

Edward Felix Russell 1882-1949 Family History

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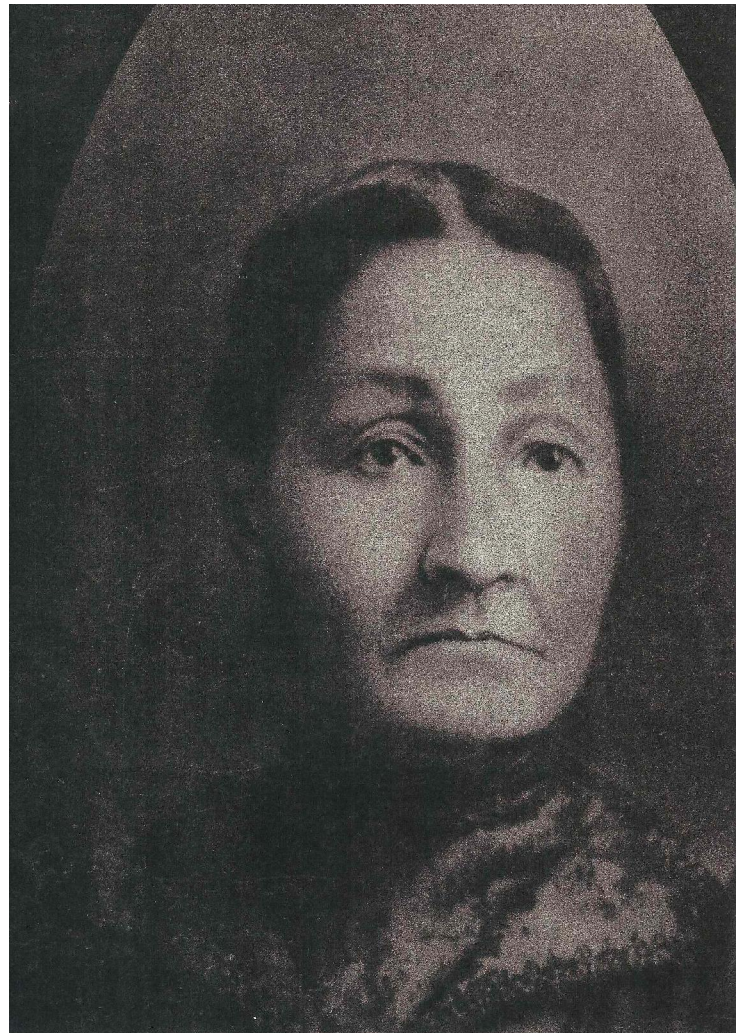
Ed Russell's parents were from Canada. His mother was Sarah, who might have been a Metis, and his father was Pierre Rouillard, a French Canadian who changed his name to Peter Russell when he moved to the Dakota Territory just south of the Canadian border, to the Pembina/Red River region that today separates North Dakota from Minnesota.

According to Wikipedia, the Metis people "...have a shared history and culture which derives from specific mixed European (primarily French) and Indigenous ancestry which became a distinct culture through ethnogenesis by the mid-18th century, during the early years of the North American fur trade."

Peter Russell was a pony-express-type mail carrier, army man, justice of the peace, store owner, and sawmill operator in the early days of the Dakota territory. Sarah bore eleven children, and the six who survived to adulthood were Ed and his brothers.



(ABOVE): Peter Russell about 1880s



(RIGHT): Sarah Sanderson, Peter's wife, photo courtesy of Mary Ryshavy

THE SARAH RUSSELL STORY

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The History of Richland County Book

Richland County Historical Society

(As told in 1910 and recorded in the minutes of the Old Settlers Association of Richland County.)

Mrs. Sarah Russell, in 1910, residing in Walcott, and one of the oldest settlers at Fort Abercrombie, was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the year 1840, and came to the Fr. Abercrombie post in 1859.

She was at Georgetown during one of the Indian outbreaks; the Hudson Bay Company was maintaining a trading post and a fort there at that time for the protection of the occupants in case of hostilities. An attack was made on this post which was repulsed. Mrs. Russell at that time was a young girl, but can still vividly recollect the stirring events of those early days in the history of the Red River Valley.

About a year after her arrival at Ft. Abercrombie, she was married on June 10, 1860, to Mr. Peter Russell, who was actively engaged in the service around the fort and trading post. This ceremony was unique in that it was performed on board the steamer Selkirk, the first steamer plying the waters of the Red River as far south as Ft. Abercrombie. Years later, he left his wife, claiming the marriage illegal because the ceremony was performed on the water.

