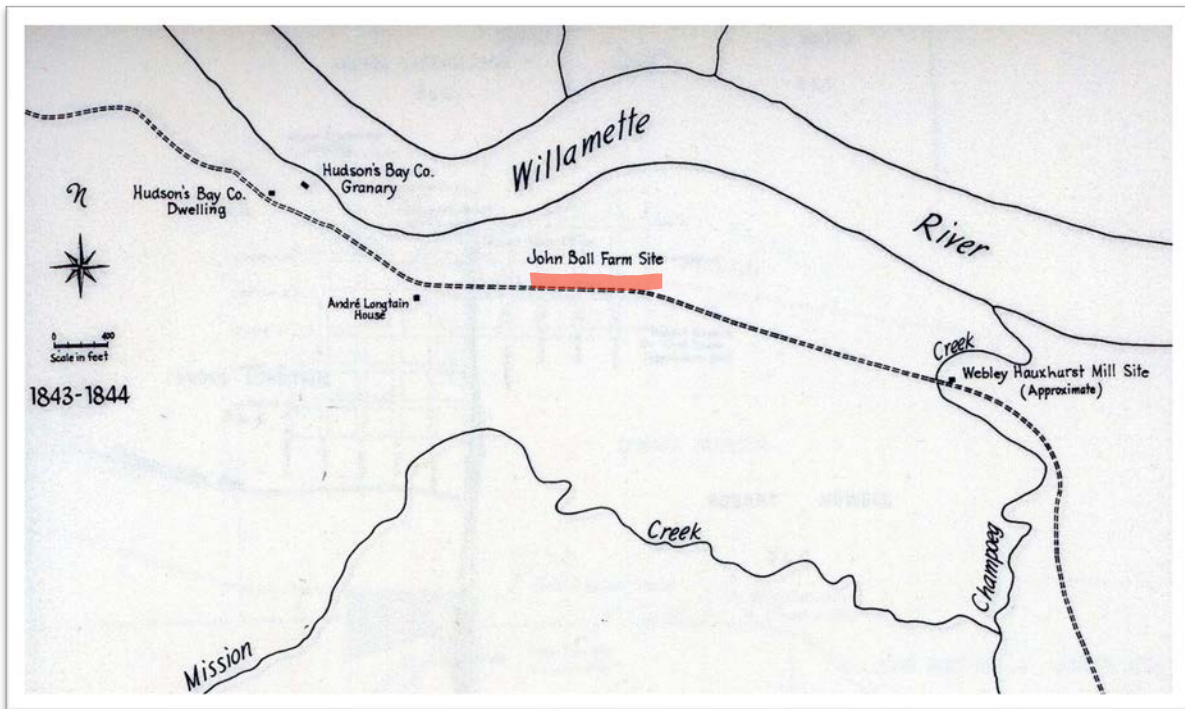
Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth, a New England entrepreneur, wanted to establish fur trading posts, a salmon fishery, and a colony. In September 1834, he left Fort Vancouver for French Prairie, where he planned to locate a place to farm. According to his journal, he found a place.

“September 21st, 1834. Put out in the morning days travell through good lands rolling sufficient and assorted timber and water. At 3 ock. came to crossed the Wallamut at Duportes [J.B. Desportes] House and from proceed up on the E. side of the river to [Joseph] Jervais 10 miles.

“September 22nd. Not suiting myself as to a farm returned to Duportes and went to look at a prairie about 3 miles below his place and concluded to occupy it it is about 15 miles long 7 wide surrounded with fine timber and a good mill stream on it.

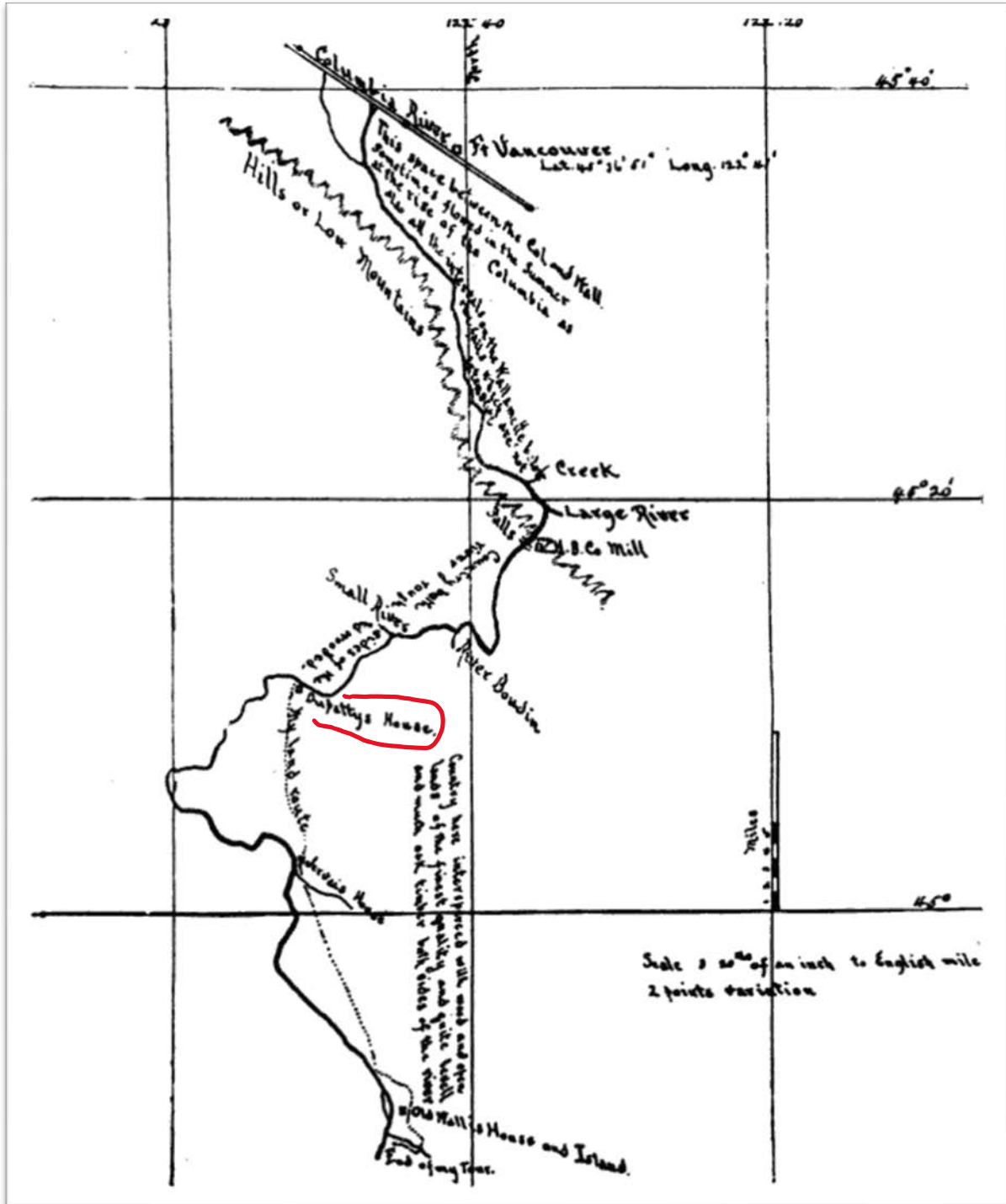
“September 22d. Laid out a farm afternoon took a canoe and descended as far as falls.”<sup>23</sup>

