

BATOCHÉ PROJECT

PART ONE

CHAPTERS ONE TO THREE



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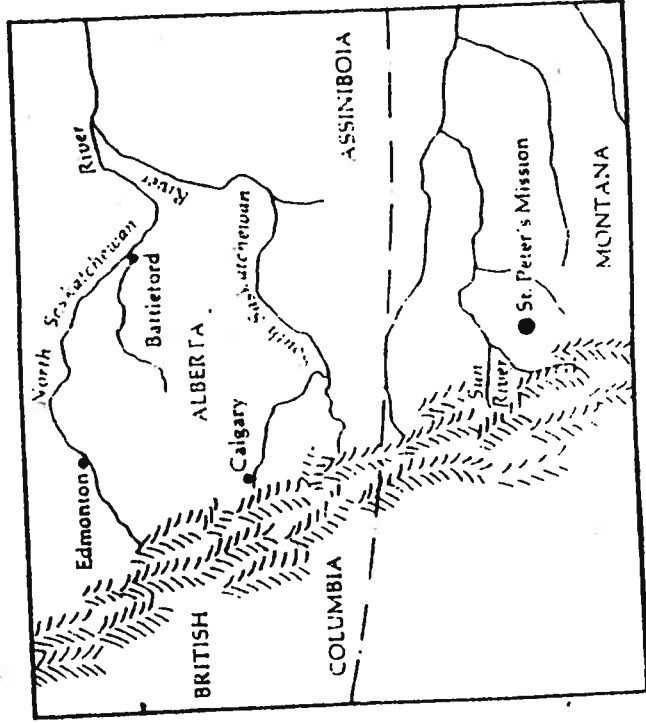
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#### ABBREVIATIONS

CSP	Canada Sessional Papers
PAC	Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

CHAPTER ONE



SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS DISCUSSED

IN CHAPTER ONE OF THE PROJECT

- Spring 1884 French-and English-speaking Half-Breeds meet in Batoche area. They decide to send a delegation to Riel in Montana urging him to come to their assistance in dealing with Half-Breed grievances regarding land claims.
- June 1884 Riel and his family accompany Metis delegation back to Batoche
- December 1884 Petition sent to Ottawa by Metis in Batoche area.
- March 1885 Battleford receives police reinforcement. N.W.M.P. officer Herschmer is ordered to proceed north to assist Major Crozier at Fort Carlton.
- March 17 1885 Lawrence Clark, a Hudson's Bay Company factor, meets a group of Metis in St. Louis, on the South Saskatchewan River and informs them that the N.W.M.P. are sending 300 men to the Metis settlements.
- March 17 1885 The Metis seize several stores in the Duck Lake area to equip themselves with arms and ammunition. They arrest the storekeeper and several government officials.
- March 19 1885 Metis Council established, referred to by many as the "Little Provisional" (government).
- Spring 1884 French- and English-speaking Half-Breeds meet in Batoche area. They decide to send a delegation to Riel in Montana urging him to come to their assistance in dealing with the Half-Breed grievances in regard to their land claims.

PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE

IN CHAPTER ONE OF THE PROJECT

RIEL Metis leader stationed at Batoche, *RA*

DUMONT General of Metis army stationed at Batoche,

MACDONALD Prime Minister of Canadian Dominion,  
stationed in Ottawa,

CROZIER Superintendent of North West Mounted Police  
stationed at Fort Carlton,

IRVINE Mounted Police Commissioner stationed in  
Regina,

DEWDNEY Lieutenant-Governor of N.W.T. and Indian  
Commissioner, stationed in Regina.

MOULIN (Rev.) Parish priest stationed in Batoche.

FOURMOND (Rev.) Parish priest stationed in St. Laurent.

ANDRE (Rev.) Parish priest stationed in Prince Albert.

MCKAY Prince Albert Half-Breed employed as scout  
and interpreter (Cree-English) with N.W.M.P.  
at Carlton,

PARENTEAU President of Metis Council,

GARNOT Secretary of Metis Council,

MITCHELL Trader at Duck Lake,

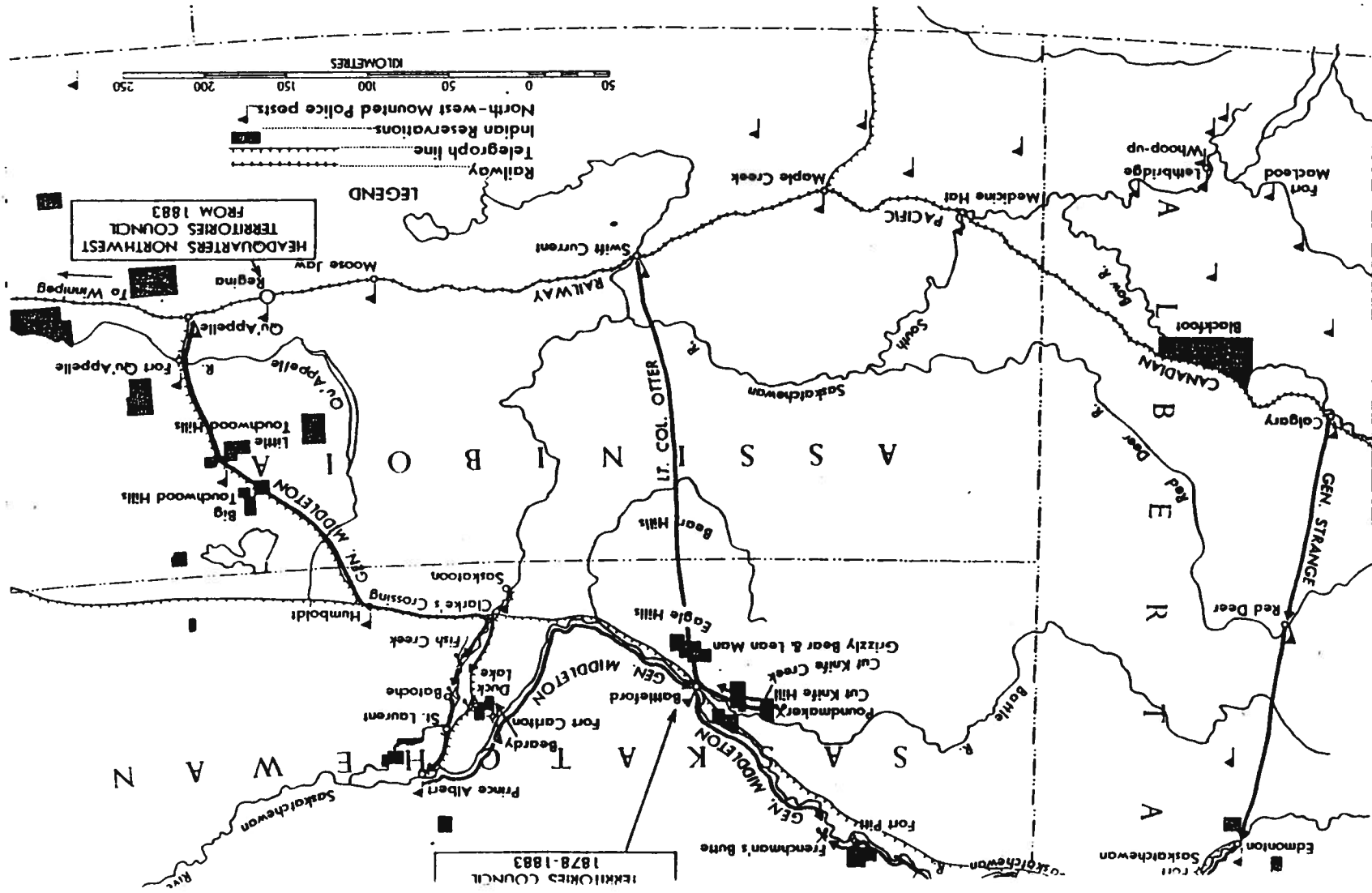
KERR Storekeeper at Duck Lake,

WALTERS Storekeeper at Duck Lake.

HERSHMER Lieutenant-Colonel with the N.W.M.P. ordered  
to assist Crozier at Carlton early in March  
of 1885.



THE CANADIAN NORTH WEST 1885



## THE INITIATION OF VIOLENCE

Introduction to Chapter One:

Historians generally agree that the North-West "insurrection," spurred on by all facets of the population - Indians, Half-breeds and Whites - had been developing over a considerable period of time. The first warning of serious trouble was given by Superintendent Crozier in July of 1884, when a tense confrontation with armed Indians led to a situation where Crozier's sound judgement narrowly averted open warfare. Three months later a police force was stationed at Fort Carlton, a Hudson's Bay Post near a number of Half-breed settlements, on the South Saskatchewan River. Following the difficulties of 1884 the police force in the Northern divisions was increased to two-hundred men.

The actual Half-breed call to arms was the result of an indiscreet remark by the Hudson's Bay factor Lawrence Clarke, stationed at Prince Albert. Clarke, on his way home from a trip to Ottawa, where he was discussing the Metis grievances with Sir John A. Macdonald, had stopped at Regina to see Indian Commissioner Dewdney and then travelled on to Prince Albert. A few miles from home he was met by a number of Metis who were anxiously awaiting the government's reply to a petition on behalf of the Whites, Half-breeds and Indians in the Prince Albert district. To the Metis question concerning government reaction Clarke reportedly answered that Ottawa's reply was on the way in the form of armed men and bullets. This news spread panic among the Half-breed settlements. The Metis took immediate action to arm themselves, seizing several stores in the Duck Lake area to equip their men with supplies and ammunition. They also arrested several government officials, among them Indian Agent Lash, and confined them on the upper floor of one of the raided establishments.

Only a week earlier Superintendent Gagnon had telegraphed Mounted Police Commissioner Irvine in Regina, to mobilize a Police attachment in support of Superintendent Crozier's force, at Carlton. A few days later the Commissioner was on his way from Regina to the fort on the South Saskatchewan with ninety policemen. Crozier, on hearing of the arrests by Riel's men, dispatched a scout by the name of Joseph McKay Jr. to Captain Moffat at Prince Albert with the request for a volunteer force of eighty men. In the meantime the Metis leaders called together

a council in the church at Batoche. Father Moulin, the parish priest, unwilling to allow the building to be used for this purpose and denouncing the Metis resort to armed resistance, was thrust aside at Riel's command. Dumont then sent out parties to cut the telegraph lines. Father Fourmond, at St. Laurent, also proved to be hostile to the Metis cause, threatening to withdraw religious services to those who actively joined with Riel. The latter realized the importance of religion to the Metis people and feared that his alienation from the priests would undermine the support he so urgently required; therefore he tried to fill the void by declaring himself a prophet of the new world for the great Metis nation.

The official decision to take up arms was signed by fifteen councillors. Pierre Parenteau was chosen president and Phillippe Garnot secretary. Some companies of soldiers were formed with Gabriel Dumont in charge of all. Riel did not become a member of the council but contributed by giving the new organization a name. He called it the "Exovedate," and referred to each member as an exovede, meaning, "those picked from the flock."

The foregoing account summarizes the initiation of violence which led to (what is somewhat erroneously termed) the Northwest "rebellion." The following quotations and excerpts from primary documents and secondary sources will attempt to examine the divergent viewpoints on issues associated with the initiation and the various accounts of ensuing hostilities as seen and experienced, curtailed or promoted by men and women of the opposing forces.

Metis Petition prior to Insurrection, fall of 1884 - Ignored.

"...Following Riel's return and at his urging, petition after petition was dispatched to Ottawa pressing the government for some action on Metis demands. Many meetings were held during the summer at which the people resolved to persevere in their efforts to win their rights. Nothing happened. The government did not respond.

- 3 -

In the early fall of 1884, they drew up a list of rights as had been done at the Red River. This was sent to Ottawa with a petition asking for guarantees. The charter contained seven clauses.

1. Subdivision of North-West Territories into Provinces,
2. Concession of land and other advantages to the Metis....
3. Immediate distribution of land titles to settlers in possession,
4. Sale of a half-million acres of Crown lands for the foundation of schools, hospitals and other institutions.
5. The reservation of 100 districts of marshy land to be distributed among the Metis children over the course of the next 100 years.
6. Allocation of 1,000 Dollars to maintain a religious institution in each Metis settlement.
7. Arrangement for Indian well-being.

2.  
AMNSIS  
Louis Riel,  
Justice  
Must Be  
Done.  
Manitoba  
Metis  
Federation  
Press, 1979

Ottawa ignored this petition as well...<sup>2</sup>

By the end of February, 1885, Riel had to think of more drastic measures.

" ... (The petition) was sent to Chapleau, the Secretary of State, and receipt duly acknowledged...January, 1885 came and went. Early in February the Cabinet agreed to investigate the claims of the half-breeds. But the government had promised investigation since 1879. There was no answer to the Metis leaders. By the end of February Riel had been forced to think of more drastic measures... (But) "I assure you," Riel told Rev. Williams the day of his execution, that three weeks before the Duck Lake fight I had no idea of rebellion."<sup>3</sup>

3.  
Waite,  
Peter  
Canada,  
1874-1896  
McLelland  
& Stewart,  
1971

Sir John Macdonald denied ever having received a petition from the Metis, Indians or settlers.

" ...it is interesting to note that Sir John A Macdonald boldly declared in the Dominion Parliament in March 1885 that no North West "Bill of Rights" had ever been "officially, or indeed in any way, promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to Government." The Government not only received the petition and forwarded it to the Colonial Office, but apparently acknowledged the receipt of the petition.<sup>4</sup>

4.  
Stanley.  
Birth  
of  
Western  
Canada.  
p.307

"Edmonton Bulletin" theorized that without rebellion the people in the North West need expect nothing from government.

"If it was not by...rebellion and appeals to the British government...that the people of Ontario gained the rights they enjoy today and freed themselves from a condition precisely similar to that in which the North West is being rapidly forced...If history is to be taken as a guide, what could be plainer than that without rebellion the people of the North West need expect nothing."<sup>5</sup>

In early March of 1885, Crozier organized military forces, in case of trouble with half-breeds.

"...On the 13th (of March, 1885) Crozier reported that a half-breed rebellion was "liable to break out at any moment" and called for reinforcements. Hence on the 15th, Commissioner Irvine, of Regina, was instructed to proceed north as quietly as possible with all available men up to one hundred.

Crozier made every preparation for the trouble which he had accurately foretold. At Battleford he organized a body of volunteers, or special constables, to defend the town and took with him to Calton fifty men of the regular force, one gun and the arms of the disbanded Prince Albert militia. On March 15th, he proceeded to Prince Albert where he arranged with Captain Moore, a former militia officer, to sound quietly the feeling of that settlement and report of it, if in the event of an emergency volunteer force could be readily enrolled."<sup>6</sup>

Military leaders were long convinced that a large police force would intimidate Indians and Metis.

(In a letter to Irvine, Crozier suggested that -)...Nothing but seeing a large force in the country will prevent serious trouble before long. If matters are allowed to drift or if it is felt that no greater, or only a slight increase of force at present here is made, I am strongly of the opinion we shall have the Manitoba difficulties of 1869 reenacted with the addition of the Indian population as allies to the half-breeds."<sup>7</sup>

Dewdney advised Macdonald one week before outbreak of violence that he intended to meet with Lawrence Clarke, and that troops should be ready to start north.

5. "Edmonton Bulletin", as quoted in "Prince Albert Times", Feb. 22, 1884.

6. Stanley, George F. Birth of Western Canada Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961 p.322

7. Letter, Crozier to Irvine Jul 13, 1884 RCMP File No. 1137d.

March 12, 1885

"My dear Sir John:

...Lawrence Clarke from Prince Albert, whom I first consulted about these men will be here today, as finding he was on his way to the North from Winnipeg I wired him to come and see me as I wished to talk over the half-breed reports that have reached me since he left Prince Albert... A telegram from Crozier...Crozier is nervous, but I have no doubt has good foundation for his information as far as talk is concerned. A determined stand should be taken at once or the agitation will increase, and we will have no peace all summer.

8.  
Macdonald  
Papers  
P.A.C.  
Regina  
Mar. 12,  
1885

Herschmer with 50 (or 100 men would be better) should be ready to start north.

The part of Crozier's telegram about getting arms from the States is the weak part of it. I think the sale of fixed ammunition, and the importation of it, should be prohibited in the North.

With kind regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely

E. Dewdney" 8

Mitchell, a trader at Duck Lake, wrote to Crozier on March 20, (1885) that L. Clarke warned the half-breeds of troops on the way to fight them.

" Hillyard Mitchell, who acted as intermediary between Crozier and Riel wrote to Crozier on March 20, (1885) that he had learned "that he, (Clarke)...stopped at the settlement on the South Branch, and told the people that the Government was sending 500 police from Troy to fight the half-breeds. The people of course, got excited and said they were going to fight the said 500 men. And they are now waiting at Batoche expecting them to arrive."

Another version is put forward in an unfinished letter dated April 3rd, 1885...

" (Confidential Papers) "During the day in question and before the meeting (to form a council) took place, several English half-breed; , who were in town on business, went home

having heard the various rumors relative to the intention of the Police. Knowing that Riel had done nothing worthy of arrest and feeling that as they were responsible for his safety, they sent the news on to the lower end of the French Settlement, and as these things always grow by rehandling it reached the French in the form of a statement to the effect that the citizens of Prince Albert were arming to assist the police to arrest Riel." Whichever version may be true, the important fact is that Riel took advantage of the panic to form the Provisional Government."

Clarke, however, denied having met or talked to anyone...

"In a letter to the Hudsons Bay Company Commissioner on July 6th, 1885 (H.B.C. folio on the Riel Rebellions) Clarke gave a detailed account of his movements on the day in question and said: "Between meeting Lepine twelve miles on the other side of the South Branch and Fort Carlton, I did not meet a single half-breed, nor with those that I did meet on the way had I one word of conversation about anything connected with Riel or his movements." Nevertheless the other view was prevalent at the time.<sup>9</sup>

9. Stanley,  
Birth  
of  
Western  
Canada  
Ibid.,  
p.443

Brave men were now aroused to defend their homes:

"... Whether Clarke exaggerated, thinking that the size of the force might induce the Metis to return home quietly, or whether the Metis misunderstood his words, is not known. It is pretty certain that Clarke was referring to Irvine's force. However, even if Clarke had said 5000 men, the result would have been the same. Brave men were aroused to defend their homes.

