The Ashley (Asselin) Family part 2
In the Pacific Northwest by 1818
By Chalk Courchane

WILLIAM ASHLEY and MAGGIE FINLEY
William Ashley would marry Margaret “Maggie” Finley, the daughter of Jocko Finley, prior to 1843, and their son was named Pierre. Pierre Ashley was born in 1843 and probably baptized, on 23 Nov 1843 at Porte d'Enfer (Hellgate) Montana at Finley Camp. He is called Po-lot-kau, Polotkin and Parlock sometimes in tribal records. There was a Polotkau in the Spokane tribe and I wonder if there is a connection.

“From Sacred Heart Mission in Idaho church registers:
"die 23. 7b. 1843 (a la porte denfer ----) patron
Joseph Finley - metis.........................Louis Brown
Pierre Asselin - " ....................... Genevieve Finley
Jean Baptiste Finley ....................... Louis Brown
Alexis Asselin - metis......................Alexander Dumont
Dominique Finley " ....................... "
William Asselin " ....................... "
Rosalie veuve Asselin .....................Marguerette Finley
Catherine Finley metis.....................Philomene Finley
Victoire Nez Perce " ..................... Emelie Asselin
(the symbol for wife was used between the first and last names of the above two sponsors)

---Eleonore Martin Louis Brown -------Josette Finley
1843
N. Point, S.J.”

Their son:
PIERRE (PERRISH) ASHLEY aka: Po-lot-kau and Parlock or Peter Ashley

Pierre Ashley was born in 1843 and probably bt. 23 Nov 1843 at Porte d'Enfer (Hellgate) Montana at Finley Camp. His father was William Ashley and his mother was Margaret Finley (at least 1/2 Spokane Indian).

Pierre's early life is unknown. It is doubtful that he had a formal education. He was well educated in the things that were necessary for making a living in the wilds (the present state of Montana). He trapped, hunted, and understood woods lore. Later, as civilization dominated, he farmed and ranched. He knew horses and taught his sons about them.

Pierre may have been the only child of William and Margaret Ashley. But he could have had a full brother named William:
His mother Margaret married again, to Angus Pierre McLeod, about 1855. He may have had brothers and sisters from that union. Pierre Ashley sometimes used the surname Mcleod or McCloud? See: St. Ignatius Baptism Book, p.88, baptism of Octave Gingras, 1863, it shows "Peter Ashley McCloud."

Pierre raised a large family in hard, rugged, dangerous times on the Flathead Reservation and surrounding territory. The Flathead was very dangerous in those days. His children were considered good people. A photograph shows Pierre Ashley as a stern looking man with a Charlie Chaplin-style mustache and deep, penetrating eyes.

Somewhere in his travels, he met Mary Ermatinger. They were married by the priests at St. Ignatius Mission, Missoula County, Montana Territory on 23 Jan 1863.

St. Ignatius Mission -- 1863 Marriages

Die 23 Jan.  Pierrish son of William and Marguerite with Maria daughter of
Pierrish Francis and Maria--witnesses: Xilkuitza (sic ?) and Maria &
Fulesia (sic ?)

There was a Josephine "Aslin" bt. 10 Jul 1869; St. Ignatius; dau of Pierre "Aslin" and Margarita; godmother was: Maria wife of Patrick Finley. This is probably a child of this couple.


Rosalie Asselin
Born: 24 December 1867
Baptized: 25 December 1867 at St. Peter's Mission, Montana by Rev. Father
Francis Xavier Kuppens, S.J.
Daughter of Peter Asselin and Marie
Sponsors: Louis & Adele  page 51, # 1217

He is shown on the following Flathead Indian Censuses:

1886: #1322 age 45 1895:
1887: #1334 44 1896:
1888: #1329 49 1897:
1889: #1176 50 1900: #1431 age 58
1890: 1900: US; MT; Flathead Reservation
1891: Family #96; #30; Sheet #2
1892: 1901: #137 age 59
1893: 1902: #1244 age 60
1894:

And although he was dead at this time:
1903: #790  age 60
1904: #551  age 62

In the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library at the University of Montana in Missoula is the Demers Mercantile Company Ledger 1881-1883 following are pages from it that mention Pierre Ashley:
Eugene Felsman explained to me some time ago that sometimes the Indian Agents were lazy and just submitted last year’s census and update the age’s and etcetera.


