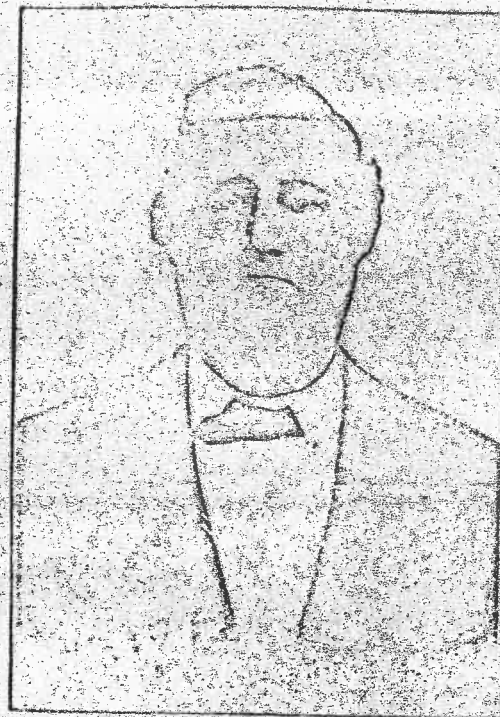


THE MOUNTAIN MEN AND THE FUR
TRADE OF THE FAR WEST



JAMES P. BEAUVAIS

B 12/6/1815 D Nov 1878

JAMES (Geminian) PIERRE BEAUVAIS, Born
12/6/1815 Ste Genevieve Mo. Died Nov. 1878
St Louis Mo. Established trading posts along
the Plate and Republican Rivers 1840--1867

JAMES (GEMINIAN) P. BEAUVAIS

1815--1878

Edward C. Beauvais

Married 1862

Mary J. Robidoux.

Married

8/17/35 By Church
aff 1832 Indian marriage in

MARY LOUISE MONTARDY.

Died 1836



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On the 10th of December 1815, I, the undersigned, married Pierre Geminien, born on the sixth (6) last, of Geminien, Beauvais and Michel Ambroise, Sponsors were Pierre Almond and Pelagie Ambroise.

HENRY PRATTE, Priest

This simple certificate recorded the beginning of the career of G. P. Beauvais, mountain man, trader, and Indian Commissioner. (His portrait appears herein at page 13.)

The easy going Geminien worried little about spelling, and "Geminien" and "Gemmien" seem to have been used interchangeably by both the father and son. They weren't too formal about names, either. Young Pierre Geminien began early in life to use the name "Geminien Pierre," often with a "Junior" after it.

Geminien, Jr., had a sister Julie Marie, born in 1817 and a brother Renaud Davile, born in 1820.⁸ Renaud, or Reno, set up business as a gunsmith and gunsmith in St. Louis in 1838 and maintained a close association with his brother throughout his life. Geminien also had another brother who handled some of his affairs in St. Joseph.⁹ This was apparently Francis Augustin Beauvais who married Joseph Rubidoux' daughter in 1847.¹

Life was serene and simple in old St. Genevieve. Visitors were impressed with the amiability and refinement of its people. There was a democratic society with little emphasis on political power or manifestations of wealth. As an example, Brackenridge described old M. Beauvais, one of the wealthiest men in upper Spanish Louisiana, as

dressed in the costume of the place . . . with a blue handkerchief on his head, one corner thereof descending behind and partly covering the eyelids which bound his hair, and a check shirt, coarse linen pants-

⁸ Claim, 17, 1697 by Estate of Geminien Beauvais, Records of U.S. Court of Claims, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁹ Letter from Beauvais to P. Chouteau, Jr., June 30, 1835, Chouteau Papers, Missouri Hist. Soc.

¹ Orin Robidoux, *A Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers* (Kansas City, 1924), 287.

leaves on his lips, and the first worn by both sexes.

However times changed grew up. Missouri was to the pursuit of commerce Geminien, Senior, before for the Delaware Indians with B. Pratte & Co thereby introduced early was only natural that he on with Chouteaus and in 1831.

He worked on the set her maiden voyage up turned in July but Gen Mackinaw boat full of signed on as a member the mountains.¹² They it Lake valley and then went River in July.

After this brief break son began. There were but was much hard work, but vious on the Green River rendezvous the party came went on to St. Louis.