10. Charlebois  
Peter  
The  
Life of  
Louis  
Riel.  
New  
Canadian  
Public.,  
Toronto,  
1978  
p. 141

Now Riel and the Metis horsemen were excited. At a small shop operated by George Kerr and his brother, the Metis came upon a group of government officials. They took the officials as their prisoners, and hurried on toward Batoche...(Date: March 17,85.)

...At Walters and Bakers, the Metis helped themselves to all the guns and ammunition in stock. Henry Walters protested, and for his pains was taken prisoner. Upstairs, in his own shop, he was locked up with the other prisoners.

Riel then had Dumont send out parties to cut the telegraph lines."<sup>10</sup>

Dewdney wrote to Macdonald in March of 1885 that half-breeds must be taken unawares and their leader arrested:

Dewdney to  
Macdonald,  
Mar. 11,  
1885.  
(Private)  
Macdonald  
Papers  
Vol. IV

" "If the half-breeds mean business the sooner they are put down, the better. They are like Indians. When they gather and get excited it is difficult to handle them, but if they are taken unawares there is little difficulty in arresting the leader." 11

But Riel and the Metis were not going to be caught unaware:

" (Riel) hoped that by holding prisoners and seizing property he could bring John A Macdonald to bargain, thus to gain concession for the Metis. The threat of war might be as effective as war itself. Riel and the Metis discussed their problem at length... 12

Charlebois.,  
Ibid.,  
p.141

The parish priests in the half-breed settlements, denouncing the unconstitutional means of resistance, withdrew their service:

" "... The clergy...(were) refusing to perform religious functions for those Metis who joined actively with Riel. Riel realized that he must fill this void. He did not want to lose the support of the people to whom religion was very important, to the Priests who were working hand in hand with the government.

Charlebois.,  
Ibid.,  
p.139.

The missionaries came to fear immediately the Metis adulation of Riel, taking it as a serious threat to their power in the parishes. Riel spoke of himself as a "prophet of the new world." The Metis were to become "a great new nation." ...Canada must become the cente of Christendom... 13

Charlebois' approval of Riel's action - under the circumstances - stands in contrast to Father Andre's condemnation of the Metis leader's style of movement. He wrote to his superior, Monsigneur Grandin, O.M.I., on March 22, 1885 :

"The People considered Riel as a hero with the qualities of a saint."

" ...But beneath this mask (is) hidden fiendish conceit and excessive ambition...Riel detests priests and bishops and uses all his influence to turn the half-breeds against the clergy... He tells them that we are bought off by government, paid to



14.  
Correspondence  
Andre to  
Grandin  
P.A.C.

uphold its authority and that as a result it was necessary to guard against the clergy's influence..." 14

Riel's first move was to seize the church in St. Antoine so that he could make it his headquarters:

...Father Moulin's protest irritated Riel (who) threatened to arrest and tie him up like a prisoner if he continued to oppose his plan. The church was therefore taken by force and became the headquarters for Riel and his people...Riel said to his recruits: "Providence has foreseen this miraculous movement...St. Antoine is going to be celebrated as the birthplace of the emancipation of the Northwest..." 15

15.  
Andre to  
Grandin  
Ibid.

The term "Provisional Government", widely used to describe the Metis resistance movement was not used exclusively by the people who were actively engaged in the movement. Riel and Louis Schmidt, both, refer initially to a "council". Louis Schmidt writes:

The greatest number possible of the Metis were invited to come with their arms to St. Laurent...(then) the Metis went in a body to Batoche and it was there that the taking up of arms was decided.

...They immediately organized a Council of Leading citizens, which many named "the little Provisional" in memory of its elder brother of Red River. Some companies of soldiers were formed...with Gabriel Dumont in command of all...Pierre Parenteau was chosen president, Phillippe Garnot became secretary...Each man was called an "exovede," and the council itself the "Exovedate." Both words were synthetic Latin by construction and meant "those picked from the flock." 16

16.  
Memoirs  
of  
Louis  
Schmidt  
P.A.C.

During his trial Riel said: "The 19th Century is to be treated in certain ways, and it is probably for this reason that I have found the word 'exovede', I prefer to be called one of the flock. I am no more than you are, I am simply one of the flock, equal to the rest." 17

17.  
Queen vs  
Riel,  
197.  
As cited  
in  
Stanley,  
p.413

SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS DISCUSSED

IN CHAPTER TWO OF THE PROJECT

- March 21 Riel sends a letter to Major Crozier asking for the surrender of Fort Carlton. Crozier in turn asks for the surrender of the leaders of the "rebellion".
- Riel sends a letter to the English Half-Breed settlements, explaining that, "Justice Demands Us To Take Up Arms".
- March 24 Prince Albert settlers and English Half-Breeds draw up a petition to government asking for redress of the Metis' grievances. Four hundred and fifty persons sign the petition.
- March 25 The Battle of Duck Lake. A small party of policemen from Fort Carlton are sent to Duck Lake to purchase supplies. On the way they are jostled by a group of Metis under Dumont. The policemen return to Carlton and talk Crozier into returning to Duck Lake to "get even" with the Metis. In the ensuing battle, Assywin, an aged Indian, Isidore Dumont, Gabriel's brother, and three other Metis are killed. Crozier's force lost nine policemen and volunteers.
- March 30 The Canadian government appoints a commission to settle the Metis grievances.

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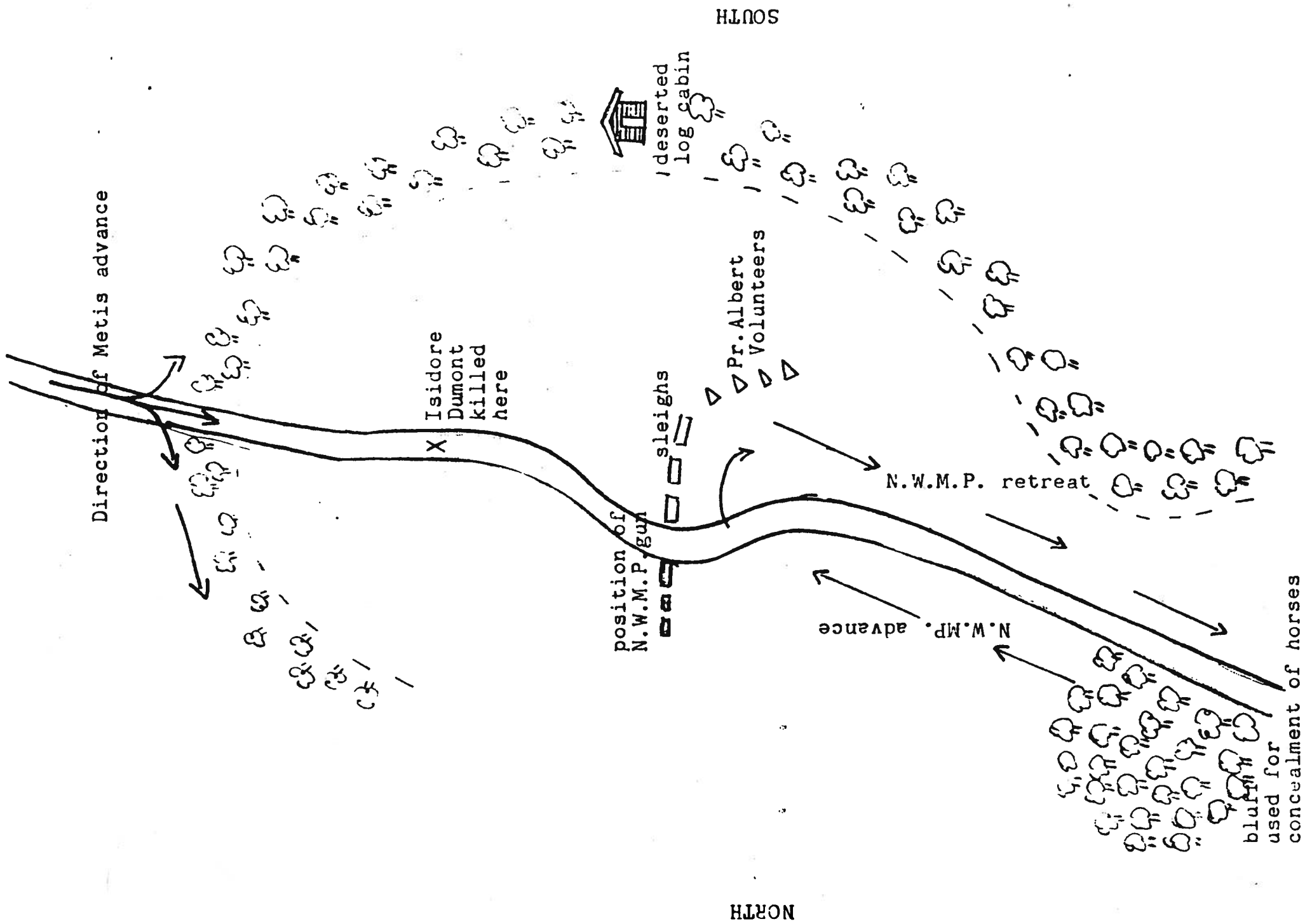
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PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE

IN CHAPTER TWO OF THE PROJECT

RIEL	Metis leader stationed at Batoche.
DUMONT (Gabriel)	General of Metis army, stationed at Batoche.
MIDDLETON	General of Canadian Dominion Military Forces.
MOFFAT	Major of the N.W.M.P., stationed at Regina.
MCKAY	Prince Albert Half-Breed employed as scout and interpreter with N.W.M.P. at Fort Carlton.
DUMONT (Isadore)	Brother of Gabriel Dumont, living in Batoche area.
ASSYWIN	Half blind Cree Indian with Dumont's force.
NOLIN	Brother-in-law of Louis Riel who did not support Metis resort to arms. Riel's prisoner for short period of time.
LEPINE (Chs., Maxime)	Metis' unwilling to arm themselves, imprisoned by Riel.
LASH	Indian Agent at Duck Lake. Imprisoned by Riel.
ROSS	N.W.M.P. scout imprisoned by Riel.
ASTLEY	N.W.M.P. scout imprisoned by Riel.
NESS	Half-breed from Batoche area imprisoned by Riel, but released likely upon his wife's request.
BRADY	20th century organizer of the Metis in Alberta and Saskatchewan.
TOMPKINS	An English Half-Breed imprisoned in a house at Duck Lake, by Riel.



MAP OF DUCK LAKE BATTLE GROUND ( March 26, 1885 )

The road pictured in this drawing leads from Fort Carlton, (bottom) to Duck Lake, (top.), in a north-west to south-eastern direction.



BEAR LAKE 1885. This scene depicts the battle between Major Crozier's forces and Gabriel Dumont's small army. The building in the foreground is a deserted log cabin belonging to the Cree Chief Beardy. ( Photo Canadian Archives.)

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Recruitment of Support by Opposing Forces and The Encounter at Duck Lake.

#### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO:

It may be useful, at this point, to describe the locations in which the events discussed in this chapter took place.

The North and the South branches of the Saskatchewan River meet at a place called "the forks" about three miles east of Prince Albert. Before they unite the rivers run parallel to each other with twenty to thirty miles distance between them. Along this stretch, close to a bend in the South Saskatchewan called "the elbow", lies the village of Batoche. Almost directly opposite, on the bank of the North Saskatchewan, is the former Hudsons Bay Post and Mounted Police garrison, Fort Carlton. Between Batoche and Carlton is another village, close to Beardy's Reserve, named Duck Lake. Other, mainly Metis, settlements in this vicinity are St. Louis and St. Laurent. Along the road from Duck Lake to Prince Albert lies the farming community of Red Deer Hill, composed of mostly English-speaking half breeds who were, in the days of the North-West troubles, sympathetic to the Metis movement.

Riel, after the initial call to arms, was uncertain of the extent of support among the Metis, particularly in view of his alienation from the clergy. He therefore appealed to the English half-breeds and white settlers for their cooperation. The latter were undoubtedly sharing Riel's antagonism toward the indifference of the government, but did not approve of the resort to arms or Riel's attempt to involve the Indians; in short, they wished to remain neutral. Several meetings were held in the parish of St. Catharines, at Red Deer Hill - one of them instigated by Crozier, who wished to counteract Riel's influence over the parishioners. Riel also tried to bring Crozier to the surrender of Carlton and its supplies, promising the Major and his men freedom in exchange, if they consented, and "a war of extermination" in case of refusal. Crozier, in turn, issued a proclamation "to all persons who have been forced into the rebellion" and "protection on presenting themselves to the Officers at Carlton or Prince Albert."

News of the outbreak of violence did not reach Prince Albert right away. The telegraph lines had been cut and all travel

stopped after the arrest of Lash and other government agents. Major Moffat, in charge of the few police in Prince Albert, responded to an urgent call from Crozier, on March 20, and dispatched Captain Moore with forty-seven volunteers to Fort Carlton. Crozier also reported to Moffat that Colonel Irvine was on his way north with one hundred men and sixty horses. By March 23, General Middleton had been called to Winnipeg, where Lt. Governor Dewdney had activated the 90th Battalion and the Winnipeg Field Battery. Three days later two hundred men had left the city by railroad. Crozier also made efforts to raise volunteer corps at Battleford. On the same day, March 26, shots were exchanged between the Metis and the Mounted Police, at Duck Lake.

The skirmish at Duck Lake was planned by neither Crozier or Dumont. Crozier had sent a small party, under Sgt. Stewart, to purchase supplies, when on their way to the village, they met a group of Metis with Dumont, and some jostling and word-alling took place. Somewhat distressed, Sgt. Stewart decided not to press on to Duck Lake but returned to the fort instead, where a scout had already informed Crozier of the encounter with the Metis. According to several historians the Major was, at this point, persuaded to "get even" with the half-breeds and set out with one hundred men and a cannon to meet the Metis head-on. About seven miles from Carlton a skirmish took place in which nine Prince Albert volunteers and three police men were killed, and about twenty-five wounded. The Metis lost five men; among them Dumont's brother Isidore and a Cree Indian by the name of Assywin.

Crozier and his men had underestimated the Metis ability to retaliate. Historians differ in their description of the number of Half-breeds engaged in the skirmish but agree that they had definitely the advantage of cover from an abandoned building



belonging to Beardy's reserve and clumps of brush and willow in its vicinity, while the N.W.M.P. were on relatively open ground. When Crozier realized that neither his men nor his cannon were capable of overcoming the Metis force he retreated to Fort Carlton, defeated.

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The foregoing is a summary of events describing the build-up of government troops, the Metis' appeal for support from English Half-breeds, Indians and white settlers, and the battle of Duck Lake which took place less than a week after the initial call to arms by the Metis' leaders. As in the previous chapter, the pages following the foregoing introduction are intended to provide the reader with a variety of primary documents and secondary sources. The material has been selected to facilitate an understanding of the climate of uncertainty and tension that existed among Metis' and government members alike. The accounts of the battle at Duck Lake illustrate the differing perceptions of the sequence of events and demonstrate that, perhaps, perceptions were often colored by the political commitment of those who recorded the action.

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Riel felt that his success would depend on maintaining complete unanimity among his own people and upon his receiving the backing of the English half-breeds.

"Riel had acted with initiative....He believed in his star and believed, too, that with his Provisional government and his prisoners could force the hands of Sir John A. Macdonald as he had done in 1870. But he felt that his future success, like that of the past, would depend on his maintaining complete unanimity among his own people, and upon his receiving the backing of the English half-breeds. Above all he could tolerate no traitors among the Metis...on March 19 he did not have the unanimity that he felt to be essential." <sup>1</sup>

F. Stanley  
Louis Riel,  
Graw-Hill  
Person  
163  
373

"Riel knew that what he was now doing did not enjoy full support of the Metis. The missionaries were advising the people against violence. Charles Nolin, who had formerly invited Riel back to Canada, now made an effort to develop an opposition group among the Metis. Riel acted swiftly. Nolin, William Boyer, and Louis Marion were arrested. Boyer and Marion refused to join Riel's armed group.

At the trial, Nolin was sentenced to death. Riel did not demand an execution...Nolin and Marion agreed to submit and support the Provisional Government. Boyer was allowed to go free." <sup>2</sup>

On March 21, (188 ) Riel wrote to the English half-breeds of Deer Hill, St. Catharines and St. Paul: JUSTICE DEMANDS TO TAKE UP ARMS.

(In closing he refers to his organization as "the council of the French-Canadian half-breeds.)

"Dear Brothers In Jesus Christ, - The Ottawa Government has been maliciously ignoring the rights of the original half-breeds during fifteen years...Moreover the Dominion has taken the High-handed way of answering peaceable complaints by reinforcing and dispatching the Mounted Police...Ottawa does not intend to govern the North-West so much as to plunder it....Let us be firm in the support of right.

Dear Brothers, in the Council of the French-Canadian half-breeds now under arms at St. Anthony and in the Saskatchewan... The fact (that) your delegation and ours have crossed each other affords convincing proof that our feelings are mutual. Justice **Commands to Take Up Arms.**" 3

Sessional  
Papers  
Victoria  
p. 43  
A.C.

Letters were also sent to notify the Indians and the English and French half-breeds of Fort Qu'Appelle.

"Monsieur F. X. Batoche.

The French half-breeds have taken up arms "en masse". Not one of our people is against us. Tell our relatives, the Indians to come and help us, if needed. Take all the ammunition of the company..." 4

Sessional  
Papers  
Ibid.

"To our brothers the English and French half-breeds at Lake Qu'Appelle and vicinity:

Dear Relations and Friends, - If you have not already heard, you shall hear the reasons which led us to take up arms...The Ottawa Government took possession of our country fifteen years ago, they make a mockery of our rights and offend against the law of God by inflicting upon us endless injustice. The officials commit every species of crime, and the mounted police are a scandal of the world by their foul language and evil conduct.