"Reports of Agents in Montana - 1887

Planting of Orchards
In my last annual report I stated that sixteen heads of families had been induced to purchase from the Geneva, N.Y., nursery, at their own expense and cost of transportation to this agency, young fruit trees, such as plum, apple, and cherry, which were planted out into orchards. Such was the thrift and growth of the trees that other families followed the example this year, and an agent from the house of L.L. Mann & Co., nurseriesmen of Saint Paul, Minn., arrived here this spring with a shipment of trees for delivery to the following named Indian residents of this reservation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount of Order</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Gardipe</td>
<td>$44.50</td>
<td>3 miles north of St. Ignatius mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Matt</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>6 miles north of St. Ignatius mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.B. Vitell</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>at mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Pain</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Finley</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>16 miles north of St. Ignatius mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parish Aslin</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.00</strong></td>
<td>2 miles northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Elmic</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>at mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Sarel</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>4 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gideon Gangras</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>16 miles north of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Bonapart</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Koodnai</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kieedlie Moses</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>30 miles northwest mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salowan Malta</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>3 miles northwest mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andre Spokane</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>10 miles west of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Pairier</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>8 miles south of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Irwin</td>
<td>115.00</td>
<td>16 miles north of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel, chief of</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pend d'Oreiles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Sac Sac</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Larose</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>3 miles north of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Camille</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>4 miles north of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Finley</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptiste Michell</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>16 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoin Marse</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>17 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lumphrey</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>16 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Barnaby</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>Do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. King</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15 miles east of mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frank Secund 30.00 18 miles east of mission  
Adolph Finley 25.00 9 miles east of mission  
Isadore Ladaroot 50.00 Do.  
Alex Finley 50.00 6 miles east of mission  

These large orders were sold to the Indians with the understanding that they were to be cash on delivery, and as the trees were delivered this spring by an agent of the nursery and planted into orchards by the Indians, it is presumable that both parties were satisfied. As fruit trees already planted have yielded abundantly on this reservation and at maturity, it will be readily seen that in a few years the raising and selling of fruit will be a marked industry on the Flathead Indian reservation."

Pierre died on 23 November 1902 and was buried in St. Ignatius Mission Cemetery. Later a marker, which included the names of his children: Rose, Agnes, Octave, and Josephine, was put over his grave.
Pierre Ashley and his daughter, Mary Augustine Ashley
Dear Chalk, I am sending you copies from the original portrait photos that I found cleaning out a drawer in my mother’s home. I did not know that she had these old photo portraits. They are in very bad condition and most names were written on the backs of each photo written in pencil over the years. I am wondering who the young man is, he was not identified and “the one identified as “old man Ashley”. Could that be Pierre? I hope at least one you might not have. Your Cuz, Arlene

Original labeled “Old Man Ashley.” A picture very similar to this was loaned (or given) to Annabeth Felsman Savik by Frank Allison years ago.
Mary Ermatinger Ashley and her daughter, Elizabeth “Auntie” Ashley

This was taken at the Old Ashley Place, near St. Ignatius, Montana. In the background on the right looks to be a duck, or chicken. On the left (and across the photo is a clothesline supported by a long pole. Under the pole is an axe on a chopping block and a long pole on supports to be saw into chunks of firewood. Behind them is some kind of fence or corral. Snow is on the mountains. Grandma Ashley does not have her wedding ring on, she has a walking stick, shawl, apron and bandana on. Ashley has a hat in her left hand.
Pierre Ashley  Charlie Molman in upper right

Taken by Chalk Courchane in June of 2010.
St. Ignatius Catholic Cemetery on the outskirts of St. Ignatius, Montana
Taken by Chalk Courchane in the 1990s.

Burial Register of St. Ignatius Mission; page 6; #33: "Peter Ashley buried Nov. 25, 1902, Petrus Asselin (Pierrish) maritus Mariae Senex residence: St. Ignatius. Buried in Ashley plot."
His tombstone at St. Ignatius Cemetery states: "Pierre Ashley - aged 57 years - died Nov. 23, 1902". Taken by Chalk Courchane
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BORN IN</th>
<th>YEARS OF AGE</th>
<th>DIED IN</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>NOS. OF PERSONS PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED</th>
<th>NOS. OF PERSONS MENTALLY IMPAIRED</th>
<th>RESIDENT AT WORKING AGE</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
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<td>Mark</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING THIS SCHEDULE

The following instructions apply to columns 2 to 8:

Column 2: When the Indian is born, the person has one to nine.

Column 3: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.

Column 4: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.

Column 5: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.

Column 6: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.

Column 7: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.

Column 8: When the Indian is not born, the person has one to nine.
MARY ERMATINGER

Mary Ermatinger was born in Montana at an encampment in Tobacco Plains according to her own testimony. She was a member of the Upper Pend d’Oreille, or Qlispé (Kalispel), those of the Mission Valley being the Slqtkwmscint, (and) the people living along the shore of the Flathead Lake. The Pend d’Oreille is the closest Salish tribe to the Salish proper, or Flatheads, in language and customs. Because her father was a chief trader with the Hudson Bay Company, her people may have been on a winter buffalo hunt when she was born.

Mary’s grandparents:

Grandfather was Che-les-qua, a Pend d’Oreille warrior, and the father of Mary Three Dresses, and husband of Matilda.

