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Article Summary: Fort Bernard was strategically located, about 8 miles east of forts Platte and Laramie on the North Platte River in a region known as "Sarpy's Point." This is the story of Fort Bernard, established during the summer of 1845.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: Bernard Pratte Jr, John Charles Cabanne, Peter l'Abadie Sarpy, Mary Walker, T H Jefferson, Joseph Bissonette, Bernard Vasques, Anthony R Bouis, Honore Picotte, John Baptiste Richard, Peter Richard, Pierre Chouteau Jr, Virgil Pringle, Edwin Bryant, Mr Bordeaux, Christopher C Branham, Francis Parkman, John Sybille, Quincy Adams Shaw, Henry Chatillon, Antoine De Laurier, Antoine Reynal, George McKinstry, George Law Curry, William Henry Russell, Edwin Bryant, Riley Gregg, William Stokes, Nicholas Carriger, George Law Curry, Alexander Barclay, Bill New, John Conn, Edwin Bryant, Thomas Bullock, James Bordeaux, Charles Primeau, William Kirkendall, George Donner, Paul Dorion, Robert Ewing, R T Jacobs, William Crosby

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Photographs / Images: North Platte Valley Historical Sites; Joseph Bissonette; Peter A Sarpy; Document signed by Joseph Bissonette

## FORT BERNARD ON THE OREGON TRAIL

*By David Walker Lupton*

In the spring of 1845 two rival fur-trade posts reigned supreme at the fork of the North Platte and Laramie rivers—the American Fur Company's Fort John (Fort Laramie) and the post of Bernard Pratte, Jr. and John Charles Cabanne known as Fort Platte. Increasing numbers of emigrants were then heading for Oregon along the Platte River Road (Oregon Trail), and during the single month of June, 1845, the traders at Fort Laramie had counted 550 wagons of Oregon bound travelers.<sup>1</sup> Although Pratte and Cabanne saw this rising tide of potential "customers" as a business opportunity too good to dismiss lightly, Fort Platte's proximity to Fort Laramie (1 mile distant) evidently did not provide the ideal trading potential that the two owners had envisioned. As a result, sometime between June 25 and August 31, 1845, the firm abandoned Fort Platte and became involved with the establishment of a new post named Fort Bernard.<sup>2</sup>

The area chosen for the new post was strategically located, approximately 8 miles east of forts Platte and Laramie on the North Platte River. This location was well known to traders of the region as "Sarpy's Point," named after Peter l'Abadie Sarpy, who had built a short-lived post there in 1837-1838.<sup>3</sup> It was probably to Fort Sarpy that an early traveler, Mary Walker, referred in her overland journey diary of 1838. As late as 1846 the emigrant T. H. Jefferson observed the remains of Sarpy's post and distinguished it on his map of the area published in 1849 as the "Old Fort," a short distance east of "Rosseaux Fort" (Richard's Fort.)<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Bissonette, the manager of Fort Platte, was given the responsibility of supervising the abandonment of that post. Apparently acting for the Pratte and Cabanne company, he sold some of the goods on hand to Fort Laramie and removed the remaining items to the new location in time for the fall and winter trade. Earlier researchers appear to have been unsure of



the origin of the name Fort Bernard and thought it might have been named after a French fur trader, Bernard Vasquez; however, it is more likely that Bissonette named the new post after Bernard Pratte, Sr., or Bernard, Jr.<sup>5</sup>

On August 31, 1845, the American Fur Company trader, Anthony R. Bouis, sent a letter from Fort Pierre to Honore Picotte, the general agent for the American Fur Company's Upper Missouri Outfit. This letter establishes an early date for Fort Bernard:

Mr. Cabanne has abandoned Fort Platte. Bissonet [Joseph Bissonette] is stationed a few miles below that fort with a few articles of trade that remained on hand last spring. It is supposed that if Cabanne comes up next fall it will be but a small outfit. The prospect of trade in that section of the country is very flattering, plenty of Buff and there will be more Indians there this season than ever. Part of the Minniconajous and 200 lodges of Cheyennes will winter in the neighborhood of the Fort.<sup>6</sup>

