

William “Kug-kay-dway-wash-kung” Davis (b. 1823)

William “Kug-kay-dway-wash-kung” Davis (b. 1823) is listed on the 1850 Pembina census as a hunter as family #116. William is shown as age 26, his wife Marie Vallee as age 20 and their son William as age six. William was born at Red River, the son of Jean Baptiste Davis and Betsy Josette, La Sauteuse. Josephte was Josephte Mijakammikijikok (Mezhekamakuikok) who was first married to fur trader Alexandre Wilkie. Thus William Davis and Jean Baptiste Wilkie were half-brothers. They moved to Pembina in the late 1840s. He married Marie Enno Heneault, then Marie Vallée at Pembina in 1862. William was also a counsellor for chiefs Little Shell II and III.¹ William was a signatory to Riel’s August 20, 1880 petition to Major General N.A. Miles requesting support for the Montana Half-Breeds. He and his brother Jean Baptiste Jr. were both members of the Turtle Mountain Band. He signed the 1878 Cypress Hills petition for a Metis Reserve. Their son Louis Davis (b. 1869) became one of the members of the Turtle Mountain Police in the early 1900s. William Davis was a noted leader of the buffalo hunt. In his Ph. D. thesis “Infinity Nation: The Metis in North American History,” Nicholas Vrooman relates a contemporaneous account of the Davis Camp:

[During the travel of] Thomas Holmes’ 1866 overland train, a Mr. L. M. Brown serialized the journey for the Shakopee, Minnesota, weekly newspaper the *Spectator*.²

On the next day . . . we fell in with two families of the Indian Half-breeds. They had wintered at Ft. Abercrombie and were out on their spring hunt. They each had their wife and children with them, their ‘teepees,’ and nine ‘half-breed carts,’ drawn, some by horses, some by oxen, and one or two by cow. . . . On coming up to them we found that they spoke the French language, and one of them spoke passably good English. Their names were William Davis and Jean Parisien.³ Mr. Davis is the half brother of Mr. J. Wilkie, one of the members of the last Territorial House of Representatives in Minnesota. Mr. Parisien is a family connection of the famous Jo. Rolette of Pembina. These men had traveled and hunted the prairies from the mouth of the James River to the British Possessions more or less for the last thirty years, and of course knew nearly every acre of ground over which we were intending to journey. . . . Upon consideration by the officers of the train it was concluded to employ our half-breed friends to lead us to Ft. Berthold by what, in their judgment, was the best route under all the circumstances, which they agreed to do, and did so, in a manner entirely satisfactory. . . . Every noon

¹ Counselors for Little Shell III in the 1890s [These men also served as counselors for Little Shell II: Ayse-sense]. Sas Swaine Poitras (67); Kug-kay-dway-wash-kung, William Davis (70), Paydway-walsh-kum, Louis Lenoir; Boin-ence Davis (73); Kar-yence Delorme (50), a son of Auguhk-quay; Sharlo Bottineau (68); Ossaotit, Francois Desmarais (55); Tchee-kee-tarn Parisien (68); Batees-shish Valley (58), son of Norbace Valley; Ahkee-win-nini, Alex Jannott (58); Tcheer-kuhk, Joseph Desmarais (56); Bayriss, Corbet Grant (55); Karn-nar-dah, Antoine Heneault (59); and Jean Batees Gorin (Champagne, 57).

² White, Helen McCann, ed., *Ho! For the Gold Fields, Northern Overland Wagon Trains of the 1860s*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1966: 181-183. Cited in Nicholas Vrooman, “Infinity Nation: The Metis in North American History.” Helena, Montana, 2010: 305.

³ Jean Baptiste Parisien was born on April 15, 1829, the son of Jean Baptiste Parisien Sr. and Charlotte Nolin. In the 1850 Pembina Census he is shown as household # 95 and listed as a hunter. His mother Charlotte, and siblings, Madeleine, Genevieve, Isabelle, Edouard and Indigne are shown in the same home.

and night, except two, our guides led us into camp where we had plenty of water and feed for our cattle and horses, and although wood is scarce on the James River, in dry weather the 'buffalo chip' is a very passable substitute. We had the pleasure several times of witnessing "the chase of the buffalo," by our half-breed guides, who were experts in the business; and saw and learned how simple and easy a thing it was to kill a huge buffalo. The experienced and practiced eye of the half-breed will clearly descry a 'patch of buffalo' fully five miles before the ordinary whiteman can see any object whatever.

Davis and Parisian, while hunting food for the Holmes Train, encountered the encampment of Davis' brother, John B. Wilkie. There were about 2,000 Métis, men, women, and children. That band of Métis had just that day harvested around 2,000 buffalo.

Children of William Davis and Marie Vallee

Louis "Weesug" Jerome St. Matte Davis was born October 24, 1869, the son of William Davis Sr. and Marie Valle. He married Marie Rose Parisien, the daughter of Hyacinthe Parisien and Marguerite Letendre. He was also known as "Wee-sug." He was one of the members of the Turtle Mountain Police in the early 1900s.

Francois "Napuk" Davis became the first Tribal Court Judge at Turtle Mountain. François "Napuk. Davis, (1873-1947) was the Metis son of William Davis and Marie Vallie, born November 1, 1873 at White Earth, Minnesota. He married Angélique Turcotte at St. Ann's Mission on June 25, 1892. Angélique was born March 16, 1876 at St. Peter Mission, Montana, the daughter of J.B. Turcotte and Angélique Paquin. The couple had twelve children. Frank "Napuk" Davis was the first Tribal Judge of the Turtle Mountain Band, appointed in 1920 at the time that a Tribal Judicial system was established as a Court of Indian Offenses. He served as Judge until 1945.⁴

Joseph "Mash-kos-sew" Davis (b. ca. 1862) was born at Pembina, the Metis son of William Davis and Flavie Henry. In 1882 he married Josephine Hamelin, the daughter of Moise Hamelin and Isabelle Wiscon Wichup Laterregrasse at Wood Mountain. They had six children. He was a Plains hunter and moved to the Judith Basin of Montana with his family.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
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⁴ St. Ann's Centennial Committee, *St. Ann's Centennial 1885-1985*. Belcourt, North Dakota: St. Ann's Centennial Committee, 1985: 193, 305.

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