From a letter by Clarence Woodcock to David Courchane, Feb. 3, 1983:

"I feel safe to say after consulting with my Mother, Dolly, and Agnes, and Tony that Che-les-qua does mean Three Hats. The children of Matilda are names that I have heard before. If Matilda is the same one, then I have heard her referred to by the old people as Malee Agate. She lived on the west end of Camas Prairie up near the tree line. Her old cabin still stands there. The only child I am familiar with is Abel Telcostair. His son married Bernice Pichette. They use the name Abel as a last name. His name was Steve (Telcostair) Abel. They have two living children--living on the Fort Belknap Reservation--Judy Abel Grey and Delores Abel Plummage. The name Telcostair of course is misspelled...Telqweste is the more correct spelling. Translated the name means one who
runs away from something. The name came from Abel Telcostair's father who was in a battle and ran from the battle site for some reason. After that he was named Telcostair."

Clarence Woodcock states that: Che-les-qua, means:"Che-les in the Salish language refers to the number three. Qua could be a shortened way of saying Quacqen which means hat. The name Che-les-qua could then possibly mean Three Hats."

Her sister:
Ann Quitoo was the daughter of Che-les-qua (Three Hats) and Matilda of the Pend d'Oreille Tribe of Montana. She was called Che-la-sil-shin-nah, and was commonly referred to as Two Leggings. According to the Flathead Register of Indian Families (1904-1907) which stated her age as 78 years, she was born about the years 1826 to 1829.

As with her sister, Cha-teel-she-nah, she was born in a Pend d'Oreille camp somewhere in their tribal lands. Her training was cultural as was it was for all Indian women of her time. When the Catholic Jesuits arrived she converted. She also had a sister named Felicite.

She married Moses Quitoo and together they had at least two children, Celestine and Lucy. She had at least two other children: Isaac and Abel Telcostair. Abel Telcostair was born in about 1853? and died in 1914. Abel Telcostair's descendants used Abel as their surname. Ann's daughter, Lucy married Grizzly Bear Stand Up, or Grizzly Standing Bear, or Joseph Standing Bear, and when he became one of the tribal judges, Judge Joseph. Joseph and his first wife, Adelaide, helped guide the first Sisters of Charity to St. Ignatius Mission in 1864.

Ann Quitoo died in St. Ignatius, Montana on September 14, 1906.

At the time of Mary’s birth, her father, Francis Ermatinger, was trading with the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles from a base at Flathead House. Francis and Mary Three-Dresses probably met each other about 1835 or earlier. They had two other children, both were boys who had died in infancy.

It is not known what type of education Mary Ermatinger received. Surely she was well taught in the culture of her people. Indian medicine was considered a specialty of hers.

The Pend d’Oreille customs of young women was not doubt similar to the Flatheads. "Before babies were born to the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles, the mothers and fathers had to be very careful to observe a long list of taboos. This was done in order to protect the child from prenatal and postnatal harm. When the time came, the mother was assisted by midwives as she squatted on a robe and grasped a mounted wooden bar. If labor was prolonged or unusually difficult the medicine man, or shaman, was called for." This is how Mary Ermatinger must have been born. "When going away from the lodge the mothers took their babies along on their backs in birch bark cradle boards, baby bags of skin, or cradleboards of wood, called im-pol-aih. The Flatheads loved their children without restraint and pampered them as much as was practical. Young Flathead were not weaned
until they were several years old, and went naked even longer than that, except in severely cold weather. The Pend d'Oreilles' children played as all children do, little girls played with toy dishes, tiny lodges, and dolls. They often used puppies as their "babies"; carrying them on their backs in cradleboards. To keep the children in line a child policeman was used, and to frighten them into minding a camp-child-scarer called Spotted Face was used.

In a four-day period of instruction on maturation and old and wise women of the tribe was picked to be her lifelong mentor and teacher. She was to copy her teacher in chastity, industry, skill, capacity, and in childbirth and fecundity. "The girl lived in the old woman's tepee, "and each day her face was painted as she was told moral advice. She was kept busy all day with tasks and chores that she was required to execute immediately.

"Upon the girl’s return to the family’s lodge, the father and mother followed through: "from this time onward the parents exercised every precaution to see that their daughter remained chaste, while the young men used every means open to them to see that they failed." "A Shining From the Mountains" Sister Providencia, S.P., Jasper Printing & Sisters of Providence, 1980, pp. 4-5.

Ross Cox of the North West Company said of the Flatheads (Pend d’Oreille as well) that "With exception of the cruel treatment of their prisoners (which, as it is general among all savages, must not be imputed to them as a peculiar vice), the Flatheads have fewer failings than any of the tribes I ever met with. They are honest in their dealings, brave in the field, quiet and amenable to their chiefs, fond of cleanliness, and decided enemies of falsehood of every description. The women are excellent wives and mothers, and their character for fidelity is so well established, that we never heard of an instance of one of them proving unfaithful to her husband .. laziness is a stranger among them." Of course as time passed and more contact with other people this would alter very much!

