

DOCUMENTS

Astorians Who Became Permanent Settlers

(Continued from page 231)

[NOTE: Since the first part of this Document appeared in the issue for July, 1933, Mr. Barry has encountered contentions about his treatment of Johann Koaster or Jo Ashton, page 222. In spite of such contentions he still believes the two names are for the same man, the long Johann Koaster shortened to Jo Ashton. "As such," says he, "their stories entirely dovetail." Soon after writing the Document, Mr. Barry was stricken with a severe illness, but, fortunately, he has recovered.—EDITOR.]

8. Sailor Jack. Hon. Willard H. Rees, in describing French Prairie, in the Willamette Valley, wrote: "Here were the homes of Gervais, Lucier, Cannon, Jack, and on the west side of the river, Labonte, and Lafranboise, four Canadians and two American citizens, all Astor men." (Trans. Ore. Pion. Assn. 1875, 20.) On page 60 he tells of the wreck of the *William and Ann*, at the mouth of the Columbia River, 1829, and that Mr. Manson called to his assistance "Michel Laframboise, John McLain, a Scotchman, and Jack, a brave Kanaka sailor," to go to the rescue.

Hon. James W. Nesmith listed the persons in the Willamette Valley when he first arrived in 1843, and among them was "Sailor, Jack" (Trans. Ore. Pion. Assn., 1876, p. 54). There seems to be no mention elsewhere of any Jack Sailor, so the comma was possibly a typographical error. The writer can find no other mention by which the Astorian "Jack" can be identified, but it is hoped that some reader may be able to do so.

9. Louis La Bonte¹⁰ was born in Montreal, 1788, and accompanied the overland expedition of the Pacific Fur Company to Astoria, 1810-2. On the journey, December 29, 1811, he fell from hunger and exhaustion on the Telocaset hill, between the present towns of Baker and Union, Oregon. Wilson Price Hunt, the leader and partner of John Jacob Astor, carried La Bonte's pack in addition to his own burden.

10 "Brief Bibliography, L. La Bonte, Jr." (H. S. Lyman), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. I, 169-188, Vol. 4, 264-266. Irving's *Astoria*, Chap. 37. "Pudding River," W. H. Rees, *Transactions*, Oregon Pioneer Association, 1978, 19-24 (wrong date, see Coues, *Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, 813, 819. Coues, *Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, 862, 868, 878, 904, 914, (different man, p. 875). John Work "Journal," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 5, 105, 107, 165, 166; Vol. 11, 105. N. J. Wyeth, *Journal*, (Oregon Historical Society), 233. Rev. J. Lee, "Journal," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 17, 263. Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 125. "Young Estate," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 21, 260, 273. Charles Wilkes, U.S.N. "Journal," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 17, 54; *Narrative*, (1849), Vol. 4, 358. "Tax List, 1844," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 31, 18. Leslie M. Scott, *History of the Oregon Country*, Cambridge, 1824, Vol. 2, 222.

In 1812, La Bonte accompanied Donald McKenzie to the Willamette Valley, and during the trip the incident occurred which gave the name to Pudding River, Oregon.

La Bonte is mentioned six times by Alexander Henry during 1814, at Fort George, (Astoria) since La Bonte was engaged by the North-West Company, and subsequently by the Hudson's Bay Company. His wife was daughter of Chief Coboway of the Clatsop tribe, who was so frequently mentioned by Lewis and Clark and other early travelers. Her two sisters married Joseph Gervais and Solomon H. Smith. A son, Louis La Bonte, Jr., was born in 1818.

La Bonte was employed as carpenter at Spokane House, 1822-5, and at Fort Colville, 1825-8, which he aided in building. His wife and two children accompanied John Work down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver in 1828. La Bonte's term of service then expired, and he desired to begin farming in the Willamette Valley, but since it was the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company not to permit former employees to remain in the Indian country, Dr. McLoughlin insisted upon sending La Bonte to Canada. "But La Bonte was an astute Frenchman and contended that as he had enlisted in Oregon and was not brought here by the Hudson's Bay Company, it was no infraction of this rule, but rather in compliance with it that he should be dismissed here." McLoughlin, however, sent him to Canada, whereupon he immediately returned; at first working for Joseph Gervais and subsequently at the farm of Thomas McKay at Scappoose, Oregon. In 1834, Nathaniel J. Wyeth wrote that he "Came to the farm of Thomas McKay, where I was treated with great kindness by La Bonte his foreman." That same year Rev. Jason Lee wrote that he "Showed us every attention and kindness"; while Rev. Daniel Lee wrote of his "Hearty French welcome."

In 1836, La Bonte started a farm on Yamhill River, near where Dayton, Oregon, now is, and there are two mentions of him in the accounts of the Ewing Young Estate, one being the purchase of twelve yards of striped cotton.

In 1841, Charles Wilkes, afterwards Admiral, wrote in his journal that "The best farm I saw on my route was that of La Bonte." In his *Narrative* he wrote, "The most perfect picture of content I saw was a French Canadian by the name of La Bonte, on the Yam Hill River, who had been a long time in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. This man was very attentive to us, and assisted in getting our horses across the river . . ."

On the tax list of 1844, La Bonte is listed as having: Horses, \$280; Cattle, \$200, and Hogs, \$48. He died September 3rd, 1860.

His son is mentioned as having guided Rev. Daniel Lee, and in later life gave very valuable reminiscences in regard to his father as well as Joseph Gervais, Thomas McKay, Etienne Lucier, William Canning ("Cannon"), Alexander Carson and Jean Baptiste Dubreuil, as well as of many others.

10. Michel Laframboise¹¹ was born in 1790, presumably in Canada. And in 1810 engaged with the Pacific Fur Company, traveling to New York by canoe, and then went to Astoria on the *Tonquin*. After the Pacific Fur Company had sold their buildings and other possessions to the North-West Company, 1813, a vessel was seen, and it was uncertain whether she were American or British, Laframboise, who had learned to speak the Chinook Indian language, was "Decked and painted in the full Chinook costume" and sent to ascertain the nationality of the vessel. He returned and gave the information that she was H.M.S. *Raccoon*. He was engaged by the North-West Company and is mentioned five times by Alexander Henry, who was in command of Fort George (Astoria). When the *Isaac Todd* approached, Laframboise was sent to light a signal fire on Cape Disappointment.

