



Grave 5 - Lot 6 - Block 15A

Deschamps Family

Deschamps Family, prominent pioneer family of ranchers and politicians. The French Canadians homesteaded the Frenchtown area. The Deschamps family has played a prominent role in the growing and changing economy of the Missoula area.

- **'Deschamps' means:** "of the fields" in French.
- **1700.** Family came to North America and settled in Quebec in French Canada. The leader of the St Louise French river boatmen who brought Lewis and Clark up the Missouri River

was a Deschamps.

- **Early descendants.** Antoine Deschamps (1805-1893) and Julia Marca Deschamps. They had three children all born in Canada: Antoine, Gaspard, and Joseph. All three sons settled in the Missoula area in the 1870s.
- **Gaspard Deschamps (1846-1920).** Arrived in Cedar Creek gold camps in 1870. He soon moved to the Flathead where he ran cattle and was one of five white men living with the Salish Indians. In 1877 he moved to Frenchtown and married Denise Cyr (1856-1934). Over time they came to operate a 2,500 acre ranch in Grass Valley and had 12 children.
- **Joseph Deschamps (1851-1935).** Bought Gaspard's interest in a Missoula blacksmith shop called Hamel & Deschamps, located on W Main St, which he continued to operate until the 1920s. He married Louise LeBeau (1863-1912) in 1879. They had five children.



- **Antoine Deschamps (1836-1911).** Was the oldest son and bought Gaspard's Lavalley creek ranch in 1882. In 1883, his wife, Pamela Courtreau (1837-1915) and their daughters and two youngest sons arrived. Two of their oldest sons had already come to the Frenchtown area in the 1870s.
- **1883.** Antoine and Julia moved from Quebec to join their growing family in Missoula. Both died in Missoula and are buried at St. Mary's cemetery along with most of their children and grandchildren.
- Until after WW II, the French-Canadian immigrants



maintained their heritage and spoke only French until they entered the school systems.

The French Catholic holiday of St. John the Baptist Day was the town's major holiday complete with parades and celebrations.

- **Today.** The 8th generation of Deschamps continue living in the Frenchtown and Missoula areas.
- Over the years, the Deschamps family has played a major role in the growing and changing economy of the Missoula area. Many members of the family have been active in state and local politics, education from grade schools to the University, community and civic activities, and the arts.

Information and photos provided by Robert 'Dusty' Deschamps III, direct descendant and U.S. District Court Judge.