

## Xavier (Zavier) Finlay

In the Pacific Northwest before 1808

By Chalk Courchane

He was the son of Jacques Raphael "Jocko" Finlay according to some sources. A couple sources even go so far as to say he is Jocko's brother! I had thought he may be the same person as James, but James was referred to as "defunct" on his daughter, Catherine's marriage record of 2 May 1856, and Xavier is reported as alive in 1859 at Fort Colville. He was an engage and voyageur for Hudson's Bay Company. He lived with three of his brothers and his brother-in-law Alexander Dumont at Chewelah, Colville Valley, Washington.

"There was an Xavier Finlay who was 80 years old in 1859 at Ft.Colville. His mother was a Spokane Indian." From "The Rainbow Seekers"; KXLY Publication; 1974; p.17. (Note: If he was a son of Jocko, he could not have been that old, in 1859). Some have made him into Francois Xavier Finlay and a brother of Jocko Finlay, but they can show no proof for that assumption. He could be one of Jocko's sons that we only know by their Native American name.

"Xavier Finlay, a mixed blood, when more than 80 years of age, at the time of the establishment of Fort Colville in 1859, said to white men that he could remember when the first horse was brought into the country north of Snake River. Word came to the Indians in the Colville Valley, he said, of the presence of a strange animal among the Indians in the Wilson Creek country, between Spokane and the Columbia, fleet as the wind, as large as an elk, but without horns, and docile as a deer. Moved by curiosity, a number of northern Indians, including his grandparents, journeyed to see this first horse in the northern country, and he recited how he was lifted, then a little boy, upon the back of the strange and beautiful creature, and shivered with fear when the sleek coat touched his little bare legs." From "History of the City of Spokane and Spokane County - Washington"; Vol.1; N.W. Durham; S.J. Clarke Pub. Co.; Spokane; 1912; p.3; footnote. Note: Fort Colville was established in 1825 instead of 1859 - Durham possibly means Ft. Colville established as a US military post.

"I found some notes I had made years ago on the back of a piece of paper. (You know how it is when you first start?) I don't know the source, but wrote, "Xavier Finley lived near Curlew Lakes and is probably buried there." From letter to David "Chalk" Courchane from Betty Pierce; 24 Jan 1983.

Xavier not found on Father DeSmet's Finlay Family Tree.

Early pioneer Thomas Beall relates: "In April, 1859, I met one of the Finlays at the new army post in Colville. He was a tall bony man about 50 or 60 years old." William S. Lewis notes that this man was either Francois or Xavier because they both lived at the military post at that time." From "Early Birds in the Northwest; Rowland Bond; Spokane House Enterprises; Nine Mile Falls; WA; 1972; p. 24.

Two people started the Francois Xavier Finley invention and could not tell me what source that was used to prove it. Such as this “Francois Xavier Finley, 1779-1859, metis, born in Alberta, brother to Jacques Raphael "Jacko" Finley. Jocko married a St. Germain.” Notes from [dgarneau@teluplanet.net](mailto:dgarneau@teluplanet.net). A Jean Roth from the Seattle Genealogical Society believes the same thing. Neither of these people was able to give me a good answer to what source they used when I made an email inquiry some years ago.

On December 3, 2003 one answered: “ It looks like multiple sources but on my site at directory use the search engine to find 'finlay'. They are in Alberta 1700's, Alberta 1800-1829, Metis 1812-1814 and Metis 1816-1817. It would appear Xavier is deduced from his adopted children and his brother Jacko. I suspect the primary source is Washington records. Everything I know is on my web site, also suggest use search engine to find references.” (Note from Chalk: The above is the dribble that confuses good research, I mean, putting stuff on the internet without any proof or collaboration. And what adopted children! There aren't any! Another person calls him Francisco Xavier Finlay.

We may never know for sure who he actually was, in my 40 years or so researching the Finlay family I have never come across any fur trade letters, journals or histories that connect Xavier, or a Francois Xavier as Jocko Finlay's brother.