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JACQUES RAPHAEL FINLAY

Well I know who'll take the credit: all the clever chaps that followed,
Came a dozen men together, caring nought for any desert fears,
Tracked me by the camps I'd quitted, used the water-holes I'd hollowed,
Clever chaps that did the writing. They'll be called the Pioneers.

KIPLING.

David Douglas, the botanist, preserves the true name of this primary pioneer of the Columbia River Basin; he being equal if not prior to Lewis and Clark; although probably preceded by Lagasse and LeBlanc of the North-West Company, in 1800-1.

The subject of this incomplete sketch was the son of James Finlay, Sr., who was one of the older traders of the Northwest and one of the founders of the first North-West Fur Company of Montreal or Canada, frequently referred to as the French Company, and brother of James Finlay, Jr., a prominent partner of the same company in its early period. He was born about 1768, of probably a Saulteur (Chippewa) mother. Douglas speaks of him as a Sauteur. His name is variously spelt in the records of him, Jacco, Jaccot, Jacko, Jocko, Jacquot, but not often as Jacques, the correct form.

The earliest record of Jacco Finlay is given by John McDonald of Garth, in his *Reminiscences* of date 1798, in which he says: "The settlement upon Bow (Saskatchewan) River having been attacked by the Missouri Indians, they killed all the men, and pillaged all the goods in the Hudson's Bay fort, excepting one person, a clerk who hid himself in the cellar amongst some rubbish; and then attacked our fort. They were beaten off, and several killed. Our fort was in charge of one Jaccot Finlay, a man of courage."

Harmon's account as recounted to him reads: "The Hudson Bay Company had a fort in the same neighborhood, which was first attacked by about one hundred and fifty Indians on horseback; and the few people who were in it, excepting one man, who secreted himself, were

killed. After they had taken out of the fort all the property which they could conveniently carry away with them, they set fire to the fort, and proceeded to the establishment of the North-West Company, which was two hundred rods distant from that of Hudson Bay people, with the intention of treating it in a similar manner. The fort gates had, providentially, been shut previously to the approach of the Indians. There were in the fort three men and several women and children. They took their stations in the blockhouses and bastions, and when the natives had come sufficiently near, fired upon them. The Indians instantly returned the fire, and the contest was continued until night approached."

Peter Fidler's Register, kept at York Factory, has this entry: "On the 26th of June, 1794, South Branch House burned and plundered by the Fall Indians; 3 men, 1 woman and 2 children murdered, and 2 carried away as slaves, young women. Canadians (North-West Company) killed and wounded 14 of these Indians in ye attack."

In Roderic McKenzie's list of Proprietors, Clerks, etc., Finlay is listed as Jacques Raphael, at 1200 (Liveres, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ c) and among the highest paid employes of the North-West Company. This is the older company of 1799. In the new company's list of 1804, he is listed as Jacques Raphael and commissioned clerk. Both of these are at Fort des Prairies, which was the Rocky Mountain depot of the company.

Finlay is mentioned as building and being in charge of several posts of the North-West Company on the east side of the Rockies. He was with David Thompson at the Rocky Mountain House and Saskatchewan River, 1800 to 1806; while the company was searching for a pass through the Rockies, and is known to have crossed through Howes Pass in 1806, and built a canoe on the Columbia River for David Thompson, which Thompson used the following year. The pass is entered from the east up Jacko Creek, and it is probable that Finlay was through it some time before, having known it from the Kooteney Indians, who traded with him at his post on Kooteney Plains, the uppermost House on the Saskatchewan River, at the base of the mountains. The company was prevented from using the pass by the hostilities of the Piegan Indians, who wished to prevent arms and ammunition from reaching the Kooteney and Saleesh Indians.

He was with Thompson at Old Kooteney House the winter of 1807-8, and was probably a free trader, outfitted by Joseph Howes of the Hudson's Bay Company, during the next season of 1808-09 and 1809-10.

The next mention of him is by Thompson under date of October 14, 1809, when he says: "We fasted, except for a chance Goose or

Duck amongst us; until the 14th, when Jaco, a fine half-breed arrived and relieved us. From him we traded twenty-eight Beaver tails, forty pounds of Bear Meat, and thirty pounds of dried meat, and now thank God enjoyed a good meal."

