

Lebrét, Sask. January 3, 1948.

A custom near 200 years old among the Metis is the celebration of "le jour de l'an" (New Years) and this has been marked almost yearly. Last winter due to high snow and blizzards, the old Metis were unable to gather to wish one another Bonne Anee, and partake of their pemmican, and provide an old time ~~coffee~~ fiddler to dance Red River Jig, McDonald's Reel, and eight hand Reel..

their This year they were blessed with mild weather, and financial condition some what improved by having good gardens and a fair crop of wild berries. The function was a simple one but nevertheless enthusiastic one for most of the old-time dwellers were able to attend, and to enjoy of their native foods, les beigns croche, et les bollatts. And most of them to smoke their ~~favorite~~ well loved "kin-nik-nik", this is the second bark of the red willow mixed with plug tobacco.

To open the function this year there was a silence period, when with heads bowed, the Metis prayed for the repose of the departed souls, since the last function three (3) of their members died, Mrs. Melanie Deslorne, 92, ~~xxxxxx~~ Mrs. Francois Desmarais, and ~~xxxx~~ Simon Desjarlais, 77. The last named was a grand-son of Governor Cuthbert Grant, who captured the Lower Fort Garry from the Hudsons Bay Company at the Seven Oaks' Battle in 1816.

At the head of the table was Mrs. Thomas Kavanaugh, 102, who xx was married to Thomas Kavanaugh at Fort Totten, N.D. the year of Confederation. Beside her sat St. Pierre Blondeau, one of the few remaining men who hunted buffalo. In fact, St. Pierre took please in recounting some of his exploits against the "Monarch of the Plains", where Regina now stands.

In reminiscing St. Pierre told of the customs of the good old days. In a joking way, he remarked that perhaps nobody was worth killing in the old Qu'Appelle Valley as there had never been a murder among the Metis for the past 100 years or more. Some what a striking contrast to conditions existing in modern times. The doors were never locked, and the house or tent by the side of the trail was open to all, where the traveller both white or

72.

Metis would find friends, would be helped along his way, and sent away with a blessing and good wishes.

Among others who attended the function were Adolpice Pelletier, the weather prophet of the Qu'Appelle, Peter Desjarlais, 88, the grandson of Cuthbert Grant mentioned above, Mrs. Zacharie Blondeau, 92, Mrs. Chrysostome Robillard, 90, Francois Desmarais, 89, Mrs. St. Pierre Blondeau, 77, Mrs. Fred Major, also grandee-daughter of Cuthbert Grant, and Mrs. Rene Page, 96, Mrs. Page was an aunt to the late Giant Beaupre, Willow Bunch, who was almost 8 feet tall. It appears the Giant's mother took sick when he was a baby and there being no domestic cows or canned milk in those days, Mrs. Page went to the rescue and breast nursed both her own baby and the giant. She also told the gathering she and ~~xxx~~ Jean Louis Legare acted as the God-parents at the Giant's christening.

Following a number of short speeches, most of those recalling the days of 80 years ago and more. The tables were cleared, the floor made ready and time honored eight hand reel music by an old fiddler, started these oldtimers into the difficult steps, and whirls of a dance that few people can execute correctly.

For the older folks the function closed with the benediction of the patriarchs, they took to their conveyances, some of them in the modern auto, some in the old covered sleigh, and some in the single cutter, and went home.

At the meeting place the young folk started their celebration, and the sun was well above the tops before the fiddlers went into the tune of "Home Sweet Home"

J. Z. LaRocque, Corr.