The siege of Fr. Abercrombie by a host of attacking Indians took place during their residence here. During the fall of that year the Russell's were in hiding practically all the time from band of hostiles who were running down the white men in the outlying districts.

During the year 1859, a massacre took place at the post situated on the river where now is located the city of Wahpeton. A stage passing through this point was also attacked, and both the buildings post and the stage were burned, killing a number of people. The news of the trouble was carried to Ft. Abercrombie by a lady carrier. If it had not been for the courage of this woman, who carried the news of the had not been for the courage of this woman, who carried the news of the outbreak to Ft. Abercrombie during the darkness of night, the entire force and occupants of the fort as well as the adjoining trading post would have been taken by surprise and slaughtered.

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Mr. and Mrs. Russell occupied the first homestead filed upon in this locality. Their claim was located about twelve miles north of McCauleyville. In those days, says Mrs. Russell buffaloes roamed over the prairies in droves of a hundred or more, and deep trails marked their pilgrimages over the prairie. Meat could be had in any quantity for the taking, but other provisions and common merchandise brought fabulous and common calico sold at fifty cents a yard.

Peter Russell Obituary

From the Kindred Tribune, Kindred, North Dakota, Friday, April 17, 1914.

On Friday afternoon, at the state hospital, the spirit of Peter Russell, the earliest pioneer in the section of the state, passed peacefully away. The cause of death was chronic interstitial nephritis. The remains were sent to Walcott on Saturday evening and on Monday afternoon the funeral services were held at the home and the Walcott schoolhouse and all that was mortal of this hardy pioneer was laid at rest in the village cemetery, Rev. Hoy of Wyndmere, officiating.

Mr. Russell was born in Montreal, Canada, May 10th, 1833, and came to this country in 1856, settled on Red River, near Fort Abercrombie in 1859. In 1860 (?) he was married on the steamboat Selkirk which plied on the Red River from Fort Abercrombie to Winnipeg. In 1867 he filed on a homestead in Wolverton Township, Minn. From there they moved to a farm nearer Fargo where they resided until 1882 when he filed on a tree claim and pre-emption in Walcott township where they resided for many years. Owing to ill health, they moved to Kindred and afterward to Walcott where the widow still resides. To this union, there are living, six sons, Frank, Peter, Edward, John, Fred, and George, all of whom attended the funeral, save George who resides in Washington. Mr. Russell was an active energetic worker in the early days. He conducted a store at Georgetown in 1863-4 and in 1865-6 he carried the mail between Georgetown and the Fort. He also was manager of the saw mill at McCauleyville in the early days. Owing to business reverses his health became poor some years ago. To such hardy pioneers as he and his estimable wife, the present generation owes its present success. Thus is gone one of the first of our pioneers who braved the storms of winter, the ravages of Indians during the outbreak, and lived to see the land he was instrumental in subduing, transformed into a veritable land of perfection. He sleeps the last long sleep neath the sod that he loved.

The Tribune extends sympathy to the bereaved and especially to Grandma Russell, who is honored and esteemed by all who know her. Peace to his ashes.

The Wahpeton Times
Wahpeton, North Dakota
April 23, 1914 page 2

PETER RUSSEL PASSES

**Another Pioneer of the Valley
Dies at Age of 81**

Walcott Reporter.

Peter Russell, one of the first white settlers in the Red River valley, died at the Jamestown state hospital Friday, April 10th, from facial erysipelas. The remains arrived here Saturday evening. The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Hoy, of Mottville, N. D., Monday—2:30 at the house and at 3 o'clock in the village school-house. Interment was made in the Walcott cemetery.

