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## Swan Valley Massacre Remembered By Pend d'Oreille People

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Four members of a Pend d'Oreille hunting party and a Montana game warden were killed a hundred years ago in a tragedy near Holland Lake commonly referred to as the Swan Valley Massacre.

As told by people present during the tragedy and several historians, the game warden entered the camp and shot the three men in the party. A deputized laborer killed a 13-year-old boy. Then a young pregnant woman, Clarice Paul, killed the game warden to prevent the deaths of the women and a young girl in the party. Afterward Clarice bore the emotional burden of the tragedy silently until she died.

Her son, John Peter Paul (Holds-on-Tight-to-the-Enemy), who was born three months after the massacre, learned the story from his mother. John Peter Paul died in 2001.

During his last years he asked the Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee to tell her story, prompting the Committee to research historic records, interview family members of the descendants, write a brief history pamphlet, and organize memorial ceremonies that took place October 18, 2008 in the Swan Valley.

This month, the Montana Highway Department erected a sign describing the tragedy. The sign is on the east side of Highway 83 between the Holland and Lindbergh Lake roads. A private ceremony for the family of the hunting party was held October 18 near the grave site and was followed by public commemorations at the Holland Lake beach and at the site of the new historical sign.

In late September 1908, members of three Pend d'Oreille families followed the Long Ridge (Jocko) Trail from Arlee across the southern end of the Mission Mountains, down past the mouth of Lindbergh Lake to their traditional camping area near the Gordon Ranch, where they hunted elk and deer as their people had done for centuries.



*Tony Incashola, Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee Director, standing by the new historical marker sign on Highway 83 just south of the Holland Lake turnoff. Photo by Sharon Lamar.*

According to the short history pamphlet published recently by the Culture Committee, the hunting party camped at a place they called It-Has-Skunk-Cabbage. They put their horses on the Gordon Ranch in the fenced pasture of a local friend, Virgil Woods.

Montana's first game laws had gone into effect in 1905. The Pend d'Oreille hunters had purchased hunting licenses, despite the fact the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 guaranteed their right to hunt on their traditional hunting grounds. An elder, Martin Yellow Mountain, who was partially blind and was in the party to help as camp tender, had not purchased a license. Instead he had been given written permission to travel with the group by the Flathead Indian Agent.

Game Warden Charles Peyton entered the camp three times on October 16 and 17. During the first two visits, only the women, a young girl, and a 13-year-old boy, Peh-lah-so-weh, were present. The women were safe-keeping the

men's hunting licenses and Yellow Mountain's permit.

Peyton declared the permit "no good" and used it as an excuse to return when the hunters were in camp, bringing along Herman Rudolph, a German immigrant laborer who was deputized for the purpose.

On the evening of October 17, Peyton and Rudolph "stormed into the tipi." Little Camille Paul, Clarice's husband, was quietly playing solitaire. When Peyton grabbed Little Camille's rifle, Little Camille stood and "wrested it from him." This enraged Peyton who drew a pistol and pointed it at Little Camille, but left without firing.

Thirteen-year-old Peh-lah-so-weh understood English. He heard Peyton say the hunting party had better be gone in the morning. The hunting group decided to leave. The next morning they were packed and ready to go when they heard a shot fired nearby. Peyton and Rudolph had returned.

Yellow Mountain was helping his wife Mary Sahn-shin-mah mount her horse. After an exchange of words, Peyton began firing. He shot Little Camille, whose rifle was still in its scabbard, and shot the leader of the hunting party Atwen (Antoine) Scwi (Stousee), who was unarmed. Atwen was the father of Peh-lah-so-weh.

Yellow Mountain tried to fire back, but Peyton killed him before he could lift his rifle. Peh-lah-so-weh shot Peyton in the abdomen without killing him. But Rudolph shot and killed the boy.

The women and Little Mary, Peh-lah-so-weh's six-year-old sister, had hidden in the brush after being fired at by Peyton. When the women returned to their dying husbands, Atwen's wife Mary Tah Pal saw Peyton rising and reloading his gun. Clarice, who was Catholic and believed killing to be a sin, grabbed her husband's rifle and wounded Peyton, who prepared to fire again, forcing Clarice to shoot him twice.

Pregnant Clarice then escaped on horseback, despite Rudolph's attempt to ambush her, and

rode all day in search of help. She reached a hunting camp led by Many Names (Louie Mollman). The next day members of his party returned with Clarice to the site of the massacre and moved the bodies about a mile to the west, where they buried them in a temporary grave. Two years later the bodies were moved to the St. Ignatius Catholic cemetery.

The Scwi, Paul, and Yellow Mountain families were well-regarded by white settlers in the Mission and Swan valleys. Clarice was never charged with the killing of Peyton. Rudolph left the area before his scheduled coroner's inquest and was never heard from again. Nevertheless, Clarice was troubled by the killings and seldom talked of the tragedy.



*L to R: Josephine Quequesah (granddaughter of Camille and Clarice Paul), Tony Incashola (Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee Director) and Jeff Hager (MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director) at the Swan Massacre Commemoration on October 18, 2008. Photo by Sharon Lamar.*

At the Holland Lake beach on October 18 this year, more than 50 members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) and a handful of Swan Valley residents attended the public ceremony and listened to drumming, singing and prayers in Salish and English.

Speakers— Josephine Quequesah, tribal translator and granddaughter of Little Camille and Clarice Paul; Antoine “Tony” Incashola, Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee chairman; Tribal Chairman James Steele; Jeff Hagen, director Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Pablo Espinoza, CSKT Fish and Game conservation manager— emphasized the importance of working together and talked of recent successful cooperation among Tribal and State game wardens.

A book by the Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee titled *A Story of the Pend d’Oreille People* is soon to be published and will be available by contacting the Culture Committee, 406-745-4572, [tonyi@cskt.org](mailto:tonyi@cskt.org).

Swan Ecosystem Center has a few copies in its resource library to give away of the history pamphlet, *Swan Valley Massacre of 1908*, and can make copies of the story as told in 1955 by Clarice Paul and Mary (Little Mary) Stousee Finley (circa 1958-60).