

What Pierre (Peter) "Pig's Eye" Parrant Has to Say About Himself

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A fur trade era re-enactor, Duke Addicks often portrays Pig's Eye Parrant, who tells about his life in the fur trade era.

But Pig's Eye himself has returned to make sure Duke gets it right. So what follows is what Pig's Eye has to say about himself.

Following that, Duke Addicks has listed a bunch of resources that seem to confirm much of what Pig's Eye has to say. But Pig's Eye was there. Who can doubt that what he has to say about himself is true.

What follows is in Pig's Eye's own words.

Peter "Pig's Eye" Parrant Himself Speaks:

I understand my friend Duke Addicks tells stories about me and my employers in the fur trade, Grey Cloud and her Scottish-born husband James Aird, and how I got into the whiskey business and started what is now the City of St. Paul which was first known as Pig's Eye's Landing, which would have been a very wonderful name for a city. So I want to tell you directly all about me, more than you want to know perhaps, but if you want to understand the fur trade in the Upper Mississippi River Region, then this story of my life may help.

My name is Pierre Parrant, or Peter Parrant, or, and I hate the nickname that Roswell Russell, a clerk's assistant at Fort Snelling, gave me, "Pig's Eye" Parrant. Just because I have a bad eye. I kept it covered after that. I hate to be laughed at!

I am the founder of what is now called the City of St. Paul in what is now called Minnesota, which became a state about ten years after I left, according to Mr. Addicks. Perhaps you don't believe me, that I started this city.

So I've come back to tell my story, so you will know what really happened. But, being

unable to write in English, or much in French for that matter, I am telling my story to my friend Duke Addicks who I trust will report it accurately to you. Mr. Addicks even has books and magazine articles and the like which reference my activities before I left suddenly after being mistreated by Justice Joe Brown who I understand became famous but not generally altogether respected around here.

Anyway Mr. Addicks says he will put a list of books and articles which mention me, and which confirm what I am trying to say, at the end of my story.

Mr. Addicks says that the ghost of Mr. Aird often returns to tell his side of this story, but this is my story as I remember it, and everything I say may be true!

Maybe you'd be interested in what I got to say. Or not. But here it is anyway.

So I begin.

MY EARLY LIFE

I was born in Sault Ste. Marie in 1777, my father being one who ran a warehouse there. He was part French and part Huron and my mother was part French and part Ojibwe. So I am a half breed and proud of my heritages. I learned to read and write a little French and worked for my father when I was just a child.

QUEBECOIS MUSIC

My father told me that the part of France my family comes from is the valley of the River Lorie. All the voyageurs, or their parents or grandparents, came from there because then they all knew the same songs, over a thousand songs, they sang as they paddled their canoes across the great lakes and the rivers of the interior. No one would hire a voyageur unless he knew the songs, and these were the songs the people of Lorraine sang. Some of the words are the old words and speak of events across the ocean that we do not well

understand. Some of the songs are new, we used the old tunes but with new words.

Most of the tunes were changed a little bit by us because they did not sound right to the Indians. Especially our fiddle tunes, our dance tunes. Many voyageurs were over-winterers, that is, they spent the winter near the post with their Indian wives.

The winters in the upcountry are long and cold, so what else do you do but marry an attractive young woman, from whatever tribe you were trading with, and spend your winter nights playing your fiddle and singing your voyageur songs. And the women listening to this music told their husbands that the tunes were ok but not exactly right and they sang the tunes the way they liked them. So the husbands, those over-winterers, began to play the tunes and sing the melodies in a way that satisfied their Indian listeners. Many voyageurs were part Indian anyway.

So at the summer rendezvous, were everyone danced the jigs and reels and other European dances, and sang the voyageur songs, the over-winterers taught these improved melodies to the voyageurs who came across the lakes from Montreal, and these revisions made their way back to Quebec and became what Mr. Addicks speaks of as Quebecois music, the traditional music of Quebec. But I wouldn't know about that. I just sing the songs.

Mr. Addicks says these days only about fifty of the tunes from the thousand voyageur songs survive. The listeners in my time didn't know how to write down the tunes, only the words. So I am teaching him how to sing the old songs with his Indian flutes, Native American flutes they call them, but I never heard of Native Americans, only Indians and the various tribal names. Anyway, I'm teaching him the old melodies, for which he is very grateful. He says.

