

## **Charlotte Thompson née Small. (1785-1857)**

Charlotte was born in the Canadian Northwest in 1785. Charlotte was the Métis daughter of fur trader Patrick Small and a Cree wife. Her father left the business and abandoned his fur trade family when Charlotte was just five.

Charlotte's father, Patrick Small, was a partner in the North West Company (NWC). In the fall of 1784, Small was sent to Île-à-la-Crosse to run a post for the NWC. Here he met and married a Cree woman, Charlotte's mother, who would bring him not only a family, but the support of her entire Cree community. On September 1, 1785, Charlotte was born. Charlotte also had a sister, Nancy, who would go on to marry NWC partner John McDonald of Garth. Seven years after arriving in Île-à-la-Crosse, Patrick Small retired from the NWC and headed back to Eastern Canada. Fearing the prejudice that awaited his Aboriginal wife and young children, he left alone. Charlotte, Nancy, and their mother remained at the post, living on a pension provided by Patrick.



Charlotte Small and David Thompson  
Statue by Rich Roenisch

At age 13 Charlotte married the 29-year old-explorer and well known map maker David Thompson on June 10, 1799 at Ile-à-la Crosse in the Canadian Northwest. They remained together for 58 years and would have 13 children.

Charlotte and children often traveled with David Thompson on his exploits. During their marriage she travelled over 12,000 miles with her husband. Thompson mapped the largest expanse of North American than anyone else. He retired from the North West in 1812 and relocated his family to an area near Montreal. On October 30, 1812 the couple were remarried in Montreal according to his tradition and Charlotte and the children

remaining at home were also baptized. Charlotte signed the church registry thus leading historians to believe that she could both read and write. The couple never returned to the Canadian Northwest but lived their lives out together in the Montreal area Charlotte died in 1857 only three months after her 87 year old husband died.

The monument shown above commemorating both David Thompson and Charlotte Small was erected by the Windermere Historical Society at the entrance to the town of Invermere, British Columbia.

Reference:

Aretha Ven Herk. "Travels with Charlotte", *Canadian Geographic* Vol. 127. No. 5 July/August 2007: 54-64.



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