He accompanied the expedition to the mouth of the Fraser River in 1824, as the interpreter, and in 1826 was with P. S. Ogden a short time. That same year he was in the Umpqua region, with David Douglas, the botanist, and was called the Interpreter. In 1829, he was at Fort George (Astoria) when the *William and Ann* was wrecked, and went to her assistance, but too late. He was listed as "Post Master" at Fort Vancouver in 1830; a term that had no reference to mail. When the American vessel, the *Convoy*, was in danger from Indians, Dr. McLoughlin sent Laframboise with ten men to her assistance.

From that period he seems to have been assigned to the Umpqua region and to the southward, as far as California, being at first listed as an Interpreter and then as a Post Master, with the full sal-

11. 1811, Franchere (1854), p. 30; Thwaites, p. 192. 1813, Alex. Ross (1849), p. 257; Thwaites, p. 248. 1814, Alex. Henry, Vol. 2, 758, 868, 905, 909 (twice). 1824, John Work, "Journal," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 3, 200, 209, 226. 1826, P. S. Ogden, "Journal," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, 11, 204. 1826, David Douglas, "Journal," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 6, 93. 1829, W. H. Reese, *Transactions, Oregon Pioneer Association*, 1879, 20, 60, 61. 1830-1843, Hudson's Bay Company, "Minutes," North Dakota Historical Society, 1813, pp. 658, 738, 754, 757, 770, 786, 832. 1833, N. J. Wyeth, *Journal*, p. 181. 1834, John Work, "Journal," edited by Leslie M. Scott, *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 24, 238-268. 1834, "Hall J. Kelley," edited by F. W. Powell, *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 18, 125, 126. 1835, "Methodist Record," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 23, 236. 1838-40, A. J. Allen (Dr. White), *Ten Years in Oregon*, N.Y., 1848, pp. 92, 118. 1841, Wilkes, *Narrative*, Vol. 4, 349; Vol. 5, 235; "Journal," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 17, 47. 1841, Chas. Pickering, *Races of Men*, London, 1872, p. 33. 1841, "De Mofras," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 26, 168. 1842, "Young Estate," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 21, 276. 1844, "Tax List," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 31, 17. Leslie M. Scott, *History Oregon Country*, Vol. 2, 222 (Biography). H. H. Bancroft, *History Northwest Coast*, Vol. 2, 521, 527-8, 539, 549, 675; *History of Oregon*, Vol. 1, 74, 147.

ary of a Clerk. He took a farm in the Willamette Valley in 1831, and although he was away on expeditions so much of the time yet he succeeded in raising grain. He was mentioned as being at Fort Umpqua in 1832, and in 1833 Wyeth told of his arriving at Fort Vancouver with news that the Indians had killed three men who had been with Desportes McKay. In 1834, he was in California, and hearing that Ewing Young had started to Oregon, hastened to overtake him. Hall J. Kelley, who was with Young, was ill and Laframboise was very kind to him, and took him to Fort Vancouver, where Kelley was so weak that Laframboise had to support him. That same year, 1834, when John Work visited the Umpqua region he made ten mentions of Laframboise in his journal, usually under the name Michel. In 1835, Laframboise took two Indian lads to the mission school of Rev. Jason Lee.

The Hudson's Bay Company records listed him as Interpreter in 1836, and in 1837 as Post Master with a salary of one hundred pounds. From 1839 he was listed as with the annual Bonaventura expedition. In 1838, Dr. Elijah White wrote of his bringing news of an attack by Shasta Indians. In 1840, his party is described by Dr. White. They came "In Indian file, led by Mr. La Fromboy, the chief of the party. Next him rode his wife, a native woman, astride, as is common with the females, upon her pony, quite picturesquely clad. She wore a man's hat, with long black feathers, fastened in front and drooping behind very gracefully. Her short dress was of rich broadcloth, leggings beautifully embroidered with gay beads, and fringed with bells, whose delicate, musical tinkling could be heard at several hundred yards distance. Next the Clerk and his wife, much in the same manner; and so on to the officers of less importance, and the men; and finally the boys, driving the pack horses, with bales of furs, one hundred and eighty pounds to each animal. The trampling of the fast-walking horses, the silvery tinkling of the small bells, rich and handsome dresses, and fine appearance of the riders, whose numbers amounted to sixty or seventy. The array was really patriarchial, and had quite an imposing appearance."

When Lieutenant, later Admiral, Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., visited the Willamette Valley, in 1841, Laframboise was his guide after he had reached Champoeg. Laframboise was "Very happy to see us" he wrote, and described him as "Low of stature, and rather corpulent, but has great activity of both mind and body, indomitable courage, and all the vivacity of a Frenchman." Also that he was "exceedingly civil." The naval detachment which went to Califor-

nia, in charge of Lieut. G. T. Emmons, U. S. N., found the Indians preparing to attack Laframboise, and mention a place where he had been twice attacked. That same year, 1841, Eugene Duflot De Mofras listed his property as: 40 hectares enclosed and 20 cultivated; 170 hectoliters of wheat raised; 200 horses; 2 houses and one mill. In 1842, he was mentioned in the records of Ewing Young's estate.

The tax list of 1844 listed his property as, "Clocks, \$12; Horses \$300; Cattle \$1,500; and Hogs \$100." This was a voluntary assessment, which seems to have puzzled many Canadians. The annotations were, first, "Will not pay," and later a check to show that he had paid the tax, \$2.89. He died January 25th, 1865, apparently the last of the Astorians, yet the newspapers seem not to have noticed it.