Wyeth did not mention building a house. He likely took over John Ball’s abandoned house and farm. In 1836, William Johnson was the next inhabitant of the Ball house. Robert Newell, arriving in 1843, was the final owner.<sup>24</sup> The following map plots Ball’s farm site.<sup>25</sup> It was on the Robert Newell Donation Claim. As a point of reference, the Champoeg townsite was partially built on Newell’s claim and partially on Andre Longtain’s claim.



Both Ball and Wyeth mentioned the Desportes home. It was considered a regular entry point into French Prairie.<sup>26</sup>

Wyeth sketched a map showing this trip including Dupatty’s house.



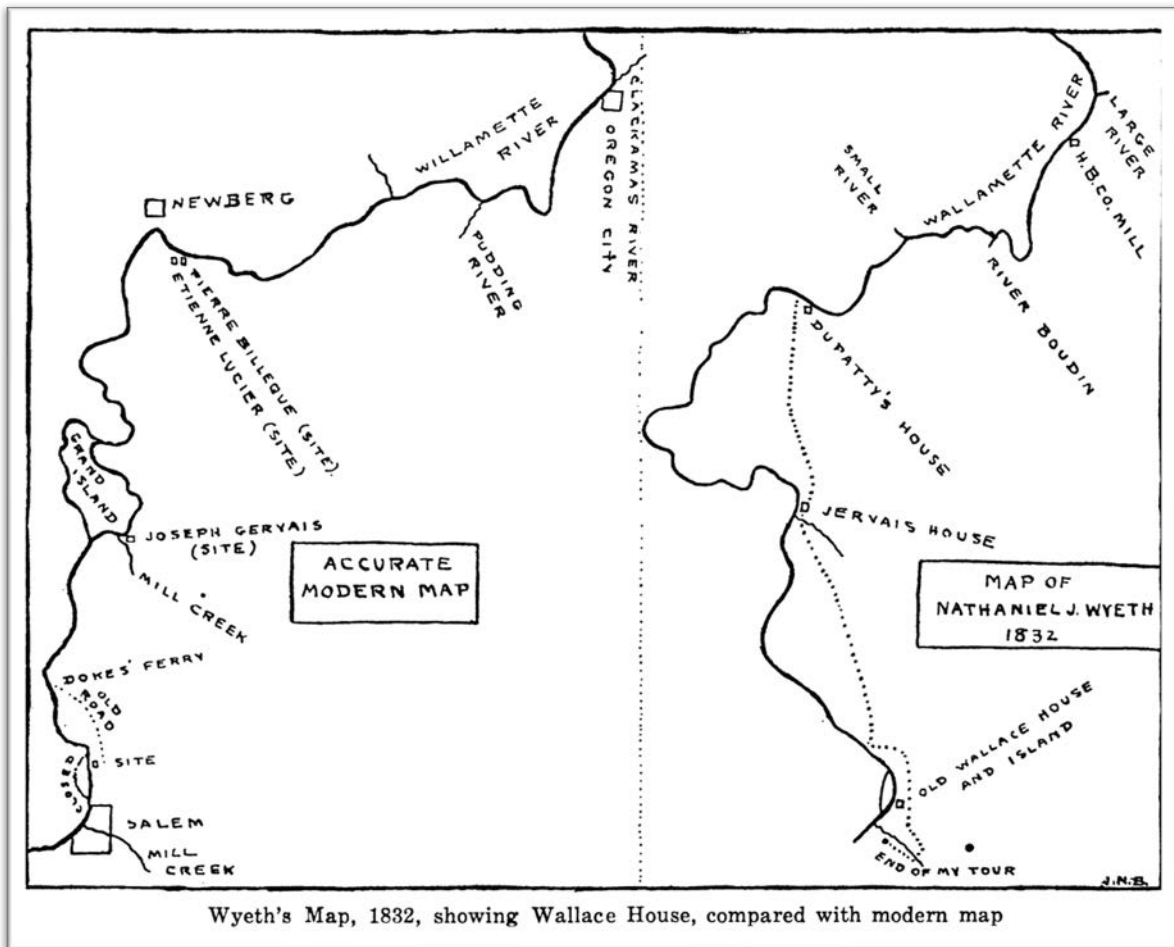
Thomas Farnham's 1839 journal mentions the farm.

"We soon crossed the stream, and entered the cabin of Mr. Johnson. It was a hewn log structure, about 20 feet square, with a mud chimney, hearth and fire-place. The furniture consisted of one chair, a number of wooden benches, a rude bedstead covered with flag

mats, and several sheet-iron kettles, earthen plates, knives and forks, tin pint cups, an Indian wife, and a brace of brown boys...

