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## PIERRE ST. GERMAIN: A MÉTIS HERO OF THE FIRST FRANKLIN EXPEDITION

The Métis played a major role in the development of Manitoba, especially before their social prominence was diluted by the influx of white settlers about 1880. [1] A substantial number of their surnames are commemorated in Winnipeg street names. Because most of the Métis left few written records, it takes considerable effort to ferret out the story of any one of them.

Our detective work, although only a small footnote to the historical record, concerns one of the most interesting and accomplished of the many fur trade employees who retired to the Red River settlement. Pierre St. Germain (1790?-1870?), an intelligent and resourceful voyageur of mixed Chipewyan and French Canadian descent, had many praiseworthy attributes. St. Germain served as interpreter on the First Franklin Expedition, 1819-1822, whose careful mapping of a section of our Arctic shoreline first began to fashion a 'roof' for the map of Canada. [2] He played a central role in the accomplishments, drama, and tragedy of the first Franklin arctic land expedition. Although considered a rogue, a rebel, and a troublemaker by Franklin, St. Germain was Franklin's strongest, most resourceful and versatile servant. Too independent to fit easily into naval discipline, he was nevertheless indispensable. His importance to the expedition has been summarized:

Throughout the entire arctic journey St. Germain was by far the most successful hunter. Strong, resourceful, practical, a man of great stamina, his dexterity was evident in crossing the Burnside in a made-down canoe on 9 September, in ferrying Franklin across Belanger Rapids on 14 September, and in manipulating the little makeshift canvas craft across Obstruction Rapids on 4 October. St. Germain alone had the experience and the ability to improvise, that allowed him single-handedly to make the fragments of 'painted canvas' [Richardson] or 'oil-cloth' [Back] into a cockleshell that finally transported everyone across Obstruction Rapids on 4 October ... Pierre St. Germain was an indispensable man, without whom Franklin, Richardson, Back, and Hepburn would have perished. It was a close call indeed. Without St. Germain, we would have had no surviving officers, no published journals, and no books of natural history observations. [3]

In fact, had Franklin's British concepts of class and race not prevented him from listening, and from labelling Pierre as a trouble-maker and rebel, there might have been fewer than the horrendous eleven fatalities from Franklin's party of twenty.

St. Germain's years of service were divided into 9 years with the North West Company, 29 months with the first Franklin expedition, and a final 12 years with the Hudson's Bay Company, after which he retired to the Red River Settlement on 12 September 1834. We have uncovered compelling evidence of his later 1841 emigration with the James Sinclair party to a homestead in the Cowlitz River valley in Washington state, and of his Washington descendants. His date of death is not known, but he may have been about 80 when he died.

We believe that St. Germain has not received the acclaim that is his due. We wish to correct this injustice because his achievements were substantial, both as a worthy individual and as a representative of the large class of illiterate “servants.” These “half-bloods”, as they were called, provided the human power for canoeing and back-packing; without them the officers of the fur trade and exploring expeditions would have been much restricted in their trade and travel.

St. Germain spoke French and Chipewyan, and some English. He was thoughtful, intelligent, and the one most realistically aware of the dangers of Franklin’s first mission; hence he was the most rebellious member. Franklin came to despise him for his insubordination but Back respected his abilities, and Richardson showed degrees of affection which varied according to St. Germain’s behaviour.

Prior to the publication of the trilogy of officers’ journals from the first Franklin expedition, one of the few published tributes paid to Pierre St. Germain was in the curt biographical index style of Father A. G. Morice:

Franco-Dene Métis who served as interpreter to Sir John Franklin during his first expedition to the arctic (1821). While freely admitting that he was the most intelligent of all [four] of his interpreters, the explorer seems sometimes to doubt his fidelity. There is however no doubt that St. Germain rendered him tremendous services by his skill in hunting and the inexhaustible resources of his inventive mind. He shared the unbelievable privations of the expedition; he seems to have been the one who was most resistant to them. He was evidently the most enterprising of the entire party. Sent with Captain Back to get aid at Fort Enterprise, he had the good fortune to find the famous chief Big Foot (Akaicho), who was the instrument of their salvation. The mother of St. Germain was Chipewyan. [4]

In a previous profile of Pierre St. Germain, one question was foremost. Was the Pierre St. Germain, whom we shall designate as “our” Pierre, guide and interpreter for the first Franklin expedition, the Pierre who retired from the fur trade to be a farmer along the Red River, with both a son and grandson named Pierre? Or was he the Pierre St. Germain who migrated to “Oregon” in 1841? [5]

Initially we leaned to the former explanation because: a) his son and grandson, both named Pierre, remained at the Red River Settlement; b) the biographical entry in the HBC Archives, compiled in the London office in 1954 and loaned by Judith Hudson Beattie, ceased with the census of 1840, with no mention of his departure from Red River; and c) because the Pierre St. Germain in Lewis County, Washington, said to be 85 years old in 1850, was presumed to be too old to be “our” Pierre. This difference in age has remained a sticking point of some concern throughout all subsequent research.

What a tangled web of incomplete and often contradictory information we found as we pursued the matter and tried to sort out the various discrepancies. At first, it was confusing to sort out the St. Germain family with the name Pierre, since Pierre was the second commonest Christian name, after Joseph, in the St. Germain family. Worse, the stated ages of individual people in the Red River did not progress from census to census in concert with the calendar years elapsed, evidently because unschooled people before the era of vital statistics and baptismal records did not remember their year of birth.