I knew the songs, but I am not a small man so did not find a place in a canoe as a

voyageur. But as a young man I went to St. Louis where I was welcomed for my strength by Chouteau & MacKenzie and developed the skill of being an oarsman and a steersman on a bateau, also called a York boat, also called Mackinaw boats, which are used much on the Mississippi for the trade.

WORKING FOR GREY CLOUD AND HER HUSBAND JAMES AIRD

I was also known at Prairie du Chien where I started working about 1799 for a beautiful woman who was the best fur trader on the river, and her husband, a gentleman named James Aird who at the time I met him was a very prosperous land owner, due to the considerable trading skills of his wife, Grey Cloud. Grey Cloud was considered to be the major trader in Prairie du Chien, and Aird was especially a farmer, owning considerable property in Prairie du Chien. Grey Cloud was trading mostly on the Ste. Pierre, now known as the Minnesota, River with the Mdewakanton, and also with her brother's, the second Chief Wabasha's, band, which at first were located at the mouth of the Upper Iowa River and then at Wabasha's Prairie, now known as Winona, just north of du Chien.

Mr. Aird had a post way up the Missouri River that he and I occasionally went to, and when we did we was gone most of a year. Grey Cloud didn't go on those long trips. She stayed at their house in du Chien or with her brother's band while her husband was gone, and continued in the fur trade with them.

Grey Cloud and Mr. Aird always brought liquor but gave it as an inducement to trade, as presents. We never traded liquor for pelts. No. Mr. Aird was too much of a gentleman to do that and Grey Cloud wouldn't trade pelts for liquor under any circumstances and certainly wouldn't want her husband to do so either. I did, though, later on when I set up my own business.

Just after running the rapids at Rock River in the fall of 1805, Mr. Aird and I and his

clerk, a kid named Ramsey Crooks just over from Scotland, were headed first for St. Louis and then on to Mr. Aird's post on the Missouri, we met Lt. Zebulon Pike coming up the almost dry Mississippi River in a great Keel Boat. Pike heard Mr. Aird playing his bagpipes, as we were celebrating a successful run of the rapids with a tune and a drink, while I cooked a late breakfast on the beach with pork roasted on the fire for us and for the crews of the four other boats coming downriver through the rapids behind us.

Anyway, Lt. Pike brought his huge boat over to where we were and stopped to talk to Mr. Aird and seek his advice. We gave him a drink and a meal, and a tune on the pipes, and then told him what to do, while we waited for the other boats to show up.

Mr. Aird told Lt. Pike to get rid of his Keelboat and to get a couple of Mackinaw boats which some called bateaux, at Prairie du Chien to use to get upriver to St. Anthony's falls, and even to the rapids above the falls, and then to use canoes thereafter.

Mr. Aird also told Lt. Pike to find Mr. Aird's brother-in-law the second Chief Wabasha who would help him in his adventures. Mr. Aird's wife, Grey Cloud was the daughter of the Great Chief Wabasha and sister of Necotheidah the second Chief Wabasha, who was Aird's brother-in-law. Pike said he had heard that Wabasha didn't want to meet with him, but Aird said ask again.

Mr. Aird sent word to Wabasha letting him know why he should meet with this American even though Wabasha was trading with us British in this area, asking him to meet with Pike, and they did. And they seemed to like, even respect, each other. Wabasha even adopted Lt. Pike into his band of the Mdewakanton Dakota in a Grand Medicine Society ceremony held just for Pike. Wabasha gave Pike a special pipe to show to the other Indians upriver to let them know that Pike was Wabasha's special friend.

Mr. Addicks says an anthropologist named Hall wrote about these adoptions in his book

The Archaeology of the Soul, so what I say here must be true. Lt, Pike even writes about it in his journal, which was published and which Mr. Aird read and re-read and found very interesting. He even laughed aloud a lot when he read it, but he never explained to me what was so funny. He said Pike's journal was a lot like a book by a Jonathan Carver, which Mr. Aird read in Scotland before he came over, and which was about Carver spending the winter with the Great Chief Wabasha in 1766 or thereabouts. Lt. Pike quotes from Carver's book, and gives Carver credit for the information Pike used.