Adjoining Mr. Johnson's farm were four others, on all of which there were from fifty to a hundred acres under cultivation, and substantial logbarns. About a mile on our way, we called at a farm occupied by an American, who acted as blacksmith and gunsmith for the settlement. He appeared to have a good set of tools for his mechanical business, and plenty of custom...A mile or two farther on, we came upon the cabin of a Yankee tinker...Farther on, we came to the catholic chapel, a low wooden building, 35 or 40 feet in length; and the parsonage, a comfortable log cabin. Beyond these, scattered over five miles of country, were 15 or 20 farms, occupied by Americans, and retired servants of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>27</sup>

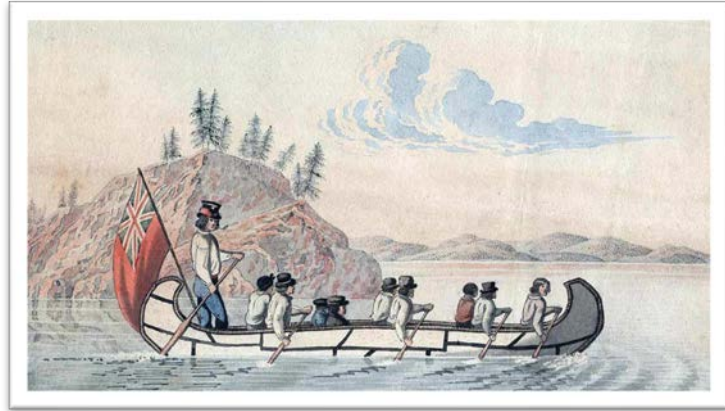
J. Neilson Barry used Wyeth's map to determine the site of Wallace House. This Pacific Fur Company post was established in 1812.<sup>28</sup> Barry's map suggests the Desportes farm was near Pierre Bellique and Etienne Lucier's homes.



## Religion

The French Prairie settlers wanted their marriages blessed and their children baptized. They may have also been anxious to have the last rites for their deceased family members.

On 5 July 1834, the settlers sent a letter via the HBC Express to the Bishop of Juliopolis [at Red River, now Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada,] requesting that a priest to be sent to them.



Several months later, in the fall of 1834, Jason Lee and his fellow Methodist missionaries arrived on the prairie. Joseph Gervais welcomed them, and their first services were held in his home. Gervais's house was about 18 by 24 feet, two stories high, and constructed out of square hewed logs. The first floor had three windows covered by deerskins. A large fireplace was built out of sticks and covered with plaster made from clay and grass. He had a large barn, about 40 by 50 feet in dimension.<sup>29</sup>

Lee could not speak French, and the French Canadians could not speak English. Lee penned the following in his diary,

Sun., 19 Oct. 1834— Made a few remarks from these words: “Turn ye from your evil ways,” to a mixed assembly, few of whom understood what I said but God is able to speak to the heart.”<sup>30</sup>

In the spring of 1836, the French-Canadian settlers sent another letter to the Bishop of Juliopolis as a reminder. **John Bt Desportes** signed with eight children.

“We have nothing to Right to you about the Country but that the farms are All in a very thriving state and produces fine Crops. We have sent theis few Lines to you hoping that it will not trouble you to much for Righting so quick to you but the Country is setteling slowly and oure Children are Learning very fast which make us very eager for youre assistance wich we hope by Gods helpe will be very sone oure prayers will be for his safe Arivele We have sent you a List of the families that Are at present in the settlement...”

One year later, on 8 March 1837, the “Willammeth Settlers” sent another letter to the Bishop.” **John B. Desportes Mck** [ay] was again one of the petitioners. He had eight children.<sup>31</sup>

The requested Catholic priests hadn't arrived, and a number of the French Prairie families joined Jason Lee's Methodist Mission. Jean Baptist's daughter Lizette married John Hoard [Howard].

“Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May 1837

Mr. John Hoard was married to Miss Lisett De Portes at the house of **Mr. De Portes**, Willamette settlement, by Daniel Lee.”<sup>32</sup>

Jason Lee didn't perform the marriage. He was onboard the ship *Hamilton*, bringing a group of people to reinforce the mission staff. In the latter part of May 1837, the group arrived at the Desportes landing on the Willamette, where they obtained horses.



**Desportes** joined Jason Lee's Temperance Society in 1836. In 1837, he signed his mark to the letter asking Ewing Young to discontinue his distillery. He offered \$8.00 to reimburse Young.. Charles Rondeau, the husband of Agathe Depati, signed the petition but did not pledge anything.<sup>33</sup>

## The Desportes family and the St Paul Church

In November of 1838, Fathers Francois Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers arrived at the St Paul wooden church the settlers had built for them. After visiting the local French-Canadian settlements, the first St. Paul mass was held on 6 January 1839. Subsequent masses were held until 3 February 1839 and then from 13 May to 10 June 1839. The sacraments were recorded in the Vancouver register. Father Blanchet returned to St. Paul on 12 October 1839 and took up residence.



--Replica of the first St Paul Church

### Sacramental events at St. Paul for the family

“This 16 January, 1839, we priest undersigned have baptized **Marie Lisette**, aged 16 years, sick at home, natural child of **Jean Baptiste Dupaté**, farmer of this place and of the late Catherine Tichailis. Godfather William McCarty who as well as the father has not known how to sign.”<sup>34</sup>

“This 16 January, 1839, in view of the dispensation of 3 bans of marriage granted by us priest Missionary, Vicar General, between John Howard, Irishman, freeman, on the one part, and **Marie Lisette**, natural child of **Jean Baptiste Dupaté**, on the other part, nor having discovered any impediment, we priest undersigned, Vicar General, have received their mutual consent of marriage, at home, and have given them the nuptial benediction in presence of Jean Baptiste Dupaté father, consenting, and of Antoine Rivet who as well as the spouses have not known how to sign.”<sup>35</sup>

“This 21 January, 1839, we priest undersigned have baptized **Agathe**, aged 13 years and a half, natural child of **Jean Baptiste Dupati**, and of a Calépouya woman. Godfather Etienne Lussier who has not known how to sign.”<sup>36</sup>

“This 21 January, 1839, in view of the dispensation of 2 bans of marriage granted by us Vicar General, and the publication of the third between Charles Rondeau, of Sorel, in Canada, and farmer of this place, and **Agathe Dupati, daughter of Jean Baptiste Dupati** on the other part, nor any impediment being discovered, we priest undersigned missionary, have received their mutual consent of marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in presence of Jean Baptiste Dupati and of Pierre Stanislas Jacquet, witnesses before whom the said groom has recognized as his legitimate children with another woman, Angelique aged 10 years,

George aged 6 years, and Genevieve aged 4 years. The said spouses as well as the witnesses have not known how to sign.”<sup>37</sup>

“This 28 January, 1839, we priest undersigned have baptized **John** aged 3 years, natural child of **Jean Baptiste Dupati**, and of a woman of the country. Godfather Joseph Gervais who has not known how to sign.”<sup>38</sup>

“This 6 July, 1840, we priest undersigned have buried in the cemetery of this mission the body of **Jean Baptiste, natural child of Jean Baptiste Depati**, farmer of this place and of . . . , deceased yesterday aged 16 months. Present Charles Rondeau and Pierre Depot who have not known how to sign.”<sup>39</sup>