The English half-breeds of the Saskatchewan are undoubtedly with us. The Indians are crossing to us and joining us on all sides.

5. Purchase all the munitions you can...Do not listen to the offers the Ottawa Government will make you; their offers are the offers of robbers. Sign neither paper nor petition..." 5  
Sessional  
Papers  
Ibid.

Do not molest, ill-treat or kill anyone - were Riel's orders.

In a letter from Louis Riel to "Dear Relatives," he promotes disarmament but issues strict orders not to molest, ill-treat or kill any body:

Dear Relatives, - ...if you see the police passing by...take away their arms...Afterwards notify the Wood Indians...keep ready to all events, in being calm and courageous...Do not kill anybody. Do not molest nor ill-treat anybody but take away their arms. Fear not. Louis "Lavid" Riel, Exovede." 6

6. Sessional  
Papers  
Ibid.

The English half-breeds and whites of Prince Albert were in support of Riel but deplored the use of arms.

On March 23, at a last-minute meeting at St. Andrew's school-house, in Prince Albert, whites and English half-breeds proposed to send a petition to the government in which they blamed the latter for the agitation of the Metis and begged them to do justice and avoid blood-shed. At the same time a number of resolutions were sent to Crozier and Riel.

Petition:

"That the French in this district have taken up arms. That the Indians to a great extent are in sympathy with them. That the English half-breeds and Canadian settlers are in sympathy with them to get redress of their grievances in a lawful manner -- but not to take up arms.

That there is great danger of Indian war. And all that that means. That the French have rights and are determined men. That there is no way of settling this disturbance but by treaty or war.

That the Neutral party the English half-breeds and Canadian settlers who wish to remain at peace -- and their wives and families do beg of the Government to treat with the French -- give them their just rights and save the destruction of our families....

The Government has refused to treat with the settlers, till one party could bear it no longer, and will have their rights or die.

We therefore beg the Government to do justice to the settlers treat with them and save the effusion of blood.

Signed, on behalf of St. Andrew's, Red Deer Hill, and the surrounding country:

Charles Adams, Chairman  
J. F. Pritchard, Secretary  
Alex Stansfield, Sec.

7. Anglican  
Missionary  
Papers.  
Possession  
of Ruth Buck.

Geo Glaister  
Roderick Cook  
Thomas McOrister  
Andrew Spence ..."

Resolutions:

"That while heartily sympathizing with the French half-breeds in their endeavours constitutionally to get redress of their many grievances we cannot endorse their present attitude in taking up arms for that purpose, and we hereby beg of them not to shed blood.

That the opinion of this meeting is that, had the Government been just with the settlers this disturbance would never have been.

7.a

Anglican

Missionary

Papers

Ibid.

And further, had the influential citizens of Prince Albert joined the movement instead of ignoring it, had they advised the Government instead of exciting it against the people, it is the opinion of this meeting that the Government would have settled all grievances long ere this.

...That a copy of these resolutions be sent to Major Crozier, and one to Riel...." 7a.

On March 21, (1885) Riel demanded the surrender of Fort Carlton and its supplies.

"St. Anthony, 21st March 1885 - To Major Crozier, Commandant of the Police Force at Carlton and Battleford.

Major: The councillors of the provisional government of the Saskatchewan have the honor to communicate to you the following conditions of surrender: You will be required to give up completely the situation which the Canadian Government have placed you in, at Carlton and Battleford, together with all government properties.

In case of acceptance, you and your men will be set free, on your parole of honor to keep the peace. And those who will choose to leave the country will be furnished with teams and provisions to reach Qu'Appelle.

In case of non-acceptance, we intend to attack you, when tomorrow, the Lord's Day is over, and to commence without delay a war of extermination upon all those who have shown themselves hostile to our rights.

Messrs. Charles and Maxime Lepine are the gentlemen with whom you will have to treat.

Major, we respect you. Let the cause of humanity be a consolation to you for the reverses which the governmental misconduct has brought upon you.

Louis 'David' Riel, Exovede	Jean Baptiste Parenteau
Rene Parenteau, Chairman	Pierre Henry
Chas. Nolin	Albert Delorme
Gab. Dumont	Dum. Carriere
Moise Ouellette	Maxime Lepine
Albert Monkman	Bte. Boucher
Bte. Boyer	David Tourond
Donald Ross	Ph. Garnot, secretary
Amb. Jobin	

St. Anthony, 21st March 1885

To Messrs. Charles Nolin and Maxime Lepine

Gentlemen: If Major Crozier accedes to the conditions of surrender, let him use the following formula, and no other: 'Because I love my neighbor as myself, for the sake of God, and to prevent bloodshed, and principally the war of extermination which threatens the country, I agree to the above conditions of surrender.'

8. Exhibit  
of  
trial  
Queen  
vs  
Riel  
PAC

If the Major uses this formula and signs it, inform him that we will receive him and his men, Monday. Yours, Louis 'David' Riel, Exovede." 8

Crozier, on March 21 also, demanded the surrender of the leaders of the rebellion and the dispersal of the armed men. He had a proclamation posted which offered protection to those who were forced into the "rebellion" against their will.

Crozier's Proclamation:

9. As cited  
in  
Charlebois, against their will, will receive protection on presenting themselves to the Officers Commanding at Carlton or Prince Albert." 9

Picked men were employed by government as spies. Some were attached to the police as scouts, others as interpreters.

Irvine (?) wrote to Macdonald about the employment of spies:  
"Your Excellency speaks of employing some picked men among the

half-breeds. We do so already. There are a certain number of men attached to the police force as scouts, and others as interpreters." 10

1. Traumadan believed that a Prince Albert trader, by the name of Hillyard Mitchell, was an informer. He explains, "...a man named Hillyard Mitchell, often came from Prince Albert to spy on what was happening among the Metis..." 11 Stanley quoted Mitchel as telling the Metis: "I have come over here as a friend...not as a spy, but to give you all some good advice." 12

2. F. Stanley  
p. 232

Another informer, employed as interpreter with the police, was a half-breed by the name of Joe McKay, nicknamed, "Gentleman Joe." McKay's role was prominent in the battle of Duck Lake, on the 26 of March.

The skirmish at Duck Lake was unpremeditated.

13. "The coming skirmish...was planned neither by Crozier, nor Dr. P. Charlebois, by Dumont. Crozier had sent a small party, under the command of Sgt. Stewart, to purchase supplies from the Duck Lake shop operated by Stobart and Eden." 13

Dr. P. Charlebois,  
Ibid.,  
p. 146

On their way to the village they were stopped by a group of Metis with Dumont and some jostling and name-calling ensued. Sgt Stewart, believing that his company would be more vulnerable on the return trip,

The two forces met at a point about a mile and a half from Duck Lake.

Dumont and his men returned to Duck Lake after their meeting with the Mounted Police, but scarcely had they arrived when scout brought the message that Crozier was leading a force of policemen toward the village. The Metis, led by Dumont, dashed forward to meet the police about a mile and a half from Duck Lake. The half-breed position was decidedly favorable, providing ample shelter from thick clumps of brush and willow. Crozier's men were unaware of the Metis' presence until they descended the first hill. When the advance scouts gave the first warning, Crozier ordered his force to a halt.

Police reporter tells story of the battle at Duck Lake.

The Mounted Police placed a barricade across the road and prepared for hostilities. An account of the parlay between the Metis' and the police was given by a reporter for the "Battleford Herald," stationed at Fort Carlton:

"....Two men were seen to separate themselves from the body of half-breeds and advance towards the police, one of them carrying a flag of truce which consisted simply of a white rag tied to a small stick. Seeing them approach Crozier took with him Sgt. Brooks and Joseph McKay, the police interpreter, meeting the other deputation about mid-way between the two lines, whereupon a short parlay took place. Through the interpreter Major Crozier asked these men who they were, to which the spokesman replied that they were Crees and half-breeds and in turn demanded of Crozier to know what he sought. "Nothing" the Major answered. "We only came to see what was wrong," to which the Indian speaker replied, "You had better go back." At this juncture of the Indian (who was with the half-breeds\*) snatched at the revolver at McKay's hip and apparently this had been a signal agreed upon between them, for instantly a number of shots rang out from different points along the half-breed line. How earnest their intentions were can be divined from the fact that when Crozier turned on his heel waving his sword above his head and giving the command, "Commence firing," blood was trickling down from his cheek where it had been grazed by a bullet. In a moment firing became general and the rat-tat-tat of the Winchesters and Sniders and muzzle-loading shotguns and the variety of sporting rifles of different descriptions with which some of the rebels were armed become very general." 14

14.  
Dr. P.  
Charlebois,  
Ibid.,  
p.146

The parlay between opposing forces as portrayed by Dr. Peter Charlebois:

In Charlebois' account the parlay is portrayed somewhat differently. Dr. Charlebois explains that McKay must have had his rifle pointed at the Cree Assywin, "who reached out and turned the rifle to point in another direction. On seeing the armed man grab the barrel of the rifle, Crozier said to 'Gentleman Joe', "shoot him," McKay quickly drew his revolver from his belt and shot Assywin. Then, turning slightly, 'Gentleman Joe' shot Isidore Dumont through the head. Both Crozier and McKay were hurrying back to their own lines as the bodies of the two emissaries of peace slid off their horses onto the ground. These were the first shots of the Metis uprising of 1885.

Fred Anderson, a long-time resident of Duck Lake who knew McKay, had this to say: "There has always been a dispute as to who fired first. I knew Joe McKay, who was there. He told me the two sides were talking when an Indian grabbed for Joe's gun. He said the only thing he could think of as they struggled was to



keep the barrel pointed away from him. When the gun went off, the Indian was killed and the fight was on..." 15

Supt. Crozier to Lieut.Col. Irvine:" I was in formed that there were about one-hundred marauding Half-breeds at Duck Lake."

On his return to Fort Carlton Crozier wrote a report of the Duck Lake encounter for Lieut. Col. Irvine who was on his way to the fort while the police were engaged in battle with the Metis'. The report was forwarded to Sir John A. Macdonald who considered it incomplete and asked for further details; particularly the reason for Crozier's impulsive move to meet the Metis unaided.

"Sir,- In reply to your Memorandum of this date I have the honor to inform you that on the morning of the 26th of March I sent a party to Duck Lake to procure a quantity of provisions and ammunition that were in the store of a trader, named Mitchell. They left Carlton shortly after; about ten o'clock it was reported to me the Serjeant Stewart had been prevented by Half-breeds from taking the stores after which he had gone and that he was "in trouble."

I immediately got ready a party one hundred strong to proceed to the relief of Stewart as I was moving off Stewart's party came down the hill at the Fort. I was informed that there were about one hundred marauding Half Breeds at Duck Lake. The rebel Head Quarters and force according to my latest information received through scouts being at Batoche's Crossing, South side of River. I therefore concluded to go to Duck Lake and get the provision and ammunition.

When within a mile and a half of Mitchell's store I was attacked by a force of Half Breeds estimated at the time at over two hundred in number but I have since been informed through rebel sources that there were at least three hundred and fifty of them." 16

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15. Dr.P.Charlebois, Ibid., p. 147

16. N.W.M.P. Papers, P.A.C.

Crozier to Irvine: "The movement that threatened to be the most serious to us was that of a large body moving towards our right flank."

Crozier described the parlay between himself and the opponents as follows:

"I threw a line of skirmishes to the right of the road under cover of a wood to prevent the rebels surrounding us, which they were attempting to do - the remainder of my force, excepting the men in charge of the horses formed under cover of the sleigh extended to the left at right angles to the road.

As my escort halted, a man advanced from the enemy bearing a flag of truce. I ran forward to meet him and called back for the Interpreter Joseph McKay.

The enemy notwithstanding the flag of truce continued to get rapidly into position. The movement that threatened to be most serious to us was that of a large body moving towards our right flank.

I said several times to the man with the flag "Call back those people," referring to those moving to the right, to what I said he paid not the slightest attention. It was evidence that the sending out of the flag of truce was but a piece of treachery and to gain time in order to outflank us on the right and get into position." 17

Crozier to  
Irvine.  
MP  
Irvine.

Crozier to Irvine: "The enemy were in a bush behind splendid cover, we were exposed."

Crozier wrote of the difficulties his men faced in combat: "The deep crusted snow caused any movement to be most difficult, if off the beaten track my men in extending found it slow and hard work.

The engagement lasted about thirty minutes and though the rebels were upon their own ground intrenched, in ambush, with the advantage of a commanding position, ready and waiting for us, we drove back their right and had we been opposed by them on our right on anything like an equality we could have done the same to their left - but there we had to contend against

the enemy in houses and in ambush. The right of my line did prevent the rebels gaining our rear - they did it at the cost of their lives - men could do no more.

Both the Police and Volunteers who composed my little escort behaved superbly, their bravery and coolness under a murderous fire was simply astonishing.

The enemy were in ambush behind splendid cover, we were exposed, yet not a man shirked or even faltered until the order was given to retire and then they moved off quickly.

8. Crozier  
Irvine,  
bid.

I have the honor to be

Sir

your obedient servant

L.N.F. Crozier, Supt." 18

Lieut. Col Irvine to Sir John A. Macdonald: "Crozier's better judgement was overruled by the impetuosity of Police and Volunteers."

In a letter to Sir John Irvine criticized Crozier's decision to march out of Fort Carlton without awaiting orders. He wrote:

"Sir, - Referring to my telegram of the 26 ultimo...It appears to me a matter of regret that...Superintendent Crozier should have marched out as he did, in the face of what transpired earlier in the day, but I am led to the belief that this officer's better judgement was overruled by the impetuosity displayed both by the Police and Volunteers to go and take the stores and if necessary fight for them." 19

9. Irvine  
Macdonald  
W.M.P.  
papers

Police cannon was useless in Duck Lake engagement.

G.F. Stanley gave this account of the battle in action: "On the right the rebels had taken possession of a log house, which, partly obscured from view by the banks of snow and brushwood, was an excellent point of vantage. From it they poured a hot fire upon the Prince Albert Volunteers who had extended their formation to the right and were without cover of any description. To relieve the pressure upon that flank, Crozier ordered the cannon be directed upon the brush, but, owing to the position of the volunteers, this was impossible. The gun was accordingly trained upon another section of the field, but with little results, the shots flying "far over the enemies heads." \*

\* Narrative of John Brass. MSS folio on the Riel Rebellion.

To make matters worse, after several discharges a shell was rammed home before the powder charge was inserted, which rendered the cannon useless for the remainder of the engagement.

20.

Stanley,  
Birth of  
Western  
Canada  
Ibid.  
p.328

Finally, after thirty or forty minutes, Crozier, recognizing the inevitable, gave the order to retire. His position was untenable. The half-breeds had all the advantage of position and, Crozier believed, of numbers." \*\* 20

\*\* Crozier believed that the force opposed to him number<sup>ed</sup> between 300 to 400 men. Crozier, however, greatly overestimated the number of his opponents. The Metis fought behind cover and Crozier was not in a position to make an accurate estimate.

(The foregoing explanation cited in Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p.p. 444, 445.)

Duck Lake engagement described by Louis Schmidt, Riel's former secretary: The Metis were only a handful at the beginning.

"The English Commander...arrived without mishap about 2 miles from Duck Lake. But there a body of Metis barred them from the road. There followed a short battle, rude and murderous. A while later, 9 volunteers and 3 Police were dead, while the Metis themselves had lost 4 of their own and one Indian.

The cannon had had no effect. Drawn with too much haste, its projection passed above the heads of the men and went who knows where.

Not to be completely destroyed, Crozier ordered a prompt retreat not even taking the time to pick up the dead except those of the Police. And then there was time. The Metis who were only a handful at the beginning of the action, arrived all the time, and spread on each side of the enemy in an attempt to encircle them.

They wanted to pursue those who took flight, but Riel opposed it, saying that there was already enough spilled blood and believing, I imagine, that hostilities would stop there.

Gabriel received a slight bullet wound in the forehead, and he momentarily withdrew. When he wanted to return to the

21. H. Schmidt,  
Memoirs  
PAC

charge, there was already no more enemy. In collecting the enemy dead, the Metis found a wounded man who had not been able to follow the others. They brought him with them and took care of him." 21

Dumont, grazed by a bullet, cried: Courage! As long as I have lost my head I'm not dead.

Joseph Howard recounted Gabriel Dumont's recklessness and consequent wounding during the battle at Duck Lake.

"Gabriel Dumont...rode recklessly to within sixty yards of the troops. A bullet plowed a deep gash through his scalp and he fell, almost senseless; his horse, also wounded jumped over him and fled. He struggled to his feet but dropped again, and a nearby Metis, Joseph Delorme, cried out that their general had been killed. "Courage!" Gabriel yelled. "As long as I haven't lost my head I'm not dead." Another brother (of Gabriel) Edward Dumont, ran forward to drag him out of the line of fire but Gabriel sent him back to take command." 22

22. Joseph  
Howard,  
Strange  
Empire,  
p.391

A boy of fourteen among the Metis recalled the battle fifty years later; "You be scared like I was scared that day," he said. "You never forget either."

"Among the rebels on the battlefield was a boy of fourteen a distant relative of Gabriel Dumont whom the latter, without children of his own, often treated as a son. More than fifty years after the Duck Lake battle his memory of it was still vivid. "You be scared like I was scared that day," he said, "you never forget either."

The boy, whose name was Alex, lay shivering for hours in the snow on top of the hill while the Metis awaited the police. He heard Uncle Gabriel cursing because his force was inadequate; Riel was not yet there with reinforcements and scouts had warned that Crozier was bringing about a hundred men...

...He had asked Gabriel, who had slain Blackfeet, what it was like to kill a man, and Gabriel had said it was not much different from killing game. Alex had done that, but he could see a great deal of difference now: the game was stalking the hunter over this snow-covered field. He remembered, too, that when overconfident Metis had remarked that the police were only

fair shots and the volunteers no good at all. Gabriel had answered grimly that men could very quickly learn to shoot well...

Alex did not see Gabriel shot from his horse, but he saw him stanching the flow of blood from his forehead with handfuls of snow, saw him crawl to his cousin, Auguste Laframboise, who was dying, and weakly attempt to make the sign of the cross over him.