11. Etienne Lucier¹² was born in Canada in 1793, and accompanied the overland expedition of the Pacific Fur Company to Astoria, 1810-12. He went with Donald McKenzie to the Willamette Valley in 1812, where the incident of a blood pudding originated the name for Pudding River, which subsequent writers dated later, but that name was mentioned in 1814 by Alexander Henry, who also refers to Lucier a number of times, as having been associated with the North-West Company after the sale of Astoria. He was in a canoe which started from Fort George (Astoria) to carry news of the arrival of the *Isaac Todd*, 1814.

Lucier married twice, having three children by his first wife and two boys by his second. After his term of service with the Hudson's Bay Company expired he became the first farmer in the Willamette Valley. The rules of the Company required discharges to be made where the men had been engaged, in order to compel them to return to Canada, but since the Astorians had been engaged on the lower Columbia River, and desired to remain, Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor, arranged to keep their names nominally on the books. He told them that the Willamette Valley would inevitably become United States territory since in 1825 he had been "Officially in-

12 1812, W. R. Rees, *Trans. Ore. Assn.* 1879, 22-23, A. J. Allen (Dr. White) *Ten Years in Oregon*, 70. Error in date, see *Alex. Henry*, Vol. II, 813, 819, 1814, Coues, *Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, 868, 892, 904, 915, 1829. "Dr. John McLoughlin," (S. A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days of Oregon History*, Portland, Ore., 1905, pp. 217-219) "Louis La Bonte, Jr." (H. S. Lyman) *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 1, 171, 173, 174, "F. X. Matthieu," (H. S. Lyman), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 1, 87, 89, 94, 97, 1829. Lucia's daughter married Donald Manson; Rees, as above, 56-63. (He gives date as 1828.) 1835. Parker, *Exploring Tour*, 168, 169, 1836. "Meth. Record," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 23, 242, 248, 1837. "W. A. Slacum," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 13, 210, 1839-1842. "Ewing Young Estate," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 21, 214, 217, 220, 228, 232, 249, 252, 257, 270, 272, 275, 286, 294, 303, 1844. "Tax Roll," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 31, 17, 1841. "De Mofras," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 26, 168, 173, 1853. Obituary, *Oregonian*, April 2, p. 3, Column 1. Granddaughter, "Reminiscences," (H. S. Lyman), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 4, 264. H. H. Bancroft, *Hist. of Ore.*, Vol. 1, 74, 41, 113, 294, 304, 317.

Additional Note.—1838. Lucier and Gervais were on the committee to welcome Rev., later Archbishop, F. N. Blanchet, E. V. O'Hara, *Catholic Hist. of Oregon*, Portland, Ore., 1925, p. 21.

formed that in no case could the British Government claim extend south of the Columbia." So these settlers, who were at first only Astorians, made their homes with the expectation of becoming American citizens.

Lucier's first farm, 1829, was where Portland now is, on the east side of the Willamette, but he moved to the falls, where Oregon City now is, to build three cabins on Dr. McLoughlin's land claim, 1829, and did not return, but went up the valley to French Prairie where the other Astorians had settled; and for a time camping near Joseph Gervais, until he had selected his own farm. In 1835 he visited Fort Vancouver, and Rev. Samuel Parker went up the Willamette river with him to examine that locality. In 1836, Lucier joined the Temperance Society which had been started by Rev. Jason Lee, and in 1837 signed his name with a cross to a letter offering to reimburse two Americans if they would discontinue a distillery. Lucier also signed a petition to Congress, 1837, asking that the United States would extend her laws over that country.

W. A. Slacum, U.S.N., visited the Valley in 1837, and once more Lucier's name was printed by congress, as having 70 acres enclosed, 45 cultivated, and raising 740 bushels of wheat. He had 21 horses, 45 hogs, four buildings and one mill, which were all in good condition. It is interesting to compare this with the report of De Mofras in 1841. Hectares enclosed, 35, and 30 cultivated, 230 hectoliters of wheat, 35 horses, four buildings and one mill. The tax roll in 1844 listed him as having: Clocks, \$12; Horses, \$450; Cattle, \$1,295; Hogs, \$100.

In the first civil government, 1841, Lucier was on the committee to draft laws, etc., but there was so much opposition by Lieutenant, later Admiral, Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., that the organization was not perfected, although still continuing to function in the prolonged transactions of the estates of Ewing Young, 1841, and Cornelius Rogers, 1843. When the movement was revived in 1843, Lucier was appointed on a committee by the First Wolf Meeting, and aided in getting a good attendance at the Second Wolf Meeting, when he was appointed on the committee for wolf bounties and also on one for fuller organization.

This committee met at Oregon City where two factions had been bitterly opposed, one desiring independence of the United States, and the other desiring delay. It was there determined to have a temporary or "Provisional Government" and the fourth general mass meeting was held at Champoeg, May 2, 1843, where, according to H. H. Bancroft, the Americans were so evenly divided

that the vote for organization was only affected by a small group of Canadians. Robert Newell states that there was a majority of five, of whom Lucier was one, and Gervais another. There is a popular tradition that two lines were formed with fifty against and fifty-two in favor of organization, while another tradition is that all did not form in line, which undoubtedly explains how the majority was greater than two.

The great influx of American settlers with their multitudinous interests prevented much mention of the small settlement of friendly and peace-loving French Canadians, who lived their own quiet lives on French Prairie, yet the Portland *Oregonian* had quite an obituary notice of the death of Etienne Lucier, which occurred on March 8, 1853, and stated that "He was regarded by all who knew him as a most worthy citizen and an industrious man. Peace be to his ashes."

12. Nine members of the overland expedition to Astoria, 1810-12, became permanent settlers, brief biographies of eight have been given, the ninth was Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay,¹³ whose name was such a peculiar combination of French and Scottish that only Slacum seems to have used it entire. David Douglas called him Baptiste McKay, but usually he was termed Desportes. Alexander Henry used the "Mr." when referring to him, yet termed him a "workman" which caused even Elliott Coues to confuse him with Thomas McKay. The natural mistake may be corrected by noting the entries in Henry's journal for March 22, 23 and 25, the third McKay being "J. A." who had been in the Willamette Valley and left in Canoe number three, April 4, 1814.