Mr. Aird said that the Lewis and Clark journals when they came out, and all of the fur traders who could read English anyway read them, that those guys quoted a lot from Mr. Carver's book but never gave Mr. Carver credit. Mr. Aird said that's the worst kind of lie, to play a tune that someone else composed, and not give them credit for it, or to use someone else's words and not give the person who said the words credit for saying what he did. It's all very confusing to me, and maybe that's why I didn't laugh.

Mr. Aird and his Scottish born fur trader friends, Cameron, Dickson, Campbell, those guys, supplied a lot of liquor for the dances held before those Grand Medicine ceremonies, when the women would lock up the weapons so their men wouldn't hurt themselves, and I did too later in my life. But apart from giving liquor to the men during a fur trade bargaining session, the providing of "spirit water" for those spiritual events was perhaps how liquor first got involved in the Indian's lives.

Of course Aird also sent his fur trader buddies along with Pike on his journey just to see what he was up to and to tell the Indians not to worry, Aird's British friends would still trade with them. Cameron went with Pike to St. Anthony's falls and even witnessed the so called treaty, and other British fur traders followed Pike further upriver. And the rest is history.

Then after seeing Lt. Pike on his way, and after picking up supplies in St. Louis where we stayed over the winter, we went up the Missouri that next spring with some liquor to give away and a full fur trade inventory.

We met Lewis and Clark coming down the river. Mr. Aird was the first white man they had met since starting their journey, and they were grateful for our updating them on the events that had taken place since they left. We provided liquor for those two and all of their men to celebrate their return, since they were out of liquor, as well as a meal. They called Mr. Aird "Gentleman Jim" and the nickname stuck to him for the rest of his life. Ramsey Crooks was Mr. Aird's clerk then, just a young man from Scotland learning the trade. Crooks told me thirty years later when we were talking about the American Fur Trade's rules on providing liquor to the Indians, how much he was impressed with Mr. Aird's welcome to those two men and their companions.

Mr. Aird liked to read and play his bagpipes, and maybe have a drink or two, as we struggled up the Mississippi with our load of trade goods. He and I were always in the lead boat, he in the middle, I in the stern close enough to talk with him. The men when it was shallow would have to pole the boats or even go onto shore and pull them with ropes to make any headway. Going upriver was always a struggle, but I was the steersman and in command so didn't have to do that. But often I helped out. When we got near a village he traded at, he would announce our coming with a tune or two on his pipes.

His wife Grey Cloud and their daughter Margaret, also known as Grey Cloud, would travel with us and the two women would distribute the trade goods to the women of the village while Mr. Aird's clerk, for awhile it was a boy named Ramsey Crooks like I said, kept track of who received what and whose husband would make payment in furs in the spring for the goods we brought.

The trade was mostly for the women. Aird would have those things made out of metal that the women really used and were dependent on: scissors, knives, awls, axes, and especially kettles. And cloth, wool cloth that kept them warm in wet weather and in winter. And pretty things of not much use but very valuable. That's why his wife Grey Cloud was so valuable and became the great trader she was, really taking over the trade from her husband. She knew what the women wanted and made their men pay plenty of pelts for what they received.

Some of Mr. Aird's men, and sometimes we also, would overwinter with the tribe as they moved from place to place, gathering the wild rice, hunting waterfowls, and sometimes buffalo on the prairies, then deer in the white oak forests closer to their village. In spring, while the women and children made maple syrup using their kettles, the men would gather the pelts and all would meet at the village to do it all over again. Just as soon as the men returned with the pelts, Mr. Aird would meet them. There would be no drinking during that entire time, right from the day the bargains were sealed as to the payments the men would make for the trade items they and their women received. But when the pelts were received by Mr. Aird, he would solemnly give each of the Indian men a big drink as he thanked them for their success.

The pelts would be bundled and we would take them downriver to Prairie du Chien. That was always an interesting journey, as we traveled fast on the high waters of the spring river.

Mr. Aird didn't read as we went downriver, he just hung on. Little Grey Cloud always rode in the front of the boat and shouted with excitement as we encountered floating trees or were swept over the sandbars. Little Grey Cloud went everywhere with her dad and her mother Grey Cloud. She learned the fur trade very well and when Tom Anderson married her, she was already trading alongside her mom.

About Mr. Anderson, Mr. Aird's young partner. He married Aird's daughter Margaret, the little Grey Cloud, in 1805 when she was just eleven years old but an established trader like her mom. Tom had the post up on the island where Pike had signed his treaty. But when the war of 1812 started Tom moved to Canada with their two children and fought for the British.