When the boy looked back at the enemy, they were milling around the sleighs, trying to hitch up under fire. One wounded volunteer, unable to rise, was pushing himself with one bent leg toward the sleighs. His booted foot would scabble in the snow, trying to dig a hold, then there would be a little push and he would move a few inches. Alex thought the snow curled aside from his head like a sod from a plow. He watched the man's jerk painful progress for a long time, while the teams were hitched and the other wounded loaded into the sleighs. The boy felt as he wanted to call out to the police to wait. They didn't, and the wounded man was left still plowing blindly toward the road."

23.  
Howard  
Ibid.  
pp.  
394,  
395

(It would be reasonable to conclude that the wounded man mentioned in Howard's account was the same of which Louis Schmid in the foregoing memoir - wrote: "...the Metis found a wounded man who had not been able to follow the others. They brought him with them and took care of him.")

Gabriel Dumont: "The sound of gunfire was heard at Batoche and Riel with 70 men hurried to help their brothers at Duck Lake.

Gabriel Dumont's description of the battle at Duck Lake had many interesting details. Lawrence Clarke in his flight left behind his raccoon coat and Crozier left behind several wagons and horses, he recounted several years later. The following are excerpts from his description of the action:

"Once the fusillade began, we fired as often as we could. As for myself, I fired the twelve shots of my Winchester rifle, and had reloaded to get it into play again, when the English, stunned by the number of their dead, began to withdraw. For them it was time, because until then their cannon, which had prevented my men, who were now on foot, from moving down the hillside now, was silent. Their cannoneer, in loading it, had put the lead before the powder. Our men then began to move round them.

Since in their flight they would cross a clearing, I attempted to ambush, saying to my men: 'Courage.' I'll make a few red-coats jump in their wagons. And I laughed -- not because I took pleasure in killing, but to encourage my boys.

As I talked about knocking over the red-coats, I neglected to take cover, and a bullet ploughed my skull, where it left a deep scar. I fell. Then my horse, also wounded, bounded over me. We were then about sixty yards from the enemy. I wanted to get up, but the shock was so severe that I couldn't.

When Joseph Delorme saw me fall back, he cried out that I was killed. I said to him, 'Courage, when the head isn't lost we don't die.' I then told Baptiste Vandal to take my cartridge and my rifle, which was famous, and which had a range of 800 yards...The sound of gunfire was heard at Batoche and Riel with 70 men hurried to help their brothers at Duck Lake.

While we fought, Riel sat on his horse, exposed to the bullets, armed only with a crucifix which he held in his hand...

24.  
Gabriel  
Dumont's  
Account of  
the Battle  
on March  
26th, 1885  
Sessional  
Papers  
49  
Victoria  
PAC

When Auguste Laframboise, a cousin, fell, Dumont tried to get to his knees to offer a prayer, but fell over on his side, murmuring, "Cousin, I'll owe it to you." 24

Laurier's Anecdotes:

Saskatchewan Herald" correspondent Laurie, while stationed at Fort Carlton recounted several anecdotes after the battle. The first gave a description of Gabriel Dumont's dash ahead of the Metis' and consequent wounding which, on the preceding pages was portrayed from a pro-Metis' point of view. Laurer makes a closing comment which reveals his strong anti-Metis bias...

25.  
Laurie  
Papers  
PAC  
"What a pity that Sandy's bullet had not been another inch lower."

By Laurie:

"...as one of the rear guard, a Scotchman named MacDonal was about to mount his horse he saw a solitary half-breed astride of a pony dash out as though intent on pursuing us alone but Sandy rested his rifle on the saddle, took careful aim and fired and had grim satisfaction of seeing his victim throw up his hands and fall from his horse. We subsequently learned that the man of bravado was no other than Gabriel Dumont himself and that

the Winchester Bullet had struck him high in the forehead and had glanced upwards, thus sparing his life. What a pity that Sandy's bullet had not been another inch lower!" 26

6.  
Laurie  
Papers  
PAC

"Am I wounded Laurie?" (Laurie's narration.)

"The return march was uneventful and devoid of any startling incident. I remember though that a Policeman known as "Dutchy" Miller who was riding in the same sleigh with me happened to take off his cap for some reason, when he noticed a round hole in the front and turning it around discovered a corresponding one in the back. In amazement he leaned forward and pointing to the top of his head asked, "Am I wounded, Laurie?" and sure enough there was a furrow just scalp deep ploughed the full length of the top of his head." 27

7.  
Laurie  
Papers  
PAC

For the first time in my life I heard the answers to the roll call: "Killed, wounded or missing."

"We reached Carlton shortly after 4 o'clock in the afternoon and then came what was to be the most painful and most solemn event of the day, the roll call, and for the first time in my life I heard the answers, "killed in action" or "wounded" or "missing." 28

28.  
Laurie  
Papers  
PAC

Young Napier died, calling, "Tell them I died like a man."

John Hooper, a Staff N.C. Officer with Middleton's Column, heard the following story from one of Crozier's men. It concerned several Prince Albert Volunteers who died during the battle of Duck Lake.

"Captain Morton, leading the volunteers as he fell mortally wounded, said to one who offered assistance: "Nothing will help me. See that my wife and family are cared for!" expiring with a groan.

A moment after, Young Napier (son of Sir Charles Napier, of Magdala) was hit in the breast by a slug. To the next man he called, "I am shot - tell them I died like a man!" Whilst still on his knees, he was again struck twice (in the neck and in the thigh). Young Arnold was shot through the lungs and continued to fight, but was struck by two more bullets in quick succession. Several of the civilians were completely exposed and in a kneeling posture - a splendid mark for their hidden foe. but a few yards away." 29

29.  
John Hooper  
A Staff  
N.C.  
Officer  
Infantry  
Brigade  
Middleton's  
Column



Major Crozier took an unexpected plunge, - as told by Laurier.

Of Napier the Saskatchewan Herald correspondent Laurier told an amusing tale. This incident must have taken place only a few days or even hours before the young man was killed in battle.

"Major Crozier, the officer commanding, was making a tour of the sentries sometimes between midnight and daybreak for the purpose of learning if all was alert and giving attention to the duties devolving upon them. One of the new volunteers from Prince Albert, William Napier, who by the way was a cousin of Lord Napier of Magdala, was one of these sentries and when he heard the Major and the orderly sergeant approaching he promptly challenged them, when according to the usual routine Crozier asked him to give over his orders, meaning for him to repeat the instructions which had been given to him when placed on sentry. It seems that the sergeant of the guard had neglected this little formality, taking it for granted that that the sentries placed by him would be aware without any special instructions from him what they were expected to do. "Orders," said Napier "I have no orders." When the Major asked him "What did the sergeant of the guard tell you when he placed you here?" The answer came "Oh yes, he told me to look out and not step in that hole," pointing his finger to a place a couple of feet in the rear of Major Crozier. The Major turned around suddenly and stepped back with the result that he plumped into the hole clear to his armpits and had to make a hurried departure for his quarters to get into dry clothing." 30

30.  
Laurier  
Papers,  
P.A.C.

Riel had hoped that the engagement at Duck Lake was the first and the last action.

Philippe Garnot, secretary of the Metis' council, wrote in his memoirs of the limited number of men, scouts and horses available when the alarm that the Police were coming was raised at Duck Lake. He said that the Metis were not expecting an immediate attack and had only twenty-six men and sixteen horses ready to meet Crozier and his force of one-hundred men. He continues:

"All the same they left to meet the Police quite far away so they could not reach the houses with their rifles...The 26 horsemen met the Police a mile and a half from Duck Lake, on the Reserve of the Indian Chief Beardy and they dismounted immediately and sent their horses to the rear...two among them, an Indian who had no rifle, and who was almost blind, and Isidor

Dumont, brother of Gabriel, continued to advance on the road, while forty placed themselves along the side of the road and ten others hastened to get a good place on the other side... before the Police took possession of it...(During the battle) the Metis conserved their ammunition, having only a little and having only six carbines, the rest were rifles for the hunts; but they knew how to be supported by about one-hundred infantry-men who were to make a detour to cut off the retreat of the Police.

The battle lasted only twenty minutes...When Major Crozier gave the order to retreat, the volunteers who were along the fence (by the side of the road) were all shot, save the one who was wounded and fell prisoner to the Metis; for the Police left its dead, its wounded, five or six horses, about twelve carbines, some ammunition...(and) a bob-sleigh completely harnessed... The Metis wanted to pursue the Police, but Riel prevented them, telling them that they had already made enough damage and he hoped it was the first and last action." 31

31.  
Philippe  
Carnot  
Memoirs  
P.A.C.

"Toronto Daily Mail" told story of government scouts, captured by the Metis.

On the day of the Duck Lake battle two scouts by the name of Harold E. Ross and W. Astley were captured by the Metis. They had left Fort Carlton between 11 and 12 o'clock on the night of the 25 March with the intention of gaining the high ground in the vicinity of St. Laurent to find if the Half-breeds had taken any steps to intercept Commander Irvine, who was on his way to the fort. When they came over the hill at Duck Lake they were spotted by Indian pickets near the trail. As they proceeded down the hill the Half-breeds rode after them, the soft snow, which had fallen the day before completely muffling their footsteps.

"Toronto Mail, May 25, 1885."

"Hearing a noise behind him Ross looked back and saw Dumont at the head of about 20 men with a rifle in his hand. Gabriel at once cried out, "Surrender, You're scouts." Astley did not hear the call, whereupon Ross tapped him on the shoulder and said "They're on top of us," and wheeled his horse around. Dumont immediately seized him by the foot and ordered him to dismount, which Ross refused to do. The rebel adjutant-general,

as he styled himself in official documents, then attempted to pull Ross off, upon which the latter endeavored to draw his revolver. Two Indians got on each side of him, and those on the right pulled his foot from the stirrup and Dumont succeeded in unhorsing him, and in doing so discovered the revolver which he demanded. Ross drew it at once not to give it up, however, but for the purpose of administering a leaden pill to an Indian who had him covered with a gun, at the same time seizing Dumont by the throat with his disengaged hand to prevent his interference. Feeling something touch his head behind, Ross looked around, and found himself covered by two more guns, seeing which he surrendered. Astley in the meantime had endeavored to escape, but perceiving his comrade was not following, turned back to his assistance when was also surrounded and taken." 32

32.  
Toronto  
Daily  
Mail,  
May 25,  
1885  
(Caron  
'apers.)

Capture of police scouts from Metis' point of view (Traumadan)

The capture of police scouts Ross and Astley, as reported on the "Toronto Mail," has also been described by Auguste-Henri Traumadan who based his account on Gabriel Dumont's personal Memoirs. Traumadan's description leads from the capture of the government scouts to the harrassment of Crozier's Police, prior to the Duck Lake engagement.

"The (Metis) scouts observed two horsemen - Harold Ross and John W. Astley - go by, and turned back to notify Dumont who, with his brother Edward, Philippe Gardipy, Baptiste Deschamps and an Indian, Joseph Trottoir, set off in pursuit. On the way, he advised his armed companions not to harm them if they did not resist. They overtook the two at Duck Lake. Dumont took aim and yelled: "Don't run away or I shall kill you."

"I am a surveyor", said Ross as Dumont approached.

"You're a liar and no surveyor", retorted Dumont as he forced the man to dismount and noted the revolver he carried.

As Astley was trying to escape, Dumont's men prepared to shoot him, but Dumont stopped them. However, Astley fell and the Metis secured him. Both prisoners were taken to Duck Lake.

On the way, Dumont assured them that "if they were good lads, they would be well-treated." Dumont's men had scarcely had time to stable their horses when they heard a shout: "The Police are here!" Actually, only three scouts, Dumont and his

brother Edward, James Short, their brother-in-law, and Patrick Fleury, went after them. They couldn't catch them but amongst them, they recognized Thomas McKay, and stubbornly continued to pursue them.

Dumont, who was ahead of his companions, suddenly saw twenty-two Mounties ambushed along the road they had just ridden over. Dumont galloped towards his men and yelled at them to dismount. Blasphemously, a Mounted Police Sergeant announced that he was going to kill him. Dumont promptly rushed him and disarmed him. A shot resounded, and Dumont heard Thomas McKay shout: "Pay attention, Gabriel."

"Pay attention yourself, or I'll blow your brains out", replied Dumont as he hurled himself at this new adversary. McKay wheeled his horse which floundered in the snow and reared. With the end of his rifle, Dumont prodded McKay in the back, but as McKay spurred his horse, he managed to free himself. During this fracas, McKay never ceased from repeating: "Pay attention, Gabriel", to which Dumont reiterated: "Pay attention yourself". With the end of his rifle barrel over McKay's kidney, he forced his victim to move on. Meanwhile, McKay ordered a retreat. As they were leaving, Dumont shouted: "Why did you come here?"

"Just to speak to you", McKay replied.

"Then why run away?" asked Dumont. "You told us you would come with some men. Where are they? Bah! You're nothing but a fool!" However, McKay and his companions heard little of this; they were galloping away at full speed.

Dumont's men wanted to chase them but he held them back. There were only three! Therefore, abandoning the idea of pursuing the runaways, the little troop returned to Duck Lake. And this time again, they had scarcely time to stable their horses and swallow a few mouthfuls of lunch when the cry that the Police were coming roused them to action. This time, the Police were in force." 33

13.  
Auguste-  
Henri  
Tranmadau  
inofficial  
trans-  
lation  
p.264-266

Astley and Ross provided Crozier with sworn statements, naming location, and number of half-breeds engaged in battle.

"I, Harold E. Ross of the town of Prince Albert in the Saskatchewan district in the North West Territories of Canada, Deputy Sheriff do solemnly declare:

1. I was a prisoner in the custody of Riel and the Rebels on the 26th day of March last and personally visited the scene of the battle on Saturday the 28th day of March last past, the said Riel the leader of the rebels was then with me on the said battlefield.
2. I have examined the plan and perused the statement hereunto \_\_\_\_\_ and marked "A" made by John Astley, who was a fellow prisoner with me on both of the above mentioned dates, and I solemnly declare the same are exact and in strict accordance with what I saw and observed myself.
3. And I further declare that I counted the number of men going out to take part in the said battle and that there were over 300 halfbreeds and Indians engaged in the said battle.

I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of an act passed in the 37th year of her Majesties Reign entitled An Act For the Suppression of Voluntary and \_\_\_\_\_.

Declared before me at Prince Albert in the Northwest Territories, Canada, this 28th day of May 1885. Signed

Steven Burstis  
Notary Public  
Signed Harold E. Ross.

"I, John W. Astley of the town of Prince Albert in the district of Saskatchewan in the North West Territories of Canada a civil engineer do solemnly declare that I was a prisoner in the hands of the rebels under Louis Riel at Duck Lake on the 26 day of March last past. 2. That the sketch map or plan hereto \_\_\_\_\_ is accurately drawn from my own personal observation of the locality where the fight took place and truly exhibits the features of the locality. 3. Of my own knowledge I declare that there were between three and four hundred Half-breed and Indians engaged in the fight at Duck Lake on the said 26th day of March last past.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of an act passed in the 37th year of Her Majesties Reign and entitled An Act for the Suppression of Volunteer and extrajudicial oathes.

Declared before me at Prince Albert in the District  
of Saskatchewan this 28th day of May A.D. 1885.

born  
atements  
ss,  
ley  
W.M.P.  
ipers

Signed  
Notary Public  
Signed J. Astley" 34

Among the other prisoners was George Ness who was released for  
some unknown reason to his fellow prisoners.

(unknown to all but Riel...)

The Toronto Mail, May 25, 1885 carried the following story  
entitled: Other Prisoners:

"A number of others were also in confinement, but the  
majority were only imprisoned for a short time. Those who were  
placed in Walter and Bakers store for safekeeping were kept there  
only during the night of the 18th, and were removed to Batoche  
church the next morning, and the next day were removed to the  
residence of Philippe Garnot, secretary of the provisional  
Government. Among the other prisoners were George Ness, Louis  
Marion, and Charles Nolin, half-breeds who had refused to take  
up arms. Walters, of Walters and Bakers, and J.D. Hanafin, a  
clerk in their employment, Ed Woodcock, already referred to as  
captured at Hoodoo, and Thos. Sanderson, of Carrott River who  
happened to have camped at that place the night it was plundered.  
...Both...Nolin and Marion gave their adherence (to the Metis  
government) but the latter (Marion) deserted the next day and  
Nolin the day of the Duck Lake engagement. Ness stood out to  
the last but was released for some reason unknown to his fellow-  
prisoners....." 35

sional  
ers  
.C.

Mrs. Ness to Riel: Dear Sir, Excuse me troubling you, I am the  
cause of my husband being taken prisoner.

It appears certain that Riel released George Ness on  
account of two letters written to him by Mrs. Ness. The first  
one reads as follows:

"Monsieur Louis Riel  
Dear Sir,

Excuse my troubling you but I have confidence in you  
alone that you will have pity on me who are all alone with my  
three little children who are very young. No near neighbor to  
help me take care of my little cattle and also you arrested my

husband while he was trying to get something for his little family. Oh believe me it is I who am the cause of his being taken. The night before I begged of him to go sell his horse to get provision and other things which are greatly needed... Dear Sir I would be so glad to see him, only to speak to him, and you only can grant me this favor. ....And yet, George is a Metis; No never shall I believe that my nation is cruel enough to kill my husband or keep him prisoner for long...Adeu dear Sir, I pray for you with all my heart. .

36.  
essional  
apers  
.A.C.

Signed The wife of George Ness" 36

Strained emotions compelled Indians and Metis' to seek revenge, but intervention of cooler heads averted tragedy.