Eighteen months of service He was glad to get on he was lonesome too. He

⁸ Houck, *op. cit.*, II, p. 269.

⁹ Richard Graham Papers, Front

¹⁰ Chouteau Account, Missouri, 1

¹² News story in *St. Louis Republic*

¹² Chouteau Accounts, V-143.

ing Mountain Man, not yet of St. Genevieve with Marie and Eli Janis.¹⁴

that Beauvais had taken up he had attended as a youth e of his pupils. In any event, in 1837 and the young wife mate event made Beauvais the St. Louis police force in nd regimentation were too t in disgust to head for the

ded, and traded all over the net him going west with St. ort: "Mr. Beauvais was a with the Sioux Indians."¹⁵ t Pierre correspondence as t John (Laramie).¹⁶ He was ufit in 1850.¹⁷

age rapidly along the Platte still trade to be made with y now lay in the emigrant ties and set up a road ranch in 1853.²⁰ He was a genial ent. Travelers often men- ms. Best of all, business was oy some of the better things

Nebraska (Lincoln, 1966), II, p. 384.

Tree Trunk (Lincoln, 1955), 14.

¹⁶ Chouteau Accounts, XX-7, section Claim no. 7029, Records of the

of life. He even flew a flag with the words "Lone Star" over his headquarters.²¹

He was rated as one of the big traders on the upper Platte and kept up friendly communications with Pierre Chouteau, Jr., even to the extent of assisting in the collection of debts owed Chouteau. Some of his merchandise came directly from Chouteau but much of it was picked up at St. Joseph. His robes and furs were hauled overland to St. Joseph and then shipped by steamer to Chouteau in St. Louis.²² A typical shipment in August 1856, included 1830 buffalo robes, 126 beaver pelts and 125 other skins.²³

The Indian trade continued to prosper. Beauvais had traders with wagonloads of merchandise working in many directions. They traded with the Crow at Platte Bridge, the Cheyennes on Powder River, and the Sioux north of the Platte.²⁴ Like most of the other traders, Beauvais had a Sioux Indian wife and a family of catfres, half-breed children who were far removed from his interests in St. Louis. In fact, it was during this period that he married Miss Adrairie Lee and began his second family of five children in St. Louis.²⁵

About 1859 Beauvais opened another road ranch lower down on the trail to reap the new harvest from the emigrant trains to Colorado.²⁶ It was located on the South Platte about twenty-five miles east of Julesburg and fifteen miles south of Ash Hollow, at the "Old California Crossing" of

²¹ Eugene Wells, "Kirk Anderson's Trip to Utah, 1858," in *Missouri Hist. Soc. Bulletin*, XVIII, no. 1, Oct. 1961.

²² Letters to P. Chouteau, Jr., & Co. from Beauvais, 1853-6, Chouteau Papers; and Chouteau Accounts, XX-35; Missouri Hist. Soc.

²³ Chouteau Accounts, XX-50.

²⁴ Chouteau Papers and Depredation Claim no. 6498, Records of U.S. Court of Claims.

²⁵ Morton, *op. cit.*, II, p. 384. There were apparently four sons including Frederick J. and Reno B. The daughter became Mrs. Placide M. Trimble.

²⁶ Affidavit of William Lee, Depredation Claim no. 6498, Records of U.S. Court of Claims.

called "Star Ranch" referred to as "Five Mile Ranch" required a sizeable charge of Five Miles one of the traders. Lee, a brother-in-law at one ranch ordered the Christian men came out to manage stock for Beauvais and between six and seven at that time.³⁰ A with the herding. Indian hostilities broke out and Red, came to the buildings at Star a small detachment

was in rapid success down on Five and took three horses. Sioux took fourteen men ran off twenty-one Five Mile Ranch. named Edward Cloude Brules on Cheyenne men killed Cloude, 86, ed. by Clyde C. Walton of U.S. Court of Claims.

im no. 737, Records of U.S. are, *op. cit.*, 311, 362, and 466. 7105, Records of U.S. Court

burned the wagons and carried off all the merchandise, making a total loss of over \$15,000.

Sioux raiders again took twenty-two cattle, two horses and a mule on February 1, 1865. Worst of all they intercepted Tom Dorian on February 15, 1865, while he was trying to move two large wagonloads of goods eastward to safety and took property valued at \$94,000.