Desportes McKay had charge of six men for constructing canoes at Fort George (Astoria) at the time that Thomas McKay was spending most of his time on the *Pedler*. He seems also to have been the baker at the fort, and was mentioned in almost the last entry of the journal of Alexander Henry, the day before he was drowned.

In 1825, he appears to have been regularly going to the Umpqua country, and the famous botanist, David Douglas, requested him to obtain some cones of the remarkable sugar pine. That tree was of great interest to Douglas, and the following year, 1826, he visited the Umpqua region, and mentioned Baptiste McKay nine times;

13 1814. Coues. *Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, 834-5, 836, 840, 859, 915. (Uncertain, 861, 863.) 1825-6. "David Douglas." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 5, 249, 270. Vol. 6, nine mentions, pp. 77-94. 1832-4. N. J. Wyeth, Map 178, 181, 233. 1833. "John Ball." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 3, 102, 103. 1834. "John Work." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 24, 246. 1837. "Methodist Record." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 23, 250, 257, 264. Lee and Frost. *Ten Years in Oregon*, 166. A. J. Allen (Dr. White) *Ten Years in Oregon*, 70, 101. "W. A. Slacum, U. S. N." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 13, 188, 191, 193. 1838. "Ewing Young Estate," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 21, 245. 1841. "De Mofras," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 26, 168. 1844. "Tax Roll." *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 31, 18.

once as having killed a grizzly bear and again as having been attacked by Indians, when one man was killed and a woman captured.

About 1830, he became the first of the Astorians to settle on that portion of French Prairie where Champoeg was situated. Ten miles to the southward, further up the Willamette River, Joseph Gervais settled, and around each grew little settlements. It is of interest to compare the farm development. Slacum in 1837 listed him as having 69 acres enclosed and 35 cultivated, 556 bushels of wheat, 33 horses, 22 hogs, and three houses in good repair. In 1841 De Mofras reported him with 35 hectares enclosed, 20 cultivated, and 170 hectoliters of wheat; 100 horses, 3 houses and one mill. The tax roll of 1844 lists him as, horses \$200, cattle \$200, and hogs \$50.

In 1832, he was in the Umpqua country, but Wyeth showed his place on his map that year. In 1833, John Ball, the first school teacher in the Oregon country, turned from teaching to farming, and for three months boarded with Desportes and seemed much impressed by his having "plenty of cats and dogs" since he again wrote that he had "cats and dogs without number." Desportes went again to the Umpqua and beyond, since Laframboise announced at Fort Vancouver that three of Desportes men had been killed by Shasta Indians. Both John Work and Wyeth mention seeing him at Champoeg in 1834.

Desportes joined the Temperance Society in 1836 and in 1837 signed his mark to the letter offering to reimburse Ewing Young if he would discontinue his distillery, and offering to pay \$8. That year W. A. Slacum, U.S.N., visited the Willamette Valley and wrote in his report to congress: "The first settler was Jean Baptiste Deshortez McRoy, who came to the country with the American Fur Company in 1809, Astor's Company. McRoy pitched his tent permanently at this place, six years since. For the first two years he was almost alone; but within four years past the population has much increased, and is now one of the most prosperous settlements to be found in any new country."

That same year Desportes again laid his rifle and plow aside and took the pen, laboriously again signing a cross for his name, to petition Congress to extend our laws over that country. Since he was three times mentioned in Slacum's report thus for the fourth time his name was printed in congressional documents. The Methodist records tell of his accompanying Rev. Jason Lee and his wife on an excursion for their health; and of Miss Liset De Portes being married to John Howard; while Rev. Daniel Lee mentions him at the revival.

In 1837, Dr. Elijah White reached Champoeg and found "Battus de Port McKoy." "This old hunter who had accompanied Mr. Hunt across the Rocky Mountains, in the service of John Jacob Astor, received them with noble, warm-hearted hospitality, truly pioneer-like." At a subsequent time he again arrived at "McKoy's."

In 1838, there is mention in the accounts of the Ewing Young estate of "Deporty Mcay" buying three head of stock and paying for them, and on the same page again mentioned as "Mc ay" When the Frenchman, De Mofras visited the Willamette Valley he listed his farm as above, with a mention that he was one of the signers of the petition to Congress, and that the signers were the nine "Principal French Canadian settlers . . . the oldest and richest." Instead of making the usual hit-miss attempts at the last name, De Mofras listed him as "J. B. Desportes." Apparently the health of this worthy old Astorian seems to have broken about this time, since he seems not to have been again mentioned until 1844, in the Tax Roll, which has a little cross, such as Desportes used to make for his signature, to show that he had paid his voluntary assessment. With that tiny mark he disappears from the fast diminishing little band of Astorians.

13. Thomas McKay was a son of Alexander McKay who was the lieutenant of Alexander Mackenzie during the expedition to the Pacific Coast in 1793. Alexander McKay was a partner of the North-West Company in 1804, and of the Pacific Fur Company when it was established by John Jacob Astor in 1810. He sailed to Astoria in the *Tonquin*, and after aiding in the building of that post started as supercargo for a short trip to Alaska on the *Tonquin*, but was killed during the tragic massacre. He had married Margaret Bruce, whose maternal grandmother was a Chippewa (Ijibwa) Indian, and although three-quarters white was sometimes referred to as an Indian. After losing her husband she married Dr. John McLoughlin, and lived at Fort Vancouver.

Thomas McKay was seven-eighths white, but also termed an Indian. Although still young he was made a clerk of the Pacific Fur Company and accompanied his father to Astoria on the *Tonquin*. Since his father first reached what many people called the "Oregon country" in 1793, and returned in 1811, and spent the brief remainder of his life; and his mother subsequently came to spend the rest of her days, Thomas McKay may well be regarded as of the third oldest pioneer family, since only the descendants of the Spaniard Konakee and of the sailor Ramsay were here earlier.