Mr. Aird did miss his two grandchildren, as did their grandmother. Their names were Angus and Jane, and Mr. Aird never saw them again. He never knew that Jane would someday return and reunite with her mother. Aird never forgave Tom for abandoning Aird's daughter Margaret who stayed with her parents, eventually becoming as successful in the fur trade as her mother. The island in the Mississippi where she and her second husband Hazen Moors farmed and where she had her fur trading post got named after her, not her husband. That says something.

As he got older, Mr. Aird stayed close to their house and farm in Prairie du Chien and the two Grey Clouds did the fur trading. They made that man rich in land both at Prairie and at Mackinac Island, where he owned property as well. Mr. Aird, he was a gentleman, drank a little whiskey and supervised the voyageurs who farmed for him on all his property just north of Prairie du Chien. His land ran all the way from the river to the bluffs where the common grazing land was. In winters, he liked to walk over his frozen properties and dream or sit before the fire in his house north of Prairie and read.

Mr. Addicks tells me that Mr. Aird's house still stands, and is the oldest structure in Wisconsin still on its original foundation. It's north of Prairie du Chien on Main street just after one passes the old French cemetery on the west side of the road on high land a little away from the Mississippi. Here's a photo of me, and another picture of Mr. James Aird in front of Aird's house. I say his house, not his and Grey Cloud's house for reasons

that I talk about later in this narrative.



James Aird, in the photo to the left, stands in the yard of his and Grey Cloud's 1770s house near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. This is the oldest structure in Wisconsin still on its original location. This is likely the place where Margaret Aird, the second Grey Cloud, was born. Photo by

Jeannette Bach who will say yes, this is a photo of James Aird, or maybe his ghost.

On the right is a recent photo of me, Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant, with a clean shirt on and a trimmed beard as befits a prosperous tavern owner. Mr. Addicks provided the clean shirt and his wife Jeannette Bach took the photo and will say yes this is a photo of Pig's Eye Parrant.



THE WAR OF 1812

During the War (of 1812) in which the British fought the Americans over whose territory this Upper Mississippi region was. Was it part of Canada as the British claimed? Or Part of America as the American's Claimed. After all, President Jefferson bought all the land west of the Mississippi from Mr. Napoleon back in 1803. Except for sending Lt. Pike upriver to explore this part of this purchase, the American's showed little interest in the Upper Mississippi.

During the war, Mr. Aird's business suffered as we could not easily get trade goods from Canada and the price of fur was down because the British had difficulty with transportation. The Americans had little interest in the fur trade in this area until the dispute over the British influence was resolved.

After the war things got some better. The man who had been Mr. Aird's clerk, Ramsey

Crooks, was now an important person in the American fur trade so he greatly supported his benefactor Mr. Aird who Mr. Crooks said taught him all he knew.

But Mr. Aird had spent too many winters when he was a young man with the Mdewakanton and was in bad health. Even Grey Cloud's medicines could not save him and he died in 1819 at age 62 or thereabouts. She wrapped his body in a red blanket and we took it to a high place on the bluffs above his property overlooking the river, and, following the centuries old custom of the Dakota, put Mr. Aird's body on a platform in the open air. We later buried his bones bundled in that same red blanket, but I will not tell you where. Even now, Mr. Addicks says, even though people have searched for his remains, no one has found out where we buried his bones. My bones have been for a long time scattered by the animals, and no one knows where my bones are. Not even Mr. Addicks.

AFTER MR. AIRD'S DEATH

Poor Grey Cloud. Even though those two women fur traders made Mr. Aird rich in land, his wife Grey Cloud could inherit none of it because in 1819 women in America, white or Indian, could not own land. So she went to live as an Indian in Black Dog's village while Margaret carried on the fur trade for them both. Mr. Aird's heirs sold the land and offered her the money, but she refused.

And poor me. I was unemployed in a business that was declining. Even Margaret Aird struggled to make the fur trade pay off, and she didn't need a fat aging oarsman like me.

MY BUSINESS AS A WHISKEY TRADER

So I observed that what the Indians now wanted was liquor. Just for their ceremonies because the spirit was in it. Not to drink all the time, just for those special times. And the Americans who ran the fur trade were reluctant to sell or even give liquor to the Indians.