In an attempt to clear the decks for action against the hostiles, the army started a convoy of Sioux Indians and their local traders to Fort Kearney under an escort commanded by Captain Fouts. On the morning of June 14, 1865, the Indians rebelled, killed Fouts and several soldiers, and escaped with a large amount of livestock, including sixty-seven cattle, seven horses and a mule belonging to Beauvais. The Five Mile Ranch was sold to Ecoffey & Cuny that summer but a valiant attempt was made to keep the Star Ranch in business.³³ However the livestock still melted away. The Sioux got forty-three head of cattle on November 2, 1865, and a fine black horse on May 24, 1866.

Discouraged and financially shaken, Beauvais filed claims with the government for his losses and went back to Missouri. In 1865 he already had a fine home on Second Carondelet Avenue in St. Louis and he was listed in the directories as a resident there from 1871 on.³⁴ (His son Edward married Mary Robidoux, a great-granddaughter of Joseph Roubidoux in 1862, and moved out to a ranch in Frontier County, Nebraska, in the 1870s.³⁵)

His Sioux wife and children moved north with their peo-

³³ *Ibid.*, Statements on Depredation: Claim no. 2141.

³⁴ *Edward's St. Louis Directories for 1865-71*. The funeral story in the *St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 18, 1878, termed the residence "elegant."

³⁵ *Census Records for Frontier County, Nebraska, 1880*; correspondence from F. C. Beauvais on Depredation Claim no. 6498, Records of U.S. Court of Claims; Morton, *op. cit.*, II, p. 384. Edward died in Nebraska in 1901.

1 Tail Agency census

the Indians was not cited several times by news to the treaty with the same year he was a mission to investigate

they were intrigued by a council on Non-missioners and tower he gigantic form of missioner, appropriately Belly.³⁶

Washington with Red went to Commissioner Cloud urged the appointinent, but the did not agree. Robert ca.³⁵

as a member of the successfully to buy the his press conferences, aux in 1875, he stated full separate meetings a bands. The *St. Louis* ive him full credit for k Hills:

as "Mrs. Beauvais" with two 193 by Beauvais' estate. Special imant's name and reputed to be

ventures in America and Asia

a Affairs, Upper Plate Agency

GEMINIEN P. BEAUVAIS

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Mr. Beauvais in subsequent interviews with the leading chiefs ascertained where the trouble lay, and he now has assurances from the Indians themselves that if brought to Washington they will readily accede to a treaty by which the Black Hills will be relinquished.

His claims totaling \$45,945.00, were still pending and two trips to Washington did nothing to shake them loose.³⁹ Pretty soon it didn't matter. Beauvais contracted blood poisoning and died at his home in St. Louis two days later on November 15, 1878.⁴⁰ The newspapers gave his funeral prominent mention, stating that he had been twice married and left a widow, four sons, a daughter and three grandchildren.⁴¹ Among the pallbearers were ex-Governor Thomas C. Fletcher and former Sioux Indian agent D. R. Risley. Most significant of all, the accounts pictured one old fur trader whose last ride was made in a silver-mounted coffin followed by a cortege of at least fifty carriages, far from the barren plains of the North Platte.

³⁹ See correspondence from F. C. Beauvais, Depredation Claim no. 6193, and *St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 18, 1878.

⁴⁰ *St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 16, 1878, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 18, 1878, p. 8.

144 So. 2nd. St.,
Montrose, Co. 81401
Nov. 6, 1973

Dear Cecil:

I thought I'd write you a few lines to let you know we are both OK presently and hope you and Grace are the same and that her surgery last spring turned out to be successful.

Mess still has pains in her right leg from the 2 hip operations she went through and has to see her Doctor frequently to check and get medications. She walks with a limp but gets around very good, we even went dancing last week to a Senior Citizens dance.

I hav'nt heard much from home, Pine Ridge, but I have read in the papers that a Pedro Missonette, a local AIM leader was shot to death by Tribal Policemen, but I have not heard from my daughter yet so I don't know the exact details of the incident as of now.

Well we've had our first snow storm last Sunday the 4th. Of course, there's always plenty of snow up on the mountains which surrounds our valley.

Wishing you and yours happiness and good health.

Your Sioux cousin,

John Lee
John Lee