

Baptiste Lafontaine.

Baptiste Lafontaine was born in 1799 in the NWT, the son of Jean Baptiste Lafontaine and a Sioux woman. He married Marie Larocque dit Rocheblave on June 6, 1825 at St. Boniface, she died in August of the same year. He then married Madeleine Morin.

Children:

- Francois Shamnais dit Fontaine dit Lafontaine, born before 1825. He married Madeleine Parisien.
- Jean “Baptiste” Lafontaine Jr., born about 1826; married Francoise Martin then Matilde Gariepy.
- Calixte Lafontaine born in the “spring” 1826.

As a teenager Baptiste was part of Cuthbert Grant’s group at the Battle of Seven Oaks on June 19, 1816. Baptiste Lafontaine and François Bono were part of Grant’s group that were in advance of the main party and returned to the battle scene from Frog Plain. At trial a copy of their oral evidence was placed on record. Lafontaine testified that the causes of the greater number of the English colonists killed, were, that they kept together in a body, whilst the Half-Breeds kept jumping about, throwing themselves down whilst loading, or the enemy aiming at them and were scattered over the ground to a greater extent than Semple’s men. François Bono stated that he had fallen from his horse and was not present during the battle.¹

Later he was a renowned buffalo hunter. While at Fort Union on the Missouri River Rudolf Kurz writes:

Baptiste Lafontaine, the father of our new trader was the best buffalo hunter ever known in the region. “He covered one English mile in 6 minutes and shot, in flight, 12 cows—that is, two every minute— notwithstanding that cows run much faster than bulls. Lafontaine weighed 230 pounds, but sat his horse so lightly and comfortably that the beast was not sensible of his weight.”²



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¹ “Report of the Proceedings Connected with the Disputes between the Earl of Selkirk and the North-West Company at the Assizes Held at York in Upper Canada, October 1818.” Brown and Boucher trial transcript at pp. 249-250.

² Rudolph Freiderich Kurz. *Journal: An Account of His Experiences Among fur Traders and American Indians 1846-1852*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 115, 1937: 194.