### *Athabasca Evidence of Possible Origins*

What of the origins of “our” Pierre St. Germain? Frankly, we don’t know, but we can make an educated guess. It is extremely tempting to suppose that Pierre was the son, or possibly even the grandson, of Paul St. Germain, the latter sometimes called ‘Buffalo Head,’ who wintered at Amisk Lake in 1777-78 and was a guide at Athabasca Lake in 1785 and 1786, with a wage of 1000 livres, four years before “our” Pierre’s supposed birth. [Duckworth](#) cites Peter Fidler in giving Paul St. Germain’s birth date as 1737 and date of death as 16 January 1804. [\[6\]](#)

Father Lou Menez, O.M.I., has confirmed that Francois Beaulieu, ‘Old Man Beaulieu’ or ‘Patriarch Beaulieu,’ had among his female partners on the Slave River, two ‘special ones’; both were St. Germain girls. The eldest, Catherine B. St. Germain, who bore most of Beaulieu’s children, was ‘the daughter of Pierre St. Germain [“our” Pierre’s father??] and Thakavilther. [\[7\]](#) On 30 December 1848, with a given age of 55 (50 according to church records transcribed by Fathers Picard and Mousseau), Catherine had a delayed opportunity to be baptised and married by a priest. [\[8\]](#)

### *Employment With The North West Company*

Here we begin to be on solid ground. The North West Company Ledger, 1811-1821, shows in detail the financial dealings of each employee. The first entry for “our” Pierre St. Germain appears in 1812. His starting salary was 400 livres per year, roughly £20 per year, assuming the usual exchange rate of 20 livres per pound. [\[9\]](#) Pierre’s expenditure on sundries purchased from the company rose from 175 livres during the first year, to 312, 464, 1177, 794, 1303, and 419, respectively, in consecutive years. His wage was raised to 500 livres in the third year, dropped to 400 for two years, then was 700 livres per year in 1817 and 1818, and rose to 1195 livres in 1819. He overspent his income only in the fourth through sixth years. [\[10\]](#)



Joseph St. Germain, the son of Pierre St. Germain, with his wife Marie Anne Plamondon.  
*Source:* Washington State Historical Society

### *Initial Employment With the HBC*

“Our” Pierre St. Germain in 1820 received the remarkably high salary of 2000 livres (£ 100), about the time he switched from the service of the North West Company (NWC) to that of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). [11] Robert McVicar’s Fort Resolution journals tell us that McVicar dispatched Pierre St. Germain on the long trip to Fort Chipewyan on 1 December 1819, with directions to return promptly. Instead, St. Germain chose a longer stay and did not return until 20 January 1820, so as not to miss the New Year’s festivities at Fort Chipewyan. Meanwhile the Company dogs with him were needed for other purposes at Fort Resolution. [12]

### *Employment With the Franklin Expedition*

St. Germain contracted with Franklin at the unprecedented wage for a voyageur of 3000 livres per annum. In comparison, Solomon Belanger, as a steersman, received 2000 livres, Joseph Benoit and Michel Teroahaute as steers-men got 1600 livres, and the remaining voyageurs as “middlemen” got 1200 livres per annum. [13] St. Germain gave good value for his high wages. He accompanied George Back and Robert Hood on their expedition from Fort Enterprise to Point Lake, 29 August - 10 September 1820. When supplies arrived at Fort Providence, he led eight voyageurs from Fort Enterprise to get these supplies, leaving 28 November, carrying the broken axes for repair; he continued on across Great Slave Lake and reached Fort Resolution on 16

December. He left Fort Resolution on 8 January 1821, taking with him the Inuit interpreters, Augustus and Junius, and reached Fort Enterprise on 27 January. [14]

The published narrative of Franklin in 1823 did not show St. Germain in a good light. Franklin considered him “an artful man” but admitted: “Although perfectly satisfied of his baseness, I could not dispense with his services.” Franklin told St. Germain that he “would certainly convey him to England for trial if the Expedition should be stopped through his fault.” St. Germain replied, “It is immaterial to me where I lose my life, whether in England, or accompanying you to the sea, for the whole party will perish.” [15] After the descent of the Coppermine River, and faced with embarkation on the Arctic Ocean in frail birchbark canoes, the two interpreters, St. Germain and Adam, on 19 July requested their discharge, but Franklin refused, fearful of losing the expedition’s two best hunters. To prevent their ‘plan for eloping,’ Franklin conscripted them. He writes: “... lest they should leave us by stealth, their motions were strictly watched ... the rest of the men knowing their own safety would have been compromised had they succeeded, kept a watchful eye over them.” [16]

Recent publication of John Franklin’s extant diaries in 1995, edited by Richard C. Davis, shed additional light on St. Germain’s importance. At the time of hiring, Franklin said “He is represented to be a most valuable man, and bears an excellent character.” St. Germain had exceptional skills in repairing birchbark canoes, and it was he who was assigned to make down the 28-foot canoe into two smaller craft before crossing the barren lands on foot. [17]

