

HYACINTHE VILLENEUVE

Submitted by Miles Luke

This interesting story represents detailed excerpts from a lengthy interview of Hyacinthe Villeneuve's life as told to Mrs John Mahon and printed in the GRAND FORKS HERALD, SUNDAY MARCH 23, 1930. Hyacinthe is a brother of my grandfather Alexander Villeneuve (Newton) who was born January 17, 1860 in Le Roy, North Dakota and died January 13, 1936, in Bemidji, Minnesota. When I was a small boy I remember him during visits to Bemidji.

About Hyacinthe Villeneuve as told to Mrs John Mahon

I was born in Grand Prairie, Canada, November 10, 1847. My father, Frank Villeneuve, was born in Montreal, lower Canada, of French parentage. My parents left the Peace River country when I was four years old. We came by canoe on the Peace River to Lake Winnipeg, then on the Rainy River to Lake Superior. We lived one year at Sault Saint Marie and here my mother gave birth to her fourteenth child and gave up her life. Hyacinthe's Mother, Helene Vallee Villeneuve, died in Sault Saint Marie, June 23, 1855, and was buried there. She was 35 years old when she died and she was an American. Hyacinthe was only 3 years old when she died.



We lived in Winnipeg four years, then my father married a widow with six sons but we had so much trouble in getting along together that my father let us all go to strangers. We all found good homes and mine was exceptionally good. Charles Bottineau took me and I lived in his home for many years. They had no children of their own and I lived on with them after I had some family of my own. My wife, Pauline Lawrence Villeneuve, was a niece of the wives of both Pierre Bottineau and Charles Bottineau.

Charles Bottineau and a partner bought a store in Walhalla in 1859. Mrs. Bottineau and I lived in Winnipeg until her husband got our home ready to live in. Their business included not only a fur and supply store but also a ranch with several hundred head of stock, cattle, ponies, hogs, chickens, etc. We moved into the log home in the fall of 1861. I was 14 years old. This was a wonderful home for that time. They were rich people and fine to all the poor. There was no other house between Pembina and Walhalla and for years everyone would meet there. Charles Bottineau, in addition to his store at Walhalla operated, what I believe was the first model farm in the Territory of the Dakotas.

He bought the first wagon brought into this country from the Sioux Indians who made their escape in it from the scene of their massacre of the whites near Yellow Medicine and Redwood, Minn., in 1862. I remember the Sioux having with them at this time two white children. Mr. Bottineau traded goods to them for the boys and he later found the father of

one of them in St. Paul and an uncle of the other at St. Cloud.

My work was around the home caring for the stock and about the house with Mrs. Bottineau. If Mr. Bottineau was out of town I chored about the store too. One fall we were alone, the clerk and I, and late in the afternoon we saw 10 or 12 Indians coming to the store. They came up rather wildly and daringly, saying they wanted liquor and grub or something else. They finally grew so bold as to begin chopping the building with their tomahawks. There were about 4 barrels of whisky standing along the wall and they began chopping open at that time to bail feed in the yard and some smaller pails. They used the pails to fill up the kettle with whiskey. This happened on Saturday afternoon and when they carried off the kettle they said they would be back for more but they got too drunk. All they could do was to shout and yell and sing around the streets. They came back Sunday still feeling good and wanted to break into some more barrels, but the clerk told them they could not do that when Mr. Bottineau was about and he would take care of them if they did anymore damage.

Charles Bottineau took me with him on a freighting trip to St. Paul when I was only 17 years old and I never missed going every year after that as long as the freighting was done by carts and oxen. We had an average of 80 to 120 carts in the train and usually sold our foods in St. Paul. Wholesale men from New York, Chicago or Boston met us there and bought them. We usually left Walhalla about the 20th of May and would reach St. Paul by July 4. We rested our oxen for about three weeks and loaded supplies for the store, getting home the last of August if the weather and roads were good. There was only one trail to St. Paul until we got 45 miles below Fargo, than there were two roads.

Charles Bottineau farmed first one quarter, then he farmed three quarter. He learned farming in Minnesota and had a good head to work out the needs of the land and the care and feeding of the stock of which he had plenty of all kinds. They treated me in their home just as they would their own son. I went with them when I was 20 years old to Winnipeg to have a visit with Mrs. Bottineau's parents. It was at that time I first met Pauline Lawrence, who later became my wife. She was 16 and I almost 21 when we were married on February 14 1867.

In May of that year I drove Charles Bottineau to Pembina to transact some business. We spent the night at the home of Joseph Rolette. Next morning I was up at sunrise and heard 4 men across the river on the St. Vincent side calling for help. They seemed to be in a great hurry and wanted someone to come with a skill and take them across. I woke both Mr. Rolette and Mr. Bottineau and they sent the boat and found it was Pierre Bottineau and the Governor of Minnesota. They had with them the Governor's brother-in-law who was also the government doctor. Pierre Bottineau was the guide. They had 4 carts and 2 extra men to drive them.