By December 18, 1845, Pratte and Cabanne having grown "tired of the business" sold their interest in Fort Bernard to Honore Picotte. This sale appears to be nothing more than a disposition of their share in the business transacted at Fort Bernard (shares, supplies, and personnel) with some of the remaining supplies left to Bissonette. On this date Picotte wrote from Fort Pierre to James Kipp at Fort Union:

We have bought out Messrs. Pratte & Cabanne's interest at Fort Bernard on the Platte, we therefore have all the Country to ourselves, excepting Wm. Kenceleur [Renceleur] who is opposing us at this place with a smaller outfit. We paid Messr's Pratte and Cabanne 25% advance on St. Louis cost for goods deliv'd in the Country, and they were very glad to accept the proposition as they are tired of the business. . . . Justin Gros Claude [Grosclaude] the Bearer of the present was in the employ of Pratte & Cabanne and in the transfer of useless articles, I had to take him.<sup>7</sup>

Although Cabanne seems to have remained at Fort Bernard until the end of 1845, Pratte was already in St. Louis, where he served as the mayor for two terms during 1844-1846. Some historians feel that it has never been definitely established that Pratte and Cabanne owned Fort Bernard during their short association with the post.<sup>8</sup>

Following the termination of the Pratte and Cabanne partnership, Bissonette stayed on at Fort Bernard and went into business with John Baptiste Richard, a Fort Platte trader whom he had known for several years. A newspaper reporter stated in 1846 that John and his brother (probably Peter Richard) "reconstructed Fort Bernard," perhaps adding to Bissonette's original temporary structure. At Fort Platte Bissonette had been employed as manager and Richard served as trader; however, at

Fort Bernard the two men reversed their roles. Richard ran the business and Bissonette visited Indians in their camps.<sup>9</sup> The very presence of Fort Bernard was an irritation to the American Fur Company's Fort Laramie, just as Fort Platte had been.<sup>10</sup>

During their winter trade of 1845-1846, Richard and Bissonette were very successful, using corn in trade for the best robes from the Indians. Moreover, in the spring of 1846 the post carried on a brisk trade with the overland emigrants by underselling Fort Laramie by 30 to 40 percent!<sup>11</sup>

Shortly before May 7 John Richard's brother and partner, Peter Richard, left Fort Bernard in the company of several men with two Mackinaw boats loaded with furs bound for Missouri. John Richard stayed behind at Fort Bernard to run the post. The details of the events that transpired during May and June, 1846, are rather sketchy; however, it can be theorized that a negotiation must have taken place with the traders at Fort Laramie in order to obtain the two boats for transporting the buffalo robes. Later in May the Fort Bernard group joined Pierre Didier Papin's American Fur Company party of 11 fur boats also traveling down the North Platte River.<sup>12</sup> Accompanying the flotilla was a land party at least for a portion of the trip down the North Platte, for on June 1 Negro Jack, and several other men in the company of Peter Richard, were detached at Horse Creek to look for oxen or horses which had run off. Negro Jack became lost and was not heard from again until July 4, when three Indians brought him into the camp of Francis Parkman on a mule, starving and emaciated.<sup>13</sup>

Interesting notes concerning the trip exist in a letter written by Honore Picotte at Fort Pierre to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., in St. Louis. The letter, dated March 11, 1846, states in part:

I made particular inquiries about the navigation of the Platte and learn by persons well informed on the subject, that if there is not a full river on the north fork our Boats will run some risk of not getting down although they may reach the south fork, for that reason it is agreed between Mr. Papin & myself, that he will not leave with his boats unless there is a fair prospect of high water, if the contrary he is to put all his waggons and carts in good repair and keep his horses & oxen in good order; I am to do the same thing here we will co operate and begin to haul the packs by the 1st May from Fort John to this place, when here I will have boats & men ready to dispatch them as they arrive, and we have reason to believe that the last shipment will be no later than 1st Sept. I hope however that we will not be to all this trouble and that Mr. Papin will go down safely with his Boats.<sup>14</sup>

It is obvious that the navigational problems encountered created a situation whereby it was impossible for all the

Mackinaw boats to remain together. Reports from a few travelers have preserved some of the events of the trip. One emigrant, Virgil Pringle, saw all 13 boats together on June 6 at a point approximately 35 miles west of Grand Island, Nebraska, where they were having difficulty with shallow water.<sup>15</sup> Five days later, however, another emigrant, Edwin Bryant, recorded that he met the two boats from Fort Bernard. They had made little progress and were grounded at approximately the same spot where they had been observed by Pringle.