When Alexander McKay left Astoria he commended his son, Thomas, to the care of Alexander Ross, but Thomas, although yet a youth, did not need any guardian, and during the many years he lived he always took a prominent part in everything wherever he happened to be, and seems to have been ubiquitous. In almost every book or journal there is not merely a casual mention, but usually a great number of mentions with considerable detail as to him and his doings. If there was some trouble with Indians, Thomas McKay usually was conspicuous. Ross Cox and Alexander Ross each tell of his bravery. Alexander Henry made numerous mentions, and as if they had not been sufficient Elliott Coues adds some more by injecting the name "Thomas" to mentions of Desportes McKay. He reappears in the *Fur Hunters* of Ross, and then in his journal of December 5th, 1824. The recent publication of *Governor George Simpson's Journal* shows that he had just come down the Columbia before Ross saw him. He was with Finan McDonald, Peter Skene Ogden, Work and McMillan.

It would require a good sized book to give his biography, and it is hoped that such a one may be written since it would be a simple method of writing the history of the Oregon country, for Thomas McKay loomed large and the material will be found in the journals etc., of Nathaniel J. Wyeth, (1832, 33 and 34), Irving's *Bonneville*, J. K. Townsend, Rev. Jason Lee, Rev. Daniel Lee, Mrs. Marcus Whitman, William H. Gray, Thomas J. Farnham, and many other primary sources and all secondary writers. There is far too much to try to give a resume.

In his case the fact that Rev. Samuel Parker did not mention him is most remarkable, and may possibly give a clue to what may be disclosed when the Hudson's Bay Company documents are published. The Minutes of Council of the western department of the Company show that Thomas McKay was reengaged as a clerk in 1831, for three years, which would have expired in 1834, but there seems to have been no meeting that year, and Thomas McKay is again engaged in 1836 for the usual three years, which may possibly indicate that for two years he may have had an independent venture. It was just at this period that we find him building Snake Fort at the mouth of the Boise River. Mrs. Whitman in her journal mentions Snake Fort as "Belonging to Mr. McKay," and again as "Owned and built by Mr. Thomas McKay." It may be possible that since it took so long to communicate the news of the building of Fort Hall by the American, Wyeth, and to obtain authority to erect

a rival establishment, that Dr. McLoughlin may have suggested to his stepson to undertake a private venture.

Since Fort Boise was subsequently authorized, we find Thomas McKay with a farm at Scappoose, and Louis La Bonte as manager, and building a large mill at Champoeg, with William Canning in charge and rescued from it during a flood. We find him accompanying Dr. Elijah White to treat with the Nez Perces Indians in 1842, and in the Tax Roll of 1844, Thomas McKay was assessed for pleasure carriages, a luxury which only four other settlers had.

In the Cayuse War, Thomas McKay was captain of a company and when presented with a flag told his soldiers, "This flag you are expected to defend, and defend it you must." It is needless to add that they did. There is much in regard to his height and powerful appearance; his kindness and artless frankness, while as affable as a Frenchman; of the remarkable discipline of the trappers under him, and of his undaunted courage. His sons were sent to be educated in the States, one becoming a physician, and like their father very prominent in later days. It would be spoiling a good book to tell you any more.

14. It is unfortunate that there was no complete list of the Astorians who came to the Columbia River on the *Beaver* in 1812. The names of the partners and of the clerks are given, and the eight English-speaking men probably were Baker, Flanagan, John Little, Mulligan, Bell Nash, Patrick O'Connor, Joseph Wakeman, with Henry Willett, who died at sea. But of the five Canadians the only name known is Francois Payette.¹⁴ Since the earliest settlers in the Willamette Valley were Astorians it is quite possible that some settlers whose names we know may have come on that ship.

When the Pacific Fur Company collapsed, Francois Payette was engaged by the North-West Company and is mentioned by Alexander Henry as number forty-eight in his list of those at Fort

¹⁴ Coues, *Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, pp. 868, 904. (error in Index). Ogden "Journals," (T. C. Elliott), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 10, 331-365, 'Vol. 11, 201-222; 361-399. John Work "Journals," (T. C. Elliott), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 10, 296-313, Vol. 13, 363-371, Vol. 14, 280-314. W. S. Lewis and P. C. Philips, (1923). N. J. Wyeth, (*Ore. Hist. Society*, 1899) 59, 128, 136, 141 (twice), 200, 218-9, 251 (Baptiste to Lee's school). Washington Irving, *Bonneville*, Chaps. 34, 41. W. H. Gray, *Journal*, Whitman College Quarterly, (Walla Walla, Wash., 1913), Vol. 16, p. 4. Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, N. Y., 1884, 148, 210. Barry, Data as to Fort Boise, *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 34, March, 1933. "Minutes of Council, (H. B. Co.) No. Dakota Hist. Soc., 1813, Vol. 4. Jason Lee, "Journal," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 17, 417-20. M. F. Eells, "Journal," *Trans. Ore. Pion. Assn.*, 1889, 86-7. Asahel Munger, "Journal," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 8, 401. T. J. Farnham, *Travels*, (Thwaites, Early Western Travels), Vol. 28, 317-322. L. W. Hastings, *New Description Oregon and California*. 1857, 20, 50. *Medorum Crawford*, (*Ore. Hist. Society*, 1897), 17. J. C. Fremont, *Narrative*, 1846, 101, 104, 105. T. Talbot, *Journals*, (C. H. Carey) 1931, 58. "P. H. Burnett," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 5, 81. "J. W. Nesmith," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 7, 352. "Johnson and Winter," *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 7, 93-4. W. H. Rector, "Journal," (F. Lockley, *History of Columbia River Valley*, 1928, 1073.)

George (Astoria) in 1814. On May 1st of that year he was sent with the party to report the arrival of the *Isaac Todd*.