The journals of Hood, Richardson and Back (Houston, 1974, 1984, and 1994), [18] treat St. Germain in more sympathetic terms. Back’s narrative pays tribute to the hard work performed by the voyageurs and interpreters: “The perpetual fatigue of transporting canoes &c across the portages,” he says, “had harassed the men considerably and having no other sustenance than bad dried meat—it is only surprising how they maintained sufficient strength to perform their daily labour.” [19] Back next gives us a better insight into the ‘apprehended insurrection’ of the voyageurs, led by St. Germain on 13 August 1820, before they had reached Fort Enterprise. Back’s version is more blunt than Franklin’s: “About 10h AM a mutinous spirit displayed itself amongst the men—they refused to carry the goods any farther alleging a scarcity of provisions as a reason for their conduct—Mr Franklin told them we were too far removed from justice to treat them as they merited—but if such a thing occurred again he would not hesitate to make an example of the first person who should come forward—by ‘blowing out his brains.’ This salutary speech had a weighty effect on the cock weather minds of the Canadians—who without further animadversion returned quietly to their duty”. [20] In *Arctic Ordeal* is the following comment:

One can sense the varying degrees of Richardson’s affection for St. Germain as he calls him in turn: Pierre, Pierez, Perez, and Pieresh; he used the affectionate diminutive Pierrot after St. Germain had been particularly helpful. However, Richardson’s use of ‘Pierrot’ confused Franklin greatly and caused him twice in the published journal to ascribe actions to Perrault [the voyageur] that in Richardson’s journal are credited to St. Germain. One of these was the sharing of an extra portion of meat with the officers on 14 September, an act of generosity singled out for special mention in Louis Melzack’s introduction to the recent reprint of Franklin’s journal. The second was the crucial killing of a fine caribou on 15 September, when they were starving. [21]

When St. Germain left Franklin's employment on 7 January 1822, he received a draft on the Hudson's Bay Company for 6259 Halifax livres (about £ 313), for service from 1 February 1820 through 6 July 1822. [22]



Captain John Franklin. Pierre St. Germain accompanied Franklin on his disastrous first overland journey to the Arctic Ocean between 1819 and 1822. From *The Arctic Grail* by Pierre Berton.

### *Employment With the HBC After Amalgamation*

Following the union of the HBC and NWC in 1821, and interpreter Pierre St. Germain's discharge from duty with the First Franklin Arctic Exploring Expedition, in which 9 of 11 voyageurs and one of two Inuit interpreters lost their lives, Pierre St. Germain reached Fort Chipewyan on 21 January 1822. [23] Fortunately the record of his hiring on 6 September 1822 by Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod has been preserved in the HBC archives. [24]

Just over two years later, in the "List of People having Families supported at the Company's Establishments in McKenzie's River District," signed by Edward Smith on 20 May 1824, only Pierre St. Germain and John Baptiste Adam, the two Chipewyan interpreters with Franklin, are said to have originated from "Canada NW," not from "Canada" [Quebec], as other voyageurs were listed. St. Germain's occupation on this and subsequent Company documents was consistently "Interpreter," a designation given to no other St. Germain. His residence was given as Fort Perseverance, now Fort Norman, and his "12 years of service" corroborate 1811-12 as the first year of his service with the North West Company. In 1823 and again in 1824 St. Germain's salary was 1000 livres per annum. [25]

Smith in 1824 listed Pierre St. Germain as having one woman; he was also the "immediate protector" in both 1823 and 1824 of a female child, daughter of Antoine Paul, voyageur. [26] When Antoine Paul had left the northwest in 1822, Pierre St. Germain presumably undertook

care of the unnamed Native woman and child that Paul left behind. In view of later entries in the Red River census it is slightly disconcerting to find no mention of a son of his own at this time.

In September 1826, St. Germain had his final opportunity to provide assistance to John Franklin. Only three days after Edward Smith had arrived at Fort Simpson on 18 September with two canoe loads of goods from York Factory destined for Franklin, the explorer had returned to his winter quarters at Fort Franklin on Great Bear Lake following his second, more successful Arctic Exploration west from the mouth of the Mackenzie River. On 22 September, Smith sent St. Germain and Francois Vennance in one canoe from Fort Simpson downstream to Fort Norman near the mouth of the Bear River, with the needed replacement of warm clothing and other goods to see the exploring party through their final winter. Kendall came down the Bear River to get them and returned to Fort Franklin, Great Bear Lake on 8 October. [27]

The HBC books for 1824 through 1834 clearly and unequivocally refer to “our” Pierre, as “Native, Interpreter, Franklin Expedition” with wages steady at £25 per year. Twice his age is given. The York Factory journal for 1825-26, gives his age as 35 years, and the 1829-30 journal records 39 years. [28] These two estimates of age are the best available, and would place his birth about 1790. When he retired to Red River Settlement, he shaved ten years off his age. Later, in Washington, if this is the same Pierre, his age became grossly exaggerated.