So in 1820 I found myself in business supplying liquor to my longtime friends, the Indians on the Minnesota River. Trading pelts for liquor when I could get away with it which was most of the time. I still tried to do some legitimate fur trading, partnering with Colin Campbell off and on, but 1826 was the last winter we spent out on the prairie. After that winter, I went into the liquor smuggling business full time.

I had help of course. Lots of help. There was big profit in liquor.

Where did we get the liquor? St. Louis, of course. We stored it at various spots on Lake Pepin, which is a wide place in the Mississippi just a few miles south of what was to become St. Paul We brought it by boat upriver to an island which later was called after me, which was on the east side of the Mississippi. It was just downriver from the Little Crow band's village of Kapoza which in those days was on the east side of the river until the Treaty of 1837 forced them across to the west side.

Which Little Crow? There was a whole series of them. Hunts Sparrowhawks Walking had the name Chief Little Crow when I got started in the liquor business. He liked his liquor and helped us until he died in 1833. His son Big Thunder thought liquor traders should all be shot, me first, and that liquor was a bad thing.

But Big Thunder's son, His Red Nation was the best for us. His cousin, Joe Renville became the distributor of liquor to the Yanktons and Tetons from his fort way out at Lac qui Parle. All we had to do was to get it past the Indian Agent Taliaferro, which we in the liquor business say as if it were spelled Toliver and we'd spit when we said it. Taliaferro was against giving liquor to the Indians unless he did it himself. And he did it a lot as a gift of friendship. It was just the selling of it to the Indians by us that he objected to.

But we would bring some kegs upriver and hide it where His Red Nation and his friends

would find it and just put some kegs in a canoe and quietly go past the fort on moonless or cloudy nights, and the liquor was on the way to their relative Joe Renville. Or we'd take it overland to the place where we could ride across the Mississippi above the falls when the river was low, which was most of the time except in the spring, and then overland to the Minnesota where Nine Mile Creek joined it.

But moving liquor on the river was hazardous. In 1834, Alexis Baily and I and some others were stopped on the Mississippi by soldiers from Fort Snelling as we tried smuggling liquor upriver to His Red Nation from where we hid it at old Fort Antoine on Lake Pepin. Joe Brown was financing our little adventure back then, and we were just going to bring it to his post near the mouth of the St. Croix. But no, sometimes we couldn't get it upriver even that far.

I BECOME A RESPECTABLE TAVERN OWNER

I decided I could make more money selling liquor by the drink than by the barrel.

At Fort Snelling all of those soldiers needed a drink or two more than they were allotted. They got two or three stiff drinks a day, courtesy of the government. A half gill (that's supposed to be two ounces but those who poured the liquor were always a little generous) with breakfast, then a half gill with the afternoon meal. But in the evening, well that's where I came in handy. Sometimes they would get a drink at the Fort, sometimes not. But either way, some of those soldiers would still be thirsty after dark.

So I opened a little tavern in 1835 in Fountain Cave not too far from the fort where anyone with a canoe or snowshoes in the winter could come and have a few drinks. And I just bought my whiskey by the barrel from His Red Nation and his suppliers who brought the whiskey right to me. Some say I made it. Too much trouble and equipment required to do that. No. Too easy to buy it from those who brought it up from St. Louis.

My Fountain Cave Tavern was an important place where people could come together and share a drink in the light of the big bonfires we made by the opening, and talk. Not a hovel, like some say.

I sold it by the drink to soldiers and voyageurs and Indians and the Scots like the Campbells. And the settlers who had come here from Selkirk on the Red River country up north and who brought their fiddles and bagpipes to the Cave, and the American Fur Company folks across the river. Everyone came to my tavern for a drink and to hear the latest news and just to talk. Let's go to Fountain Cave and find out what's going on people would say. And they did.

Especially my friend Collin Campbell came around. I'm glad to say I had a friend. We had done some fur trading together back in 1826, spent the winter together in a tipi at the head of the Des Moines River for McKenzie. Get to know someone well that way. Told every story we could remember made up the rest.

Yes, everyone came to my little establishment.

Even the great Second Wabasha, Grey Cloud's brother, Aird's brother-in-law I mentioned earlier, came there in broad daylight and talked about how he was not going to sign any treaty giving up his people's lands to the East of the Mississippi to the Americans, President Andrew Jackson be damned. Of course that was before the Americans killed him with smallpox in 1836.

