

Alexis Bonami, *dit* Lespérance. (1797-1890)

Alexis was born on November 20, 1797, the son of Pierre Lesperance and Marguerite Aucoin. He was a La Loche Boat Brigade leader and prominent guide and boat pilot on the Mackenzie between the 1820s and 1840s. On June 6, 1825, at St. Boniface, he married Marguerite Grenon (b. 1803), they had thirteen children. Marguerite was the daughter of Joseph Grenon and a Saulteaux woman. Alexis supported Riel in the 1869-1870 Resistance at Red River. He eventually retired to St. François Xavier and supported Riel in the 1885 Resistance at Batoche although he was too old to participate actively.



Alexis was born into a Quebec fur-trading family. During the War of 1812 he served in a regiment commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel James Cuthbert. He began his career with the HBC as a voyageur. He was noted for his leadership of the difficult Portage La Loche canoe brigade. He opened this route in 1832, traveling from Red River in York boats across Lake Winnipeg to Norway House, then along the Saskatchewan River, then the Churchill River, then to Lac La Loche, then to Methy Portage, where this crew met those coming down from the Mackenzie River district and furs were exchanged for provisions. The route covered 4,000 miles on a tight schedule using dangerous waterways. Alexis supervised the brigade until his retirement, when he received a pension from the HBC.

Their daughter Caroline¹ was married to Jean Baptiste Boucher. He was a member of Riel's Exovedate at Batoche in 1884-85. Caroline accompanied her husband, Charles Nolin, Maxime Lepine, Gabriel Dumont, Baptiste Boyer and Louis Riel to the first meeting with the English Metis at the Lindsay School House. Her husband was wounded at the Battle of Batoche. Their daughter Marie Marguerite married Maxime Lepine Jr. Caroline died at St. Louis on May 11, 1910.

Their daughter Marguerite married Alfred "Rabasca" Schmidt in 1847. Their grandson Louis Schmidt *dit* Laferté became secretary of Riel's Provisional Government in Red River. His granddaughters, Emma and Caroline, entered the Order of the Grey Nuns. Alexis died at St. François Xavier on December 11, 1890.

Their daughter Adelaide was married to Michel Dumas Sr. and son Andre was

¹ **Caroline Lespérance, (Boucher)** (1842-1910). Spouse, Jean Baptiste Boucher Sr. (1838-1911).

Caroline was the daughter of Alexis Bonami Lespérance and Marguerite Grenon. Her father was a leader of the HBC La Loche boat brigades and was a strong Riel supporter in the 1869-70 Resistance. Although not active in 1885, Alexis was a Riel supporter. Alexis died at St. François Xavier on December 11, 1890, age 94. Caroline Lesperance was the aunt of Louis Schmidt, a boyhood friend of Riel, who sent numerous petitions of Metis grievances to Ottawa from St. Louis in 1883-84, and first suggested that the Metis send for Riel in Montana.

married to Pierre Falcon's daughter Balsamie Falcon. Daughter Rosalie Lesperance married Duncan McDougall

In 1835, the HBC granted Lesperance 50 acres of land on the Assiniboine River near Upper Fort Garry, across the river from a 70-acre lot which Alexis had purchased himself. With the help of his family, he was able to work a surprisingly large farm. Within three years he owned livestock and had three acres under cultivation, and by the early 1840s he was cultivating 10 to 15 acres, well above the average for the settlement.



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