

## Charlotte Small

Charlotte Small's marriage to David Thompson is a powerful reminder that Europeans could not have survived without the help of Indigenous women.

David Thompson's "country wife", Charlotte Small, made his clothing, his snowshoes, and took care of his physical well-being. Her presence probably helped strengthen the trading opportunities for him.

When she married Thompson, by the custom of the country, Small was only 13, not uncommon in 1799. They had thirteen children, five born in the Northwest. She and the children travelled with Thompson by canoe and overland. Although described as plain, neat, and rather reserved, Small's adventurous spirit is evident in the distance she covered. This diminutive woman travelled half as far as Thompson's 50,000 miles, but three and one-half times as far as American explorers Lewis and Clark.

Unlike most traders, Thompson brought Charlotte with him when he left the West in 1812. They were married for over 50 years, and lived out their years together in Quebec.

### Invaluable Wives

Few traders would have survived without the help of their Indigenous wives. These women knew how to live with the land – what plants to eat; how to hunt and trap; when to travel. They advised their husbands on ways to behave and speak when meeting other Indigenous people.

Born September 1, 1785 – Died: May 4, 1857

### Additional Resources

- **Parks Canada**  
<https://parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/personnage-person/charlotte-small-thompson>
- **David Thompson Country**  
<https://davidthompsoncountry.ca/our-origins/>
- **The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture**  
<https://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/14751>



## **Our Collections**

### **Glenbow Museum**

<https://www.glenbow.org>

### **Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives**

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

### **Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection**

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>

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