Here's how that happened. The military leaders knew smallpox was coming up the Mississippi, so the good surgeon at Fort Crawford inoculated all the Indians down at Prairie du Chien, and the surgeon at Fort Snelling inoculated all of the Indians around the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers here, even me. But the military leaders, some say The President himself, ordered that none of Wabasha's band down at Winona, half way

between the two forts, be inoculated against smallpox. So Wabasha II and a bunch of them died.

His son, Bounding Wind, also a good customer, signed the treaty in 1837 just as soon as he became the new Chief Wabasha III. Settlement on the east side of the Mississippi was now possible. And I thought about that.

Even Indian Agent Taliaferro came to the tavern in Fountain Cave for a drink. His wife Eliza had arrived in 1828 to find that he was the happy father of a little baby girl, not hers. Eliza very much disapproved of his very former Indian wife, one of Cloudman's daughters. Eliza especially did not ever like Taliaferro's daughter Mary who he supported and saw often. When it seemed that he and Eliza could not have children of their own, Taliaferro sometimes left his happy home and came to have a drink with his friends here. Mary was the only child he ever had, and he brought her with him sometimes. She seemed to be a dreamer, and looked into the fire often.

Even Commandant of the Fort, Joe Plympton showed up once in a while, but he was bad for business. All of the soldiers got out of there as soon as he arrived unless they were petrified with drink. Only the Indians stayed. He liked his liquor though, and never gave me any trouble about my new location.

And of course fur trader Joe Brown who I smuggled whiskey for and who was the one who treated me so badly when I was an old man. Joe even got a creek named for him for awhile, Browns Creek. He and Jo William Snelling, the son of the Commander back when the fort was built, once canoed up it when they were sixteen to Minnetonka Lake—no white person knew that lake was there, but the boys proved it was. After Joe Brown got out of the army he built a cabin at the mouth of the Mississippi, so it was called Brown's Creek. Now they call the creek Minnehaha I guess. After some woman in some poem

about events which didn't even happen anywhere around here and for sure not on Brown's Creek.

Joe Brown had been a fifer in the army at Fort Snelling. A great job, no general duties, just play the damn fife, and sneak a drink, and he taught all of the Indian boys he and Joe Snelling hung around with how to play fifes too, and how play fife music on their Indian flutes. Joe Big Eagle (Black Dog) was one of the best Indian flutists I ever heard but he died in 1838 and his skill died with him. He played those jigs and reels on the Indian flutes as if an Indian had made up the tunes.

Sam Pond, one of those missionaries at Cloudman's village, even showed up occasionally but he didn't drink, just came for the news. He probably disapproved of me selling to the Indians from his village who talked to him like he was a friend. He said he liked to hear the boys play their flutes when they serenaded the young women in the summer evenings outside the girl's mother's homes. He said the Indian flute music was soft and sweet and agreeable to his ear. He was from out east somewhere and talked like that. When Taliaferro and Eliza went back out east in 1839, Taliaferro left his daughter Mary with Sam to raise. He was a kind and curious man.

Anyway, Joe Brown always carried a flask in one pocket and a fife in the other pocket, they're pretty small, and would offer a drink and play tunes at any excuse. He was really good at the fife. You could hear him sometimes in the night, a scary sound, as he canoed on the river. I had to watch out that he didn't sneak a free drink off of me.

Joe Brown married his first wife, Helen Dickson, daughter of the notorious British Colonel Robert Dickson, for love when he was just 20 and she 17. But they divorced the year before my tavern opened, and Margaret-Mary McCoy often came with him. In fact, she seldom let him out of her sight He would laugh and say the Indian boys played courting

flutes to woo their women, he played the fife and won Margaret's heart (and privately he would say the same about his courtship of Helen, but knowing her she probably wouldn't have been impressed).

Margaret had been his assistant for a few years before the divorce, so he had plenty of opportunities to play his fife for her before Helen caught on to what else was happening. But his marriage to Margaret didn't last long. Soon after Joe got elected to the Wisconsin legislature it passed a law or something granting him a divorce which a court sometime later approved of.

Mostly people came at night in the darkness. Maybe an Ojibwe killed a Dakota after they left, but no one fought at my place, or they would not be welcome back.