“This 9 March, 1841, we priest undersigned have baptized **Antoine** born the 16 of February last of the illegitimate union of **Jean Baptiste Depati**, farmer of this place, and of **Jany** . . . Indian woman. Godfather Antoine Rivet, godmother Rose Lacourse, who have not known how to sign.”<sup>40</sup>

“This 10 January, 1842, we priest undersigned have baptized **Françoise** aged 14 years, natural daughter of **Jean Baptiste Depati and of a Kalipouya woman**. Godfather Charles Rondeau, godmother Josephthe wife of Jacques Servant, who have not known how to sign.”<sup>41</sup>

“This 10 January, 1842, in view of the dispensation of two bans of marriage granted by us priest undersigned and the publication of the third between Antoine Bonenfant, farmer of this place, of-age son of Antoine Bonenfant and of Marie Anne Pepin of the Grand Maska in Canada, on one part, and **Françoise Depati**, natural daughter of **Jean Baptiste Depati and of a Kalipouya woman**, on the other part, nor any impediment being discovered, we priest undersigned have received their mutual consent of marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in presence of Charles Rondeau, of Pierre Depot, and of Jean Baptiste Depati, witnesses, in presence of whom the said Antoine Bonenfant has recognized as legitimate Antoine aged 11 years, and Martin aged 8 years whom he has had of another woman.”<sup>42</sup>

“This 20 February, 1842, we priest undersigned have baptized Susanne, Indian, aged 6 years, of the nation of Yengula. Godfather Joseph Bonenfant, **godmother Françoise Depati**, who have not known how to sign.”<sup>43</sup>

“This 3 April, 1842, we priest undersigned have baptized Jean Baptiste, born the 20 March last, of the legitimate marriage of Charles Rondo, farmer of this place, and of **Agathe Depati**. Godfather Charles Plante, godmother **Francois Depati**.”<sup>44</sup>

“This 19 September, 1842, in view of the dispensation of two bans of marriage granted by Francois Norbert Blanchet Vicar General, and the publication of the third between **John Hord**, farmer of this place, of-age widower of . . . **Despati**, on one part, and Catherine Lonetain, domiciled in this place, minor daughter of Andre Lonetain and of Nancy Okinogan, on the other part, nor any impediment being discovered, we priest undersigned have received their mutual consent of marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in presence of Pierre Belecque friend of the groom, and Andre Lonetain, father of the bride, witnesses, who as well as the bride have not known how to sign. The groom has signed.”<sup>45</sup>

“The 12 November, 1843, we priest undersigned have baptized under condition **Eugenie**, aged about 24 years, daughter of infidel parents, of whom the father is called Wanakske, chief of a tribe at the Falls of the Wallamet, now married by civil act to **Jean Baptiste Depatie**. Godfather Louis Laroque, godmother . . . Montour, who have not known how to sign.”<sup>46</sup>

“The 12 November, 1843, we priest undersigned have baptized Catherine aged about 20 years, of infidel parents, **raised by Jean Baptiste Depati**. Godfather Louis Laroque, godmother Marie Laroque who have not known how to sign.”<sup>47</sup>

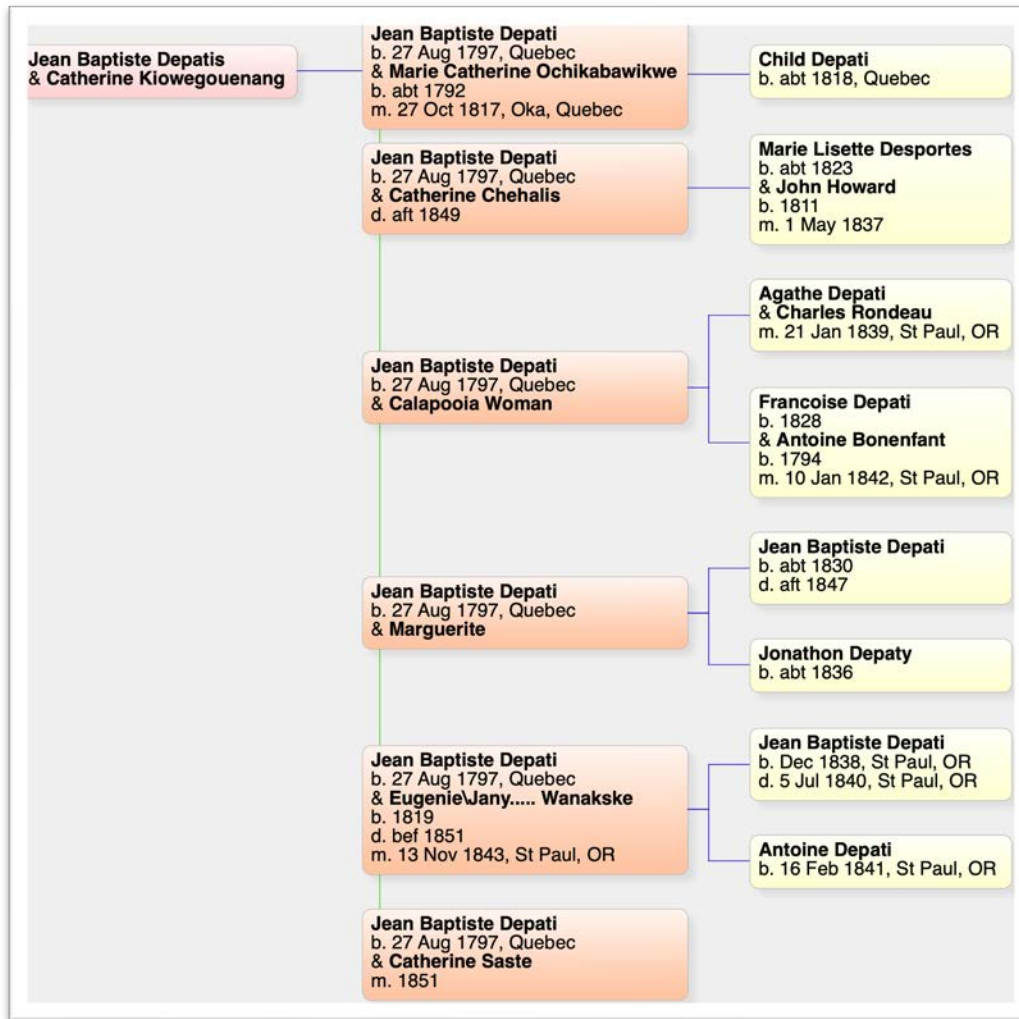
“The 13 November, 1843, we priest undersigned have after the publication of one ban of marriage made at the sermon of our parish mass and the dispensation of two other bans granted by Messire Blanchet V.G. between **Jean Baptiste Depati** farmer domiciled in this parish, of-age son of the late Jean Baptiste Depati and of an infidel woman, of Temiscaming, on one part, and of **Eugenie, of-age daughter of the late Wanakske**, infidel, as well as his wife, on the other part, nor any impediment appearing and the said Jean Baptiste Depati being certain of the death of a woman with whom he had been married in Canada; that woman **called Catherine Ochikapawissa**, we, I say, priest undersigned and authorized to ad hoc have received their mutual consent of marriage in presence of **Charles Rondeau, son-in-law**, and of Francois Rivet who have not known how to sign, of Francois Bilodeau and of Francois Xavier Mathieu, undersigned, friends of the said groom [“of whom only one has signed “crossed out] who has not known how to sign.”<sup>48</sup>