Bryant further recorded that the *voyageurs* consisted of [Peter] Richard, a Mr. Bordeaux, a Mr. Branham of Kentucky (possibly Christopher C. Branham), a half-breed Mexican, an Indian, and several creole Frenchmen of Missouri. The traders were trying to locate wagons to haul the robes the rest of the way to Missouri.<sup>16</sup> Since Richard's party was by now alone, it can be concluded that they must have separated from Papin's flotilla sometime between June 6 and June 11 when Bryant met them.

Bryant's party exchanged flour, bacon, sugar, and coffee in trade for buffalo robes during this brief meeting with Richard and his traders. In addition Richard, Bordeaux, and Branham stayed overnight at Bryant's encampment, where they procured a horse and other articles for the trip east.<sup>17</sup>

One possible clue to the final fate of Richard's two boats was related by Francis Parkman in his literary description of his summer excursion to the Rocky Mountains in 1846. Parkman stated that the two boats had become hopelessly caught in the shallows not far from Pawnee villages and were soon surrounded by Indians, who carried off everything they thought of value, including most of the robes. They tied up the men left on guard and whipped them with sticks. If this event did occur, it would have had to have been after June 11, since, as indicated herein, Bryant noted on that date that the boats were still loaded with furs. It is interesting to note that earlier in the voyage, apparently in early June, the Pawnee had taken 10 of Papin's horses and had whipped one of his men into camp.<sup>18</sup>

Presumably Richard's men called a halt in their journey toward Missouri at this time. Even Jose (Hosea), the half-breed Mexican accompanying the unsuccessful party, not wishing to linger in Pawnee country, turned back to the mountains with the Mississippi Saints, an emigrant Mormon party.<sup>19</sup> Although

Papin and his group of American Fur Company traders had to abandon three of their boats along the way east, they finally reached Fort Leavenworth on July 2 with eight boatloads of furs.<sup>20</sup>

While the two Mackinaws from Fort Bernard were foundering on their way east, Joseph Bissonette, John Sybille, and three hands were westbound for that same fort with goods-laden wagons. Traveling along the Oregon Trail after completing a trading excursion to St. Louis, the traders were attacked on June 4 by a war party of Pawnee (probably near the head of Grand Island). Bissonette's party finally arrived at his trading post on June 28, reporting that they had been robbed of a considerable amount of goods.<sup>21</sup>

It is not known why Richard's party was in association with Papin's trading flotilla from Fort Laramie. The Fort Bernard men had left this rival fort a few days before Papin's party departed on May 7. Possibly it was to procure the services of the two Mackinaw boats for the journey from Fort Laramie or to request the company of the American Fur Company's traders for greater protection from marauding Indians. The two-month saga illustrates a frequently repeated paradox of the fur trade: one fort associating with a rival fort in times of mutual benefit, apparently for protection from the Indians, for a sharing of resources, and perhaps for companionship.

As stated earlier, Francis Parkman, his cousin Quincy Adams Shaw, guide-hunter Henry Chatillon, and cart-driver Antoine De Laurier left Westport, Missouri, for a summer's excursion to the Rocky Mountains on May 9, 1846. Arriving at Fort Bernard on June 15 Parkman described their greeting in his journals:

June 15th. Camped on a very pretty bottom on the Platte. Rode over the sand as far as a little, unfinished log fort, in the midst of a steril[e] prairie, bult by Sapi [Sarpy]—log houses in form of a square, facing inwards—two Sioux lodges in the open area—corale behind, and plenty of shaggy little ponies feeding on the bottom. The bourgeois (John) Richard received us politely, and ushered us into a log room, with a rock fireplace, and hung with rifles and their equipments, fanfaron bridles, garnished buckskin dresses, smoking apparatus, bows & quivers, etc. The men lounging around on robes—passed the pipe—an Ind. seated in the corner—Reynard [Reynal] filling the pipe in the chimney corner—a voyageur, with hair glued in Ind. fashion, lounging on a bedstead.<sup>22</sup>