Young girls were required to make a spiritual quest for sumesh just like the boys did. That is to be sent out alone for the time it took for a guardian spirit made its appearance as an animal that would protect and assist the young girl all her life. It was usually a bird or animal. Many in our family seemed to have used the elk or grizzly bear as a totem.

When Mary was about four months old, her father was escorting a party of missionaries (including a Swiss gentleman named John Sutter) from the Rendezvous at Popo Agie River to Fort Hall. The four women of the party were the second group of white women to cross over the Continental Divide. This was July 15, 1838. Whether Mary or her mother was with him is not known.

In the Pend d'Oreille tongue Mary was called Malee Sa-ma-mae, or Seme, meaning a person of French descent, according to Clarence Woodcock and the Flathead Culture Committee. She was also known as Mary the Younger, to distinguish her from her mother, Mary the Elder. Both Mary's were also referred to as Three-Dresses, Cha-teel-she-nah or Mary Chattishna in church records.

On Jan. 23, 1863 Mary Ermatinger married the young 1/2 Spokane Indian, Perrish (or Pierre) Ashley, the son of William Ashley (Asselin) and Margaret "Maggie" Finley. By her own words on September 25, 1913, she states that they were married by the Catholic

In the St. Ignatius Mission, Montana Marriage Book 1856-1873 we find:
1863
"Die 23 Jan. - Pierrish - Junxi in matrimonio Pierrish filium Willelmi & Marguerite cum Maria filia Francisis & Maria - -- banns - testes Kilkuitzo (sp) & Maria & Eulesia(sp?)"

Mary and Pierre Ashley lived in the Mission Valley, probably near St. Ignatius Mission. Later they moved to a place near Kalispell, Montana, where some of their older children were born. Pierre's Uncle Joe Ashley ran a sort of Hudson's Bay Company post on Ashley Creek nearby. This may be the reason the Ashley's made the move. When the 1886 census of the Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai Indians was made, (the first official census made of these people), Pierre and Mary Ashley and their family were living at St. Ignatius Mission. When they returned isn't known.

Besides Mary Ermatinger's two Pend d'Oreille brothers, she had four half-brothers and sisters: Lawrence, Frances Marie, an Okanogan sister, and a Cree sister (who later married a James Bird).

Mary is shown on the following Flathead censuses as:

1886 #1323 age 43
1887 #1335 " 43
1888 #1330 " 46
1889 #1177 " 47
1890 #1221 " 48
1891 #1226 " 49
1892 #1268 " 50
1893 #1277 " 51
1895 #1332 " 59
1896 #1342 " 60
1897 #1368 " 61
1900 #1432 " 62
1900 # 31 " US Census; MT; Flathead Reservation Sheet #2
1901 # 138 " 61
1902 #1245 " 62
1903 # 791 " 63
1904 # 552 " 64
1905 # 543 " 65

Grandma Ashley a lost year in 1887, but gained 2 years in 1888 and then eight years in 1895 and then lost years in 1901 & 1902! When the Flathead Reservation was allotted, she was given #89, an allotment of 80 acres, described as S1/2,NW1/4 Section 9, T.
18N., R.19W. Montana. I still own part of this land as well as Mary Augustine Ashley’s Allotment #92. (Chalk)

Tepees in a line near Dixon, Montana

This is from the Frances Gilbert Hamblen Collection, http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/copyrights.html
This page is from the Flathead Agency Roll Book, 1903-05, which is a gigantic book and an adventure to photocopy, four sheets of paper were needed to copy one page out of the huge tome.
The Flathead Agency 1905 Register of Indian Families is another huge book and is ledger like so the two sheets upon make one sheet side by side. One can see that the clerk mistakenly entered Pierre Ashley’s parents instead of Mary Ashley’s but corrected it. At least this documents his parent’s names.

From the Federal Archives and Records Center:
HUSBAND.

From Ashley

Father

Mother

WIFE.

Mary Ashley

Father

Mother

Married, when: 1865

CHILDREN.

Eliza Ashley

William

Mary

Frank

Anton

August

Ann Ashley

Charles Ashley

DEATHS.

For additional or plural marriages use card form to be kept inside.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Information</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Father</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Father's Brothers</td>
<td>1. 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Father's Sisters</td>
<td>1. 2.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Name of Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Mother's Brothers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Mother's Sisters</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Name of Previous Wife</td>
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<td>Present Wife's Mother</td>
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<tr>
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**COPY**

Seattle Federal archives and records
Corpus. S.D.
4115 Band Post Pkwy.
Record Group 9, 93
Additional Information

Filed October 17, 1940
Received by A.A. Wetter

285
My grand parents, Charles and Helen Ashley and my parents, Louis and Viola Courchane were all married in this church, as were countless other relatives.