“The 26 May, 1844, we priest undersigned have baptized under condition Charles aged 2 days, legitimate child of **Charles Rondeau farmer**, and of **Agathe Depati** of this parish. Godfather Louis Laroc, godmother Marie Toussaint.”<sup>49</sup>

“The 6 April 1847, Baptism of Thomas, child of C. Rondeau and of **Catherine Depati**, born the 4 April. Godfather Thomas Moisan, godmother Henriette Lonetain. Father present.”<sup>50</sup>

After 1847, no further sacraments were reported in St Paul for members of the Depati family.

The chart below summarizes the St. Paul events.



### St Louis sacramental events for the Depati family

The St Louis Church register started in 1845, and the first Depati family entry was made in 1847. The Depaty family attended the St. Louis church where baptisms, marriages, and deaths were recorded in the church register. The list below includes entries for Charles Rondeau and Antoine Bonenfant, spouses of the Depaty girls.

“The 13 January, 1847, we undersigned missionary of the Company of Jesus have baptized Isabelle born the 10, of Thomas MacKay and of Isabelle Montour. **Godfather J B Depaty, godmother Jenny Wanaské.**”<sup>51</sup>

“The 24 July, 1847, we undersigned missionary of the Company of Jesus have baptized Martin aged 18 years legitimate son of Antoine Bonenfant and of Marie Spokane. **Godfather J. B. Depaty; godmother Jenny Wanaské.**”<sup>52</sup>

- “The 8 August, 1847, we undersigned missionary of the Company of Jesus have baptized conditionally **J Baptiste aged 17 years son of J B Depaty and of Marguerite Indian**. Godfather Jean Gingras, godmother Olive Forcier.”<sup>53</sup>
- “The 25 November, 1847, we undersigned parish priest of St. Louis have, in supplying the ceremonies of Baptism, baptized conditionally Etienne, born the day before of the legitimate marriage of Etienne Biernes and of Angelique Rondeau. **Godfather J B Depaty, godmother Jenny Wanaske.**”<sup>54</sup>
- “The 23 July, 1849, in view of the dispensation of one bann of marriage and the publication of two others made at the sermon of our parish Masses be-tween **Charles Rondeau, widower of Agathe Depaty** and Elizabeth, Indian, living at the house of Bapt. Aubichon; we priest undersigned have received their mutual consent to marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of **Antoine Bonenfant** and Baptiste Aubichon.”<sup>55</sup>
- “The 23 September, 1849, we priest undersigned have baptized Angelique born day before yesterday of the legitimate marriage of Etienne Biernes and of Angelique Rondeau. Godfather Georges Rondeau. **Godmother Catherine Depaty.**”<sup>56</sup> Note: Catherine Depaty is likely the Catherine Saste who marries Depaty in 1851.
- “The 2 May, 1850, we undersigned parish priest of St. Louis have buried Charles, son of **Ant Bonenfant and of Françoise Depaty**, deceased the day before aged 3 years. Witnesses **Ant. Bonenfant**, Joachim Hubert.”<sup>57</sup>
- The 10 June, 1851, we undersigned have buried in the cemetery Suzanne Kalapouya deceased the day before aged about 14 years. Witnesses **Charles Rondeau, J B Depaty.**<sup>58</sup>
- “The 9 September, 1851, we undersigned, after the publication of one bann of marriage between **J B Depaty widower of Jenny Wanaski and Catherine Saste**, of this parish, the dispensation of two other banns being obtained and not having discovered any impediment, have received their mutual consent to marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of Francois Rivet and of Joachim Hubert.”<sup>59</sup>
- “The 6 April, 1853, we undersigned parish priest of St. Louis have buried **Jean Baptiste Depaty** of this parish, deceased 2 days ago in the evening, aged about 60 years. Witnesses **Charles Rondeau, Georges Rondeau.**”<sup>60</sup>
- “The 23 September, 1856, we undersigned parish priest of St. Louis, in view of the publication of one bann of marriage made at the sermon of our parish mass between **Jonathon Depaty**, of-age son of **J B Depaty, and of Marguerite** both deceased in the parish of St. Louis, on the one part; and **Lisette, widow of Charles Rondeau** also of the parish of St. Louis on the other part; in view also of the dispensation of two other banns granted by us, have received their mutual consent to marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of **Antoine Bonenfant**, and Pierre Depot who could not sign.”<sup>61</sup>
- “The 13 January, 1857, we undersigned parish priest of St. Louis after the publication of three banns of marriage made at the sermon of our parish masses between **David Vincent**, of-age son of Godefroy Vincent and Judith Paye, both deceased at Machiche [Yamachiche], district of Three Rivers, Canada, on the one part; and **Catherine** of the parish of St. Louis of the Willamette, **widow of J.B. Departy** on the other part; have received their mutual consent to marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in the presence of **Antoine Bonenfant**, Charles Lafantaisie, **Antoine Depaty**, who could not sign.”<sup>62</sup>

## Land

The early French Prairie settlers selected prairie land that didn't encroach on their neighbors. The land was under the oversight of the Hudson's Bay Company, and there does not appear to be a formal registration process. As noted above, in 1833, the Desportes family lived on the Willamette River near Champoeg. They were in the St. Louis Church parish area in the late 1840s.