Thus it was at Fort Bernard that Parkman met Antoine Reynal, a trader for Fort Bernard, who later accompanied the Parkman party as interpreter at various Sioux villages and on excursions throughout the summer.<sup>23</sup>

Upon leaving Fort Bernard Parkman's party "nooned by the Platte" under a cottonwood tree and there treated the proprietors of Fort Bernard to a cup of coffee before continuing on to Fort Laramie.<sup>24</sup>

A little over a week later, on the afternoon of June 23, some of the early emigrants who mentioned Fort Bernard in their overland diaries stopped at that post to refit and reprovision. There was a difficult trek ahead to Fort Bridger, Fort Hall, and beyond. On this day George McKinstry and George Law Curry, having left Missouri in early May with California-bound emigrants, arrived at Fort Bernard with some 10 members of the William Henry Russell party. Also with the group was Edwin Bryant, mentioned earlier, who described the fort:

We reached "Fort Bernard," a small building rudely constructed of logs, about two o'clock, p.m. While approaching it, I saw a large herd of mules grazing on the plain and guarded by Mexican Indians. One of these had a small looking-glass, with which he conveyed the reflected rays of the sun into our faces, by way of a distant salutation. The mules (animals of which we were in quest) were objects more agreeable and interesting to us than their keepers. I had a letter of introduction to Mr. Richard, the principal of this trading-post, from his brother, one of the party which we met on the Platte (on June 11). Mr. R. received us with mountain cordiality, inviting us to remain with him over night. We declined the invitation, having determined to proceed as far as Fort Laramie. An inhabited house, although of the rudest construction and with accommodations far inferior to an ordinary stable, was nevertheless a cheering sight. Several traders from Taos and the head-waters of the Arkansas . . . were collected here, to whom the herd of mules we saw belonged. They had packed flour, some four hundred miles, for the purpose of trading with the Sioux Indians.<sup>25</sup>

Although their overnight encampment was a few miles west of Fort Laramie, Bryant returned to Fort Bernard the afternoon of June 24 to encamp while awaiting the arrival of the wagon train which he had left behind. He and other members of the advance party, including George McKinstry, determined that arrangements could be made there with the traders from Mexico to obtain mules in exchange for oxen and wagons. The following day Bryant described the mountain men and the events at Fort Bernard:

The mountain traders and trappers are not rich in luxuries; but whatever they possess they are ever ready to divide with their guests. In a trade, however, they are as keen as the shrewdest Yankee that ever peddled clocks or wooden nutmegs. Coffee, sugar, and tobacco are valued here at one dollar per pound; whiskey at a dollar per pint, and flour at fifty cents per pint. The last-named article is sometimes a dollar per pint, according to the supply, payable in buffalo or deer skins, buckskin shirts and pantaloons, moccasins, etc., etc. Money is of no value among the Indians. The traders, however, who come here from New Mexico and the United States, whenever they see their advantage, extort money from the emigrants.

Several emigrant companies which we have passed in the last day or two, arrived this evening, and encamped near the fort. A party of Sioux Indians, headed by two chiefs, on their way to join the main body in their expedition against the Snakes, halted here for the night. The two chiefs had recently returned from a victorious expedition against the Pawnees; bringing with them twenty-five scalps, and a number of horses. They had a "talk," and smoked the pipe of peace and friendship at the camp of Capt. Cooper. A contribution of flour and meat was then made by the emigrants for their benefit.<sup>18</sup>

George McKinstry in his diary for June 24 and 25 related his activities at Fort Bernard while awaiting the wagons containing the other members of their party:

Wednesday, June 24th—Morning clear and beautiful . . . started fort Bernard via Larimie . . . met Mr. [Hiram] Ames . . . got him to return with me . . . arrived at the Ft. [Bernard] . . . Mr. A. sold his wagon for two mules.