During Mary and Pierre Ashley’s time on the Flathead Reservation before 1890, the Salish tribe was split in two some in the Bitterroot Valley under Chief Charlo and the rest with Chief Arlee at the Jocko Agency or in St. Ignatius. Those on the reservation fared better than Charlo’s people because of three points: their population was greater at about 1300, they were on a government recognized reservation and the whites were kept away, and the Jesuit Mission at St. Ignatius (which at this time was a “large and bustling
establishment”) served them in the capacities of schools and mechanical shops, with the government probably helping a little. Plus “the white and mixed-blood farmers and ranchers (like the Ashley’s) who married into the tribe played an important role in spreading knowledge about ranching and farming. Most important, however was the astuteness of the reservation leadership.” The Pend d’Oreilles and Kootenai worked to develop new economic resources like ranching and farming to replace the hunting of buffalo and other big game. Before the time of the allotments they were not poor but economically sound and only after the white took the homestead lands did they decline in wealth. “Letters from the Rocky Mountain Indian Missions – Father Philip Rappagliosi” edited by Robert Bigart, University of Nebraska Press, 2003, pp. xxix-xxx. This is shown with the Ashley family ranches through the photo albums of family members, and decline in prosperity can be seen.

“In the 1870s a village of Indian cabins and tepees surrounded the mission complex. Rev. James O’Connor, bishop of Omaha, visited St. Ignatius in June 1877 and left the following description of the village surrounding the mission:

St. Ignatius is not laid out in streets, owing, I was told, to the fact that the Indians insist on locating their cabins so that they may be able to see the church from their doors. They visit it frequently during the day for private prayer, but when not in it they take great pleasure in being able to look at it. “Where a man’s treasure is there also is his heart.” The cabins as a general rule are about fifteen feet square, well built of pine logs from the neighboring mountains, and are both clean and comfortable. With the exception of one or two bedsteads, I saw nothing that could be called furniture in any of them. The inmates sit or rather squat on the ground or recline on the robes or skins that serve them as beds. Sacred pictures and crucifixes are fastened to the walls, and kettles and other cooking utensils stand on the open hearths or hang from hooks or andirons. The tepees are furnished or unfurnished in like manner only that in them the fire is in the centre of the floor and the smoke escapes through an opening above it. Outside one of the cabins, women were drying beef or buffalo meat over a slow fire. The meat was boned, cut into long strips and laid on an arch of wooden bars about two feet above the fire. Every cabin and tent had its contingent of savage dogs, who recognizing the habit of the Fathers, allowed us to pass if not graciously, at least unchallenged.” “Letters from the Rocky Mountain Indian Missions – Father Philip Rappagliosi” edited by Robert Bigart, University of Nebraska Press, 2003, pp. xxxi.

According to a letter written by Father Philip Rappagliosi, S. J. on January 18, 1875 from St. Ignatius Mission to his parents 1876 was a hard winter. Water froze in the houses near the stove and ink froze while he was writing the letter in mid word. People were freezing to death! This might have had something to do with the death of the new born son, Octave, who was born in November 30, 1876 and died December 15, 1876.
Following is an article from a newspaper, the name and year is unknown, it was found in Mary's house many years after she had passed away by a great-granddaughter, Mrs. Dorothy Ellen (Wheeler) Clinkenbeard. It states:

"INDIANS OLD AND YOUNG TO BE AT RONAN FESTIVAL: Will Gather from All Parts of Reservation for Fourth of July—

"Ronan, June 15. - (Special) - Indians old and young, in their brilliant robes, with be here from all parts of the reservation for the Indian festival July 2, 3 and 4. Even oldest members of the tribe are arranging to be in attendance at the festival, a novel Fourth of July celebration feature that Ronan will put on.

"Mrs. Peter Ashley, aged 108 years, will be found sitting at the entrance of her tepee within the circular Indian village and relate vivid and exciting incidents of the early days and of her life on the plains."
"Although very feeble she has been able to tell lucid stories of happenings during the eventful span of her life--colorful years during which the tribe was moved from the Bitter Root valley to the Flathead area. Onward through all this pushed the endless line of white settlers seeking gold, new homes, more fertile lands and greater abundance of wild game.

"She was born at Tobacco Plains, then a grazing country for huge herds of buffalo, and was christened "Chawhelschnaw" meaning "Three Dresses".

"At the age of 24 "Chawhelschnaw" married Peter Ashley, a Spokane Indian, to them 12 children were born.

"After her marriage Mrs. Ashley, with her husband, made frequent hunting trips back to the plains. It was during one of the expeditions her people were attacked by a band of Blackfeet. "Chawahelschnaw", who had always been an excellent rider, escaped with her baby son on an Indian race horse. Of her children only two are left, William, 56, and Elizabeth, 63.

"Still very active at the age of 100 years Mrs. Ashley planted her own garden. Only until the last two or three years has she been unable to care for herself. Her record for longevity is not her only attraction; she is considered one of the most interesting members of her community."

The fact that the family erroneously referred to her as 112 years when she died, puts the date of the above article at about 1936.