This is the year Finlay was on Jacko or Jaques Creek, in the Flathead Reservation, Montana, which took his name. It was the ruins of his house that Alexander Ross saw in 1823-4. There is no reason to believe that Joseph Howes' party of the Hudson's Bay Company came further south than the north end of Flathead Lake, unless Finlay was engaged by Howes for the season of 1909-10. Howes first came across the pass in 1809 on a scouting trip, and with a strong party for trading in the Fall of 1810. Thompson engaged Finlay the next Spring, 1810, as a clerk, and during that summer he located and built the Spokane House at the junction of the present main and Little Spokane Rivers. He was clerk in charge of that post until the spring or summer of 1812, though for a few days during that time there were superior officers at the post.

Thompson in his *Narrative* says: "On the 14th [June, 1811], we arrived at the Spokane House on the River of that name, where I left a small assortment of Goods to continue the trade, with Jaco, a half-breed, as clerck." This was Thompson's first visit at Spokane House. In the geographical notes, under date of August 6th, 1811, at the mouth of Snake River, he notes: "Wrote a letter to Joco Finlay to send and meet us with horses, etc." On the 13th of same month his entry is: "A very fine day. At 5½ A. M. set off and at 6½ A. M. arrived at the house. Thank God for his mercy to us on this journey. Found all safe but Joco was with the horses sent to meet us. Late in the evening he arrived." Thompson had used the trails by the way of the Sink of Deep Creek and Jaco the main road by the way of Coulee Creek Crossing furthur west. On November 11th of same year, we find, on leaving Spokane House for Kullyspell and Saleesh Posts: "Left Coxe & Paul the Iroquois with Jacque Finlay." On the 14th of that month, Michel Kinville, who was in charge of Lake Indian House, on Kooteney River, was ordered to abandon that post, and move the goods to the Skeethoo River (Spokane House). According to Thompson's *Narrative*, this post, Lake Indian House, was established by Finan McDonald in the fall of 1807. This would be the first white residence in Idaho.

Mr. Alexander Ross in his *Fur Hunters of the Far West*, says: "Mr. Stuart was stationed. He tried to defend his post, but owing to the wet weather his gun missed fire several times, and before any assistance could reach him, he had received three arrows; his gun had just

fallen from his hands, as a half-bred, named Finlay, came up and shot his assailant dead." This may be Jacques' son. This was at the Cascades, January 4th, 1814.

John Work's *Journal*, under date of February 25th, 1826, says: "Campment de Bindash [on Spokane Plains near Trent] with J. Finlay's sons who were hunting, fortunatly we fell in with them or we would have had little fire during the night." On August 3rd, 1826, he says: "We had seperated the horses and took those for Fort Colville across the river [Spokane], and breakfasting and trading some salmon from old Finlay." Finlay was then in possession of the Old Spokane House, and which he probably held for some years, and we believe died there.

Douglas's *Journal*, under date of May 9th, 1826, says: "Left Kettle Falls on the Columbia River, at 10 A. M., with two horses. I had for my guides two young men, sons of Mr. Jaques Raphael Finlay a Canadian Sauteur, who at present resides in the abandoned establishment of Spokane, in which direction I was going. Mr. Finlay being a man of extensive information as to the appearance of the country, animals, and so on, Mr. Dease kindly gave me a note to him requesting that he show me anything that he deemed curious in the way of plants &c." The 11th he says: "I reached the old establishment at Spokane at eleven o'clock, where I was kindly received by Mr. Finlay. As the principal object of my journey was to get my firelock arranged by him, being the only person within the space of eight hundred miles who could do it, and being an item of the utmost consequence to have done soon, I lost no time in informing him of my request. Unfortunately he did not speak the English language, and my very partial knowledge of French prevented me from obtaining information which I should have acquired." While with John Work on August 3rd, 1826, he notes: "At nine o'clock in the morning crossed the Spokan River to the old establishment on the south [should be north or east] side, where we found old Mr. Finlay, who gave us abundance of fine, fresh salmon from his barrior, placed in a small branch of the main river."

This first entry of Douglas' and Thompson's note from Snake River, coupled with the many places of trust he had held, would show Finlay was educated in French; which was the language of the North-West Company.

The records would show that Jacques Raphael Finlay was the first explorer on the headwaters of the Columbia River in the Flat-head section and the Spokane country.

The register of the joint Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company's employes for 1821-22, containing 1984 names, does not show the name of Finlay. They appear to have never been servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, but free traders and trappers.

Jacques Finlay had a large family of sons and daughters, noted for their fine physique, many with light blue eyes. The men of the family were competent and trustworthy. The daughters were fine wives and mothers.

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