There was no ferry across the river and they ordered rigs in Pembina before they would take time to eat breakfast, in order that they could go at once to Winnipeg. Charles Bottineau sent me to take them. We had a fine spring wagon and a lovely team of drivers that we had raised ourselves, well broken, no bad habits at all. When I drove the team up in front of the hotel and the governor was told all was ready he looked the outfit over and asked who would drive it. They told him that boy and he murmured something about my age but both Mr. Rolette and Charles Bottineau told him that if he would not take me they had no other man to go.

I made all preparations so we could have whatever we needed, including canvas to cover us in case of a storm. The Governor warned me that he must be back in 5 days to Pembina.

We kept to the beaten trail for 10 miles and then turned off onto the prairie. There were no settlers and we followed Plum coulee for 3 miles. There I found a shallow place in the Red River and low banks on both sides. I got off and the governor asked Pierre what I was going to do and he told him I was going to strap the box of supplies to the axle of the wagon so that it would not be lost in the river, when the horses were swimming across. I spread my canvas over the wagon under the men and told the governor to settle himself firmly as the horses were good swimmers and we could cross in a hurry. When we were safely over Pierre made the Governor say that I was good enough. The doctor, to show his approval, took from his satchel a flask of whiskey but I had to tell him, "No, I have never yet tasted whiskey." We next stopped at the home of a well-to-do farmer of that time. I stopped at the door and let the men off the rig. The Governor told me the stable boy was paid to take care of my team and to let him do it. I told him no man could feed the team I drove but myself. The Governor then ordered dinner for 4 and when I came in the table was set for the family and 3 plates for us. My plate was set in the kitchen. The Governor was angry and told the farmer he had ordered dinner for 4 people. The man told him mine was in the kitchen and the governor told him to bring it into the dining room as he wanted me to eat with the rest.

When we reached Winnipeg about 6pm, the Governor ordered rooms for each of us at the hotel. He told me not to leave the waiting room as he might need me at any time. He and I left Winnipeg next morning for Point Douglas, where the Governor went to see a Minister on business. In the afternoon we went to Fort Gerry.

We made the trip back to Pembina in 5 days all right and I was a rich man going home to my wife. The Governor gave me \$10 per day and \$14 for a present. Sixty-four dollars was a lot to make in 5 days at that time.

PEMBINA COUNTY PIONEER BURIED: **Walhalla Mountaineer, Walhalla North Dakota, 21 Dec 1933**

Hyacinthe Villeneuve is laid to rest at Olga: Was one of the states Early Settlers. Funeral services were held Friday at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church at Olga for Hyacinthe Villeneuve, 87 years old, one of the northeastern North Dakota's oldest pioneers. He died Wednesday following a stroke suffered three weeks ago. The services were in charge of Rev L.A. C Ducharme and burial was in the Olga cemetery beside the remains of Mrs Villeneuve. Mr. Villeneuve had been a resident of North Dakota since 1852, living first in Pembina county and moving to Cavalier county in 1895. He was born at Peace River Alta. the son of Frank and Eliza Villeneuve, Nov 10, 1846. His mother died when he was four years old and two years later he came with his father and other members of the family to Pembina after having lived a short time at Grand Prairie and Ste.Saulte Marie. In Pembina he was adopted by Mr and Mrs. Charles Bottineau, pioneer Pembina county couple. He returned to Canada in 1870 and at St. Norbert Man, married Pauline Laurence, and the couple came to Neche where they farmed. The Bottineau family moved west and settled in the new territory which later was organized as Bottineau county. The Villeneuves moved to the Rush Lake vicinity in 1895 and filed on a homestead before the railroad was built through that territory. They later moved to a claim 15 miles west of Langdon where they lived for four years and later moved to a farm in the Beaulieu district. Mrs Villeneuve died in 1911 and Mr. Villeneuve lived with his children there until coming to Langdon last fall to live with his son and DIL, Mr and Mrs John Villeneuve. Thirteen children were born to the pioneer couple. Nine of the number survive their father. They are : Albert of Beaulieu, Mrs Charles Nault of St. Clara Man; Mrs A Laraviere of Beaulieu; Frank of Walkerburn, Man; George of Turtle River, Minn; Mrs Jennie

Darling of Langdon; Mrs J. F. Landreth of Bayrd, Neb; John of Landgon, and Mrs. W. A. Dewell of Dodge City, Kan. Most of the 35 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren also survive. Though he had 11 brothers and 1 sister, none of them are living.