After the fight at Duck Lake Gabriel Dumont entered the prison and ordered the prisoners to be shot but the men in charge refused to obey the order. The Sioux were particularly anxious to have revenge but were restraint mainly through the intervention of Monkman. Father Andre of Prince Albert wrote to Bishop Grandin of a wounded man who was attacked on the battlefield but was saved by William Boyer when a Sioux was about to kill the man using the butt of his gun. He had already been hit several times and two of his fingers were broken as he covered his face to shield himself from the blows. Boyer took the wounded man to Duck Lake. This, Father Andre wrote, "is another matter which is a credit to the half-breeds." 37

37.  
Andre  
to  
Grandin,  
Sessional  
Papers,  
R.A.  
Alberta.

The latter incident must be understood in the context of experience which the Sioux had in the United States. There they had been cruelly persecuted and hunted like game. Many of their relatives had been killed and it is likely that they wished to revenge the brutality their next-of-kin had suffered.

The prisoners were moved to Carlton which by then had been vacated by the Mounted Police. A detachment of half-breeds remained to guard the premises and a man and a woman were assigned to the care of guards and prisoners.

After the battle of Duck Lake Riel urged Crozier to come and take away his dead.

The Metis council met promptly after the Duck Lake engagement to discuss the situation at hand and decided that the first and most pressing need was the removal of the dead on the battlefield. A prisoner was released and given a letter to the command

ing officer at Fort Carlton urging him to come take away the bodies of the unfortunate and that those in charge of this task would not be molested. Thomas Sanderson offered to carry the message to Supt. Crozier and then return again to give himself up as a prisoner.

"To Riel this seemed to offer an opportunity to communicate with those who had backed the agitation...and to place his case before them once more...he therefore wrote a letter addressed to Crozier, which he handed to Sanderson, at the same time asking Sanderson to tell the people (the volunteers) that he did not wish to fight them...The letter to Crozier read, in part as follows:

"A calamity has fallen upon the country yesterday. You are responsible for it before God and man. Your men cannot claim that their intentions were peaceable and since they were bringing along cannons. And they fired many shots first. God has been pleased to grant us the victory; and as our movement is to save our lives, our victory is good; and we offer it to the Almighty. Major, we are Christians in war and in peace. We write you in the name of God and of humanity to come and take away your dead, whom we respect..." 38



Prince Albert Volunteers had felt that "they could eat those breeds, moccassins and all," related one of Riel's prisoners.

Jim Brady, twentieth-century organizer of the Metis in Alberta and Saskatchewan, outlined particulars of the battle at Duck Lake in a letter to Mr. R. B. Swankey of Edmonton. Brady's story is based on a first-person account by Peter Tompkins, who was captured by a Metis scout on March 18, 1885, while trying to repair a telegraph line. Tompkins was confined with other prisoners in a house at Duck Lake and watched Gabriel Dumont's attempt to organize a small Metis force. This group composed of 25 Metis and 5 Sioux, then met and defeated the Mounted Police under Crozier.

Jim Brady related the following about Peter Tompkins.

"In the early morning hours of March 26th he was aroused by a commotion outside the house in which he was imprisoned. Richeli the Metis guard captain, allowed him to stand at "upper story window. Directly below him was Dumont and a number of mounted men. Scouts had reported that the police from Carlton were moving on Duck Lake. The party which had hastily assembled moved out to meet them. He counted 25 Metis and 5 Sioux Indians. It was this party which met and defeated Crozier. Dumont had despatched messengers summoning the men from the lower settlements to join them. However, when these reinforcements reached Duck Lake village they were informed that Crozier was in retreat. Tompkins was extremely critical of the blunders of the attacking force. The Metis scouts had reported that Crozier's force had cannon. He spent a few uncomfortable minutes expecting to be shelled as the house in which the prisoners were confined stood on a prominent rise of ground, close to the lake shore, and presented an excellent artillery target. He fully expected that Crozier would advance across the ice, launching a frontal assault, in which case, the Metis acknowledge Duck Lake would have fallen. Crozier's movement was tactically unrealistic. The Metis claim Crozier was led to Duck Lake against his better Judgement. While at Carlton he was joined by the Prince Albert Volunteers. This group were in the main Protestant Orangemen from Ontario with an accretion of "Quisling" loyalists from among the English half-breeds. Crozier had sent Sergeant Stewart with a small detail to retrieve the personal effects of Hillyard Mitchell who had fled from Duck Lake. This party had been warned and turned back by the Metis. Police scouts reported this development to Crozier. The Prince Albert Volunteers were for an immediate movement against Duck Lake. Crozier suggested delay until Stewart's return. Whereupon the volunteer commander told Crozier he would brand him as a plotroon and coward if he did not advance immediately. He also added they

had sufficient force 'to eat those breeds moccasins and all'. Crozier replied that he would lead him to Duck Lake. It is noteworthy to record that this contemptuous exponent of the military mind was promptly despatched during the first minutes of the engagement. The North West Mounted Police with long experience in the country and many personal acquaintances among the Metis recognized in them adversaries of proven courage and resourcefulness and were anxious to avert a direct armed encounter. The Prince Albert Volunteers were confident that a mere display of force would overawe Dumont and disperse his followers. Tomkins recalled that the Metis held a large gathering to celebrate their victory. Crozier abandoned Carlton and Metis scouts ranged up to the environs to Prince Albert. On one occasion, a noted scout Jimus Short concealed himself for a day in the church tower at Prince Albert, observing enemy dispositions and at dusk drove away a herd of cattle within sight of the garrison." 39

39.

Jim  
Brady  
to  
B.R.  
Swankey,  
Edmonton.  
Corres-  
pondence,  
Gabriel  
Dumont  
Insti-  
tute,  
Regina

Riel had hoped to create a haven in which all the oppressed peoples would find refuge.

Tompkins related to Brady that during their confinement at Duck Lake the prisoners were visited by Riel. He recalled that Riel spoke excellent English with a decided French accent, stating:

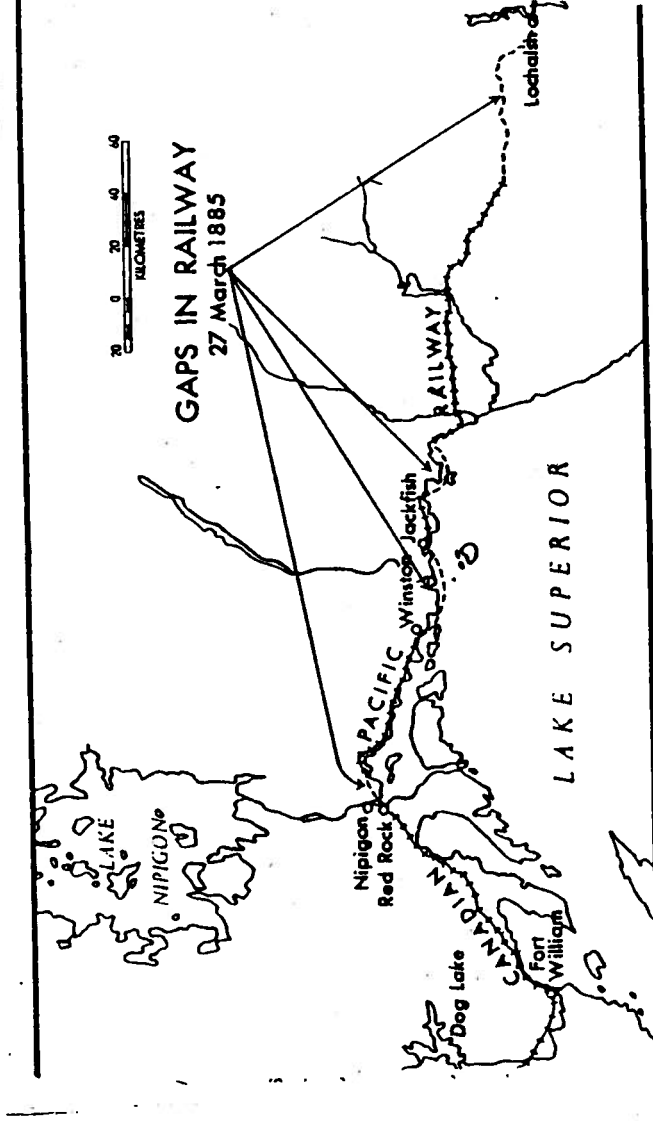
" 'Gentlemen, the fortunes of war have made you our prisoners but you have every assurance your life and property will be respected and you will be treated according to the recognized rules of warfare. If at anytime you have any complaints lodge them with Monsieur Richelieu, the Captain of the Guard, and he will transmit them to our Council'. Lash, the Indian Agent and other white prisoners refused to talk to Riel but Lash did threaten Riel with the words 'I will live to see you and your Council hanged'. Riel asked Tomkins if he had any questions to ask. There upon, Tomkins enquired what Riel purposed to do if the rebel efforts succeeded. Riel declared that if the rebel cause was successful the Metis would summon representatives of all the peoples of the North-West to set up a National Assembly to meet at Battleford which would become the capital of a new federated republic based upon the division of the country into national regions having a common center with the boundaries radiating there from to the outer circumference of the republic, excluding, however, the northern and Arctic regions which were to be allocated to the Indians and Eskimo and others following that mode of life. Tomkins pointed out that in this hypothetical state the Metis would be a minority. Riel acknowledged this but averred there would be a community of interest in which all would share. Tomkins quoted his words 'In this new nation all the oppressed peoples of the earth will find a haven and a refuge.' Accordingly each immigrant group would be apportioned to their national region. All regions would enjoy local autonomy with direct federal representation at Battleford. In

matters of external affairs, customs and defence the federal power would be supreme. Tomkins enquired about land ownership. Riel confirmed the principle of private ownership of land with an inalienable right inheritance. This led Tomkins to say 'Mr. Riel, I can fully understand your plans for a republic and I agree with your ideas of land ownership but I can foresee a problem arising out of your proposed system of property rights. As you noted, these various racial groups will be arbitrarily confined within their national boundaries. We have the human problem. Everywhere men look they see the daughters of Eve are fair to look upon and love laughs at boundaries. From the youth will come new citizens who have a loyalty to two races and this will be repeated continuously in endless combinations and variations. All these new hybrid citizens will inherit property rights inalienable to them by law. If a woman marries outside her region will she retain inherited land rights within her original region or will she upon marriage surrender them to the regional authority. I can foresee where people will find these multiple boundaries not only confusing but actually depriving them of their property rights. How will you deal with that problem, Mr. Riel?' For a moment Riel was visibly sunk in thought. He replied, 'Mr. Tomkins, you have posed a very penetrating question. To be frank I have never given it any thought. However, I shall give it my serious consideration and next time we meet I hope I will be able to answer your question'. At this juncture Richelieu entered and conferred in Cree with Riel who then hurriedly left the room."

40.

Jim  
Brady  
to  
B.R.  
Swankey.  
Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE



83 Gaps in the C.P.R.

SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS DISCUSSED

IN CHAPTER THREE OF THE PROJECT

March 20

Government informs C.P.R. that no more public money to finance corporation will be forthcoming.

March 24

A force of 400 soldiers transported from Ottawa to the West.

March 27

A few hours after the Duck Lake battle, North West Mounted Police Commissioners Irvine arrives with a force of 100 men from Regina.

March 27

700 more soldiers dispatched from Eastern Canada to N.W.T. Van Horne, Vice-President of the C.P.R. promises to get troops in less than seven days to their destination.

March 28

Middleton arrives in Fort Qu'Appelle and divides his force into three columns.

1. his own striking force, based at Qu'Appelle.
2. Colonel Otter's force, based at Swift Current.
3. Major General Strange's force based at Calgary.

April 3

Middleton leaves Qu'Appelle with part of his army for Humboldt. Colonel Otter leaves Swift Current for Battleford.

April 6

Dominion government settles Half-Breed claims.

PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE

IN CHAPTER THREE OF THE PROJECT

RIEL . Metis leader stationed at Batoche.

GRANDIN (O.M.I.) Bishop of St. Albert and Superior to Oblate Missionaries in the St. Laurent area.

ANDRE (Rev.) Parish priest stationed in Prince Albert.

MIDDLETON General of Canadian Dominion Military Forces.

IRVINE Mounted Police Commissioner stationed in Regina.

VAN HORNE Vice-President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Corporation.

WHITE (Dr.) Toronto physician.

## CHAPTER THREE

The Police transfer to Prince Albert and the Canadian troop --  
movement from East to West.

### Introduction to Chapter 3.

The decision to move Police and Volunteers to Prince Albert had been greeted with enthusiasm by the men stationed at Fort Carlton. The fort was of little importance, either from the point of view of situation or supplies. The evacuation was carried out under cover of the night and every available vehicle loaded with goods. What could not be taken was destroyed, - either sunk beneath the ice in the river or emptied in the snow.

The arrival of the Police brought confidence to the citizens of Prince Albert who had been thrown into a panic when they heard of the Metis' victory over the Mounted Police. Many thought that either Half-breeds or Indians would soon "swoop down and bring fire and blood-shed to the town," wrote Father Andre, a Prince Albert Parish priest, to his superior, Monsigneur Grandin. Many of the residents recounted their experiences to newspaper reporters a few decades later. These anecdotes have been preserved by the Prince Albert Historical Society and are stored in the local Museum at the present time.

During the first two weeks of April life in Prince Albert resumed a fairly normal course, the Police were awaiting the arrival of government troops dispatched from Eastern Canada. Van Horne of the Canadian Pacific Railway moved close to five thousand men to their destination in less than ten days. This gigantic task was well worth the effort from the C.P.R.'s point of view: It brought the company, which had been on the point of bankruptcy, the desired Dominion loan.

After the arrival of the military in Fort Qu'Appelle many of the new Volunteers had to practice the skills required in combat. The army had been called together in great haste and many men had never fired a rifle before. From Fort Qu'Appelle the majority of troops moved north, but few had to return east on account of illness. Those who returned had many negative comments about the mode of transport, the behaviour of officers and men, and the morale among soldiers. The 65th Battalion from Montreal was singled out as the least disciplined. The men from this corps mutinied during transport and showed a general unwillingness to fight the Metis in Western Canada.

While preparations for a large military battle were in progress the grievances of the Half-breeds, which had led to their discontent and organized effort to effect action from government, were remedied. The Half-breed claims were granted by Ottawa on March 30, 1885; but at this point it was too late to halt the hostilities set in motion. By early April thousands of troops were on their way to Batoche and a small but determined Metis force prepared to defend itself against an overwhelming majority of trained soldiers who were ready to strike "the rebels" a deathly blow.



The foregoing introduction is intended to help the reader become acquainted with the sequence of events leading from the evacuation of Fort Carlton to the arrival of the military in the Batoche area. The excerpts from primary documents and secondary sources have been selected to show, not only the actions and events set in motion by the leadership of the opposing forces, but also, the general mood of the people caught up in the chain of happenings around them.



The evacuation of Fort Carlton was carried out under cover of the night.

The decision to move Police and Volunteers to Prince Albert had been greeted with enthusiasm by the men stationed at Fort Carlton. Irvine too had been in favor of the move. Carlton was of little importance either from the point of view of situation or supplies. On the other hand Prince Albert was looked upon as the strategical centre of the territory of Saskatchewan. The town, however, surrounded as it was by English Half-breed settlements, was believed to be in danger of attack by the Metis. Therefore the decision to relocate the troops for the protection of Prince Albert citizens was unanimously approved by commissioned officers and Volunteers..

The evacuation of the fort was carried out under cover of the night from March 27, to 28, and every available vehicle loaded with goods. What could not be taken was destroyed - either sunk beneath the ice in the river or emptied in the snow.

Prince Albert inhabitants were bewildered and frightening, wrote Father Andre, a Prince Albert parish priest, to Monsigneur Grandin:

Through carelessness a fire broke out while Fort Carlton was being evacuated and the secrecy of the operation destroyed; for this reason the men hurried away with all possible speed.

The arrival of the Police force brought confidence to the citizens of Prince Albert who had lived in terror since the news of the Metis victory over the Mounted Police. Father Andre's description of the fears which pervaded the town were expressed in a letter to Monsigneur Grandin.

" The government troops suffered a serious defeat and were forced to beat a retreat . Eleven of their men were killed and there were a number of wounded... the number of the dead among the half-breeds is not known. This news has spread terror in the hearts of Prince Albert citizens who are bewildered and frightened. At any time, it is expected that Riel and his band of half-breeds , followed by the Indians, will swoop down and bring fire and bloodshed to the town. People are abandoning their homes to take refuge in a kind of fort that has been built in Prince Albert." <sup>1</sup>

1. Father Andre to Monsigneur Grandin, OMI. P.A.C.

Prince Albert residents of 1885 told their stories many years later

The Prince Albert historical society is in possession of the recollections of former citizens who resided in the town

during the Northwest disturbances. Following are a number of excerpts from this collection.

Story of June Garson, nee Flett.

2. Mrs. P.F. Garson, Hoey, Sask. Prince Albert Historical Society

"The people of Prince Albert, generally speaking, were very excited; indeed many of them were scared. I saw Lawrence Clarke and a little crowd go past our house to the west, shouting and singing. I said that the little crowd would be no match for the Indians." 2

Georgina Freeborn, nee Miller, had this to say:

3. Mrs. W. Miller's Hill. File 97

"On 27th March, a stockade was built at the church where all the settlement were called in one night and let go home the next day as they thought Riel's men were coming to Prince Albert, but which turned out to be a herd of cattle that had been seen." 3

Excerpts from T. E. Jackson's account.

"After the Duck Lake fight a French half-breed, named Tousant St. Lucienne, whose home was near Carlton, came to Prince Albert, and said that my brother William Henry Jackson, was in danger. He had been secretary of the Farmers Union, and was intimately associated with Riel. As I have already stated, Riel had taken prisoner, Tom Sanderson, of Carrot River, and now Tom was sent with a message after the Duck Lake fight to Major Crozier, head of the Mounted Police in Prince Albert: 'Come and remove the dead bodies of the men who have been killed at Duck Lake, and you will not be molested.' When Sanderson reached Crozier, there were present Tom MacKay, Lawrence Clarke, and others who took exception to the message; they feared a trap, as they had lost the Duck Lake fight. The consequences was that they refused to allow Sanderson to return for the bodies.

