

James Whitford- Jillanna Hammond and Kassi Wells

Sign Bite

Here lies James Whitford, a helpful and kind Metis pioneer. He fought alongside General Custer, assisted a local by the name of Thomas Scott, became Chief Ermineskin's relative through marriage and was married by the famous Father Lacombe. He died of old age here in Beauvais Lake in 1938.

Backstory

There is a grave located here in Beauvais Lake where a Metis man, part of the Cree Natives by the name of James "Jimmy" Whitford, lies. He was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba. He was one of General George Armstrong Custer's soldiers and fought in the First Battle of the Bull Run. James was a caretaker for Thomas Scott in Beauvais Lake and had a homestead not far from Scott's. What's fascinating about this is the fact that the Scott cabin is still standing in Beauvais lake, however the Whitford cabin no longer exists. Some say they can still see the indent in the ground where Jimmy's cabin once stood. Whitford met Mary Hergert, granddaughter of Chief Ermineskin. Chief Ermineskin was a close friend of Father Lacombe, a head priest and former missionary. Lacombe married Mary and James July 15, 1888 in Pincher Creek Alberta. Together, they moved to the Peace River District and had four children by the names of, Dan, Billie, Gilbert and Agnes. In 1918 they returned south to Beauvais Lake where James and Mary lived their remaining years together. James died of old age in 1938 and was buried in Beauvais Lake. His grave is being restored and still stands solo on Scott's Point. Mary moved back to Peace River, where her side of the family was located, and died in 1966. She was buried in Worsley in Peace River.



Inspiration

The inspiration to write about Mr. James Whitford came to us when we began our research about Beauvais Lake. His gravesite location was mentioned in a book and both Kassi and I were drawn to it immediately. At this point, my mind was rushing with ideas that involved a dangerous story about a man who died mysteriously at the park. Instead, we discovered that he played a rather important role in local history.

We visited the park with our Grade 10 Class in April of 2016. That's when we found his actual gravesite on Scott's Point. During our visit, our park guide explained that progress is being made in the reclamation of his gravesite, making it look pretty as it once did.

What amused the both of us about this pioneer was that he met multiple well known people, who are famous in history, and yet managed to keep a low profile. He worked for people and helped them out where and when he could manage. James Whitford seemed to be a humble man, a rare quality many people wish they possessed, including myself. Whitford was a scout for the famous General Custer and did in fact fight in a war. Kassi and I enjoy learning about the history based around Pincher Creek and its surrounding area since we are locals as well.

Sources

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