I MOVE

But Taliaferro decided I was too close to the fort, and wondered if I was a citizen or a foreigner or even human, and business wasn't as good anymore, and the east side of the Mississippi was open for settlement like I said.

I gave up my claim at the cave to get out of paying a debt, and, since it was legal to settle on the east side of the Mississippi now I moved in 1839 downriver two miles and got a big claim and started over. I paid Judge Doty five dollars for a certificate of American Citizenship, as I had been in this country for more than twenty years since the signing of the treaty of 1818 which made the Upper Mississippi part of the United States.

The business downriver was even better. All of my customers liked my new tavern. It was larger, and we could go inside in the winter. They gambled with checkers, that's a game played on a board. For lots of money. The Indians were the best players. They caught on quickly thought ahead and out smarted you. There was no place to hide. I didn't like the game myself. You could cheat at poker.

The first steamboat to dock at my landing where St. Paul is now, stopped there in 1839 because it brought my whiskey up from St. Louis and Lake Pepin. And the steamboats kept coming even after Pig's Eye's Landing got called St. Paul's, in 1841, bringing my whiskey and settlers.

Taliaferro had given up being Indian agent in 1839 so liquor flowed more easily into the mouths of those Indians up the Minnesota that wanted it. His Red Nation would stop in every so often even after he went into business as an independent fur trader with Joe Renville. He moved pelts and whiskey back and forth below the fort with some ease. He knew his dad Big Thunder would likely name one of his half brothers to be his successor because his father disapproved of His Red Nation's liquor business. But His Red Nation would frequently announce for all in my tavern to hear, "My vision is to be Chief."

My landing got called Pig's Eye's because a carpenter named Ed Brissette wrote a letter at my tavern to Joe Brown in 1839 and put as a return address "Pig's Eye's Landing" on it, and the name stuck until that Catholic Priest Galtier objected and built a chapel and called it after St. Paul and insisted that the landing be called after the saint not the sinner.

My assistant, David Faribault, would bring the whiskey and the hardware and other stuff I sold up the slope to my store. I bought and sold lots of things. The Indian women would trade corn and beans and squash and pumpkins, and dried fish, for the usual trade goods, and wool cloth and kettles especially, and the men would trade ducks and venison for their drinks. I would sell the food to the settlers who were building around me in what was becoming a town.

I MOVE AGAIN

But my whiskey operation became too visible, too many people building cabins and

houses and stores around me, and the settlers didn't seem to like the Indians and French-Canadians who came to my place and maybe drank too much sometimes. And not just for the drinking. My tavern was a social place just like at Fountain Cave. And there was just too much socializing both inside and outside my place.

My customers became reluctant to come to my place which was right in the middle of the settlement. So in 1844 I sold my claim and moved downriver again, to where I had stored whiskey earlier in my career. There was a nice place for the steamboats to tie up and lower some kegs to a boat. Because they gave up the east side of the river, Little Crow's village of Kapoza moved to the west side of the river, just across from where it was.

I made a claim out past Le Clair's Settlement, where Michel and Antoine, they were brothers, were farming. That's where the Battle of Kapoza started. I thought I was off of their property, but my neighbor Michel Le Claire challenged my claim. Said he claimed it first. If he did I didn't know about it. So we argued, friendly like, and decided to have the Justice Joe Brown who kept court on Grey Cloud's Island decide whose claim it was anyway.

I thought Joe would decide for me for sure. He once paid me five dollars to vote for him for the Wisconsin Territorial legislature in 1841 and I even did vote for him. Plus I was an American Citizen. I paid Judge Doty down at Prairie du Chien five dollars for a certificate saying so. But Joe just laughed, and said he didn't know whose claim it was either, but his decision was that it would belong to whoever got back to it first. Then he shouted "Go," leaned back in his chair and started playing a tune on his fife. And the race was on. I was out the door before Joe got more than a couple notes of his little flute thing.

Now I was 67 at the time, and even though I was a tough guy, my neighbor Le Claire

was younger and tougher. He didn't beat me by much, however, it was maybe eight miles or so, and he got back only two minutes before I did. Joe wrote the decision giving the land to Le Claire before he heard the results of the race. So I ran for nothing. So I was out a claim and a cabin, although Le Clair let me stay there until I could figure out what to do. And he and Antoine and I could still share a drink.

