

S. Dak.

~~History~~

1930

Vendredi Tablet

POSE PAR LE

CHEVALY ET DE LAR

to St. Louis la Conditte

A migtte

Je 30 de may 1743

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Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Great Northern Railway Company for the cuts used and the arrangement of the material.

## VERENDRYE CALENDAR

- 1685—Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, born at Three Rivers, Canada.
- 1712—Pierre married Marie Anne Dandonneau and settled on the Isle Dupas where, in the following five years his four sons, Jean Baptiste, Pierre II, Francois and Louis Joseph, were born.
- 1727—Pierre I engaged in fur trade at Lake Nipigon.
- 1731—Made first trip into the country west of Lake Superior. Built three trading posts and in 1736 lost his eldest son and 20 of his followers, who were massacred by the Sioux.

*(Continued on inside back cover)*

## THE VERENDRYE TABLET

One of the greatest single discoveries of historical records in the Northwest was made at Fort Pierre, South Dakota, on February 16, 1913, when there was found a leaden tablet that had been buried one hundred and seventy years earlier as a monument of exploration in the name of France. This tablet bore on its obverse an inscription that verified the much questioned journals of Verendrye and his sons, commemorative of their explorations in search of the Western Sea.

*The Finding  
of the Tablet*

This tablet was found on a Sunday afternoon by seven young people—Hattie Foster, her sister Blanche, Ethel Parrish, Martha Burns, George O'Rielly, Leslie Stroup and Frederick Demmon—who were walking on the bluffs that overlook Fort Pierre. One of the girls, Hattie May Foster, while standing on the bluff and talking to the others, was scraping in the dirt with her foot when she noticed one end of a metal plate protruding from the ground. Kicking it loose she picked the plate up and beneath the dirt that still clung to it she could see some kind of an

inscription. Handing it to George O'Rielly, who scraped some of the dirt off with his knife, they saw the number 1743 on it. Still not thinking that the plate had any value, George said that he would take it down to the hardware store and sell it for about five cents. But, upon leaving for home a few minutes later, he met George Olson, a high school boy, who told him to keep it as it might be valuable. It was by this fortunate accident that this very important find was brought to light.

## *The Tablet*

This tablet, now in the possession of the South Dakota Historical Society, is rectangular in shape, being about eight and one-half inches long, six and one-half inches across and about one-eighth of an inch in thickness. The metal of which it was made is lead hardened somewhat by an alloy that is most probably zinc. The age of the plate and its long exposure underground has weathered the lead to a sort of a whitish gray. The four corners are evenly rounded and the plane is slightly warped, a condition that was most likely caused by the children and others

tramping back and forth over its resting place.

Much discussion was raised at first as to which side of this tablet should be designated as the front or obverse side and which the back or reverse side. Now most of the historians have decided that the side that was inscribed at the time of burial should be declared the obverse and the other reverse side.

The obverse side of this tablet was, very evidently, brought to this place entirely plain and unfigured and just before it was buried the following words and figures were scratched upon it:

*The  
Inscriptions*

*The  
Obverse Side*

POSE PAR LE  
Chevaly-et dE Layr.  
Lo Jos Louy la Londette  
A miotte  
le 30 de mars 1743.

*The  
Reverse Side*

On the reverse side, which was prepared before the start of the journey, two parallel lines run entirely around the edge of the plate, forming a border. In each of the four corners is the fleur de lis, while the top center is occupied by the arms of France. Below this device four lines of Roman capitals, containing the following, appear:

ANNO XXVI REGNI LUDOVICI XV  
PROREGE  
ILLUSTRISSIMO DOMINO DOMINO  
MARCHIONE  
DE BEAUHARNOIS MDCCXXXI  
PETRUS GAULTIER DE LAVEREN-  
DRIE POSVIT

A photographic reproduction of this plate was sent to His Excellency, M. Jusserand, French Ambassador to the United States at the time of the discovery by the South Dakota State Department of History. His reply, interpreting and explaining the two inscriptions, is very

*Ambassador  
Jusserand*

interesting and instructive and has been generally accepted as correct.

We quote parts of his reply as follows:\*

*Translation  
of the Obverse  
Side*

“The text of the plate so wonderfully recovered has a little story to tell. As it was not easy to print a text on the way during such difficult expeditions, people would start with ready-prepared ones. The Chevalier seems to have provided himself with one which had been made in view of his elder brother’s expedition of 1741. It bears in fact, the name of the

*\*From South Dakota Historical Collections,*

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eldest of the La Vendryes, the text stamped under the arms of France reading:

“‘In the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Louis XV, the most illustrious Lord, the Lord Marquis of Beauharnois being Viceroy, 1741, Peter Gaultier de Laverendrye placed this.’”

“But the obverse of the plate shows that it was really turned to use by the Chevalier and at the exact moment mentioned by him. Instead of the beautiful inscriptions engraved at home in Latin, for the elder brother, before he started, we have but a rough one, made as best

*Translation  
of the Reverse  
Side*

they could, with the point of a knife, and certainly not by La Verendrye himself. As the placing of the plate was done secretly, and he himself was probably staying, as usual, with the chief of the tribe, he apparently gave orders to one of his followers to do the necessary work. The follower must have been one of the 'two Frenchmen' which he mentions, without giving their names, as having accompanied him. It was not his brother, who is not named in the plate, and who, as we shall see in the journal, would sometimes be stationed at a different

place. The author of the inscription was a man of little education, who writes 'chevalier' with a y and a t: 'Chevaly et,' and who apparently performed his work in some hurry."