Thursday, June 25th—weather clear . . . remain at the Ft. to wait our company Coopers [Stephen Cooper], Dickenson [Gallant D. Dickenson], Craigs [Riley Gregg] companies came up and camped.<sup>19</sup>

Traveling in the command of the Riley Gregg Company mentioned above was one William Stokes. As recorded by Nicholas Carriger, this group of emigrants left Missouri in early May headed for California along the "Old Fort Kearney" road. Stokes broke a wheel of his wagon near Fort Bernard and as a result sold his wagon to the owners of the post for four pairs of moccasins.<sup>20</sup>

June 26 saw considerable excitement at Fort Bernard. Bryant's oxen-drawn wagons reached the post that afternoon and Bryant described some of the activities of that day:

We entertained at supper, this evening, all the trappers and traders at the fort. The banquet was not very sumptuous, either in viands or the manner in which it was served up; but it was enjoyed, I dare say, with a higher relish, than many a feast served in a thousand dishes of porcelain and silver. The mountaineer who had subsisted for months on nothing but fresh meat, would proclaim bread, sugar, and coffee to be high orders of luxury.<sup>21</sup>

That same spirit of friendliness was mentioned in a letter written from Fort Bernard the previous day by George Law Curry and addressed to the *St. Louis Reveille*. Curry refers to the gentlemen of the establishment from whom he "received much attention." He went on to state:

This post was almost reconstructed last year by J. F. X. Richards and brothers, of St. Charles, Missouri, is yet in an unfinished state, but when completed it will be an admirable place for the transaction of mountain commerce. Already it has become, though situated so near its more powerful rival, a position of no small importance. Its proprietors and inmates are agreeable and courteous in the extreme, and among them a stranger feels himself at home.<sup>22</sup>

As a postscript to this letter, Curry shared with the readers of the *Reveille* news from California which he had received the



Joseph Bissonette (left) . . . Peter A. Sarpy, from oil painting by Manuel Joachim de Franca, about 1852, St. Louis.

This Indian: is here this  
to Certify that this Indian  
White Clay, is a Brave of the  
Chaparral Tribes and he is very  
friendly to the White, and it his  
the Benefit of the White to give  
him a little Tobacco and a little pro-  
vision for with this a great help  
to the Emigrant in the Spring that  
will give him a great Encouragement  
to help the White

Joseph Bissonette  
Laramie 6<sup>th</sup> February  
1853

Document, signed by Joseph Bissonette, asked gifts from white immigrants for its Indian bearer.

afternoon of that busy June 26 from Sam Kinney and three other emigrants who had stopped at Fort Bernard on their way east. Kinney's unfavorable comments about California may have been the impetus for one emigrant present at Fort Bernard at the time, William Kirkendall, to have changed his destination from California to Oregon.<sup>31</sup>

Curry intended to leave his wagons at Fort Bernard and with 15 other men continue the remainder of his journey with pack animals obtained at the fort. This must have been a frequent occurrence at Fort Bernard for an entry in George McKinstry's diary also stated that "Messrs Bryant and Jacobs sold their wagon for 7 pack mules—Col Russell also sold his."<sup>32</sup>

June 26, 1846, was also the day during which the members of the ill-fated Donner party were to arrive at Fort Bernard along with members of the William Henry Russell party. The following rather optimistic letter was written the next day from the fort by George Donner to a friend in Springfield, Illinois:

My friend—We arrived here on yesterday without meeting any serious accident. Our company are in good health. Our road has been through a sandy country, but we have as yet had plenty of grass for our cattle and water. Our fires have been kept up, but they have burned feebly sometimes, though we have had enough to cook every meal. Our journey has not been as solitary as we feared, and we have seen several on their return to the States. Several companies are just ahead. Two hundred and six lodges of Sioux are expected at the Fort to-day on the way to join the warriors on the war against the Crows. The Indians all speak friendly to us. . . . I can say nothing except bear testimony to the correctness of those who have gone before us. . . . Our provisions are in good order, and we feel satisfied with our preparations for the trip. Our wagon sheets have shed the rain as yet.