I LEAVE

Now I could have gone a little bit more downriver, past the lake that is called after me now, but I decided the hell with it, I was tired, I wanted to go home, back to Sault Ste. Marie, to retire, or die or whatever. People were laughing at me, calling me loser because of the so-called race that Brown tricked me into running.

So I packed my stuff, which wasn't much, and my little silver ornaments worth quite a bit and my money which was quite a bit, and started walking northeast, away from the Mississippi that had been my river, toward the trail that ran alongside the St. Croix, which would lead me to Superior and then to the trail home.

But I never made it. I don't have much recollection what happened. It was cold, and I had liquor and I must have stopped for the night and built a fire and had a drink. Maybe someone hit me on the head and took my money and stuff. Everyone knew I was leaving. That was no secret. I hollered damnations to them all as I left. Maybe I just lay down and died like an old dog who has been kicked around and lived past his time, and somebody came along later and gave me a shallow burial before taking my money and stuff. Or maybe the wolves ate what remained and scattered my stuff in the woods.

There are a lot of possibilities, but when one is dead he loses interest in staying around and one leaves and goes on a journey. But I'm not supposed to say much about that. So I won't.

But sometimes I return, like now, just to tell my own story and to have a drink or two or with Mr. Addicks or maybe more. After all, who can tell my story best but me, and I try to remember it all.

I understand a steamboat captain wrote a book about his life on the Mississippi and called my little tavern at Fountain Cave an "outpost of civilization". He did, Mr. Addicks says so. I feel better about my life now.

Mr. Addicks read to me that the Captain wrote that "This great van-leader of Civilization arrived upon the ground upon which St. Paul now occupies, in June, 1837. Yes at that date, Pierre Parrant, a Canadian, built the first cabin, uncorked his jug, and begin to sell whisky to the Indians. The result is before us." That is the city of St. Paul as it was when the Captain saw it, I guess. First whiskey comes, this Captain explains, then the missionaries like my friend Sam Pond then the immigrants with their axes and hoes and rifles, or something like I disremember what all he said. You can read it yourself. The Captain's name is Mark Twain and his book is called Life on the Mississippi. He talks about me near the end of the last chapter. I'm very proud.

Yours truly. Peter Parrant, courtesy of my friend Duke Addicks who has read this back to me and I swear that all of it may be true.

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Many additional sources too numerous to list may be accessed by contacting Duke Addicks at 1453 Hoyt Avenue West, Falcon Heights, MN 55108, 651-643-0622, addicks.storyflute@gmail.com

From an email from Nancy Goodman to Duke Addicks dated January 23, 2008:

Just thought of a couple of sources for info about old Pierre Parrant. Joe Brown took depositions from him and others during a contested legislative election in 1841. If you have not seen this, the records are in the Election Committee Report, Wisconsin Territorial Legislature, 1841-42. Hard to find. However, we did publish this in "Minnesota Beginnings" which is the records of St. Croix County, WI 1840-49. The book is in most local libraries, MHS, etc. "We" being the Washington County Historical Society.

The book also has the claim jumping contest between "Peter Parran" and Michael LeClair, from Joe Brown's JP casebook, MHS holdings. Sorry, J.F. Williams, no footrace involved.

There are some other interesting details, such as Parent had cut wood for Hercules Dousman, and actually forked over \$20 a couple of times for a liquor license.

The transaction I was telling you about with Joe Brown and Pierre was the trading post

on Kittson's Point in what is now Bayport. In 1842 Parrant's claim was sold at a sheriff's sale to Brown for \$27.50. This transfer is in Washington County Deed book A (also in Minnesota Beginnings).

If you can't find a copy of the book, I could copy the pages for you.

It was nice talking with you. Any other questions, please ask.

Nancy Goodman

Duke Addicks also relied on:

Various conversations with Dakota and Ho-Chunk people both elders and descendents of various of the Dakota people. Especially indebted to the late Ho-Chunk elder Merlin Red Cloud Jr., the late Wabasha descendent Jim Stokes, and the late Wambdi Wicasa, director of the American Indian Culture Research Center in Marvin, South Dakota. Great storytellers all!

This conversation with Peter Parrant occurred in the study of Duke Addicks occurred sometime in the winter of 2007-2008, and the list of sources added in July of 2009.