In 1837, William Slacum of the U.S. Navy listed **Jean Baptiste McRoy**, an 1831 French Prairie settler, as having 69 acres enclosed and 35 cultivated, 556 bushels of wheat [15 tons], 33 horses, 22 hogs, and three houses in good repair.<sup>63</sup> The wheat had to be sold to the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1837, the price was 50 cents per bushel, and it had to be redeemed at the company store.<sup>64</sup>

### Slacum's 1837 List

Settler's name.	When begun	Acres enclosed	Acres cultivated	Crop of wheat, bushels	Horses	Hogs	Houses	Remarks
Jean Baptiste McRoy.....	1831	69	35	556	33	22	3	Good.
Andre Longtre .....	1835	45	24	400	3	33	2	Good.
Charles Plante .....	1835	60	60	800	12	14	2	Good.
Charles Rondeu .....	1836	24	24	200	9	10	1	Good.
Louis Fourier .....	1835	34	34	540	9	10	1	Good.
Joseph Gervais .....	1832	125	65	1,000	19	55	3 & 1 grist-mill	Good.
Xavier Delarout .....	1834	36	36	350	11	35	2	Good.
Joseph Delor .....	1832	28	28	280	11	28	2	Good.
E. Arquette .....	1833	80	50	600	5	31	2	Good.
Jean B. Perault .....	1832	80	60	500	4	20	3	Good.
Etteine Lucia .....	1832	70	45	740	21	45	4 & 1 grist-mill	Good.
Pierre Billique .....	1833	50	45	700	9	28	2	Good.
*Frederick Depau .....	1833	40	35	500	8	39	2	Good.
Ewing Young .....	1835	29	29	240	79 & 2 mules	30	2 & 1 distillery	Good.
†Lawrence Carmichael								
William Johnson .....	1834	45	25	300	2	14	2	Good.
‡Jas. A. O'Neil and Thos. J. Hubbard	1836	200	15	70	9	13	1 & blacksmith's shop.	
Wm. Canning, miller and millwright								
Solomon H. Smith								
Winslow Anderson								
Charles Roe, carpenter								
Elisha Ezekiel, wheelwright								
John Hord, carpenter								
Webley Hawkshurst, carpenter								
John Turner								
William Bailey								
Calvin Ebbets, stone mason								
John Rowling								
George Gay								

\*The above thirteen are all Canadians, and have been in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company.  
 †Works on shares with Young. ‡Besides the crop of wheat, each of the above five have a large quantity of barley, oats, peas, and potatoes, sufficient for their support. || £300 sterling in the hands of the Hudson Bay Company.

John Hord [Howard], carpenter, was not listed as a farm owner on this list. John and Marie Lisette Desportes were married on 1 May 1837 by Daniel Lee at the Desportes home.

In 1841, Eugene Duflot De Mofras, a French naturalist and explorer, made a list of the “Principal French-Canadian Settlers on the Willamette.”<sup>65</sup> His list is by year of settlement, but his information source is not given.

One hectare is equivalent to 2.47 acres. One hectoliters is equivalent to 2.3 bushels.

168 NELLIE BOWDEN PIPES

**PRINCIPAL FRENCH-CANADIAN SETTLERS ON THE  
WILLAMETTE**

Name	When Settled	Hectares Enclosed	Hectares Cultivated	Crop of Wheat Hectoliters	Horses	Houses	Mills
Mich. Laframboise .....	1831	40	20	170	200	2	1
*J. B. Desportes.....	1831	35	20	170	100	3	1
*Joseph Gervais .....	1832	60	30	225	50	3	1
*J. B. Perrault.....	1832	40	30	225	10	3	
*Jh. Delor .....	1832	15	15	100	15	2	
*Etienne Luciat .....	1832	35	30	230	35	4	1
Xavier Lacoste .....	1832	20	12	95	14	1	
*P. Billique .....	1833	30	25	195	20	2	
*Jh. Deloze .....	1833	30	20	175	14	2	
J. Arguette .....	1833	40	25	185	15	2	
*Xavier Dudevant .....	1834	17	17	160	18	2	
Andre Longpre .....	1835	22	12	90	10	2	
Louis Fourrier .....	1835	17	16	115	20	1	
Charles Plants .....	1835	30	30	225	40	2	
Charles Rondeau .....	1836	12	12	90	15	1	
*Andre Picord .....	1837	14	12	90	10	1	
George Gay .....	1838	15	12	90	12	1	
Louis Fortia .....	1838	12	10	80	12	1	1
Charles Roy .....	1838	12	10	85	10	1	
Stanislas Jacquet .....	1838	20	20	180	14	1	
Abbe Blanchet .....	1839	1000†			1	1	

To approximate the cost of horses, at Ewing Young’s 1841 public auctions, John Howard paid \$31.50 for a tame workhorse. George Gay paid \$40.50 for a tame work horse.<sup>66</sup>

In 1842, Elijah White, the newly appointed Indian Agent, created a list of "Settlers west of the Rockies" that he sent to the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>67</sup> **J. B. Deporte**, Charles Rondo, and Antoine Bonefaw were neighbors.

Names of Heads of Families	No of Males over 18	No of Females over 18	No of Children of both sexes	Acres under im- provement	Amount of Wheat in 1842	Amount of Corn Grain	No of Horses	No of Cattle	No of Sheep	No of Hogs 1842
Antoine Bonefaw	1	1	2	45	200	10	10	3		6
Charles Rondo	1	1	4	60	500	110	12	9		10
J B Deporte	1	1	3	60	500	190	50	20		12
Pierre Laroque	2	2	6	70	300	100	6			5
George Davis	1			30			3	3		2

## Provisional Government

In 1843, wagons filled with resettlers arrived in the Oregon Territory. William E Hill's trail statistics estimate 125 settlers arrived in Oregon in 1842, and 875 settlers arrived in Oregon in 1843.<sup>68</sup>

These newcomers outnumbered the French Canadians and foreshadowed changes that would come to French Prairie.