Another article about her appeared in Sam John's ten volume Pioneers, on pages 183 to 184. One page of the article is missing.

"MARY ASHLEY, OLDEST WOMAN OF FLATHEAD INDIAN TRIBE by Ellen Nye

"There is a grand old lady who is now over 100 years of age and of the Flathead Indian tribe, whose story should be recorded. In the rich lower Flathead valley of western Montana lays a 40 acre piece of virgin soil which if plowed and seeded to wheat would produce in one year a crop which would bring in enough to pay for the tract. It is situated at the base of the McDonald Peak area in the Mission mountains, and is owned by this venerable woman, Mary Ashley, without doubt the oldest woman of the tribe. She steadfastly refused to allow the sod turned on this land, so it lies there untouched and virgin serving to keep her Indian soul spiritually in tune with nature and the past.

"This was the best she could do when the inroads of civilization compelled the ending of the roving mode of Indian life she understood and loved so well. She represents in her humble yet efficient way the forces which gave meaning and dignity to the Indian. She is the old-fashioned kind who has ever been respected by the white civilization. She strove faithfully to fulfill the requirements of her people and their code. She is the true Indian
help-mate with all that implies of patience, forbearance and uncomplainingly shouldering most of the manual labor that was the lot of her kind.

"Doctored Her Family

"As a mother she attended not only her own children but her grandchildren as well, who grew up and had allotments round about her homestead. These same grandchildren now hasten their offspring to the agency doctor or hospital for medical aid where in the past Mother Ashley had been doctor and nurse, for she excelled in the knowledge now fast disappearing, of recognizing and concocting for use the various healing herbs nature had deposited in these parts. She knew the Husk-Kus with its several medicinal uses. It was also used for chewing and smoking as was also the Kinnickinick. As a blood purifier, she used the tiny Princess pines.

"Another evidence of Grandma Ashley's efficiency was her well-stocked larder. She followed the chase in season, going with others of the tribe who were energetic and well-horsed, to the buffalo grounds to the eastward, and her parfleches on return were always well filled with the fruits of the hunt."

"With other women she gathered in May the bitterroot, known as "Spetlem". This served as a vegetable in the diet of the natives and provided a starchy element to the food. In June the "slokem" or wild carrot was collected. Very important was the "elwa" or camas and often cooked with this root as a condiment was a parasitic pine moss called "skautemikan". "Pscheiu", a white root, was another vegetable. The service berry, found everywhere, was gathered in great quantities and dried for winter use, as were many other berries. A sweet addition to the native diet in the spring was found by eating the inner part of the stem on the sunflowers everywhere evident on sunny hillsides.

"Duncan McDonald has also quite often emphasized this practice among the Indians, to the writer. While demonstrating how the outer stem must be turned down to reach the sweet juicy inner edible portion he would recount the delights of lolling through sunny days in spring time mid a field of sunflowers on a hilly slope partaking of the "sweets" everywhere abundant."

(Part of the article missing at this point.)

"Mary Ashley would not even meet her visitor face to face, much less allow her picture to be taken, so people in Canada were never to see what Mary was like--the beauty of the Flatheads who were her kin.

"In later years a cousin of the Ermatinger, Charley, settled in the Flathead near Polson, making a living by teaching. Among his pupils were some of the Angus MacDonald children. He was a bachelor. When he came he brought with him and presented to Mary a large framed portrait of her father and this hangs now in honor, on her living room wall when the writer visited there. The years had mellowed her attitude and in its place was rather a gesture of pride in her ancestor.
"As she sat there in a rocking chair under the father's picture, the likeness between the two was startling, especially the prominent nose that dominated the face of both, the broad forehead and firm chin. Today Mary's glorious hair is sparse and gray but her face is almost without wrinkles and but for some large liver spots, her skin is unusually white and soft. She is able to be up and around and finds her way among familiar paths near her home place in spite of her blindness. The place is comfortable and adequate and she has an unmarried son and daughter living with her. Her daughter excels in all kinds of native needlework.

"Sometimes we wonder if the men of our civilization do not yearn wistfully now and then for the qualities of blind devotion as exemplified in such a helpmate. They would probably become so spoiled the modern woman could not live with them."

In a letter from Lois McDonald, author of The Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, to David Courchane, dated August 25, 1980, she says:

"Dear Mr. Courchane,

"I was pleased to receive your letter and to know that you found the story of your ancestor interesting and informative. I became quite fond of old Francis as I trailed him around the Northwest.

"It was exciting to find some of Mary Ermatinger Ashley's descendants living in Montana and to talk to them about the stories handed down from Mary. The Liberty's had a faint recollection of the old lady and her great dignity, even in extreme old age. I believe one of the Liberty family mentioned a branch of the Ashley's in Washington..................