It seems possible that originally the Payette River had an Indian name which sounded like Payete, and was so called in 1826, which may indicate that Payette had been with Donald McKenzie, 1817-1821. In the journals of P. S. Ogden 1826-29, there are eleven mentions of Francois Payette, who is called a "steady man." John Work in his journals, 1830-2, makes twenty-one mentions. When Nathaniel J. Wyeth returned to the States after his first expedition he took with him Baptiste Payette, aged thirteen. Washington Irving tells a good deal about this lad, in his account of Wyeth's voyage in the bull boat. Wyeth wrote of his being a "Pretty good boy," and when he returned with him in 1834 he wrote to Francois Payette that his son had learned "To speak English, and to read, write and cypher tolerably well," although during the twelve months he had been so constantly traveling. When Bonneville visited Fort Nez Perces (Old Fort Walla Walla), 1834, Payette was visiting there and expecting to return to the Snake River country. When the Whitman party reached Snake Fort, at the mouth of the Boise River, there is mention of Francois Payette being there, (1836). On January 1st, 1837, he was at Fort Nez Perces, and accompanied W. H. Gray to the Whitman mission to aid in some carpenter work. Payette then went down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver, and to the Willamette Valley, where his wife's father, Joseph Portneuf, lived. While there his wife died, a "beautiful death," as Rev. Daniel Lee called it. Her sister, Mrs. Charles Rondeau, also died, and her brother, Joseph Portneuf, Jr. It will be remembered that Rondeau was the man who carried Hall J. Kelley on his back, when that unfortunate enthusiast was too ill to walk. (Bancroft, *North-West Coast*, II, 549).

Until the Hudson's Bay Company documents are published it is impossible to ascertain the status of Snake Fort and Fort Boise. The long period which necessarily elapsed before news could be communicated to London and authority received by Dr. McLoughlin may possibly have resulted in some such way as this. In 1834, Wyeth built Fort Hall. Thomas McKay built Snake Fort either late that year or early in 1835, possibly as a private venture. Orders to build Fort Boise some two miles north seem to have come about 1837, and that fort was begun. That same year Fort Hall was purchased, which made its rival, Fort Boise, unnecessary. There was no telegraph or cable in those days, but by 1841 orders were received to

abandon Fort Boise, but two years later, 1843, it was reopened as a way station.

However the official status of Fort Boise may have been changed, it was Francois Payette who was in command there, listed at first as Post Master, in its proper sense, and in 1842 as Clerk. It may be of interest to have on record the brief entries made in journals of travelers in regard to this worthy old Astorian.

In 1838, Rev. Jason Lee, returned to the States, meeting Madame Dorion-Toupin and her daughter near old Fort Walla Walla, and spending a night at Fort Boise. Messengers must have passed soon after to carry the news of the death of his wife and son. A few weeks later William H. Gray and party arrived on their way to Whitman's mission, and Rev. Daniel Lee in his book wrote that they were "Received with kind attention by Mr. Payette, the gentleman in charge of the fort." Mrs. Myra F. Eells, wife of Rev. Cushing Eells who was with Gray, wrote in her journal that at Fort Boise they "Feasted with milk, butter, turnips and salmon." She took a ride in the boat and "Mr. Payton [sic] and Capt. Sutter took tea with us." The latter was subsequently prominent in California. She also noted "Mr. Payton sends another sturgeon."

In August, 1839, Asahel Munger's journal states that at Fort Boise they "Found the people here friendly indeed." In September, Thomas J. Farnham arrived and has much description as to the fort. "Mr. Payette, the person in charge of Fort Boisais, received us with every mark of kindness, gave our horses to the care of his servants and introduced us immediately to the chairs, table and edibles of his apartments. He is a French Canadian; has been in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company more than twenty years, and holds the rank of clerk; is a merry, fat old gentleman of fifty, who, although in the wilderness all the best years of his life, has retained the manner of benevolence in trifles, in his mode of address, of seating you and serving you at table, of directing your attention continually to some little matter of interest, of making you speak the French language *parfaitment* whether you are able to do so or not, so strikingly agreeable in that mercurial people. The 14th and 15th were spent very pleasantly with this gentleman. During that time he feasted us with excellent bread and butter made from an American cow, obtained from some missionaries." When he departed he received a "*bon jour*" from Monsieur Payette. There is much of interest in the context.

Lansford W. Hastings, the leader of the emigrants in 1842, wrote that upon "Arriving at Fort Boise we were kindly received and entertained by the gentleman in charge, who kindly proffered to let us have such provisions as we needed, and to render us any additional service in his power." Elsewhere he wrote. "Fort Boisia . . . although abandoned by the Company, is still kept up and occupied by a Mr. Payette." Medorum Crawford, who was with Hastings, wrote of obtaining musk melons there.

Captain, later General, J. C. Fremont, in 1843 wrote: "On our arrival we were received with an agreeable hospitality by Mr. Payette, an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company in charge of the Fort, all of whose garrison consisted of a Canadian engage." * * * "Mr. Payette has made some slight attempts at cultivation, in which he succeeds tolerably well, the post being principally supported by salmon. He was very hospitable and kind to us, and we made a sensible impression upon his comestibles; but our principal inroad was into his dairy, which was abundantly supplied, stock appearing to thrive extremely well; and we had an unusual luxury in a present of fresh butter." * * * "Mr. Payette informed me that, every year since his arrival at this post, he had unsuccessfully endeavored to induce these people [Indians] to lay up a store of salmon for their winter provision." There are two subsequent mentions of Payette's directions as to the trails. Theodore Talbot who was with Fremont, wrote: "Capt. Payette, the gentleman in charge, is a Frenchman and exceedingly polite, courteous and hospitable. He is a veteran in the service of the Hud.B.Company. Has traveled much and undergone many hardships, in consideration of which and his valuable services, he has been placed in charge of this post."

Peter H. Burnett, one of the emigrants of that year, 1843, wrote: "We arrived at Fort Boise, then in charge of Mr. Payette. . . . Mr. Payette, the manager, was kind and very polite." James W. Nesmith, another emigrant, tells of how he "Visited Monsieur Payette, the commandant; found him a very agreeable old French gentleman, and has been in this country in the fur trade since 1810, having left New York that year, and came by sea to the mouth of the Columbia, in the employment of Mr. Astor. We spent a pleasant evening in his company and had a dance." The *Beaver* left New York in 1811, and reached Astoria in 1812. Another emigrant, Overton Johnson, tells of part of the company going to California via the Malheur River, and obtaining "The best direction they could get concerning the

route from Captain Payette, the principal of the Fort, who appeared to be friendly and much of a gentleman."

