



Métis Historical Landmarks and Geographical Locations in BC - Part Three FINAL

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15. SWANSON BAY, SWANSON CHANNEL & SWANSON ISLAND

John Swanson, a Métis born in Rupert's Land in 1826, became an apprentice sailor with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1842 and spent the remainder of his life west of the Rocky Mountains. As a young employee of the HBC, he helped to clear the site where Fort Victoria was to be built. Subsequent to that he spent his entire career with the HBC in the Pacific Coast maritime trade. He progressed through the HBC ranks and became both a Chief Trader and Master Mariner. He continued in these positions until the time of his death in 1872.

The Métis Master Mariner John Swanson has been memorialized in three geographical locations in British Columbia that bear his name. They are:

- Swanson Bay – in Graham Reach on the Inside Passage
- Swanson Channel – in Haro Strait, NW of Pender Island
- Swanson Island – on Blackfish Sound, Broughton Strait

16. SINCLAIR PASS – EAST RADIUM HOT SPRINGS

James Sinclair was a great Métis leader, explorer, trailblazer, advocate, adventurer, and pioneer. He was a stellar champion of free trade and Métis rights. He is one of the most remarkable and memorable Métis personalities in history. This prominent Scottish Métis free trader was selected by the Hudson's Bay Company as the leader of the Red River Expedition to the disputed Oregon Country in 1841.

In addition to the plaque dedicated by the British Columbia Government to James Sinclair overlooking the Columbia Valley, there is today a landmark passageway in British Columbia named Sinclair Pass that honors the bold-spirited Métis chief of the Red River Expedition. This Pass is a narrow canyon of red rock precipitously carved by nature through the looming mountains and is located on the east side of Radium Hot Springs.

The great pathfinder James Sinclair is also commemorated in the names of a nearby rushing stream and in a mountain.

These geographical landmarks are Sinclair River and Mount Sinclair

The springs, originally called Sinclair Hot Springs, have since been renamed Radium Hot Springs. All of these impressive British Columbia sites are adjacent to or close by the modern-day Banff-Windermere Highway 93.



17. VICTORIA VOLTIGEURS DISPLAY – VICTORIA NAVAL MUSEUM

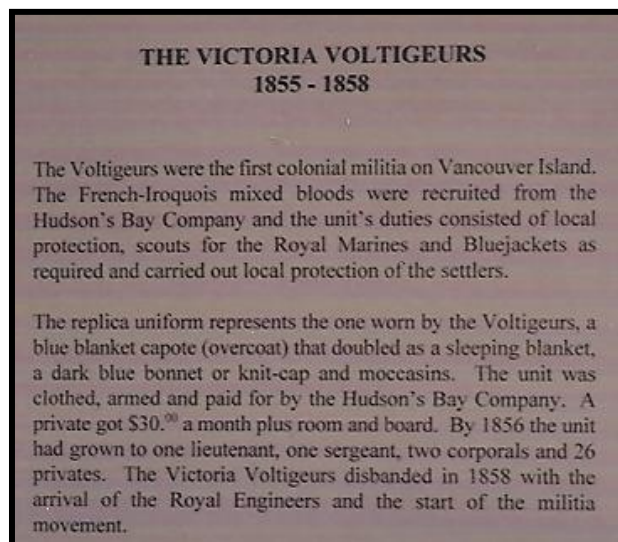
The first militia and police force formed in what is now the Province of British Columbia was the Victoria Voltigeurs, so named by the future Governor James Douglas. It came into existence in 1851. It consisted of mostly Métis volunteers who had been Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) employees.

Douglas provided his own term to describe the Métis Voltigeurs. He referred to them as “half whites”. Voltigeur is a French word that literally translates as “light infantryman”. The Victoria Voltigeurs conducted routine tasks during their tenure, dealing with local protection and other matters. However on several occasions they were involved in more dangerous activities in order to handle serious crimes such as murder.

One of the principal Victoria Voltigeurs was the Métis Basil Bottineau. He was the sergeant of the troop under the command of another Métis Joseph William McKay in the 1853 expeditions to Cowichan and Nanaimo.

There is a small display commemorating the Victoria Voltigeurs at the CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum in Greater Victoria. It depicts a uniform worn by a Victoria Voltigeur.

The following is the accompanying information sign at the display, which refers to the Métis as “mixed bloods” and indicates a later date for its formation.



17. VICTORIA VOLTIGEURS LAND GRANT SITE



Colquitz Creek at the Entrance to Portage Inlet - Victoria

James Douglas organized the Victoria Voltigeurs in 1851 as the first military/police force in British Columbia. It consisted mostly of Métis who had retired from the Hudson's Bay Company. In founding the Voltigeurs, James Douglas proposed:

.... the formation of a rural police to be effected by granting a certain number of 20 Acre lots on the Fur trade Reserve to the company's retiring servants.

In a letter of March 2, 1859 Governor Douglas wrote that the Métis Nicholas Auger, John Lemon, and Jean Baptiste Jollibois were entitled to a grant of 20 acres each on Portage Inlet (part of present-day Greater Victoria). A number of Métis employees of the HBC had retired to that area in 1851. A small settlement close by the Colquitz River (now called a creek) had sprung up there. This location is nearby the HBC's Craigflower Farm and the Craigflower Schoolhouse that were established in the 1850s (now National Historic Sites of Canada).

A copy of the "Victoria District Official Map 1858" shows the lands then owned by prominent citizens of Victoria. It also shows the acreages received by the Victoria Voltigeurs Jean Baptiste Jollibois, John Lemon and Nicholas Auger near the entrance to Portage Inlet.



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Reference Source:
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