"I had written the last chapter of my book about Mary Ermatinger Ashley and the stories told about her. She was interviewed by the local oral history buff before she died, and the write up is in the Montana Historical Library in Helena. Mary refused to speak English or to recognize the presence of a white person in the room. She answered questions through her daughter, Elizabeth. She reportedly "hated" the white people who exploited her people, and refusing to speak their language was one way of showing her contempt. A great-great granddaughter in Butte, Montana, told me of being assigned to sit with the old lady and see that she had what she needed (for she was nearly blind). Mary asked for articles in Saleesh, and the child was always confused by the language of her ancestors. Finally, Mary spoke in English, and in exasperation ordered "Bring me a shawl, you dumbbell!"

"The last chapter as I had written it was not acceptable by the publisher since it deported from the main character of the book.

"Thank you for your letter. Sincerely, Lois McDonald"

In a hearing to determine the heirs of Mary Augustine Ashley, September 25, 1913, Mary was called to testify. Here is what she said:
Q. What is your name, age, and where do you live?
A. Mary Ashley, age about 70, living with my son Charles, about 4 miles from St. Ignatius, Montana, on Dry Creek.

Q. What was your husband's name and when did he die?
A. Pierre Ashley. He died about 10 years ago. We lived together about 40 years.

Q. Where and how were you and Pierre married?
A. Married here at St. Ignatius Mission by the Fathers.

Q. Name all the children of yourself and Pierre?
A. Frank, Octave, Antoine, Rosalie, Josephine, Angelic, Agnes, August, Charles, William, and Elizabeth, here. Also, Mary Augusta.

Q. When did Mary Augusta die and how old was she?
A. She died about four years ago, and was 25 years old.

Q. Did she ever marry or have children?
A. No, she never married or had children.

Q. Give the names of your father and mother?
A. Mary and Francois Ermintinga. They died many years ago.

Q. Can you name your husband's father and mother?
A. Yes, William Ashley, a white man, and Margaret Finley Ashley. They died a long time ago.

Mary Ashley signed the testimony with her thumb-print.

She died on her allotment near St. Ignatius, Lake County, Montana on October 14, 1940 at the age of 102 years, at 5:30 p.m.

Her estate was as follows:
original allotment appraised at $2,000.00
inherited lands appraised at 2,000.00
cash, securities, or personal property appraised at 81.99

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total at $4,081.99

Mary Ashley's obituary was in "The Daily Missoulian", Thursday morning, October 17, 1940. It read:

"MRS. MARY ASHLEY, PIONEER OF FLATHEAD, DIES AT AGE OF 102

"St. Ignatius, Oct.16 -- Mrs. Mary Ashley, pioneer figure of the Mission valley, died at her home near here last night at the age of 102.

"Known for many years as "Grandmother" Ashley, she was the daughter of a British nobleman who came from England in the 1780's as a Hudson Bay company fur trader, and a full-blooded Flathead Indian known as Mary Three Dresses.
"She was born in an Indian teepee in the Mission valley, and grew up in the Indian way of life, learning to ride, fish and hunt and to follow the tribe on their semi-annual buffalo hunts.

"Mrs. Ashley had said she couldn't remember the exact date of her birth, but knew it was in the month of April of 1838, making her approximately 102 years and 8 months old.

"She enjoyed sitting in her favorite rocking chair and recalling days long gone, when thousands of buffalo roamed the plains and fur trappers were numerous.

"Her husband, Peter Ashley, died 38 years ago. They had 12 children, 10 of whom are now dead. Mrs. Ashley is survived by a son, William, and a daughter, Elizabeth, with whom she had lived since the death of her husband.

"She is also survived by 17 grandchildren, 59 great-grandchildren, and 12 great-great-grandchildren.

"Funeral service for the matriarch will be Thursday morning at 10 o'clock at the Holy Catholic church with Rev. Father Meninger officiating. Burial will be in the local Catholic cemetery.

"Pallbearers include Thomas McDonald, Stephen Peone, Robert McClure, Ray Doyle and Frank Houseman. The Twichell mortuary is in charge of arrangements."
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Fathers Adrian Hoecken, S.J. and Pierre Jean DeSmet, S.J.
(courtesy of Gonzaga University) Both these men were known to the early Ashleys and Finleys of our family.
These two pages are from the Flathead Agency Allotment Book, another big book, it was in possession of Louis “Sonny” Matt when he brought to me to look at. After he died I told Clarence Woodcock about the book, and Mrs. Matt kindly allowed him to photocopy the entire book, Clarence made me a copy too.