"There follows some rather technical explanations of the various words and his translation:

"Placed by the Chevalier de LVR (La Verendrye) To st Louy la Londette A Miotte (Toussaint Louis la Londette and A. Miotte) the 30th of March, 1743."

Some authorities have interpreted the first letters on the third line to mean "Los

jt" or Louis Joseph, the youngest of the Verendryes, while others claim that this third line reads "Witnessed (to-temoins) St. Louis La Londette."

M. Jusserand goes on to say that: "Everything about the plate tallies with everything in the journal; its authenticity cannot be doubted. As a reminder of the plucky attempt of ancestors, acting under most trying difficulties, the new-found relic has a truly sacred character, for Frenchmen and for Americans both."

## THE VERENDRYES

Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la

Verendrye, Pierre I of this narrative, was born at Three Rivers, on November 17, 1685. At an early age he embraced the profession of arms and going to France, took part in the war of the Spanish Succession. At the battle of Malplaquet, he fought so gallantly that, pierced with nine wounds, he was left for dead on the field. Recovering, he returned to the colony and marrying Marie Anne Dandonneau, settled on the Isle Dupas, where the four sons, Jean Baptiste, Pierre II, Francois (the Chevalier) and Louis Joseph, were born.

*At  
Lake Nipigon*

In 1727, Pierre I moved to the Lake Nipigon Trading Post. Here he heard the tales of the great river that flowed to the salt sea of the West, from the Indians that came to the post to trade, and four years later, after obtaining some financial help from private sources and a monopoly of the fur trade in the regions he might discover, granted by Louis XV, Verendrye and a company of fifty men, including his three eldest sons and his nephew Jemmeraye, set out to find this fabled sea.

Ascending the Pigeon River, he erected Fort St. Pierre at Rainy Lake, and in the following years built Fort St. Charles on the western shore of the Lake of the Woods and Fort Maurepas on Lake Winnipeg. These events were not unattended with dangers and disasters, as in 1736, Jemmeraye died while exploring the Roseau River, and a short time later Verendrye's eldest son, Jean Baptiste, with Father Alneau and 19 men, were massacred on an island in Lake of the Woods, by the Sioux Indians.

Undeterred by these misfortunes and the small returns from the trading posts,

*Builds Three  
Trading  
Posts*

*Fort la Reine*

Pierre I mortgaged his three trading posts, and in 1738 again turned his footsteps toward the west. Starting from Fort Maurepas, they followed the Assiniboine River to the present site of Portage la Prairie where they built Fort la Reine. Here they were joined by Charles Nolant and a party of nine men, and when the post was completed, twenty men, including Pierre I, the Chevalier, Louis Joseph and Charles Nolant, continued their search for the Western Sea, the immediate objective being the villages of the "Mantannes."

After traveling southward until they reached a point somewhere near the present International Boundary, the party turned to the west and circling around the Turtle Mountains, continued on until they reached a village of a tribe called by Verendrye the "Mantannes," located near the south bight of the Mouse river loop. Here Verendrye presented the chief with the first of the two lead plates that he mentions in his journals, and while he was doing this and making friends with the tribe, his son (the Chevalier) and the younger Nolant continued their explo-

*The Mandan  
Village*

1739  
1742

rations southward to the second "Mantannes" Fort, located on the Missouri River. Upon their return the whole party retraced their steps to Fort la Reine, reaching there in March, 1739.

*The  
Last Journey*

In April, 1742, Francois, the Chevalier, accompanied by Louis Joseph and two Frenchmen, again took up the quest. Following their old trail until they reached the "Mantannes" Fort on the Missouri, they then proceeded in a southwesterly direction until they reached a point considerably west of the Missouri River—some historians claim that they only

went as far as the Black Hills, while others say that they actually reached a point near the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming—where they spent some time with the Bow Indians.

About the middle of February they started their return journey and proceeded almost directly east until they reached Little Cherry's Fort at the present site of Fort Pierre. Here the second tablet, mentioned in the first part of this booklet, was buried on March 30, 1743, and three days later the party left for Fort la Reine,

*Burial  
of the Tablet*

Neither Verendrye nor his sons ever reached the Pacific, but by their indomitable courage in pursuing their quest against overwhelming odds, have left their names immortal on the pages of Northwest history, and it is hoped that their names will be brought into greater prominence before the people of America.

- 1738—Made expedition in search of the Western Sea and reached an Indian village designated by Verendrye as that of the "Mantannes," located in what is now North Dakota, while his son proceeded southward to the Missouri River.
- 1742—Francois and Louis Joseph made a third journey and explored far to the west of the Missouri.
- 1743—March 30. Planted the lead plate while returning to Fort la Reine.

Compliments of the S. D. State Historical Society,  
Lawrence K. Fox, Secretary, Pierre, S. D.



ANNO XXVI REGNI LUDOVICI XV PROREGENTE

ILLVSTRISSIMO DOMINO DOMINO MARCHIONE

DE BEAUVARNOIS M-D-CC-XXXI

PETROS GAVETIER DE LAVERENDRIE POSUIT