Each year the York Factory account books record his financial situation in considerable detail. On one occasion, in 1828, Pierre gave a donation of two shillings to the Catholic church. Also in 1828, presumably saving for his retirement, he transferred part of his accumulated savings, an impressive sum of £ 69-13-9, from his current company account to a savings account, leaving £11-9-3 in his regular account. The savings account paid 3% interest in 1830 and thereafter 2¼ %. In only one year, 1830, did expenditures of £ 28-15-1 slightly exceed his income. [29] It is clear that Pierre managed his finances prudently. Another contract for “our” interpreter dated from 1 June 1830, for another two year term as Interpreter at a yearly stipend of £25 sterling. [30]

### *Retirement to Red River*

The evidence for retirement to the Red River colony is also unequivocal. When “our” Pierre St. Germain retired to the colony on 12 September 1834, his credit totalled £134-1-11. [31] On 14 April 1835 he purchased 50 acres of river land, lot 47 in St. Vital. [32] Sprague and Fry list Pierre’s birthplace as “NWT,” his date of birth as 1800, a disconcerting drop of ten years in age, and his wife as Lizette Sutherland, Métis, Roman Catholic, born 1801.” [33]

In the Red River Census of 1835 “our” Pierre St. Germain was inhabitant #494, Native Catholic, married, 1 woman, 1 son over 16, one son under 16, 2 daughters under 6. [34] In the 1838 census this same Pierre St. Germain, under index number #506, had now 3 daughters under 15, the boys having left home. His age was given as 38, when “our” Pierre was 48. [35] Again in 1840 he was listed as aged 40 when “our” Pierre was 50. He now had an additional (third) acre of cultivated land and had added another harrow, a cart and a canoe to his belongings. [36] This Pierre St. Germain family, acceptable as “ours” in spite of the ten-year discrepancy in reporting of age, then disappears from the Red River record, save for son Pierre, Jr., born about 1817, and his son Pierre III, born about 1848. Both remained at Red River. [37] Sprague and Fry assign number 4605 to

Pierre and 4606 to Pierre, Jr., with a definite statement that 4606, Pierre St. Germain, is the son of 4605, [‘our] Pierre St. Germain. Pierre, Jr. may already have married Charlotte Larocque, about one year younger than he, before his father, mother, two brothers and three sisters set out for the Columbia river.

Two other St. Germain named Pierre, listed in the 1870 Red River Settlement census, born about 1830 and 1858, were identifiably sons of Joseph and of Augustin St. Germain, respectively, neither of whom had any known relationship to “our” Pierre. [38] We do not know the origin of the Pierre St. Germain, who signed a contract with the HBC on 12 June 1866 at Fort Garry, for service at Brochet. [39]



Grave of Joseph St. Germain.  
*Source:* Washington State Historical Society

### *With the James Sinclair Emigration Party*

It now seems almost indisputable that “our” Pierre became emigrant #16, among the “23 families, amounting to 121 souls,” who emigrated overland in 1841. [40] In the List of Emigrants for the Columbia, he is listed as having a wife and five children. [41] We speculate that son Pierre, Jr., the one over 16 in the 1835 census, stayed behind at Red River, and that son Joseph, the one under 16 in the 1835 census, went with his family. A final addition to Pierre’s family, in the form of Simon, born about 1840, arrived between the 1838 census and the 1841 departure.

Duncan Finlayson, under orders from George Simpson, hoped to entice 50 families to settle north of the Columbia, and thus “reduce pressures in the colony while strengthening British claims in the Columbia territory.” [42] Each family was promised “£10 sterling in advance, goods for the journey, horses and provisions at the forts on the route ... and on arrival ... houses, barns, and

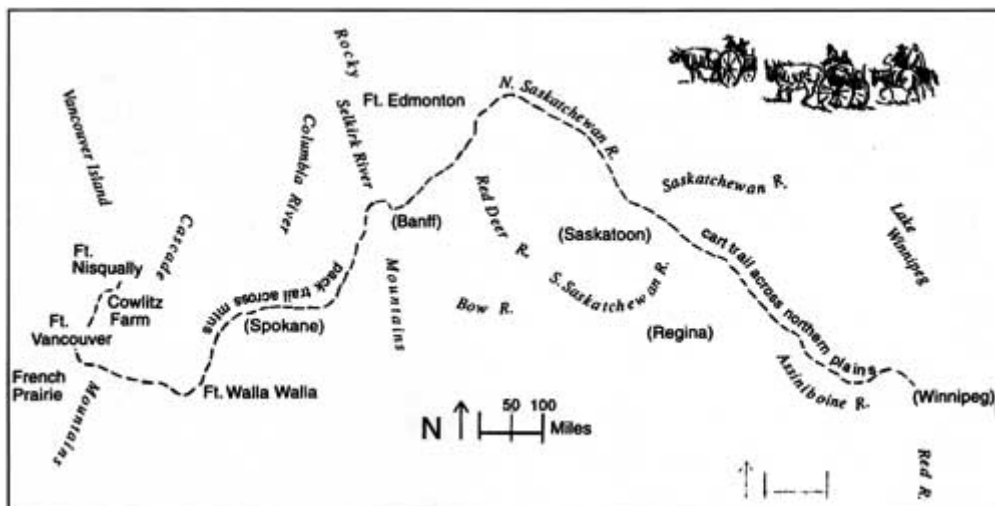


fenced fields, with fifteen cows, one bull, fifteen ewes, one ram, and oxen or horses, with farming implements and seed.” [43]

The emigration party, led by the “stout-hearted, part Indian James Sinclair,” [44] the 35-year-old son of Chief Factor William Sinclair, left Fort Garry on 3 June 1841. They set out 28 days ahead of HBC Governor George Simpson, who was on the first stage of his round-the-world journey. Sinclair’s party reached Fort Ellice on 22 June. [45] On his 16<sup>th</sup> day out of Red River, on 19 July, the speedy Simpson overtook the 23 Red River families near the Turtle River, in present western Saskatchewan, two days after they had left Fort Carlton ... Simpson gave them a favourable report:

These emigrants consisted of agriculturists and others, principally Natives of Red River settlement ... the band contained several very young travelers, who had, in fact, made their appearance in this world since the commencement of the journey. Beyond the inevitable detention, which seldom exceeded a few hours, these interesting events had never interfered with the progress of the brigade; and both mother and child used to jog on, as if jogging on were the condition of human existence. Each family had two or three carts, together with bands of horses, cattle, and dogs. The men and lads traveled in the saddle, while the vehicles, which were covered with awnings against the sun and rain, carried the women and the young children. As they marched in single file, their cavalcade extended above a mile in length...The emigrants were all healthy and happy, living in the greatest abundance and enjoying the journey with the highest relish. [46]

Deserted by their Métis guide, Sinclair’s emigrants were providentially guided by a Cree Indian, Mackipitoon or “Crooked Arm.” They travelled up the Bow River, ascended the Spray River, crossed White Man Pass, descended the Cross River to the Kootenay valley, [47] and then ascended Sinclair Creek across the narrow Stanford Range to descend Sinclair Canyon, the site of modern Radium Hot Springs, now named for their leader. [48] They passed by Lake Pend d’Oreille and reached Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River on 4 October; that night the fort burned down, but “these emigrants assisted in moving the stock and effects and by their opportune presence most of the property was saved.” [49] They continued on to Fort Vancouver, near the mouth of the Columbia River, where they arrived on 12 October 1841. [50]



Trail followed by the Sinclair expedition to the Oregon Territory, 1841. Pierre St. Germain and members of his family accompanied the expedition and settled at Cowlitz.  
*Source:* John C. Jackson, Courtesy of the Mountain Press Publishing Co.

### *Cowlitz Settlement, Lewis County, Washington*

In 1838 the HBC had chosen the open meadows and gently rolling hills near the bend of the Cowlitz River, near present Toledo, and about 30 km north of present Kelso, Washington, as the most attractive place north of the Columbia River for the relocation of “British subjects.” The Cowlitz was accessible by boat from the Columbia River and at the south end of the overland portage to Fort Nisqually. HBC Governor George Simpson had hoped the advent of these settlers would help to maintain the land north of the Columbia River as HBC and British territory, since the boundary compromise of 1818 had given the 49th parallel as the boundary as far as the Rocky Mountains, but left the “Oregon Country” west of the Rockies “under a frustrating compromise of joint occupancy.” [51] However, the 14 pre-dominantly Protestant families, nine of them of Orkney descent, desiring to plant crops, were settled instead on the gravelly meadows at Nisqually where herding was the only reasonable activity; within three years all of them moved south to the Tualatin Plains, west of the Willamette River and south of the present city of Portland, Oregon, as did all but three of the French-speaking families who had first settled at Cowlitz. [52]

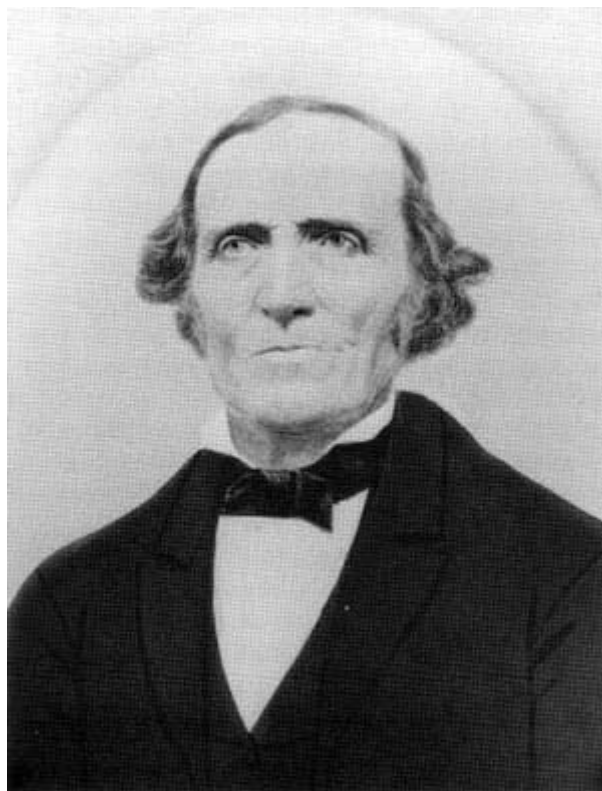
On 1 November 1842, a newly-ordained missionary, Father J. B. Z. Bolduc (30 November 1818 - 8 May 1889), made his first visit to the small settlement of St. Francois Xavier on the Cowlitz Prairie on 1 November 1842. Bolduc noted thirteen families, eleven of whom were ‘Canadians,’ but of these only St. Germain, Rhelle and Bernier had come with James Sinclair’s overland party. [53]

### *Pierre St. Germain and Son Joseph St. Germain at Cowlitz*

Pierre St. Germain is mentioned six times in the early Catholic Church records in Oregon Territory, between 7 June 1842 and 7 April 1844. In each instance he used his witnessed ‘X’ since, as the priest recorded, he knew not how to sign his name. [54]

Munnick’s biographical sketches of Joseph and Pierre St. Germain begin with Joseph:

“Joseph St. Germain was probably the son of old Pierre St. Germain although documentary proof is wanting. His stone in the Cowlitz Cemetery gives the date of his birth as 1822; he himself gave November 20, 1825, on his pension application. He stated also that he was born in Winnipeg, that he was five feet nine inches in height, with brown eyes, black hair and light complexion. Joseph married Marie Anne Plamondon in 1845, and was the father of fifteen children.” [55] Marie Anne Plamondon was the daughter of Simon Plamondon and Sehaneewah, a Cowlitz Indian woman. The marriage took place in ‘Lewis County, Oregon Territory.’ before Washington split off into a separate colony in 1853. Joseph St. Germain’s father-in-law, Simon Plamondon, was an important historical figure in his own right, the first white settler in Cowlitz valley [56] about the same vintage and durability as Pierre St. Germain.