Photographs from family member’s photo albums and boxes have been contributed to this book. Some outright gifts and others loaned to make copies from. The collections of Viola Ashley Courchane, Jenny Ashley Allison (Gunny Allison), Rose Ashley Williams (Leonard Williams), Lucy Ashley Courville (Chuck Courville), JoAnn Blood Roullier, Charles Blood, David Charles Courchane, James Courchane, Lilly Jones, and many others were used.
St. Ignatius Mission in 1916

St. Ignatius Mission, Flathead Reservation, Montana in 1916
This old tin type belongs to Charlie Blood of St. Ignatius, Montana and according to the Flathead Culture Committee years ago it is probably taken of Ashley women. It could very well be Mary Ermatinger Ashley (my great-grandmother) and two of her kids and her grandmother Matilda. Mary Ermatinger Ashley (1838-1940).
This photo was identified by the Flathead Culture Committee as Mary Ermatinger Ashley (Although it has been questioned as such by Aunt Louise Ashley Wheeler and Arlene Wheeler Groepper). As Grandma Ashley seems to usually curl up her braids this is probably not her. But we keep it here as it is a good picture and this is a good place to keep it.

Grandma Mary Ermatinger Ashley (about 100 in this photo) and her son, William Ashley
Mary Ermatinger Ashley, this portrait hung from the wall of Aunt Jenny and Uncle Frank Allison’s log house near St. Ignatius, Montana. Received from Arlene Wheeler Groeppe.
Margaret Cordelia “Muggs” Madsen Tilden, Mary Cecille Madsen McClure, Lucy Peone Ashley, Mary Ermatinger Ashley - Flathead — (ID from Cecille Tellier Brown Facebook) The original date is shown as 1909 but this can’t be correct as the first two were not born then.

This picture was taken by Jimmy Courchane. His son, Dick is standing on the old porch. See the old lilac bush to the right? And the hollyhocks in seed on the left.
My sister, Darlene, and I visited the old Ashley place and took these pictures in the 1980s.

Grandma Ashley holding Margaret Louise Ashley (Wheeler)
Darlene Matt standing by the old log house part of the Ashley place, the kitchen.

The front of the house minus the front porch.
I took these of the old Ashley place in late 1970s
Pierre and Mary Ashley built this house sometime after 1863, the original building was a log house and later according to Joe Ashley, a grandson, it was called the “kitchen.” Then a two-story frame building, that become the main house, was built and attached to it. Not far from the back door of the log house part and to the left towards Dry creek was a root cellar. Joann Blood Roullier remembers being sent to the cellar to get jars of fruit, and one time it was black cherries, she did not like the job as she was afraid of the spiders and more afraid of dropping the jars and breaking them. She remembers that it was well stocked with canned fruits and vegetables and had potatoes, onions and carrots there also. Also out that door and located in Dry Creek was a square wooden tin-lined box in which milk, butter, eggs and other items that needed to be kept cold was stored. Also nearby
was a chicken coop in which there was a couple dozen chickens of all varieties. These were for eggs and Sunday dinner. They had an apple orchard of 12 or more trees by the house and it was located out from the main house’s front door to the right a good distance. Joann Rouiller thinks they may have been MacIntosh apples. Lilly “Sassy” Jones remembers that besides apples they had plums, Bartlett pears, and crab apples. Sassy said she made jelly out of the crab apples, which both Auntie Ashley and Uncle Lem liked and Uncle Lem would smack his lips in anticipation. Viola Courchane would make pies out of the apples to go with a dinner of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and milk gravy, bread and tomatoes (scalloped tomatoes) and fresh made bread. There were old-fashioned lavender lilac bushes directly in front of the main house and Uncle Lem’s big vegetable garden spot in front to the left a good distance towards the Mission Mountains bordering the gardens was the driveway. He grew potatoes, carrots, corn, green beans, peas, onions, watermelon and muskmelons. Beyond the chicken coop was the outhouse that was cleaned with lye monthly. A granary was a on the property too. Horses were across the lane Uncle Lem’s garden. They had pigs. A big barn and another building that the wagon and farm equipment was kept.

Through the kitchen door was a huge table that could seat 12 people and to the left was cupboard for dishes that was ceiling to floor, two stoves, big one and smaller one that was used to bake, the wood stove being at the end of the building, a stack of fire wood and kindling, pots and pans but we aren’t sure where they were, and in the dark corner to the left was a place for coats and shoes & overshoes. There was wood stove for heating in the middle of the big room. A sink but it was hook up to plumbing. Batter crock and round granite tub for the flour with a lid.
Grandma Mary E. Ashley at camp on Lake Placid in the Mission Mountains. Antoine Ashley. Grandma Ashley is placing plates and other dishes on a blanket or tarp on the ground near a tepee. Behind her nearer to the lake is the cook fire and it looks like Auntie is busy there. This is the same camp site as the two photographs below but taken on a different day, or even season.

Grandmother Ashley at camp on Lake Placid in the Mission Mountains. There is at least five people in the background & two with Grandma Ashley.
Tom Ashley, Grandma Ashley, Girlie Ashley, Mrs. Pablo, Regina Ashley & Herman Ducharme. From three different collections.
(from Arlene Wheeler Groepper – Red Allison Collection)
Grandma Ashley 100 years old
Actually it should have been 1838-1940 Taken by Chalk Courchane