The expected battle between the Sioux and the Crow never occurred. Unknown to George Donner this was to be the least of his concerns. By April of the next year he would be dead.<sup>33</sup>

On June 27 Parkman made his second visit to Fort Bernard. While the managers of the fort may have been awaiting the Sioux, Parkman found a different group and recorded it in his journal the next day:

Yesterday rode down with Paul Dorion, who wished to swap a wild horse, to Richard's fort. Found there [William Henry] Russel[']s or [Lilburn W.] Boggs' comp'y, engaged in drinking and refitting, and a host of Canadians besides. Russel['] drunk as a pigeon—some fine-looking Kentucky men—some of D[aniel] Boone's grandchildren—[Robert] Ewing, [R. T.] Jacob[s], and others with them—altogether more educated men than any I have seen. A motley crew assembled in Richard's rooms—squaws, children, Spaniards, French, and emigrants. Emigrants mean to sell liquor to the Minnicongues, who will be up here tomorrow, and after having come all the way from the Missouri to go to the war, will no doubt break up, if this is done. Paul very much displeased, as well as the Canadians.<sup>34</sup>

A further description of the fort was given in a letter which Parkman wrote to his father from Fort Laramie dated June 28:

Several days ago, I wrote home, and, hearing of a party of homesick emigrants on the return, I have just despatched a man with the letter—whether it reaches you is very doubtful, but the chance is too promising to be neglected.

We are very pleasantly situated here; not in the fort, but at camp on Laramie Creek, eighteen miles distant. I rode in this morning to get the news, and see the fresh arrivals of emigrants. I found a party of the latter; from Kentucky, chiefly drunk, at a little trading-fort not far from this [Fort Bernard]. They were busy in exchanging horses for mules, and were being handsomely imposed on by the bourgeois of the fort and the trappers and hunters. Their captain was the most drunk of the party, and, taking me by the button, he began a long rigmarole about his "moral influence" over his men. But, in fact, they have no leader—each man follows his own whim, and the result is endless quarrels and divisions, and all sorts of misfortunes in consequences.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the emigrants and the Indians, Fort Bernard was sometimes the meeting place for other traders of the region. Bryant stated in his chronicle that he concluded trade on the morning of June 27 with "Mr. [Bill] New, a trader from the head-waters of the Arkansas [Hardscrabble], by which Mr. Jacob[s] and myself realized seven mules with pack-saddles and other trappings for packing, for our wagon and three yokes of oxen and their appendages." Alexander Barclay, in his diary, also mentions that trader John (?) Conn left from the Hardscrabble settlement just west of Pueblo on June 1 on his way north, arriving at Fort Bernard later in the month.<sup>36</sup>

The following day (June 28) after the emigrants had traded extensively at Fort Bernard, Edwin Bryant and eight others left on their mules from the fort for California. None of them had ever seen a mule packed before. As this group was leaving for California, Parkman, returning to Fort Laramie from Fort Bernard, met James Clyman and his party returning east from California. Clyman continued on past "Bisinetts Trading house [Fort Bernard]" and a few miles farther east met Bissonette returning from Missouri with a small trading party. Bissonette was apparently greeted at the fort by a Sioux Indian going to war who wished to leave his squaw and child under the trader's care, thus utilizing Fort Bernard as a "boarding house."<sup>37</sup>

The news of Bissonette's arrival from Missouri was announced on June 30 to Parkman's party which was camped near Fort Laramie. The traders at this fort were characterized as "a set of mean swindlers" by Parkman, who appeared to be most upset by the treatment which many of the emigrants

received at Fort Laramie. Prices were inordinately high, and as a result he sent Henry Chatillon to Fort Bernard to purchase supplies. Parkman's ledger for July 2 shows a purchase of flour, coffee, sugar, and bacon from Richard and Bissonette at prices lower than he had paid at Fort Laramie.<sup>38</sup>