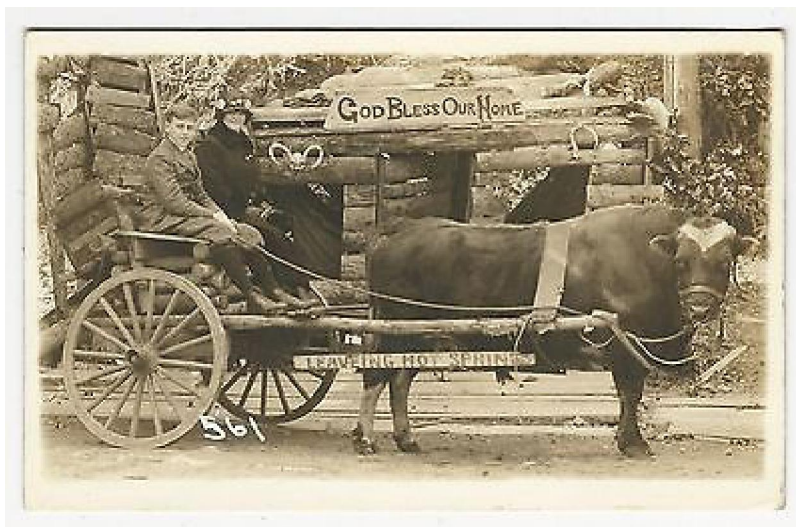
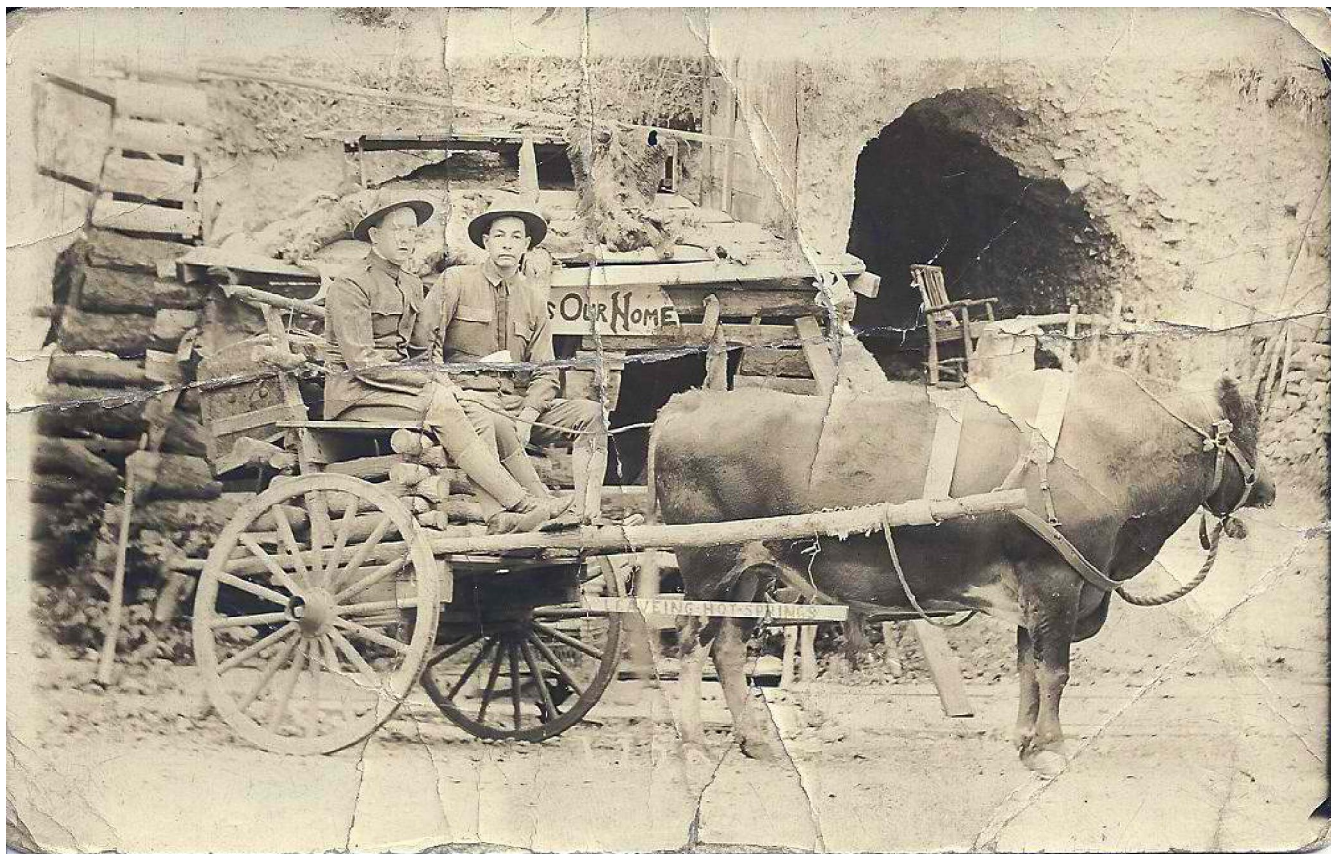
Peter Russell was born in Montreal, Canada, May 10th, 1833. Came to U. S. in 1856 and three years later settled in the Red River Valley, near Fort Abercrombie. In 1863 he was joined in marriage to Sara Soerensen. The marriage ceremony was performed on the steamboat "Selkirk" at or near McCauleyville, Minn. The marriage ceremony was performed on steamboat "Selkirk" at or near McCauleyville, Minn. The young couple moved to Georgetown, Minn., where they conducted a store for a couple of years. In 1865-6 Mr. Russell carried the government mail between Georgetown, Minn., and Fort Abercrombie. He filed on a homestead in Wolverton, township, Minnesota, in 1867, where he lived with his family a number of years. Disposing of his homestead, he and family moved to a farm near Fargo, where they lived seven years. In 1882 he filed on a tree claim in Walcott township, where the family lived until 14 years ago when they moved into this village. Mr. Russell had been a patient at the state hospital seven years at the time of his death.