William H. Rector, emigrant of 1845, wrote: "At Fort Boise I called on the man in charge of the place and found him a clever and obliging gentleman. He made out a memorandum of all the camping places with the distance from one to the other, with remarks on the character of the road over which we had to travel. . . . The instructions I got at Fort Boise were correct and were of much service to our company." This seems to be the last mention. It has been a pleasure to record the benevolence of this amiable old Astorian.

15. The story of George Ramsay¹⁵ is so extraordinary that it may be well to first explain some well authenticated circumstances which throw light upon the identity of this man. With Wyeth's first expedition, 1832, was Soloman H. Smith of Vermont. Since Dr. McLoughlin found that he was an educated man he was employed to teach school at Fort Vancouver. He married Celiast, who became a Christian and took the name of Helen. She was daughter of the famous Chief Coboway, or Comowool, of the Clatsop tribe of the south side of the mouth of the Columbia River, who was so often mentioned by Lewis and Clark and many later travelers. Smith and his wife settled among this tribe as missionaries. A son, Silas B. Smith, was educated in New Hampshire, and became an attorney, practicing law at Warrenton, Oregon. He knew the Clatsop language as his mother's tongue, and being raised among the tribe had an intimate and exact knowledge of the customs and traditions; while able to weigh evidence from the viewpoint of an educated attorney. He was personally acquainted with George Ramsay, and identified him with the Astorian interpreter on the *Tonquin*, Lamazu, Lamazee or Lamsoi. The Chinook and Clatsop Indians did not have the initial letter "R" in their language, but used the let-

15. Solomon H. Smith. See Leslie M. Scott, *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, (1924), Vol. 1, 297. Silas B. Smith. See O. D. Wheeler, *Trail of Lewis and Clark*, (1904), Vol. 2, 196-7. Gill's *Chinook Dictionary*, (1909). Franz Boas, Bureau of American Ethnology *Bulletin*, 40, 559-677. "Konapee," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 23, 25-34. Mrs. Ellen Center, Garibaldi, Tillamook Co., Ore. Kilchis Point Lewis A. McArthur. *Ore. Geog. Names*, (1928), 184. *Journal of Patrick Gass*, (1810), for Nov. 23, 1804. R. G. Thwaites, *Original Journal of Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1904), Vol. 3, 301. Elliott Coues. *Ms. Journals of Alex. Henry*, Vol. 2, 893, 894, 895, 909. Ross Cox, *Adventures*, (1831), Vol. 1, 315-6. Washington Irving, *Astoria*, Chap. XI. There are twenty-seven original sources for *Tonquin* massacre. Alex. Ross, (1849), 159-168. (Thwaites, reprint, 165-173). "Archibald Pelton," *Wash. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 19, 199-201. J. K. Townsend, *Narrative*, (1839), 180. (Thwaites, reprint, 308-9.) A. J. Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon* by Dr. White, (1848); 56-62. Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, (1844), 224-5. Silas B. Smith, "Address," Proceedings of Ore. Hist. Society, (1899), 84-5. Hawaiian, Geo. Washington, Cox, (1831), Vol. 1, 262. Charles Wilkes, *Exploring Expedition*, (1849), Vol. 4, 491, 492, 495; Vol. 5, 114-5 (picture). Neill M. Howison, (1846), *Ore. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. 14, 18. Willard H. Rees, *Transactions Ore. Pion. Assn.*, (1879), 59.

ter "L" instead, calling a rope "lope" and rum "lum," which accounts for the form of the name.

The oldest pioneer family in the Oregon country descended from Konapee, the Spaniard, about 1730. The second oldest descended from a Scotch or British sailor named Ramsay, who lived among the Tillamook tribe of Indians on the Oregon coast, directly south of the Clatsop tribe, about 1780. The writer obtained a tradition direct from Mrs. Ellen Center, granddaughter of Chief Kilchis, for whom Kilchis Point was named. She heard it from her father, who learned it from his parents, as part of the history of their tribe. Since Mrs. Center seemed to have no knowledge of other items to be cited, and her story by its setting and context seemed to be purely tribal tradition, the writer feels that it is trustworthy.

A long, long time ago, a ship was wrecked off Nehalem Bay, and part of it broke off and drifted into the bay. On this was a white youth, with red hair, unconscious. The friendly Indians succeeded in reviving him, and he subsequently married, had children and lived among the tribe. What seems to have particularly impressed the Indians was that when smallpox almost exterminated the tribe this sailor left his family and nursed the sick Indians, and so took the disease and lost his life. That seemed to be all that she knew. The authorities quoted tell more of his story.

Sergeant Patrick Gass, with the Lewis and Clark expedition, while camping on the Columbia, opposite where Astoria, Oregon, now is, saw a son of that shipwrecked sailor, and wrote in his journal, November 23, 1805: "In the afternoon ten of the Clatsop nation that live on the south side of the river came to our camp. . . . One of these had the reddest hair I ever saw, and a fair skin, much freckled." Soon afterwards the expedition built Fort Clastop, (near Astoria). While there the journal of either Lewis or Clark, December 31, 1805, notes: "With the party of Clatsops who visited us last was a man of much lighter color than the natives generally; he must certainly be half white at least. This man appeared to understand more of the English language than the others of his party, but did not speak a word of English. He possessed all the habits of the Indians."

Alexander Henry, at Fort George, (Astoria), in his journal, December 8th, 1813, wrote of a visit from the old Clatsop Chief,

(Coboway), and "There came with him a man about 30 years of age, who has extraordinary dark red hair and is much freckled—a supposed offspring of a ship that was wrecked within a few miles of the entrance of this river many years ago."