Simon Plamondon, the father of Joseph St. Germain's wife Marie Anne Plamondon.  
*Source:* Cowlitz County Historical Museum, Kelso, Washington

Of Pierre St. Germain, Munnick wrote:

“If the scattered references all apply to the same man, he was a half-breed interpreter for the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Athabaska District in 1818, a member of the earlier expedition of Franklin to the Arctic regions, and perhaps the ‘Soteaux St. Germain’ with Work in 1830-31. It is a bit difficult to reconcile these items, as well as the name of Pierre St. Germain as a member of the Red River migration of 1841. Joseph, above, would seem to have been his son. Another St. Germain, apparently a workman at Cowlitz farm, and perhaps a son of Pierre, died in a measles epidemic in 1848.” [57] Munnick is wrong in making any connection between “our” Pierre and Soteaux St. Germain, but it seems entirely possible that “our” old Pierre was now showing the signs of aging that might have been anticipated from the arduous travels he had made with Franklin and as a voyageur. [58] More complete information is recorded in the US Census, Oregon Territory, 1850, which lists Pierre St. Germain, 85, male, no declared occupation, born in Canada; Joseph St. Germain, 25, male, farmer, born in New Caledonia; Mary A. (Plummondon), 18, female, born in Oregon Territory; Rozella, 2, female, Oregon Territory. [59] Marie Anne, wife of Joseph St. Germain, was by this count born in 1832. Pierre’s age was presumably exaggerated by 25 years!

The birth year of Pierre’s son Joseph St. Germain is almost equally vague. Joseph swore an affidavit that he had been born on McKenzie’s River in 1825 (the last figure is difficult to read, and could be 1828). [60] Joseph’s age was exaggerated on his tombstone, which gave his year of

birth as 1822. His age of 16 on arrival and age 25 in 1850 census are consistent with the date of birth of 1825 given on his pension application. Joseph filed intention to become an American citizen on 12 November 1850. [61]

Mrs. Pierre St. Germain died at Cowlitz in 1844, although this is not confirmed in the church records, which do record the death that year of her son, Simon, at age four. In April 1846 Pierre and Joseph St. Germain moved a few miles north to a point 4.5 km north of the west bank of Liquimah Creek, now Lacamas Creek. [62] Pierre filed the pre-emption for 640 acres of land on 17 May 1847. Pierre and his son Joseph participated in the Cowlitz declaration against claim jumping on 11 June 1847, the year that Pierre was the major taxpayer, paying \$3 on \$200 worth of horses, \$50 of cattle and \$50 of hogs. In November 1853, when the next application was permitted, only Joseph made application for a Donation Land Claim of 640 acres of land. The lack of an application from Pierre suggests that by then he had retired from active farming.

Henry, son of Joseph St. Germain, confirmed years later that his father had come to Oregon in 1841 at the age of 16 years. Joseph died at a ripe old age on 22 January 1908, after 66 years of married life. [63] When Mary Anne, nee Plamondon, died on 3 November 1917, her obituary account said that she had, as “daughter of the first white settler north of Fort Vancouver, ... witnessed the coming of the whites in colonization groups; the passing of the land and its wealth from the hands of her grandfather’s people to the eastern emigrants.” [64]

## *Conclusion*

We are fortunate that the HBC records and Oregon records are as complete and specific as they are, and are especially grateful for the reminiscences of the oldest survivor of the Red River emigration party of 1841, John Flat. Evidence that the Pierre St. Germain who emigrated in this party was the same man who served the Franklin expedition is provided by an item (without a named author, but widely believed to have been by John Flett or from an interview with him) in the Washington Standard for 25 August 1882:

“This aged patriarch had accompanied Sir John Franklin as interpreter on his first Arctic Expedition. But few years ago he died at Cowlitz Prairie, Lewis county, at the great age of 105 years.” [65]

It remains disconcerting that his year of death has not yet been ascertained. To the extent that one can place credence in the “but few years” in the Washington Standard account of 1882, it is presumed that Pierre died at some time in the 1870s, when he would have been in his 80s. Clearly “our” Pierre was about 51 years old when left the Red River Colony in 1841 and moved to what is now Lewis county, Washington. In 1850, when he was about 60 years old, he evidently claimed to be 85. If he and his family maintained a constant 25 years exaggeration of his age beyond that year, then he may have died as early as 1870, roughly at 80 years of age (1790 plus 105, minus 25). The fact that our hero lived at least into his eighties is additional evidence of a strong constitution, even if he fell well short of the family’s claim that he died at 105.