On 2 May 1843, a vote was taken at Champoeg to decide if a Provisional Government should be established as a preliminary step for aligning with the United States. By a 52 to 50 vote, the Provisional Government won.<sup>69</sup>

Taxation was an issue at the meeting, and a resolution was adopted that there would be no taxes. There would be a voluntary subscription. Unfortunately, that subscription did not bring in enough money to run the government. In 1844, a voluntary tax act was passed by the legislature. There was a "catch" to the voluntary part. If a person did not pay the tax, he would not be able to vote or to defend his rights in court or vote. The rights included land ownership and debts.<sup>70</sup>

In 1844, the first taxes were assessed. **Deporte McKay** paid \$1.06 tax. This included a 50-cent poll tax and tax on 200 horses, 200 cattle, and 50 hogs.<sup>71</sup> Charles Rondo paid a tax of \$1.22. This included the 50 cent poll tax and tax on 300 horses and 200 cattle.<sup>72</sup>

Oregon's provisional government permitted inhabitants to stake out claims and survey them by using the metes and bounds method. A legislative committee created a constitution that included rules for the land claims. Any male could claim 640 acres, and within six months of recording their claim, they were to build a home. **Jean Baptist DePevite McKay** and Charles Rondeau, his son-in-law, filed a joint claim. Jean Baptist had been on the claim since 1837.

MC KAY, DePevite and ROENDO, Chas., partnership, Champoeg Co, 1280a. "Said McKay having resided on same for last nine years, holds by joint partners and by personal occupancy." Filed 13 Aug, recorded 17 Aug 1846. V 3 p 46



Other provisional claims mention sons-in-law, Rondeau, Bonenfant, and Howard.

RAYMOND, Pierre, Champoick Co. 640a. Chas. Rondeau on S; Chas. Bonenfant on \_\_\_\_;  
a creek forms W boundary. Personal occupancy, 13 Mar 1846. V I p138

19

LAROCQUE, Pierre, Champoig Co, tract of land. Neighbors are Thos Montour, Bonenfant  
and Charles Rondeau; adjs. Pudding River. Personal occupancy, 25 May 1847.  
V 4 p 308

Pierre Laroque was listed next to Jean Baptist on White's 1842 census.

BONENFANT, Antoine, Champoic Co. 640a On Grand Prairie; Pierre Depot on N. Per-  
sonal occupancy. 8 June 1846. Bk 2 p 47

CASE, M., Champoic Dist., "place known by the name of Kentucky." Claim first taken  
by McCarty who sold to Jno. Howard, who sold to Arnold, who sold to Dodd, who sold  
to N. Osborne, who sold it to present claimant. Dr. W. J. Bailey on N, G. Forcey  
on E and Gocha on S. Personal occupant. 15 Oct. 1845. V I p31

### Donation Land Claims

The provisional claims became null and void when Congress passed the Donation Act of 1850. That act, effective on 1 December 1850, gave 320 acres to every white settler or American half-breed Indian who was over eighteen years of age and who filed a claim. For married men, their wives received 320 acres in their own right, and proof of marriage had to be submitted.

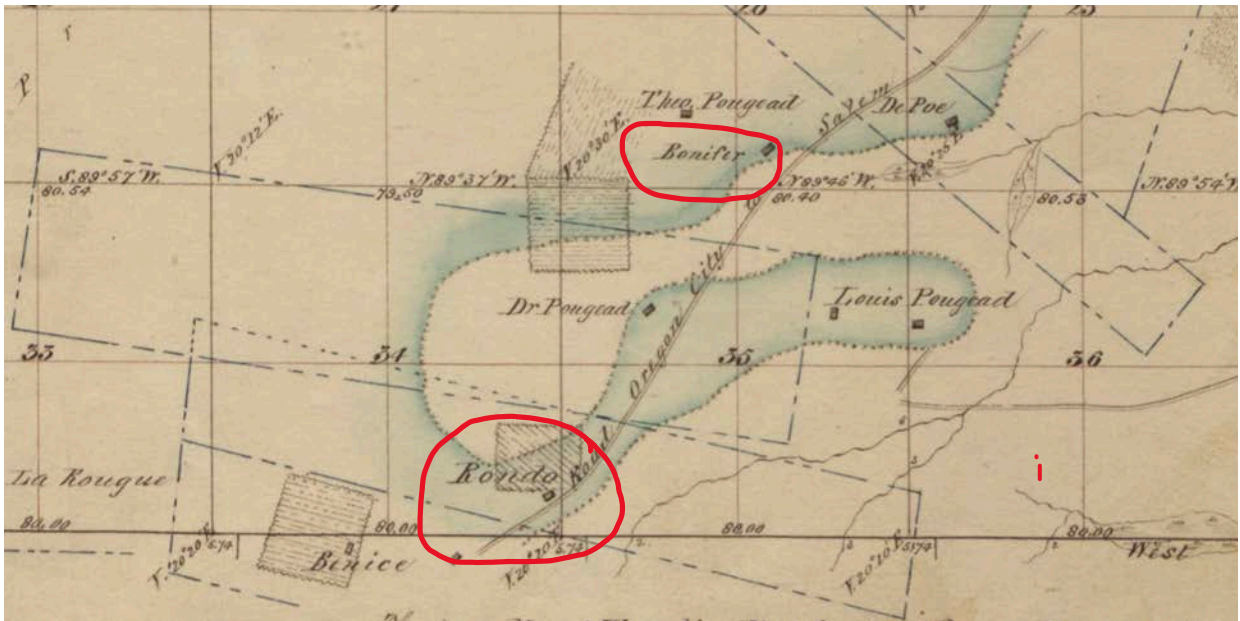
Jean Baptist is not named in the Oregon Donation Land Claim indexes, but Charles Rondeau is named. He took out donation claim #1911. The 554 acres were in sections 2, 3, and 4 of Twp 6S, R 2W and sections 33, 34, and 35 in Twp 5S, R 2 W.<sup>73</sup>