Major Crozier was camped with his officers on the level ground near where Miss Lucy Baker used to live. I went and saw Major Crozier personally and asked if he could provide Sanderson and myself with two teams to go for the bodies. He agreed to do so, and gave us two police teams. Wm. Drain volunteered to go along with us. In reality Drain was asked to go with us to keep track of us and watch our movements! He was the only one who had any firearms with him. So we journeyed off...

We got all the bodies, loaded them on sleighs, and came right through to Prince Albert, Sanderson driving one team, and

myself another with Drain sitting along side of me. We were met in Prince Albert by an interested crowd. The relatives of the deceased arrived and took the bodies away.

Riel refused to let my brother go, and I lost all the robes that I had taken along in the sleighs. When Riel would not let my brother go, he intimated that if I returned a week or two later, he would let me take him. I had to get a permit from the authorities in Prince Albert for the town was under military rule. Sentries were on the outside of the town, and we needed an order from the military authorities before we could get through the guard." 4

4.  
T.E.  
Jackson.  
Doc. 55  
to  
Macdonnell  
by  
dictation.

Story of Mrs. W.W. Clarke, nee McLeod.

"With the rebellion of 1885, my parents, now with two children, myself and a baby sister, took refuge in Prince Albert at my Aunt Ross's in the old house standing next "Addie" McBeth's house and opposite the old log Massey Harris warehouse. Later when my Aunt Ross moved away from Prince Albert, George Dill brought his bride, Rovena McGregor, a beautiful, glowing girl, to his house. (Here there is one page missing from the document.)

The Fort was a cordwood barricade around the old brick Presbyterian Church about opposite where City Hall now stands and the brick manse still stands. Most of the men were away at the Duck Lake affair and only a few left with my father, amongst them, half a dozen rifles to guard the fort, when a scout came galloping in with the alarm that the rebels were marching on the town. Although several of years later are blank, this night is vivid in my memory.

My baby sister and I were in bed in one of the rooms of my Aunt's house and my mother in her night clothes, when my father sprang into the room and, saying something to my mother, grabbed and putting my coat and stockings on me with my boots in his pocket, wrapped a shawl around my sister and taking one of us in each arm ran for the barricade. My mother had slipped a coat over her night clothes and put shoes on her bare feet. We could have gone around the square up to the old Mission (opposite where J. B. Kernaghan's store is built) and down what is now Central Avenue to the barricade. Instead of which we cut diagonally across back of where the old McGregor home stood for so many years, about where the site of Robert Cassie's store is now. The water from the melting snow stood a foot deep and painted on my memory is the picture of my mother running a few feet ahead in

the dim light. I can still feel my father's arms around me and hear him splashing across and well remember at the deepest part, leaning down from his shoulder to feel in his pocket for my precious red boots. Then, in the old manse, with my mother in bed and screaming women and children around, a rifle went off by accident and women fainted and men ran with blanched faces to the stockade.

I found two dolls under my mother's bed and started down the stair to show my father, but a big girl met me and slapped me and took them from me. My mother lost her first baby son that time, laying in bed at death's door for many weary months, and ever after was a frailer woman, not the only one who paid her price for pioneering the frontier with her husband.

It was possibly the next morning that the sleighs carrying our dead drew mournfully into the barricade, Captain Morton, our good neighbor on the farm, Dan McPhail, brother of J. R. McPhail who had a hardware store in Goschen, Dan McKenzie, and many other gallant spirits.

5. Recollections of Mrs. W.W. Clarke, Prince Albert Historical Museum, Prince Albert

'The tumult and the shouting died', and life shifted down again for the pioneers to long hours of work in the ineffable sunshine and clear air."<sup>5</sup>

Entitled, "In Memoriam," a poem by William McDougall of Prince Albert.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The following lines were composed by Mr. Wm. McDougall in memory of the anniversary of the brave heroes who fell at Duck Lak

"Come all true, loyal Canadians,  
Where're you may reside  
And shed a tear in memory  
Of Eighteen Eighty-five.

'Twas then Prince Albert's heroes,  
who in action at Duck Lake  
On that ill-fated twenty-sixth of March,  
Fought for their country's sake.

Those drifts of snow so pure and white  
Were stained a crimson red  
From the veins of our brave citizens  
Who lie numbered with the dead.

No friend to clasp their cold white hand  
Or their life-blood help to stay,  
Within their cold, white snowy bed  
Their young life fled away.

In fairer lands beyond the vale,  
Where nations cease to fight,  
They march around the great white throne,  
In spotless robes of white.

6.  
Prince Albert  
Heritage  
Museum

Go deck with flowers their lovely grave,  
As the years go fleeting by,  
For mouldering their beneath the clay,  
Lies a mother's soldier boy.

--Wm. McDougall." 6

Col. Irvine asserted that he had unquestionable proof of the nearly equal balances between loyal and "traiterous" elements in Prince Albert.

According to Gary W. D. Abrams the Police were received with a mixture of relief and bitterness. He explains:

"The worst fears were relieved in the late afternoon of March 28 when the volunteers and police arrived from Carlton. Yet their coming served also to create a new problem. Hungry and tired, the police occupied the stockade "rather unceremoniously," and thus revived a bitterness which was to fester malignantly during long weeks of inaction. Cooped up in the town, subjected to all the petty restrictions demanded by a state of war, and seeing the police stand idle while the critical battles were fought by others, the farmers in particular nursed animosity against their recent enemies. The police for their part, remembering that the settlers had helped to foment the agitation which had ended in rebellion, conscious of the hatred and contempt directed at them, and annoyed by incessant grumbling believed themselves surrounded by potential traitors. Irvine asserted later that he had "clear and unquestionable proof, at times, how nearly equal were the balances" between the loyal and traitorous elements. Only the presence and vigilance of the police, he believed prevented Riel's sympathizers from lending active support to the Metis." 7

7.  
Gary W.D.  
Abrams,  
Prince  
Albert,  
The First  
Century,  
p.78  
(Modern  
Press)  
1966

The Police in Prince Albert were awaiting the arrival of government troops.

While during the first two weeks of April, 1885 life in Prince Albert resumed a fairly normal course the Police were anxiously awaiting the arrival of government troops dispatched from Eastern Canada. Middleton arrived with a large force on April 12 in Fort Qu'Appelle. The majority of his men had been called from their homes on short notice and had never fired a rifle, for this reason they remained in Qu'Appelle for a few days practicing, firing blank and ball ammunition. The movement of troops was described by John Archer as follows:

"Ottawa had taken some precautions. On March 24 a force of 400 men had been ordered to Winnipeg. On March 27, one day after the Duck Lake battle, 780 more men were on their way west. Care was taken to send both English-speaking and French-speaking units. By April 22 some 3,300 militiamen had made the long trek to the scene of action. Although the Americans offered full co-operation a reversal of the stance taken in 1870--the government decided to send troops by CPR. It is probable that no one in Ottawa appreciated the real hardships faced by the soldiers, for there were gaps in the railroad and late March is no time to be traveling in open cars through northern Ontario. Van Horne was urged to transport the soldiers with all haste. He met the challenge and in doing so, the CPR came into its own. Horse-drawn sleighs met the trains and transported the troops to the point where the tracks began again. Shorter gaps were traversed on foot. It was a cold bleak trip, but on April 4 the first detachments from the east arrived in Winnipeg, joining troops raised in western Canada." 8

8. Archer,  
John.  
Ibid.  
P.  
89-90.

Van Horne had promised to get the troops to their destination in eleven days.

Van Horne of the Canadian Pacific moved nearly five-thousand men to their destination. He had promised the government that he would get the troops over the gaps in his unfinished railroad in eleven days. (The distance was between twenty-five hundred to eighteen hundred miles.) Van Horne kept his promise; in fact none of the troops needed eleven days, some made it in four, others took nine days to complete the journey. To accomplish this gigantic task the CPR put rails down on ice and snow, ran trains over frozen rivers, used construction trains and work engines, and imported Chinese coolies from the United States to perform most of the laborious tasks. Their efforts were amply rewarded. The company, reportedly bankrupt a few weeks earlier, got a Dominion loan before the first shots at Batoche were fired.

Between March 9 to 20, the "Saskatchewan Herald" had reported the following:

"THE C.P.R., Toronto March 9.

The Mail says that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company has not sufficient funds to complete the undertaking and that further assistance is necessary or the road must be abandoned...

RELIEF FOR THE SYNDICATE. By telegraph. Ottawa, March 13.

9. A ministerial caucus was held today to consider the question of the Pacific Railway. It is understood that the president for the company is to convert thirty million of unused stock held by government into bonds..." 9  
Sask. Herald March 13, 1885.

SASKATCHEWAN HERALD, March 20

10. "The demands of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for additional help from the public treasury, as foreshadowed in the article in the Mail telegraphed here last week, has not taken the country much by surprise...It is felt that the present demand must be the last..." 10  
Sask. Herald March 20, 1885.

On April 30, 1885, the C.P.R. got its loan.

"In British Columbia three hundred armed strikers were being held at bay in a C.P.R. camp by eight Mounties, and there was trouble elsewhere because the company was broke and the men were unpaid....the railroad was doomed unless a Dominion loan could be obtained. There had been bickering over this for four months; Sir John was holding out, as usual, for a political deal. But if Van Horne could get the troops west in time to save the Territories, the Cabinet would have to come around." 11  
11. Howard, J. Ibid. p. 379

On April 30, the C.P.R. got its loan, because, in John Archer's words, "When Van Horne performed miracles in moving troops from Toronto to Winnipeg, in spite of uncompleted sections of the railway north of the Great Lakes, Macdonald gauged the public mind and pushed bills through Parliament guaranteeing company bonds. With the money found, Van Horne had the line completed by autumn of 1885." 12  
12. Archer, John. Ibid., p. 68

'A returning soldier said that the troops should have been sent by the American route.

Not everyone in Canada felt that the Canadian government had made a wise decision in sending troops via the C.P.R. Ten volunteers who had fallen ill on their arrival in the Saskatchewan returned to Winnipeg and aired their feelings regarding troop transportation, conduct of soldiers and morale among English and French speaking forces to reporters of the "Toronto News."

"John Hewitt, a member of the 12th Battalion, was among the number who returned...To a News reporter he said that he was suffering from congestion of the lungs...He expressed the opinion that the hardship which the soldiers had to endure would put a damper on the volunteer system in future. He thinks the government should have sent the troops by the American route. Had that been done the terrible march across Lake Superior would have been avoided. He believes the government's sole reason for sending the men by the Canadian route was simply to put money in the pockets of the C.P.R." 13

13.  
Toronto  
News  
20  
April  
1885

Dr. J. E. White told of theft and drunkenness among officers and men of the 65th Battalion from Montreal.

"Dr. J. E. White, who went up with the Body Guard, and who returned to the city this morning with the sick, has learned a considerable amount about the actions and conduct of the officers and men of the 65th. The substance of his story as told to a News reporter today is as follows: On arriving at Monroe harbor the men of the 65th were lodged in a large schooner and some in sheds. The officials of the C.P.R. there very kindly opened some bales of blankets that they had in store, and lent one hundred pairs to the men, who, when they went away, took with them - that is, stole - sixty pairs of these blankets. Everything that they could lay their hands on they took, knives, forks, spoons, etc. Nice clean bunks had been provided for them, and these they left in such filthy condition that one could scarce believe that human beings, let alone civilized soldiers, had occupied them. From the stores of the regiment they stole two barrels of whiskey and other liquor, all of which they drank, making them uproariously drunk. At Monroe Harbor a lady named Mrs. Macdonald kindly threw open her house to the officers, and provided them with hot meals and every comfort. These gentlemanly officers, after enjoying the meals, pocketed the knives, forks, and spoons. They also stole the towels that Mrs. Macdonald had provided for their accommodation. But, worst of all they left her house in the condition that the men of the regiment left the bunks." 14



Lieut. Col. O'Brian did not allow the men to partake of the hot meal provided for them.

"Dr. White also corroborates the statement about Lieut.-Col. O'Brian not allowing the men of the 12th and 35th to partake of the hot meal provided for them. When the regiment arrived in Winnipeg O'Brian was informed that the meal was all ready in the restaurant waiting for the men to attack it. O'Brian said that the men didn't need it, as they had enough rations with them, and refused to allow them to partake of it."<sup>14</sup> (They ate hardtack instead.)

14.  
Toronto  
News  
Ibid.

Returning Soldier said that all went well until the "infernal Frenchmen," from Montreal spoiled the whole arrangement.

Sergeant Geo. H. Nelson, No. 4 Co. Royal Grenadiers, reported to the Toronto News that not a solitary man of the Queen's Own or of the Grenadiers would complain of food or hardship. Although it had been tough, it was the best the section could afford and much better than the people ordinarily had. He said:

"Everything went all right until the infernal Frenchmen, the 65th from Montreal, baulked right in the middle of the gaps and spoiled the whole arrangement."

Reporter: "How do you mean that they baulked?"

Nelson: "Why, I mean that they mutinied. You don't know these men. They are the worst, most mutinous, reckless, disorderly gang I ever met in my life. They mutinied right there in the gaps, kept those behind them for a day and a half in the snow without shelter and nearly starved those before because no provision could go through. Oh, they are a fine crowd of soldiers... 'We don't want to fight,' was the incessant cry. When they were not saying that they said, 'We want to go home.' The train was backing down towards us and just as it arrived one of them said, 'Me won't fight,' and threw himself under the train. The breakbeam stove in his scalp, and a wheel cut off one of his feet. We left him in the bed I had just left, and I don't know if he died or got better."<sup>15</sup>

15.  
Toronto  
News  
Ibid.

By April 13, Middleton and his troops had reached Humboldt after a treacherous 180 mile trek across the open prairie. The weather was cold, and there was a strong wind blowing. For days the men moved ahead against flurries of snow, sleet and hail.

"I am afraid the dress of my Aide-de-camp and myself would have astonished if not horrified an Aldershot General and his Aide-de-camp," the general wrote in his account of the campaign. "We were both clad in short buffalo skin coats, staff pantaloons, fur service caps, and long English shooting boots, with jack spurs. Swords were worn under, and revolvers over, our coats. The men and officers were in the regular British uniform, supplemented with snow boots, fur caps and gloves, and most of them with hideous red comforters round their necks." 16

16.  
Stanley.  
Ibid.  
p. 325

On April 20 the General and his troops were 35 miles from Batoche, at Clarke's Crossing. They were now in Metis country. Their movements had been closely watched by Half-breed scouts who patrolled the terrain on both sides of the South Saskatchewan. Ironical the grievances which had led to the discontent of the Metis and Half-breeds had by this time been remedied.

"In ten days, from the 26th March to the 6th April, the Government had altered their policy and had given what they had refused for years. What was the cause? The bullets of Duck Lake..."

Belated decision to grant Half-breed claims by government.

"Under authority of subclause E of Clause 81 'the government stated,' it is expedient to deal with half-breed claims in N.W.T. by granting:

1. To each halfbreed head of family resident in NWT, outside limits of Manitoba, previous to 15 July 1870, the lot or portion of land of which he is at present time in bona fide and undisputed occupation by virtue of residence upon and cultivation thereof, to the extent of 160 acres, if said land he is in bona fide occupation of is less than 160 acres, the difference to be made up by an issue of scrip redeemable in land at the rate of \$1 per acre; those halfbreeds not in bona fide occupation of any land shall be issued scrip for \$160 redeemable in land.
2. To each child of a halfbreed head of a family, residing in NWT, previous to 15 July 1870 and born before that date, the lands he is at present in bona fide and undisputed occupation by virtue of residence upon and cultivation thereof to the extent of 240 acres; any

17. different to be made up by an issue of scrip redeemable in land at rate of \$1 per acre; if not in bona fide occupation of any land, such child to be issued scrip redeemable in land for \$240." 17

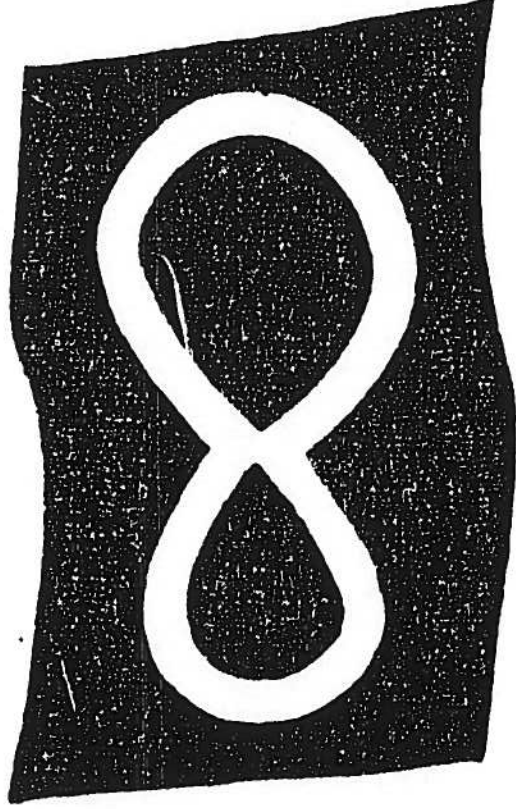
Waite,  
Peter B.  
Canada  
1847-1896  
McLelland and  
Stewart Limited  
1971, p. 157

By now it was too late to halt the hostilities set in motion. Eight hundred government troops hovered in the vicinity of Batoche and another four thousand were on their way to the Saskatchewan. A small but determined Metis force prepared to defend themselves against the overwhelming majority of government soldiers ready to strike a blow to the "rebels."