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## *Notes*

1. [Gerhard J. Ens](#), *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 175.
2. L. H. Neatby, *In Quest of the North West Passage*. (Toronto: Longmans Green, 1958), 80
3. C. S. Houston, *Arctic Ordeal, The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-Naturalist with Franklin, 1820-1822*. (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 216.
4. A. G. Morice, "Pierre St. Germain," *Dictionnaire Historique des Canadiens et des Métis française de l'ouest* (Quebec: J.-P. Garneau, 1908), 271 (translated by Margaret Belcher).
5. C. S. Houston, "Pierre St. Germain (1790-1843?)", *Arctic* 39 (1986), 370-371.
6. [H. W. Duckworth](#), ed., *The English River Book: A North West Company Journal and Account Book of 1786* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 168.
7. This Chipewyan name is also spelled "Thakanilther," according to Patricia A. McCormack, in litt., 22 January 1995.
8. Fort Chipewyan Catholic Church register, Fr. Lou Menez, OMI, pers. comm. Beaulieu's other country wife, Louise St. Germain, was the daughter of Jacques St. Germain and 'une Montagnais' (a Chipewyan woman); there is a record of Louise's baptism in 1847 at Fort Chipewyan, with a given age of 45 years, or as 40 years in the records of Fathers Picard and Mousseau. Louise was the mother of Alexis Beaulieu, Francois' youngest son.
9. At other times the exchange rate could be as low as 12 Halifax livres per pound, ([Duckworth](#), *English River Book*, 48, 178), or as high as 26.67 livres per pound (cf. in 1824, B.239/ x1, Reel 1M8.).
10. North West Company Ledger, 1811-1821 (HBCA F.4/32. Reel 5M7) 855.
11. C. S. Houston, *Arctic Ordeal*, 215.
12. Fort Resolution journals, HBCA B.181 /a/2. 1819-1820, and B.181 /a/ 3. 1820-1821.

13. Richard C. Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition*. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1995), 158-159.
14. Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals*, 94.
15. Franklin, *Narrative*, 1823, 295-296.
16. Franklin, *Narrative*, 1823, 356.
17. Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals*, 236.
18. The full citation for *Arctic Ordeal* (1984) is provided in [footnote 3](#) above. The first volume of the trilogy of Franklin's officers' journals, was titled *To The Arctic by Canoe, the Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1821* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974). The third volume was titled *Arctic Artist, The Journal and Paintings of George Back, Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1822* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
19. Houston, *Arctic Artist*, 77.
20. Houston, *Arctic Artist*, 81.
21. Houston, *Arctic Ordeal*, 216.
22. Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals*, 236.
23. Houston, *Arctic Artist*, 352.
24. HBCA A.32/52, p. 113, reel 414. On 6 September 1822 St. Germain was hired for two years at 1000 Montreal livres per annum (the new Governor, George Simpson, had pared wages in an effort to run a leaner company). The agreement was witnessed by Robert Henry and Alexander Robertson. St. Germain is listed as natif du Pays, hired in the capacity of Interpreter, and as always signed a witnessed 'X' as his, 'marque.'
25. Fort Simpson Journal, 1822-1824, B.200/e/2
26. Fort Simpson Journal, B200/e/2.
27. Fort Simpson journal, 1826-1827, HBCA B.200/a/8; John Franklin, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827*. (London: John Murray, 1828), 184, 288.
28. York Factory Journal, B239/g/5, reel 1M 800; B139/ g/9, reel 1M 801.
29. York Factory account books, B.239 /x/4, reel 1M 862, p. 520.

30. HBCA A.32/52, pp. 113-116, reel 414. The contract, to which was added ¼ barrel sugar and ¼ sack flour, was completed at York Factory on 16 July 1830. It was signed by Chief Factor Peter W. Dease and witnessed by John Andries.
31. Sprague and Frye , Table 3, unnumbered p. 149, under #4605 gives, in error, Pierre St. Germain 's company service as only five years, from 1827 until his retirement in 1832.
32. Lot 47, St. Vital, lot 790 according to the older HBC numbering system, was bought for the going rate of 7 shillings, sixpence per acre, or £18-15. That year Duncan McDougal paid the same price for 50 acres (B235/d/59, Lower Red River outfit 1834, fo. 31).
33. Sprague and Frye. *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation: the Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820-1900*. (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983).
34. Red River Census, 1835, HBCA E.5/8.
35. Red River Census, 1838, E5/8; Sprague and Fry Index # 506.
36. Red River Census, 1840, E5/10.
37. Sprague and Frye, *Genealogy*, 1983, Tables 1 and 4, unnumbered pp. 110, 200. Both namesakes, son and grandson, signed the 29 November 1869 petition opposing formation of a Provisional Government by Louis Riel.
38. Sprague and Frye, *Genealogy*, 1983, Table 1, unnumbered pp. 110 and 200, lists Augustin St. Germain, #4592, born 1824, who had a 12-year-old son, Pierre, in the 1870 Red River Census. Pierre St. Germain, age 40, St. Norbert, son of Joseph St. Germain, himself had a son, Pierre, Jr., age 17, in the 1870 Red River Census. Pierre St. Germain [junior] whose wife's surname is now given as Rogue instead of Larocque, had five children in the 1870 census: Pierre [III], aged 24; Marianne, 22; Charles, 21; Joseph, 16; Amable, 13. They lived between lots 41 and 44 in St. Boniface.
39. HBCA A.32/52, fo. 116-119d.
40. G. Williams, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-42*. (London: [Hudson's Bay Record Society](#), 1973), 29:xxv, 35.
41. List of Emigrants for the Columbia (HBCA F/26/1, fo. 2).
42. J. S. Galbraith. Introduction, pp. xi - lviii, In Williams G., *London Correspondence Inward*. (London: [Hudson's Bay Record Society](#), 1973), 29:76.
43. W. J. Betts. "From Red River to the Columbia: The Story of a Migration." *The Beaver* 301(4), (1971), 50-55; J. Flett. "A sketch of the emigration from Selkirk's settlement to Puget Sound in 1841." *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 18 February 1885.

