



# Families of the 1885 Resistance

## A - L

Are your ancestors on this list?



# Families of the 1885 Resistance

## L - Z

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# The Battle of Batoche



PLAN of POSITION of BATTLE OF BATOCHÉ, May 1885.



The Battle of Batoche was fought over four days from May 9 to May 12, 1885. Less than 300 Metis and First Nations people led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont defended Batoche. The North West Field Force, commanded by Major General Frederick Middleton numbered over 800.

On the first day of fighting, Middleton had planned to attack the Metis and Indians on two fronts. The steamer Northcote, fortified by sandbags, was to proceed down river, while Middleton would attack on land with the remainder of his men. The strategy failed when the Metis lowered a ferry cable which disabled the Northcote.

The last forces also ran into significant resistance from the Metis who effectively held their positions. The Metis and Indians held their own for the first three days of fighting. The North West Field Force continued to bombard the Metis positions with their four nine-pound cannons and fired at the Metis riflemen with their Gatling gun borrowed from the U.S. military. In defending their position through the first three days, the Metis and Indians were forced to use most of their stores of ammunition.

May 12 was the decisive day of the battle. It began when Middleton, equipped with one nine-pounder, the Gatling gun and 130 men, advanced on the Metis rifle pits. This action was meant to draw the Metis out of their rifle pits around the church to the north where the Gatling gun was positioned. Believing this tactic failed, Middleton withdrew to his camp. Unknown to him, the maneuver had in fact served its purpose. The Metis had been drawn to the north anticipating a major offensive there.

Shortly later the Middletons, under Lieutenant Colonel Williamson, broke through the weakened Metis lines near the church. Due to the overwhelming numbers and the fact that the Metis were reduced to firing only one shot from their guns the battle ended in minutes. Riel and Dumont escaped. Riel gave himself up later and Dumont fled to the United States. When the battle ended, there were more than 22 dead from both sides. Those who had not dispersed were captured and held for later trial.



# Duck Lake



The Battle of Duck Lake is the name given to the conflict between Metis warriors and the forces of the Canadian government. This event signaled the beginning of the resistance movement in the North West. The battle occurred March 26, 1885.

After meeting both sides sent representatives to negotiate a settlement, but a brawl erupted and the Metis representatives, among them Gabriel Dumont's brother, were killed when Crozier's men were ordered to attack.

Led by North-West Mounted Police superintendent Leib Crozier, a mixed force of policemen and Prince Albert Volunteers equipped with a seven-pound cannon marched from Fort Carlton on March 25.

The Canadians elected to charge, wading into the deep snow, they were met by heavy fire from Metis snipers. The attack failed and Crozier ordered his men to retreat. The Prince Albert Volunteers suffered the most casualties as they had been caught by the Metis unprotected in open country. Despite Dumont's urgings to finish off the retreating Canadians, Riel intervened and prevented more blood from being shed.

# The Battle of Fish Creek



The Battle of Fish Creek, fought April 24, 1885 at Fish Creek. In what is now Saskatchewan, was a major Metis victory over the Canadian forces attempting to put down the Metis resistance in the North West.

With his force divided on opposite banks of the river, Middleton was unable to bring his superior numbers to bear. The two artillery batteries he commanded did succeed in driving away the Metis allies the Cree warriors before their numbers could be added to the battle.

General Fredrick Middleton, leading a considerable Canadian Field Force from Fort Qu'Appelle on April 10, Middleton was advancing upstream from Clarke's Crossing along the South Saskatchewan River when he fell into an ambush by Metis warriors commanded by Gabriel Dumont. The Metis assaulted Middleton's men with a devastating blast of gunfire before withdrawing into cover and restricting themselves to sniper fire in order to conserve ammunition.

The Metis warriors inflicted heavy casualties upon the enemy, and Middleton, distressed by those casualties opted for retreat. Weeks later, after news reached Middleton of the Cree victory over Colonel Otter who had been issued the borrowed Gatling gun at Cut Knife Hill, Middleton embarked once more on what would be the decisive action against Batoche.

# The Death of Marcile Gratton (1875-1885)

The tragic end to Marcile's short life is documented in the diary of Walter F. Stewart, one of General Middleton's soldiers at Batoche. She is described in Metis writings as a Sioux Metis girl. The entry for May 12, 1885 reads:

There were many incidents of note during this final charge of the 12th day of May 1885. One was when little Marcile Gratton, a French Half-Breed girl aged ten, ran across our line of fire and was shot dead on the doorstep of one of the stores. She wanted to be with her mother. Our boys gathered round the little dead thing as she lay in her father's mother's arms, who kneeling on the step rocked her as she had when a baby, trying to get her to speak. She couldn't believe that her child was dead.

Suddenly a figure was seen to break away from among the group of prisoners, their order guard. Further up the street, disarmed and in shortsleeves he bounded like a pouter through the crowd, pushing our men right and left until he came to the Metis and the little dead girl. He stood for a moment looking down at them, his long black hair half covering his face. Then dropping to his knees he stroked his little daughter's hair gently, reverently. "Our poor little Marcile - rest now!"

He passed his other arm about his wife's shoulder and the tears welling in his eyes dropped on the little girl's dead hand. The group of soldiers looking on were deeply touched by the scene that was being enacted at their feet. "If sooner let them keep Batoche than to have hurt one hair of that poor little girl," one soldier was heard to say.

The father rose slowly to his feet, assisting his Indian wife to hers. He took his little Marcile in his arms and they slowly made their way towards the setting sun and the valley, where a few hours ago we were fighting our way toward the finish of the campaign. Such a life. Such a death.