BATOCHÉ PROJECT

PART TWO

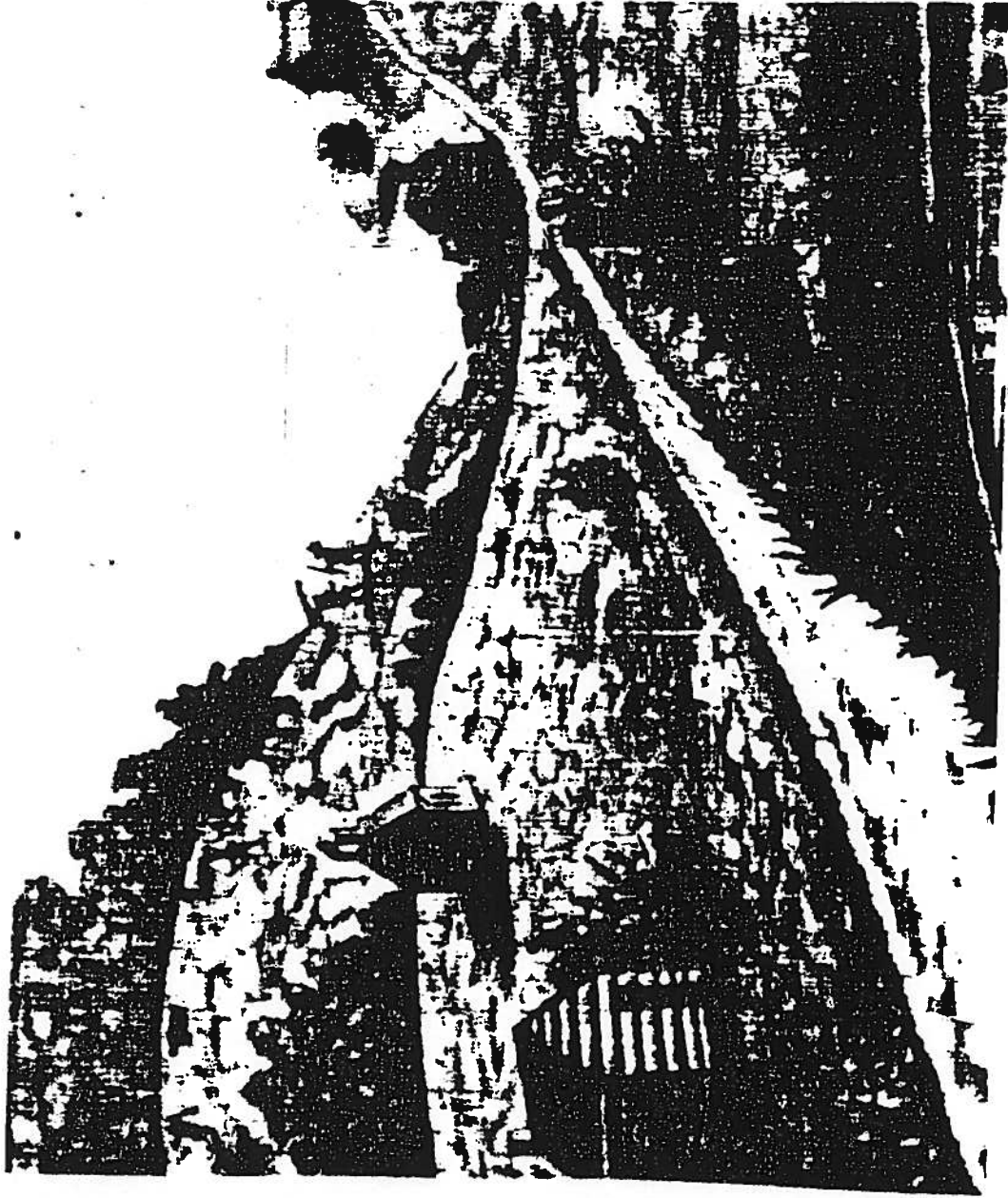
CHAPTERS FOUR AND FIVE



Christel Barber.  
Gabriel Dumont  
Institute  
September 1982



CHAPTER FOUR



PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE  
IN CHAPTER FOUR OF THE PROJECT

RIEL Metis leader stationed at Batoche.

DUMONT General of Metis army, stationed at Batoche.

DEWDNEY Lieutenant-Governor of N.W.T. and Indian Commissioner, stationed in Regina,

CROZIER Superintendent of N.W.M.P., stationed at Fort Carlton,

GARNOT Secretary of the Metis Council.

NOLIN Riel's brother-in-law who did not support the Metis resort to arms. He was, for a short time, Riel's prisoner.

MACDONALD Prime Minister of Canadian Dominion, stationed in Ottawa,

MOULIN (Rev.) parish priest, stationed in Batoche.

LACOMBE (Rev.) Missionary of mixed, white-Indian, heritage. He was the founder of the St. Albert mission. Lacombe was a well-known and widely-travelled member of the Oblate Order.

CROWFOOT Blackfoot chief who did not take part in the uprising.

VAN HORNE Vice-President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Corporation,

QUINN Indian Agent at the Indian community of Frog Lake.

BIG BEAR Cree Chief whose band took part in the killings at Frog Lake and the take-over of Fort Pitt,

FAFARD (Rev.) Parish priest at the Indian community of Frog Lake.

MARCHAND (Rev.) Parish priest at the Indian community of Frog Lake.

WANDERING SPIRIT War chief of the Crees at Frog Lake.

GOWANLOCK

Operator of Government Flour Mills at Frog Lake

DELANEY

Farm instructor at Frog Lake

GOUIN

Half-breed carpenter at Frog Lake

PEAU

Indian woman married to Wandering Spirit's nephew

DICKENS

Captain in command at Fort Pitt. He was a son of the novelist Charles Dickens

MACLEAN

Hudson's Bay Company officer at Fort Pitt

BRADY

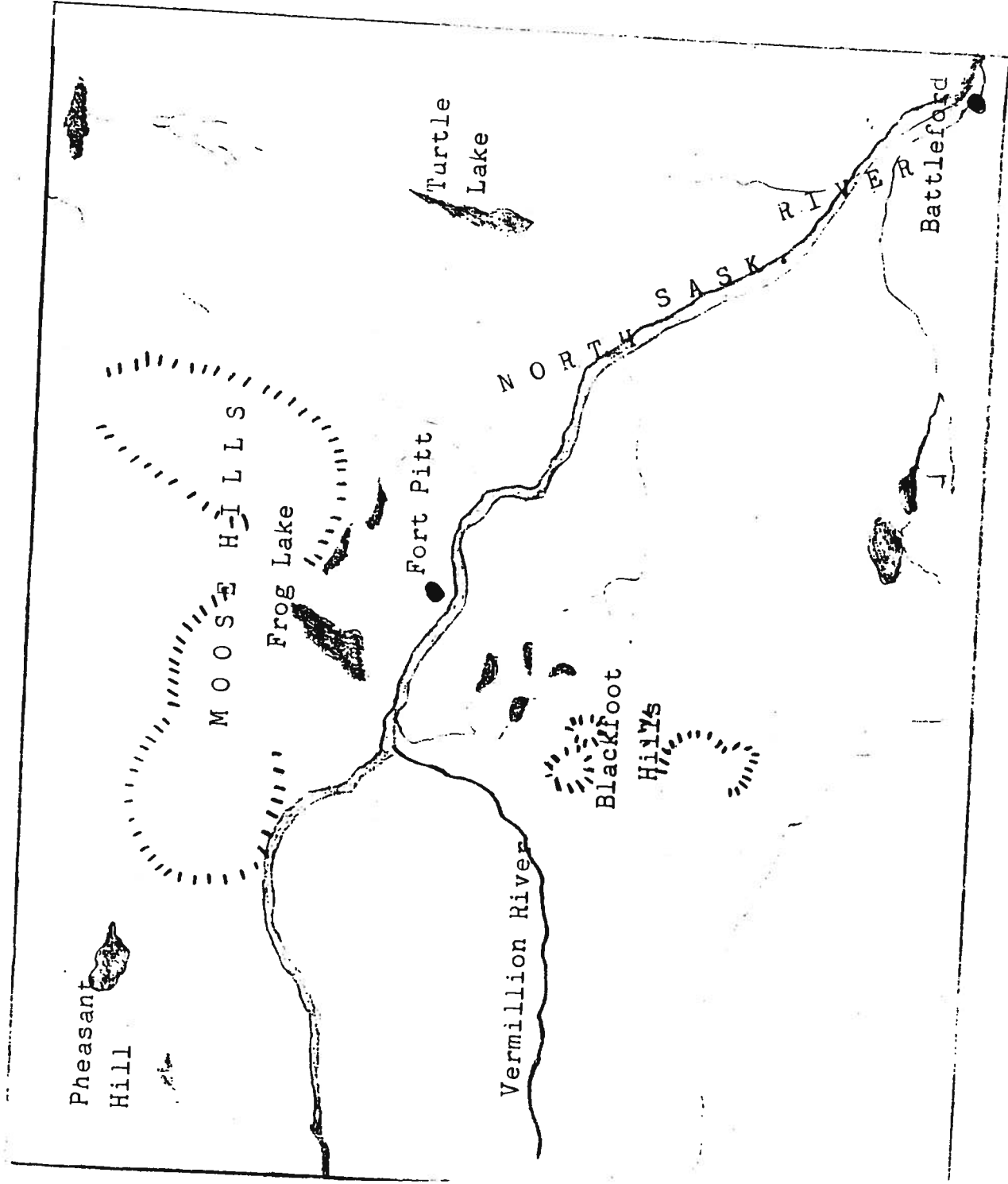
20th century organizer of the Metis in Alberta and Saskatchewan



SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS DISCUSSED

IN CHAPTER FOUR OF THE PROJECT

- March 30      Metis killed in Duck Lake battle are buried in St. Laurent
- March 31      Metis from Duck Lake go to Batoche to prepare for possible armed encounter with the police of which they were warned by L. Clarke. (Metis estimate the number of police as 315, according to minutes of Council meeting on March 31.)
- April 2        Nine settlers in the Frog Lake area are killed by Indians from Big Bear's band.
- April 2        Indians from Beardsy's Reserve and the Sioux from Round Plain are provided with food rations, horses and cattle.
- April 1885     Early in April of 1885, Riel and his Council send letters to the Indians at Battleford urging them to destroy the fort, to take the ammunition and to assist the Metis at Batoche.
- April 12        Father Lacombe who has been given a special train to travel to Indian settlements, and to persuade the Native Peoples to refrain from assisting Riel, reports to Macdonald that the Blackfoot nation will remain loyal to the Queen.
- April 15        Maclean, Hudson's Bay factor at Fort Pitt is taken prisoner by Big Bear.
- Big Bear negotiates the surrender of civilians at Fort Pitt. The N.W.M.P. using a scow escape at night by the river.



MAP SHOWING BATTLEFORD, FORT PITT AND FROG LAKE. ( 1885 )

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Metis Attempt to Organize Armed Resistance and the Indian Involvement in the North West Disturbances

#### Introduction to Chapter FOUR:

The victory at Duck Lake had elated the Metis. However, the confrontation between the Metis and the police had spoiled Riel's plan of capturing Crozier's force and holding them as hostages to press the Canadian Government into a bargaining position.

Garnot, the secretary of the Metis Council, explained in his memoirs that Riel's prime motive had not been to drive the Dominion government out of the country, but rather to get the government to pay attention to the Metis and Half-breed grievances. The minutes and resolutions of the Metis Council which have been preserved indicate that armed confrontation was seriously considered only after the first battle with the Mounted Police. On March 31, the Council expressed concern over the news passed by Lawrence Clark that a police force was marching toward Batoche. A resolution on April 16, required every able man to present himself to the Council so that a small Metis army might be established. Appeals for help went to Indians and to Half-breed communities after the Duck Lake battle urging their assistance in disarming the police and in the gathering of provisions for difficult times ahead.

Not all Metis were in favor of taking up arms. The influence of the clergy, who opposed Riel's resort to armed resistance, made many Metis uncertain of Riel's leadership. Riel finally placed the priests under house arrest when they refused religious services to the parishioners who took up arms. Sensing the serious loss of spiritual direction that his imprisonment would create, he administered the religious services himself, as best he could. However, many parishioners were unable to accept Riel as a spiritual guide and became uncertain about their allegiance to him.

Sir John A. Macdonald, fearful over the threat of Indian involvement in the North West disturbances, provided the well-known Father Lacombe with a locomotive so that the priest could travel to consult with the chiefs of Native tribes and dissuade them from supporting the Metis. Lacombe convinced the Blackfoot, the Piegan and the Sarci not to go to war, thereby removing about two-thousand warriors from potential involvement in the conflict.

Riel's letter of appeal for help were answered promptly by the Crees from Poundmaker's band. The band resented the strains of reserve life, and government restrictions on food rations kept them in a state of semi-starvation. When they heard of the Metis victory over the police at Duck Lake, the band moved at once to Battleford and ransacked the town. The settlers in the surrounding areas had ample warning of the Indian's approach. They fled to the fort and remained there until the blockade was lifted. After one month, Poundmaker's band withdrew from Battleford. The Cree chief did not approve the raid on the town, but was unable to restrain his hungry warriors.

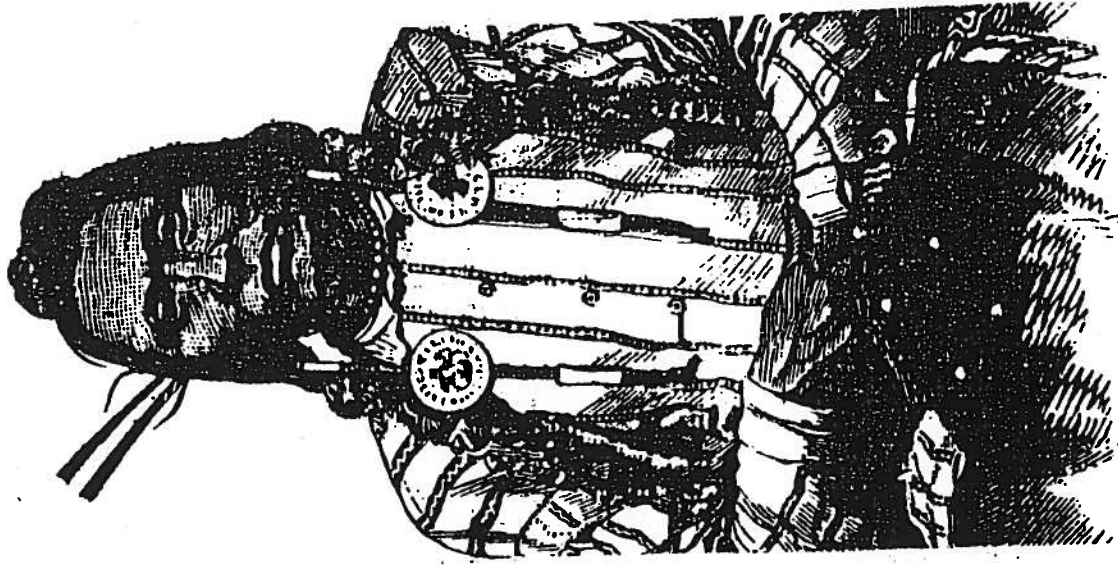
Newspaper reports of the months preceding the resistance were strongly biased against the Native Peoples and reflected the enmity of the settlers. Indian agents, farm instructors and missionaries, though many have been portrayed as well-meaning, often supported government policies of keeping Native Peoples under strict control. This led to many disputes between settlers and Indians; sometimes with tragic results. Such was the case at Frog Lake where eight people from the non-Native community were killed by members of Big Bear's band. Big Bear later admitted that he, like Poundmaker, had been unable to prevent the outburst of violence, and that he was greatly saddened by the killings. He was, however, able to prevent further bloodshed by arranging for the evacuation of civilians at Fort Pitt before it was taken by the young warriors of his band. The evacuation of the fort took place shortly after the Frog Lake incident, on April 15.

The foregoing account sums up the events after the battle of Duck Lake. The pages which follow allow the reader to become acquainted with the more intimate details surrounding the events. A number of primary documents and primary sources were selected for the purpose of providing a variety of readings to illustrate the complexity of situations which are often portrayed from a simplistic point of view. A case in point were the killings at Frog Lake--an incident without apparent provocation. Yet the taped interview with the former Metis organizer James Brady provides new evidence of behind-the-scenes action. This evidence sheds new light on the motivation for the violence in the small northern community.

The first part of this chapter contains a fairly lengthy selection of minutes and resolutions passed by the Metis Council during the time which elapsed between the battles of Duck Lake (March 26) and Fish Creek (April 24). The Council reports compensate for the lack of written material from the Metis community. They demonstrate an effort on the part of the Metis to deal with

what was believed to be a relatively small force of 315 policemen. Readers anxious to simply follow the chain of action connected with the battles may wish to skip this section. However, for those who take an interest in the lives of ordinary people which applied themselves with sincerity to a conflict that threatened to take away their modest possessions, this section is a rich source of information. Not only will the reader be impressed by the democratic processes through which the Metis reached agreement but s/he will be allowed an opportunity to understand the order, the concerns, and the fears of a simple living yet intelligent people. The reader will see that the Metis valued and wished to protect their families, that they cared for the enemy's dead and wounded, that they had firm religious goals, and that they had a strong positive relationship with the Indians in the surrounding areas. One letter to the Council demonstrates a concern for the upholding of moral values, grievances over quarrelling and drinking alcohol, vexation with troublemakers, and a fear of a general disheartening and weakening among Metis members.

This section more than any other allows the reader a glimpse of the life in the villages around Batoche. It captures the views of those who were involved most directly in the events; people who have often been portrayed as ruthless villains.



BIG BEAR

( Saskatchewan Archives Board  
Photograph No. R-B 4037.)

Sketch from: "Two montans in Big Bear's camp." by W. Gowanlock and T. Delaney.

FRCC LAKE 1885



1

Riel had Hoped to Forestall Hostilities by Capturing Crozier

And His Force

The victory at Duck Lake had elated the Metis; however, the confrontation between the Metis and police had spoiled Riel's plan of capturing Crozier and his force and holding them as hostages. The foregoing point, made by G. F. Stanley, was based on a statement made by Riel after the battle of Batoche. Riel apparently explained to Captain Young that,

"...his object had been to capture Major Crozier and his force and then say to the Canadian government, consider the situation...

Garnot, the Secretary of the Provisional Government, agreed...that there had been no 'serious expectation to drive the Dominion Government out of the country,' but that they rose to 'force the Dominion Government to attend to them' and expected daily that 'someone would come from the Government to treat with them.'