44. G. P. V. Akrigg, and H. B. Akrigg. *British Columbia chronicle, 1778-1846: Adventurers by sea and land*. (Vancouver: Discovery Press, 1975), 336.; I. M. Spry. "James Sinclair." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (1851-1860) 8 (1985): 819-820; D. Geneva Lent, *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963).
45. G. Simpson, *An Overland Journey round the World during the years 1841 and 1842*. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1847), 336.
46. G. Simpson, *An Overland Journey*, 62.
47. I. M. Spry. "Routes through the Rockies." *The Beaver* 294(2)(Autumn 1953),26-39.
48. Akrigg and Akrigg, *British Columbia Chronicle*, 336.
49. J. Flett (unsigned). "Oregon reminiscences, 1841: The Red River colony to Puget Sound." *Washington Standard*, 25 August 1882. Washington State Library, microfilm drawer 280.
50. John Flett, "A sketch of the emigration from Selkirk's settlement to Puget Sound in 1841." *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 18 February 1885.
51. John C. Jackson, *Shadow of the Tetons: David E. Jackson and the Claiming of the American West* (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1993), 52.
52. John C. Jackson, "Red River settlers vs. Puget Sound Agricultural Company, 1854-55", *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 85(1984):279-289; Joseph Heath, *Memoirs of Nisqually*. (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1979), 9.
53. Father Bolduc said that all eleven families (Bernier, Bouchard, Coutenoir, Faignant, Farron, Lapoterie, Leclerc, Ledoux, Losiere, Plamondon, and St. Germain), were "fairly good Christians." E. J. Kowrach, ed., *Mission of the Columbia: Jean Baptiste Zacharie Bolduc* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1979), 93, and "Mission to the Cowlitz," unpublished manuscript by John C. Jackson. See W. S. Wallace, "Bolduc, Jean Baptiste Zacharie" in W. S. Wallace, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada* (Toronto: University Associates of Canada, 1935), 253-254.
54. Pierre St. Germain was godfather at baptisms of Angelique Okanaya, the 17-year-old daughter of a Hawaiian father and a Chinook Indian mother; one-year-old Michel, the son of unnamed 'infidel' [non-Catholic] parents, and 15-year-old Susanne Cowlitz, daughter of 'infidel' Indians. He was witness to the marriage between Michel Cotnoir, Jr., son of Michel Cotnoir and a Chinook woman, and Sophie Plamondon, daughter of Simon Plamondon and a Cowlitz woman. He was also a witness at the burial of Marie Cowlitz and to the marriage of Louis Leclerc, formerly of Montreal, and Susanne Cowlitz. M. deL. W. Warner, and H. D. Munnick. 1972. *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest*. (St. Paul, Oregon: French Prairie Press, 1972) I, 71-76.
55. Warner and Munnick, *Catholic Church Records*, A-72.



56. E. S. Meany. "Living pioneers of Washington." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 26 April 1916.
57. Warner and Munnick, *Catholic Church Records*, A-72-73.
58. The name, "Pierre St. Germain" is found under "Pioneer Families of the Oregon Territory, 1860," (Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library Bulletin #3, Second edition, 1961, Publication 17, p. 51, Lewis 2, Sc 1 )."
59. US Census, Oregon Territory, Lewis County, Schedule 1, page 53, house 3.
60. Donation Land Claim patent papers, Oregon Provisional Land Claim Book (Book IV, 299) for 640 acres, contain a claim dated 28 April 1865, based on Notification 3236, filed 8 November 1853.
61. J. Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade: The Forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest*. (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1995). By 1865 the St. Germain land at Cowlitz was already worth \$20 to \$25 an acre.
62. The new farm, placed immediately north of the present small Matilda Jackson State Park, on a modern 1:24,000 topographical map, measured 3.3 km in width and 1.0 km in a north-south direction.
63. Joseph's sons were Joseph, Jr., William, John, Abel, and Henry (Meany, 1916). When the family left the Cowlitz farm, some of them moved into Tacoma. In 1911 Marie Anne moved to live with her son, Henry St. Germain. In 1917, the Tacoma City Directory showed Joseph St. Germain, Jr., and his wife Grace living at 2317 South G Street. Henry D. St. Germain and his wife Frances had his mother, Marie Anne, living with them at 2350 South G St.
64. *Tacoma News-Ledger*, 4 November 1917. Mary Anne, as she often spelled her name, was survived by a half-brother and half-sister at Winlock, four sons and three daughters—Henry and Alex of Tacoma, Abel of Humptulips, John of Vader, Mrs. Rose Jennings and Mrs. Veronica Peichel of Tacoma and Mrs. Louise Robert [s] of Orting. Mary Anne was buried at Winlock.
65. J. Flett, Oregon Reminiscences, 1841. *Washington Standard*, 25 August 1882.

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[http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/34/franklinhero.shtml#top](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/34/franklinhero.shtml#top)