

## Historical Notes

Allen Osmundson  
About Butte Michaux

Butte Michaux is a well-known landmark in Griggs County, North Dakota, and was a point of reference for Indians, and early-day travelers, such as trappers, military expeditions and settlers. Early maps spell that name Michaux, NOT Michaud. No letter D on the end, just the X, but it is silent in French.

Butte Michaux is located eleven miles north of present-day Cooperstown, N.D., and its apex appearing to be in the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of section 35-148-59, Pilot Mound Township, according to my 1993 topographical map, and my latest information declares its elevation to be 1586 feet above sea level.

Pilot Mound Township was apparently surveyed three different times, with the north and west boundaries surveyed in July, 1873, the south and east boundaries surveyed in August, 1875. Then the quarter section survey was done between 9 and 19 July, 1881, by Scott and Sturdevant surveyors, this info being entered at the Surveyor General's office at Yankton, Dakota Territory. That office was moved to Huron, Dakota Territory by December, 1883.

The 1873 and 1875 surveys were apparently done to establish the land grant rights granted to the Northern Pacific Railroad Co. But the 1881 survey was apparently done for the benefit of settlers who were already moving into that area.

That September, 1881, survey shows that there were already seven homesteaders in Pilot Mound Township, namely Nels Rukke in sec. 1, Rollef Johnson and Tore Olson in sec. 24, Elef Olson in sec. 26, Sever Johnson in sec. 25, and Isaac and Seth Mills in sec. 36. Ole Alfson settled in sec. 24 in the fall of 1881, after the survey.

The survey map is of interest to me since it shows that Isaac and Seth Mills, and Tore Olson had plowed land right across quarter section lines, thus indi-

question -- How did Butte Michaux get its name?

In January, 1997, I wrote to the National Archives of Canada at Ottawa, to ask if they perhaps had any info on Butte Michaux or that Hudson's Bay Co. trading post reported to be located near the butte, and possibly some info on the Ottawa Indians.

Tho I have received helpful info from those archives in the past, their reply to me said they had no info on a man called Michaux, nor on a Hudson's Bay trading post, but they did send some info on the Ottawa Indians, that the tribe had headquartered in the Lakes Huron and Michigan area in earlier times. One wonders how the Ottawa Church near Butte Michaux got its name. Perhaps someone can tell us that.

However, in February, 1998, I was reading the book about the Lewis and Clark expedition through the Louisiana Purchase titled "Undaunted Courage", by author Stephen E. Ambrose, and on page 70, I encountered the name ANDRE MICHAUX. I stopped reading immediately and wrote a letter to the author Ambrose at his winter home at Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, to ask if he perhaps had more info on Michaux. But as yet, November, 1998, I have had no reply from Ambrose.

You see, that book tells us that President Thomas Jefferson had retained Andre Michaux to do some research/exploring of that northern mountain area. But President Jefferson consequently learned that the Frenchman Michaux might possibly be on a secret mission for France to investigate various aspects of that land area, so Jefferson fired him, and later sent Lewis and Clark.

But that same day, February 12, 1998, I also wrote a letter to the Hudson's Bay Co. Archives at Winnipeg, and in their reply stated that they were unable to locate a HBC trading post in the Cooperstown/Butte Michaux region. But though HBC had a

named John Fosholdt. Fosholdt had told Wright that an Indian half-blood had been lost near a very high hill, or butte, in the north part of present-day Griggs County, and when he was found there, the butte was given his name, Michaux. However, Wright quoted two other versions, one that the butte was named for an Indian chief, and the other that an Indian scout named Michaux was buried there. Quite conflicting versions really.

But nevertheless, the name Michaux, definitely a French name, is connected to that butte.

So one day this (1998) fall I was in the Griggs County Library and one of the librarians found a book for me that contained names, and brief histories, of world-wide prominent people, and there I found the name of Andre Michaux.

Briefly, he was born March 7, 1746, at Satory, France, and died November 13, 1802, at Tamatave, Madagascar.

He was a botanist, and among the countries he visited were England, Spain, Persia, also Madagascar, studying plants at the behest of the French government.

Then in 1785, the French government sent him to North America to collect plants/trees for the then depleted forest of Rambouillet, southwest of Paris.