Ross Cox, who arrived at Astoria, 1812, on the *Beaver*, and was subsequently with the North-West Company until 1817, wrote: "An Indian belonging to a small tribe on the coast, to the southward of the Clatsops, occasionally visited the fort (Fort George, Astoria), . . . His skin was fair, his face partially freckled, and his hair quite red. He was about five feet ten inches high, was slender, but remarkably well made; his head had not undergone the flattening process; and he was called "Jack Ramsay," in consequence of that name having been punctured on his left arm. The Indians allege that his father was an English sailor, who had deserted from a trading ship, and had lived many years among their tribe, one of whom he married; that when Jack was born he insisted on preserving the child's head in its natural state, and while young had punctured the arm in the above manner. Old Ramsay had died about twenty years before this period; he had several more children, but Jack was the only red-headed one among them. He was the only half-breed I ever saw with red hair. . . . Poor Jack was fond of his father's countrymen, and had the decency to wear trousers whenever he came to the fort. We therefore made a collection of old clothes for his use, sufficient to last him for many years."

A daughter of Jack Ramsay married Alexander Duncan Birnie, who was quite prominent as a guide; the son of James Birnie who was in command of Fort George (Astoria) for many years and very frequently mentioned by early travelers.

George Ramsay was probably a brother of Jack Ramsay, but having a dark skin and flattened head, was not recognized as a half-breed. This is indicated by the fact that he was able to speak French and English, which seemed almost impossible for full-blooded Indians on the coast. That white men imagined that he belonged to the Chinooks, Gray's Harbor Indians, Cowlitz and Wickaninnish shows that they were not able to identify him with any definite tribe. Since he was not at Astoria while Ramsay Crooks was there proves that he was not named Ramsay for him, as has been suggested.

It is known that he had made two voyages in trading ships, and was acquainted with the languages of the various tribes. Shortly

after the *Tonquin* left Astoria, in 1811, he went to that ship in a canoe, near Gray's Harbor, where he was then living, and was engaged as an interpreter, and so became one of the Astorians. It is impossible to enter into details regarding the massacre, except that he seems to have used his utmost endeavors to prevent it. Many years later he admitted that since he knew beforehand that the ship was to be blown up, and yet had not warned the natives, he had considered it more discreet to avoid telling all he knew. This explains discrepancies in earlier accounts.

After the massacre he was held as a slave for two years, when his friends ransomed him. He returned to Gray's Harbor and was on his way to Astoria when he met messengers who had been sent for him. There seems absolutely no foundation for the idea of Alexander Ross, that he planned an attack upon Astoria. The sole basis being that a gun and other weapons had been abandoned by some Indians, and we now know that the Clatskanie Indians of that neighborhood had been planning to assassinate poor "Judge," (Archibald Pelton), which they accomplished in 1814.

George Ramsay was living among the Chinooks at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1813, at the time of the arrival of the *Isaac Todd*. Alexander Henry mentioned him three times as Lamsoi, a Chinook, and again referred to him as "our trusty pilot." In 1823-4 he was employed on the brig *Hersilia*, by Captain James Sheffield, and seems subsequently to have been employed by Captain William McNeill on the brig *Llama*, since he had a letter from Captain McNeill recommending him. It must have been about 1830 that a hair seal scratched out his right eye, which greatly aids in identifying him.

After Fort George (Astoria) was reestablished, George Ramsay remained constantly on the lower Columbia River, and acted as pilot. In 1834, J. K. Townsend in descending the river on Wyeth's brig, the *May Dacre*, wrote: "A Kowalitsk (Cowlitz) Indian with one eye, who said his name was George, boarded us, and showed a letter he carried, written by Captain McNeal(McNeill) in the Hudson's Bay service, recommending said George as a capable and experienced pilot. We accepted his services gladly . . . George . . . taking his station at the bow, gave his orders to the man at the wheel like one having authority, pointing with his finger when he wished a deviation from the common course, and pronouncing in a loud voice the single word ookook (here)."

In 1837, Dr. Elijah White entered the Columbia and tells of the pilot. "He was a brawny athletic Indian with but one eye; and from his partiality for England and its monarch they called him "Pilot George." Notwithstanding his unfortunate deformity he probably understood his business better than any man on the river. Unlike his race generally he was not at all taciturn, and was the most able linguist of his color in the section, having a smattering of French and English, and many of the tongues of his country. Excepting him they could not converse with one of the crew save by signs." There is much more in regard to him.

Rev. J. H. Frost, who arrived on the *Lausanne* in 1840 tells of the pilot, Chinook George, with one eye, and that a hair seal had scratched out the other, and that he made a very good pilot, but the passage is too long to quote. A much more full account is given by Attorney Silas Smith. "At Baker's Bay an Indian by the name of Ramsay was engaged as river pilot, the same who was interpreter on the *Tonquin* at the time of her destruction at Clayoquot. He had only one eye, but was a good pilot. Ramsay was his English name." Like Frost he tells of another pilot, also named George, getting the job away from Ramsay, but after the ship had been run on a sandbar Ramsay was reinstated as pilot. This other pilot was named George Washington, and sometimes called an Indian and sometimes a negro. He may possibly have been the Astorian Hawaiian, George Washington, but the one eye of George Ramsay always identifies him as the George mentioned.

In 1841, Lieutenant, later Admiral, Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., makes five mentions of him. One of Wilkes' squadron, U.S.S. *Peacock*, attempted to cross the bar into the Columbia River, and was wrecked. "Old Ramsey the pilot then went to offer his assistance," When Wilkes later reached the mouth of the river on U.S.S. *Porpoise* he took "Ramsey the pilot on board" and "passed the bar" in safety. He had Ramsay accompany him while surveying the river, and appears himself to have made the sketches of Ramsay and of George, which appear in Volume Five.

In 1846, Lieutenant Neil M. Howison, U.S.N., on U.S.S. *Shark*, attempted to cross the bar without aid of this old pilot, and that naval vessel also was wrecked. He makes several mentions of the other George, but also suggests that future vessels should employ "Either of the Indians, George or Ramsay."

Hon. W. H. Rees in an address which seems to have been large-

ly based upon information obtained from Donald Manson, of the Hudson's Bay Company, mentions "Qua-luk, or George, the interpreter on board the *Tonquin*, and only survivor of the disaster of that ill fated ship." Surely he was a strange man, with an extraordinary story, and it seems odd that his portrait should have been preserved by Admiral Wilkes himself.

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