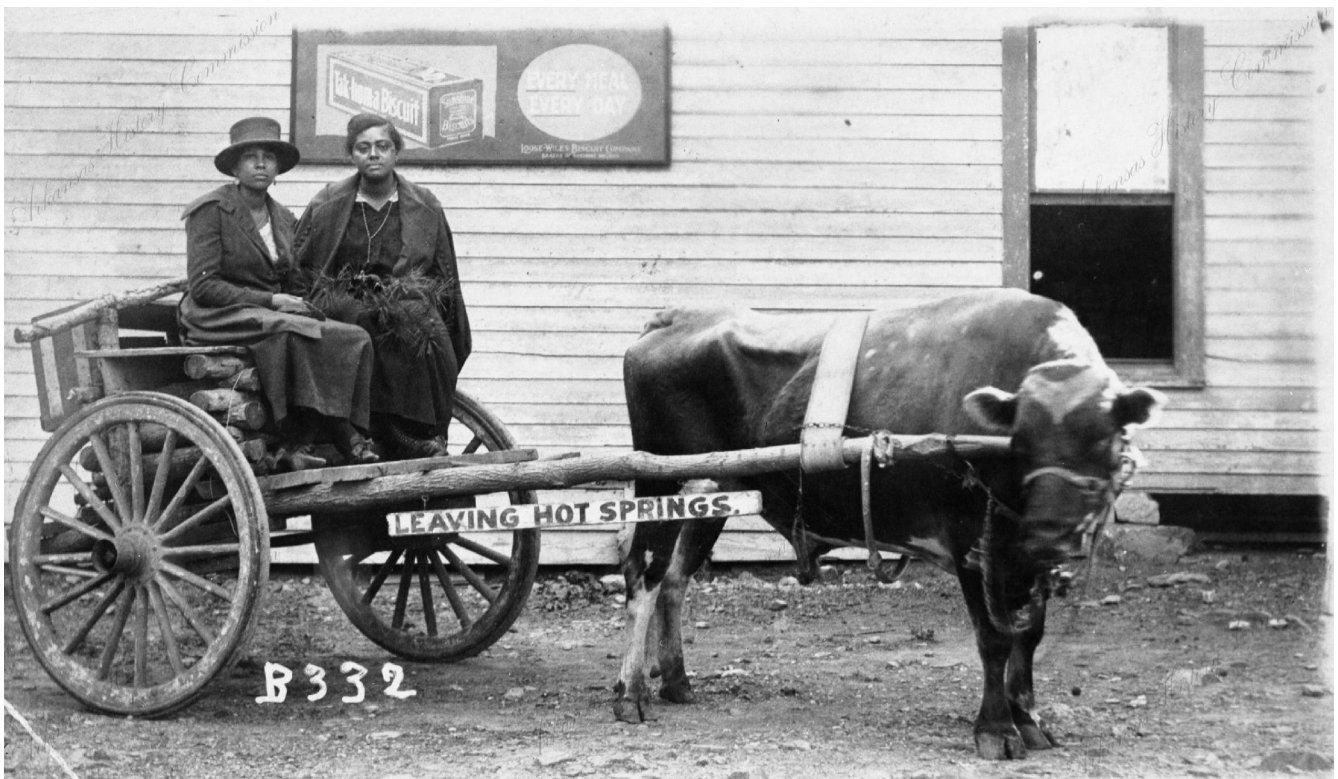
Deceased is survived by the widow and six sons, as follows: Frank, Pete, George, John, Fred and Edward.



LEFT: Edward Felix Russell,
photo courtesy of LenBer20

From 1916 to 1919, Ed Russell joined the National Guard and was called upon to watch over the Mexican border. While down south, he stopped at a popular tourist spot in Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas where he bought this photo postcard of himself with a companion. Other postcards from the same place are shown, including at the bottom, a photo postcard of the famous gangster Al Capone. Years later, inventor Bob Neal toiled over his exotic compressed air engine-compressor unit (self-filling air tank) at his home just a few miles from this spot.





(ABOVE): Maude Hines and friend at Happy Hollow, Hot Spring, Arkansas

(BELOW): Al Capone at Happy Hollow