During his stay in the United States, which lasted 12 years, until 1797, he stocked two French nurseries with plants he found in his travels in the Mid-western and southeastern U.S. states.

In 1800, he went to Madagascar, where he contracted a fever from which he died at age 56.

That brief history of Andre Michaux states nothing about a wife or children back in France. But he MAY have married, or lived with, an Indian woman during his sojourn in North America or at least fathered a boy who MAY, or may not, have been one of the Indians spoken of by John Fosholdt to Major Wright. OR was Andre Michaux actually in our area, thus naming the butte?

Surely Michaux must have kept a journal of his stay in



the Cougar-Valiant game  
gives a pass from Robbie



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demonstration at half ball game. Andy Hen-  
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um Wogsland 12, Jayme  
berg 8, Lucas Wahl 8,  
Fuller 4, and Justin

stics of note: John  
gen's 5-7 FG shooting, 5-  
ooting and 7 rebounds;

Vigesaa's 4-6 FG  
g and 4-4 FT shooting;  
Full 5 rebounds, 5  
and 2 charges taken;  
Gronneberg's 5 assists  
steals; and Adam  
and's 7 rebounds, 6  
shots and 4 assists.

**LEADS**  
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The survey map is of interest to me since it shows that Isaac and Seth Mills, and Tore Olson had plowed land right across quarter section lines, thus indicating that they had settled before that last survey had been made, or prior to September, 1881, not knowing the boundaries for quarter sections.

I obtained the information for all three above surveys from the U.S. Dept. of Interior at Billings, Montana, in March, 1996.

I have an old Colton's map of Minnesota and what was then called Dakota Territory. That Dakota Territory then consisted of present-day North and South Dakota from the Red River west to the Missouri River. West of the Missouri River we see what was Nebraska Territory. Nebraska Territory boundaries were later changed, and it became a state in 1867.

I do not see the year of that map, but from Sioux Falls city all the way north to Pembina on the Canada boundary, I find only Sisseton Village and Breckenridge listed as habitations on that whole Minnesota-Dakota Territory border on the Red River. That map is an early one.

However, on this map we find Butte Michaux several miles east of Lake Jessie. Michaux ends with an X, NOT a D. Incidentally, on this map present Stump Lake is called Wamduska Lake, and Devils Lake is called Miniwakan Lake.

All the above leads us to the

learned that the Frenchman Michaux might possibly be on a secret mission for France to investigate various aspects of that land area, so Jefferson fired him, and later sent Lewis and Clark.

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So it would seem that if there was a trading post near Butte Michaux it was affiliated with either the North West Co., or perhaps the American Fur Co., or even the St. Louis, Missouri Co. Perhaps someone might have some further, definite info on a trading post near Butte Michaux. I have exhausted my sources.

During this past summer of 1998, I contacted my friend, John E. Bye, Archivist for the North Dakota State University at Fargo, asking if he had any info on Butte Michaux. He then sent me a page of info from the collection of the very able Griggs County historian, Myrtle Porterville, which contained some info that Major Dana Wright (who had done much research on early N.Dak. history) had learned from an early Griggs County settler

from which he died at age 56.

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Surely Michaux must have kept a journal of his stay in Canada, Dakota Territory, or possibly Montana, and it could be very interesting to read that. If he did, can that journal be obtained?

Louis Garcia, my correspondent from Tokio, ND., informed me that the Dakota Indians had a name for Butte Michaux, and it is Upizica Oti Paha, translated "The Hill where the Yellow Tailed Hawk lives." Garcia said the reason for this name is lost.

At this point I cannot think of more info about Butte Michaux. But I can look out our east kitchen window and clearly see the butte about four miles to the east of our home and remember that I have climbed to its summit a number of times during my 72 years, and seen surrounding towns in Nelson, Griggs and Steele Counties, and imagine some of the history that has swirled around this Griggs County landmark. Wouldn't it be exciting to see God's camcorder film of the events that have occurred around Butte Michaux? And who knows, will there be future battles that will rage around the Butte? We need only look at the history of Europe and Asia, or even at the Indian/Indian or Indian/US military history of the not-so-distant-past.

19 Feb. 1999