During July and the first few days of August, Parkman and his party spent their time traveling and hunting with the Sioux beyond the Laramie Mountains. They had originally hoped to go with Bissonette to La Bonte's Creek northwest of Fort Laramie; however, an employee at Fort Bernard, Louis B. Chartran (variously spelled Chartrain and Chatron) informed them that Bissonette was delayed and had remained to trade in the Indian camps. On August 6 Parkman located Bissonette's party which included John Sybille and some 40 Sioux and Cheyenne lodges. They remained together until August 9 when Bissonette and the Indians moved on to another campsite.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime, on July 10, John Richard and a party of traders with two ox teams were on their way south to Pueblo on the upper Arkansas River. They had been encountered in camp a few miles below Fort Laramie by a company of Mormon emigrants—the Mississippi Saints. The Mormon company, which decided to accompany Richard to Pueblo, consisted of some 19 wagons captained by William Crosby. One John Brown wrote a narrative of the trip. Richard had buffalo robes which he had intended to trade in Taos (for liquor?), but due to the Mexican War he was detained in Pueblo after arriving there on August 7. Richard was still in Pueblo on August 20 where he entertained Parkman's party before that group turned east to St. Louis.<sup>40</sup>

During Richard's stay in Pueblo, and while Bissonette was apparently trading in Indian villages, Fort Bernard was burned to the ground. The destruction probably took place after August 4, 1846, when Parkman was still at Fort Laramie, since he makes no mention of the incident in his notes. It is suspected that men at rival Fort Laramie might have set the fire, but this has never been proved. How or when Richard and Bissonette learned of the destruction of Fort Bernard has not been recorded. Furthermore, reference to the event was not documented until May, 1847, when the Mormon emigrant Thomas Bullock noted it in his journal.<sup>41</sup>

The movements of Richard and Bissonette are poorly docu-

mented during the period following the burning of Fort Bernard, although Richard is known to have continued to trade in the area for the next six years. The subsequent activities of Bissonette are also little known until late 1849, when he allegedly formed a partnership with James Bordeaux and Charles Primeau and built a new post on or near the site of Fort Bernard. (It should be noted that, although Bordeaux and Bissonette evidently worked together on some occasions between 1849-1854, no evidence has yet appeared which substantiates a formal partnership or co-ownership of a trading post.)<sup>42</sup> On August 19, 1854, near Bordeaux's trading post the beginning of the wars with the Plains Indians were signaled with an incident known as the Grattan Massacre. On that date the site of old Fort Bernard was inadvertently immortalized in the annals of the history of the West.<sup>43</sup>

## NOTES

1. Louise Barry, *The Beginning of the West* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 553. Fort John is hereafter referred to as Fort Laramie.

2. "Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre Journal and Letter Books," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 9 (Pierre: 1918), 206. LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Marion Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938), 108-109. John D. McDermott, "Joseph Bissonette," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1966), 4, 51-52.

3. Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "James Bordeaux," *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, 2 (Spring, 1966), 6. Dale Morgan (editor), *Overland in 1846* (Georgetown, California: Talisman Press, 1963), 2, 753. Peter Sarpy's middle initial has been variously cited as both "L" by Hanson and Morgan, *Ibid.*, and as "A" by John E. Wickman, "Peter A. Sarpy," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1966), 4, 283-296 and Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 770.

4. Clifford Merrill Drury (editor), *First White Women Over the Rockies* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1963), 2, 87. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2, 753. Charles E. Hanson, Jr. and Veronica Sue Walters, "The Early Fur Trade in Northwestern Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, 57 (Fall, 1976), 297. "Richard's Fort" in this instance refers to Fort Bernard and should not be confused with Fort Platte which has also been called "Richard's Fort," David W. Lupton, "Fort Platte, Wyoming, 1841-1845: Rival of Fort Laramie," *Annals of Wyoming*, 49 (Spring, 1977), 94.

5. Hanson and Walters, *Ibid.*, 304. "Fort Bernard: Old Trading Post," *Nebraska History*, 18 (July-September, 1937), 218. Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, E. N. Feltsgog, editor (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 508.

6. "Fort Tecumseh and Fort Pierre Journal and Letter Books," 206. For further information concerning Honore Picotte the reader is directed to the following article: John S. Gray, "Honore Picotte, Fur Trader," *South Dakota History*, 6 (Spring, 1976), 186-202.