1852 Survey, Twp 5S, R2W, Sections 33, 34, 35, showing Antoine Bonenfant and Charles Rondeau.

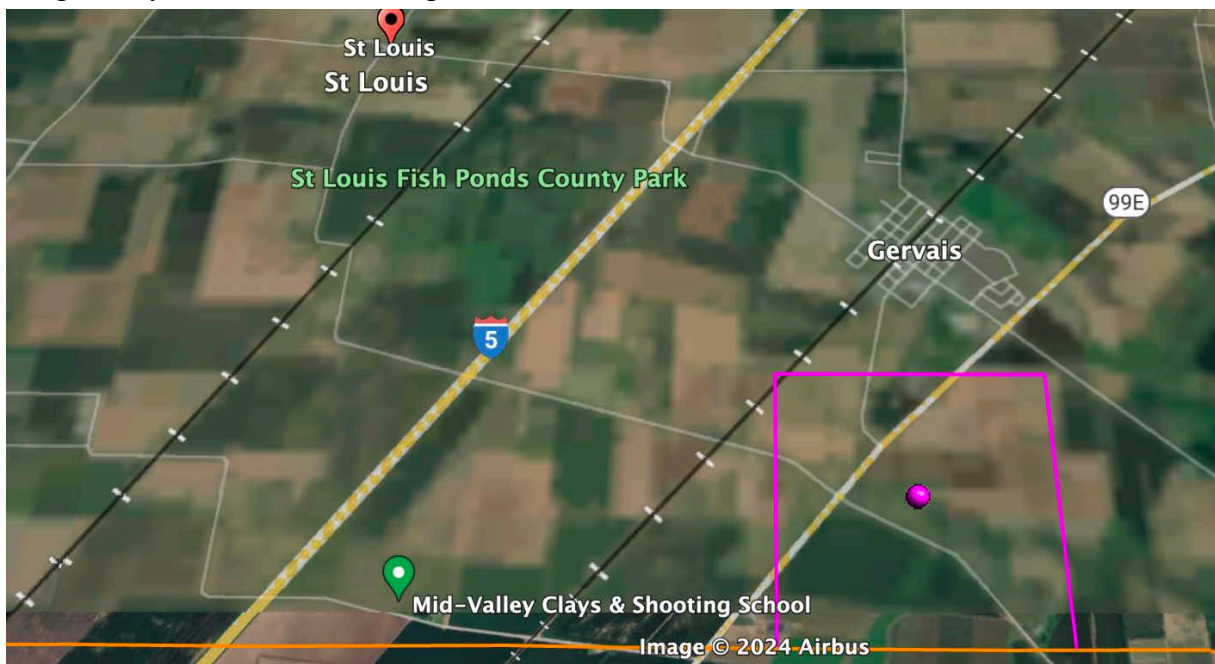


1852 Survey, Twp 5S, R2W, Sections 33, 34, 35, showing Bonifer and Rondo.

Notice that the shape of the Rondo claim is mirrored in the Benice [Benet] claim to the south. The rectangles with hash marks show fields. The small black rectangles show houses. Joseph Benet settled the claim on 24 November 1851.<sup>74</sup> His cultivated field is larger than the Rondeau field. There wasn't enough time between Benet settling his claim and when the survey was made for Benet to cultivate the size of the field. Benet's claim is likely where the Depati family lived.

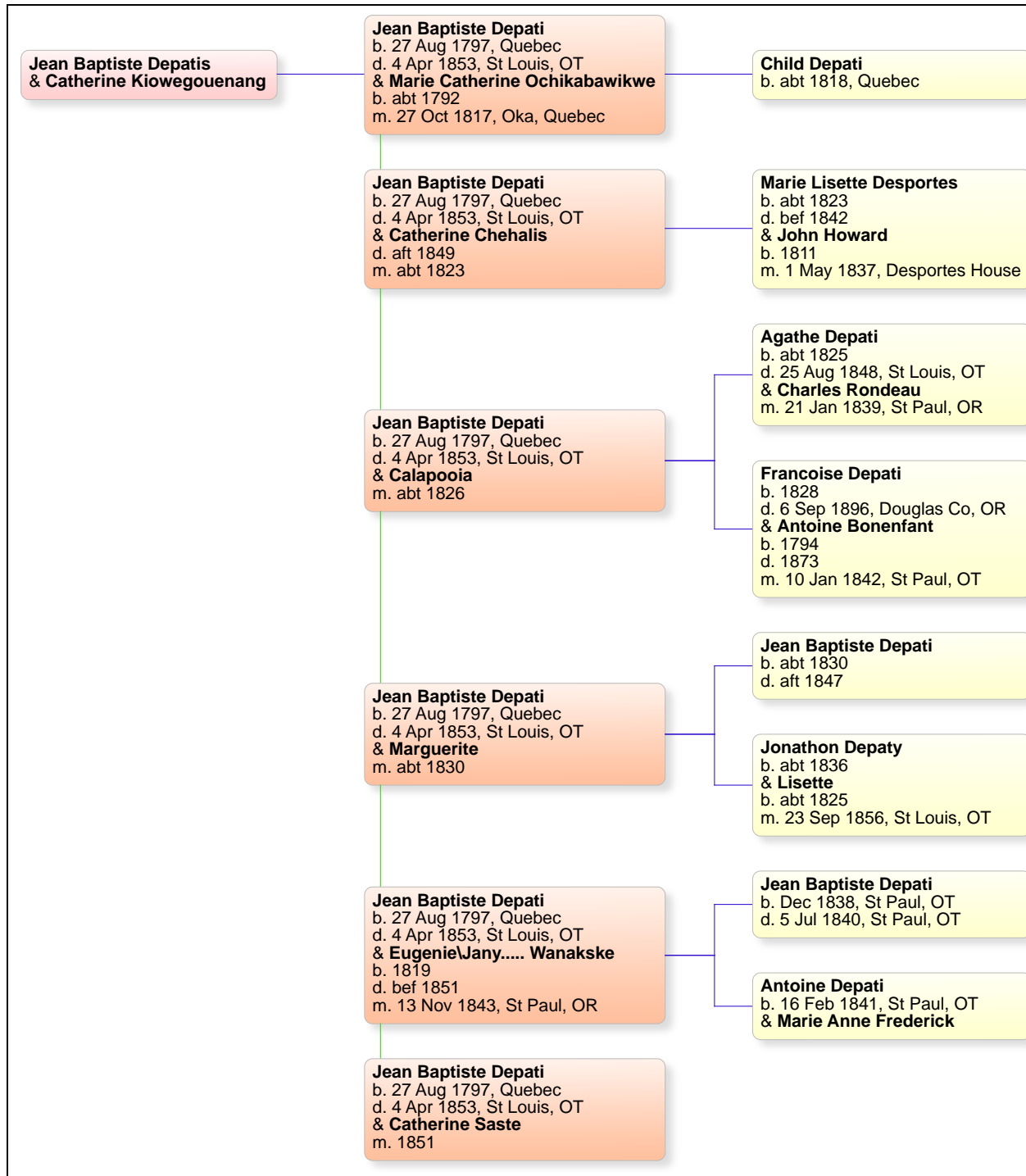


The midpoint of section 35 is shown below. The road below the midpoint, Keene Road, appears to follow the northern border of Charles Rondeau's DLC. Hwy 99E is likely built on the "Road Oregon City to Salem" in the map above.





The chart below shows Jean Baptiste's known wives and children.



Connie Lenzen, November 2024

## End Notes

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