7. Letter from Honore Picotte to James Kipp, December 18, 1845, Ft. Pierre Letter Books, 1845-1846, Missouri Historical Society.
8. Reuben Gold Thwaites (editor), *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 22, 282. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 510.
9. John D. McDermott, "Joseph Blissonette," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (1966), 4, 52. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2, 574-575.
10. Lupton, "Fort Platte, Wyoming, 1841-1845: Rival of Fort Laramie," 83-108.
11. Letter from Honore Picotte to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., March 11, 1846, Ft. Pierre Letter Books, 1845-1846, Missouri Historical Society. Francis Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, Mason Wade (editor) (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947), 2, 618.
12. Pierre D. Papin was the bourgeois or "boss" of Fort Laramie. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 489-491. Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw In California* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1967), 107.
13. Horse Creek joins the North Platte River near the Wyoming-Nebraska boundary a short distance west of Scott's Bluff. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 162-163, 578. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 451, 624.
14. Letter from Honore Picotte to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., March 11, 1846.
15. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 491-492. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 170-171.
16. Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, 82-83. Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 590. This location is placed by editor Feltskog at 60 miles west of Grand Island "at roughly the same place" where Virgil Pringle saw them. See Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 491, 492.
17. The "Bourdeaux" observed by Bryant on June 11 approximately 280 miles southeast of Fort Laramie is apparently not James Bordeaux, the acting bourgeois of Fort Laramie. James Bordeaux was observed at *Fort Laramie* on June 2 by William Clayton, June 15 by Francis Parkman, and on June 24 by Bryant. At this latter meeting Bryant makes no mention of the "gentleman and principal Mr. Bourdeaux" as being the same person as the "voyageur Bourdeaux" whom he had met 13 days earlier. Bryant, *Ibid.*, 82-84, 112. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 439. William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 209.
18. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 76. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 434.
19. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 112, 408.
20. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 490-491. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2, 587, 589.
21. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 59; 2, 592, 759.
22. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 439.
23. *Ibid.*, 443, 628-629. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 545.
24. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 439.
25. Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, 106-107. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 214, 410; 2, 651-652.
26. Bryant, *Ibid.*, 112-113.
27. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 214.
28. *Ibid.*, 1, 153.
29. Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, 113.
30. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2, 572; 575.
31. *Ibid.*, 1, 411-412, 427; 2, 575.
32. *Ibid.*, 1, 214; 2, 575.
33. *Ibid.*, 1, 361, 410; 2, 576-577.
34. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 447. Historians have suggested that Parkman's reference to Daniel Boone's grandchildren is probably in error, the reference most likely being to his great-grandchildren. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 556-557.
35. Francis Parkman, *Letters of Francis Parkman*, Wilbur R. Jacobs, editor

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 1, 45.

36. Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, 113. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2, 652, 770-771. George P. Hammond, *The Adventures of Alexander Barclay, Mountain Man* (Denver, Colorado: Old West Publishing Company, 1976), 72, 80, 139. There appears to be some confusion as to Mr. Conn's first name; Morgan cites this trader as John Conn, while Hammond refers to him as Francis Conn.

37. Bryant, *Ibid.*, 114. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 447-448, 631. James Clyman, *James Clyman, Frontiersman*, Charles L. Camp, editor (Portland, Oregon: Champoeg Press, 1960), 225.

38. Parkman, *Ibid.*, 2, 448-449, 494.

39. *Ibid.*, 2, 452-471. John Charles Fremont, *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, editors. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 1, 228-229. Charles E. Hanson, Jr. and Veronica Sue Walters, "The Chadron Creek Trading Post," *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, 12 (Summer, 1976), 5, 12-15.

40. Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 588-589. Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 1, 113. John D. McDermott, "John Baptiste Richard," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1965), 2, 295-296.

41. Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2, 467. Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 508, 531. Hafen and Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890*, 122-123.

42. John D. McDermott, "John Baptiste Richard," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (1965), 2, 296. John D. McDermott, "Joseph Bissonette," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (1966), 4, 53. Hanson and Walters, "The Early Fur Trade in Northwestern Nebraska," 305-306.

43. John D. McDermott, "James Bordeaux," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1968), 5, 71-74. Lloyd E. McCann, "The Grattan Massacre," *Nebraska History*, 37 (March, 1956), 1-25.