The Metis were in no position to conduct a successful rebellion. At the most Riel could only call upon four or five hundred Metis, many of whom were definitely opposed to fighting and took up arms only under pressure."<sup>1</sup>

Philippe Garnot wrote in his Memoirs that Riel had hoped the Duck Lake battle would have been the first and last action the Metis engaged in; (see Chapter 2) but when Riel heard of the troop movement to the Territory, he consented to continued armed resistance. The Council met frequently to decide what steps might be taken in view of the situation at hand. The minutes of these meetings reveal the democratic processes by which the Metis Council resolved major and minor matters. The following are examples of minutes from these meetings.

Examples of Resolutions and Minutes of Metis Council Concerning

the Dead and Wounded of the Duck Lake Battle

No. 51: Resolution of Council to bury the dead (translation)  
(27th March 1885)

Minutes of Council, prepared by Mr. Lepine, seconded by Mr. Carriere that a party be sent who (put) the dead who were left on the battle field under the shelter of an neighboring house and that it be done immediately. Carried unanimously. 7 for today, 3 for tomorrow.

No. 56: Minutes of Council of 29th March 1885 (translation)  
Order-in-Council 29th March 1885. Proposed by Mr. Lepine seconded by Mr. Boucher that the man killed in the fight of the 26th be carried to St. Laurent, tomorrow, there to be buried and that the priests be requested to chant a funeral service. Carried unanimously.

Order-in Council of 29th March 1885. Proposed by Mr. Lepine seconded by Mr. Dumont that the wounded man C. A. Neville made prisoner after the battle of the 20th, be set free. Carried unanimously."2

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The Decision to Take up Arms and Await Arrival of Police was

Made after the Duck Lake Battle

"Minutes of the Council of 31st March, 1885. Proposed by Exovede Gabriel Dumont, seconded by Exovede Maxime Lepine, that we abandon for a time Duck Lake, and go and take up position again at St. Anthony, to await there firmly the 315 policemen who are on the way, it would appear, and are marching against us. Adopted unanimously.

Glory to Jesus Christ, honor and praise to Mary, to Joseph, to St. John the Baptist, and to St. Anthony of Padua.

Minutes of the Council, the 6th April, 1885. Proposed by Mr. Lepine and seconded by Mr. Boucher, that the soldiers begin the work of making roads through the ice and placing the ferry boat in position to establish the ferry. Adopted unanimously.



Proposed by Mr. Boucher, seconded by Mr. Parenteau that an Order-in-Council be publicly read requiring every man capable of bearing arms to be presented here tomorrow during the forenoon. Adopted unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. Oulette, seconded by Mr. Lepine that a horse guard be organized, and that a captain, with his company be appointed to this duty, and that Mr. Lafond be appointed. Adopted unanimously."<sup>3</sup>

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Orders-in-Council Determined the Right to Take Meals in Council

Hall and the Prospective Owner of a Captured Horse

"Order-in-Council of April 11, 1885. Proposed by Mr. Boucher, seconded by Mr. Dumont, that Mr. Chamberlain be furnished with a list of people who have the right of taking their meals here and of entering the Council Hall."<sup>4</sup>

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Examples of Letters Sent and Received by the Metis Council

No. 58: J. P. Boucher to Dumont (translation)

St. Louis de Langevin, N.W. 30 March 1885.

To Messrs. the Adjutant General and Councillors.

Gentlemen:

I left Duck Lake with the intention of coming to fetch my horse. Also to assist the indispensable needs of my family. Alex Macdougall the man who was to have seen to their wants left four days ago, so that you may see the importance of my being here. Truly everything is in critical position. If you can possibly do without me for a time.

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I am with perfect consideration,

(Signed) J. Baptiste Boucher

P.S. It is my duty to make my wife make her Easter Duty."<sup>5</sup>

\*"Easter duty" refers to reception of sacraments during the Easter period.

Letter from P. H. Garnot, Secretary to A. Monkman, regarding Treatment of the Sioux Indians and Half-breeds, &c.

Batoche, 2nd April, 1885

Dear Brothers, - Will you receive all Indians from Beardy's Band and see about rations for them?

We are receiving today, all the Sioux from Round Plain, and the half-breeds, and we shall be strong enough, and we are afraid to run short of rations, so we expect that you will treat them kindly and keep them under your order, and give rations to

everyone, and to his family as long as he or they will be under your control at the fort.

Lend them horses and cattle, if possible, to help them to get to Carlton.

Take courage, and we would advise the keeping of guards on top of the hills.

Believe us, dear brother, your brothers in Jesus Christ.

For the Council,

P. H. Garnot, Secretary."<sup>6</sup>

"N. Nault and Others to Council, regarding Intoxicating Liquors. (Translation).

Batoche, P.O., 9th April, 1885

St. Antoine de Padoue.

To the Members of the Council:

Gentlemen, - Several rumors having reached this side of the river, we deem it our duty to send you a few words anent the same; we mean as to the matter of drink. We have fault to find with you gentlemen, members of the council. We find drunken men on every side along the river. It seems to me it is the duty of all of you to see to this matter. It seems to us that you are inactive. What grieves us is to see you on the other hand quarrelling amongst yourselves and giving trouble to those who act right. From the way you are acting we fear greatly that you will dishearten many amongst us. The best course to take is to come to a clear understanding amongst yourselves, once for all. We promised to keep temperance in times of the hardest struggle, and now that things do not look quite so bad as they were we want to fall back. We rely on you to set matters right.

Yours truly,

Napoleon Nault

Joseph Delorme

Patrior Tourond

Baptiste Ouellette

Patrice Flurie."<sup>7</sup>

Prayer of the Metis Council from the Council Book

"O Lord, our God, Thou Who are the Father of mercy and consolation, we are several French-Canadian Metis, gathered together in council who put confidence in Thee; grant that we may not be covered with confusion, ever defend us from this; enlighten us in our darkness of doubt, encourage us in our trials, strengthen us in our weaknesses, and succor us in the time of pressing need."<sup>8</sup>

Religious Mysticism of the Metis

During the early part of April, Riel felt that his first task was to strengthen his own position among the Metis. With the flight of his brother-in-law, Charles Nolin, to Prince Albert, his principal opponent among the Metis had been removed. Nolin had not supported Riel's decision to take up arms and had succeeded in persuading others to remain neutral.

"Fred Fidler, Louis Marion, Roger Goulet, Baptiste Boyer, Louis Reiguidel, Gabriel Parenteau, Jean Baptiste Boucher, Jean Laplante, Octave Regnier and Joseph Bremner were among those who fell away from their allegiance to Riel or refused to fight for him." 9

Philippe Garnot, wrote in his Memoirs that he, himself, persisted in refusing to take up arms. Of Nolin's escape he wrote, however,

"I forgot to mention that Crozier was on the verge of proclaiming that all persons retained by force by the rebels could find protection at Fort Carlton or Prince Albert by applying to the commanding officer. Nolin trusted this proclamation and went to Prince Albert to ask for protection; but he was received and protected in an odd way. They threw him in prison and held him for the greatest part of the time. We heard also that Tom Scott, James Isbister and others were treated in the same way."<sup>10</sup>

Riel was aware of the weakness of his position and from time to time lost patience with his followers. At other times he appealed to the religious mysticism of the Metis.

Riel Proclaimed Himself as a Prophet of the Lord

A formal decision of the Metis Council recognized Riel's claim as Prophet in the Service of Jesus Christ. On other occasions the Exovedate spent its time changing the names of the week. The following documents found in Riel's possession demonstrate that these decisions were not unanimously accepted.

"Decision of the Council - Riel a Prophet. (Translation)

Moved by M. Boucher, seconded by M. Tourond, that the Canadian half-breed Exovidat acknowledges Louis David Riel as a prophet in the service of Jesus Christ, and Son of God and only Redeemer of the world; etc.

Signed by 9 members of the Metis Council.

## The Opposition of the Clergy Prompted Riel to Take Over the

### Religious Leadership

The greatest threat to Riel's leadership remained the priests who would have nothing to do with him and called him a heretic. According to P. Charlebois, Frs. Vegreville and Lacombe were the most critical and outspoken. Sir John A. Macdonald, recognizing the danger of a general Indian uprising and Lacombe's positive rapport with the Native Peoples persuaded the priest to use his influence to keep them out of the conflict. Father Vegreville, who came to see Father Moulin, in early April, was arrested by Riel and forced to sign a statement saying that he would observe strict neutrality. The other priests were obliged to sign similar statements. According to Charlebois:

"The opposition of the clergy made the average Metis very uncertain of his cause because he respected and had been directed by them for years. Riel finally resorted to placing the priests, under house arrest and to taking over, as well as he was able, the advisory and religious duties of the clergy. This was quite acceptable to the Metis and their confidence returned."11

Sir John allowed Lacombe unrestricted travel throughout the Territory by placing a locomotive at his disposal, so that he might dissuade in particular the Blackfoot tribe from joining the Metis forces.

"Lacombe succeeded apparently on the grounds that warfare with Canada would be futile and would bring even more hardships on the native peoples.

A special locomotive was placed at his disposal day and night on the orders of Macdonald and Van Horne, head of the C.P.R., to enable him to quickly contact any Natives whom he might influence. Riding in the cab of the engine, Fr. Lacombe travelled all night from Calgary to Blackfoot Crossing."12

Chief Crowfoot of the Blackfoot tribe was the son of the great warrior "Sitting Bull", who had fought General Custer in the battle of the Little Big Horn. Lacombe arrived to consult with the great Chief very early one morning and had a successful talk with him. The priest was able to telegraph Macdonald soon afterwards that the Blackfoot tribe would keep the peace. Father Lacombe was successful also in convincing the Blood, the Piegan and Sarci not to go to war. On April 12th, he forwarded the following message from the Blackfoot Chief:

"On behalf of myself and people I wish to send through you to the Great Mother the words I have given to the Governor at a Council held, at which my minor Chiefs and your men were present.

We are agreed and determined to remain loyal to the Queen. Our young men will go to work on their reserve, and will raise all the crops we can, and we hope the Government will help us sell what we cannot use.

Continued reports are brought to us, and we do not know what to believe, but now that we have seen the Governor and heard him speak, we will shut our ears and only listen to and believe what is told us through the Governor.

Should any Indians come to our reserves and ask us to join them in war we will send them away. I have sent messengers to the Bloods and Piegans who belong to our treaty to tell them what we are doing, and what we intend to do about the trouble. I want Mr. Dewdney to be with us and all my men are of the same mind. The words I sent by Father Lacombe I again send. We will be loyal to the Queen whatever happens. I have a copy of this, and when the trouble is over will have it with pride to show the Queen's officers, and we leave our future in your hands.

We have asked for nothing, but the Governor has given us a little present of tea and tobacco. He will tell you what other talk we had at our Council; it was all good, not one bad word."<sup>13</sup>

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The First to Respond to Riel's Appeal for help were Poundmaker's Crees

While Father Lacombe was on his mission, Riel and his Council sent letters to the Indians in the vicinity of Battleford. The letter contained news of the victory at Duck Lake:

"...thirty Half-breeds and Crees fought against one-hundred and twenty men. After a fight of thirty-five to forty minutes the enemy took flight. Bless God for the success he has so kindly granted us...Take Fort Battleford. Destroy it. Save all the goods and ammunition and come to us...All that you do, do it for the love of God...Be certain that faith works wonders.

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(The letter was signed by eight counsellors).

"The first to respond to Riel's appeal were the Crees of Poundmaker's band. Poundmaker was one of the foremost Chiefs of the tribe...His mother was a half-sister of the great Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot, who adopted Poundmaker as a son...Poundmaker was respected by the whites, but his tribe had been troublesome at times and was now ripe for a rebellion. It resented the new strains of reservation life and the Government decree that rations, which had been insufficient anyway, were to be issued only to those who did farm work."<sup>15</sup>

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Newspaper Reports of Earlier Times Portrayed Settler's Enmity  
with Indians

"The Saskatchewan Herald", a Battleford newspaper which catered to the settlers of the West had fanned the many misconceptions that existed among the non-Native people in the Saskatchewan district. Reports of Indian fire-setting, unwillingness to work and discontent with reserve life perpetuated the image of the lazy, mischievous malcontent. During the summer of 1884, the paper's general aim appears to have been to assure prospective settlers that rumors of an Indian uprising were unfounded and treated most matters concerning Native Peoples with a mixture of irony and sarcasm. On the following pages are excerpts from such reports.

"False reports.

A considerable degree of excitement was occasioned in the Eastern Provinces lately by a telegram from Qu'Appelle sent out on the 18th of April, to the effect that there had been an Indian uprising at Battleford, and that the operator here reported two thousand Indians marching on the town, and more coming...

There is no truth in the report of a past or probable rising of the Indians in the district, nor any other that we know of. The noble red man may try to intimidate an odd storehouse keeper, an in an emergency capture a bag of flour or a side of bacon; but as to a general uprising, he has strong reasons for letting that job out. He has neither horses, without which he cannot move; nor arms and ammunition, or the means of buying them; nor has he any provisions which to carry on a campaign; and above all, there is an absence of unanimity among the bands such as is necessary to insure success in case of a conflict with the whites.

As far as we can understand the Battleford operator's connection with the report it is simply this: In answer to the direct question, "How many Indians are there around Battleford?" he replied "About two thousand"; and there the conversation ceased. The line went down shortly afterwards, when unfounded surmises were given as facts.

Reports of Indian trouble are calculated to do much harm to the country, and the parties guilty of spreading them should be cautioned against the practice, especially if they occupy official positions. Fortunately no great harm arose in this case, as the story was in itself improbable and was promptly contradicted."<sup>16</sup>

"May 17, 1884, reprinted from TENOR OF THE TIMES.

Jos. H. Price had a narrow escape from losing his horse and premises last week by a fire that had been started by an Indian."<sup>17</sup>

"This spring fires have run over the country to an unprecedented extent, and an incalculable amount of damage has resulted in the wooded districts...The Indians are blamed for setting out most of the fires, especially those in Eagle Hills."<sup>18</sup>

"May 31, 1884

#### THE LT. - GOVERNOR'S VISIT

...When the Governor returned from Fort Pitt he found a number of Eagle Hills Stone's waiting to see him. They had no business to lay before him but merely "wanted to have a talk." The "talk" was very short. They were ordered back to their reserves and to have eight days rations stopped for leaving work without the instructor's permission...

...the Indians generally are contented and anxious to work, especially as they find that when the spring is over rations will be discontinued except where other work is furnished them. No provisions will hereafter be given except in return for work performed...

Preparations are being made a short time ago to have a grand thirst dance, but sub-agent Quinn took such a stand against it that it was abandoned...His conduct in this respect is worthy of imitation in other places. (Quinn was killed in Frog Lake massacre, 1885).

Mr. Dewdney notices with satisfaction that whenever he has met the representative men of any of the bands, except the two troublesome Battle River ones, they have taken an early occasion to assure him that all the rumors of an intended uprising are unfounded and that they are due entirely to "the bad Battle River talk."

"There are sometimes differences of opinion between the agents and instructors, but nothing so serious as to cause any uneasiness. (This article also tells about removal of Lucky Man from Chieftainship and the general meddling of Indian Department.)"

"The dude is represented here by Big Bear's sons, who have been driving around in a buckboard all spring. They are got up in the height of fashion as they view it, regardless of expense, but still clinging to the blanket as a principal garment. One day last week, however, they fairly outdid themselves by turning out with a fine umbrella to save their bronzed vicages from further tanning. The absurdity of the thing is the greater from the fact that their general costume was the same as they wore during the most inclement weather of last winter."<sup>19</sup>

During the Month of June Newspaper Articles Outlined the Policies

Adopted to Deal with the "Indian Troubles"

"Battleford, Saskatchewan Territory, Saturday, June 28, 1884.

The Indian Troubles.

It has often been said that this summer would see a contest between the Indians and whites for supremacy, and those who thought of it as probable looked forward to a collision in which precious lives would be lost, property destroyed, and the progress of the country arrested. The struggle has taken place, and has resulted in a complete mastery of the Indians--a decided victory, bloodless, but none the less complete. How long it will be maintained lies with those who have the control in Indian affairs."

"The Future Indian Policy.

The events of last week must result in the enforcement of a uniform policy on the part of the Government. Most of the troubles in the past have arisen from a close adherence by subordinate officers to cast-iron regulations laid down by the Department. In every investigation that has taken place a policy of conciliation has been adopted and concessions made to the Indians; and this has given them the idea that all their hardships and troubles are caused by the instructors and other local officers, who, they say, have no sympathy with them. Without entering on a discussion of the proper policy to be adopted, it is evident that if it is to be conciliation and a yielding to the ever-increasing demands of the Indians, a discretionary power must be vested in the local officers. If, on the other hand, it is to a policy of a strict obedience to orders, they must at all hazards be sustained in carrying out their instructions. To do otherwise is to impair the usefulness of the men who are in daily contact with the Indians, between whom and their instructors the utmost confidence should exist.

One of the puzzles that vexes the Indian is, that when he is told by an instructor in answer to some demand that it is contrary to instructions, yet the first high officer that comes along complies with his demands. The Indian then naturally looks upon the instructor as a liar, hardhearted and unkind, and his usefulness is gone. The situation simply resolves itself into this, that the local officers must either be allowed some discretion, or they must be backed up by sufficient force to enforce their orders, and to ensure this more men and horses must be sent to this post. The Government went to a great deal of trouble to send the offscourings of the plains over here, where they would be out of the way; they must now continue their efforts to prevent their continuing to be a nuisance."



\* (The writer's opening remarks, "The events of last week," refers to a dispute between an Indian and a farm instructor which was resolved through the intervention of Supt. Crozier.)

"Herald" Writer Claims that During the Month of July 1884 Big Bear "Begged" the Government to Teach His People Farming Skills

"Big Bear - This Chief, whose name has for a long time occupied an undue prominence in the annals of the day, has entered on a new career, and one which is likely to prove more useful to all concerned than the unsettled one he has so long followed. At an interview with Major Crozier and Indian Agent Rae a few days ago he announced it as his intention to select his reserve at once and to move on to it. He pleaded in extenuation of his former course that he was laboring under a false impression and did not understand things as they really were, and had consequently allowed himself to be too much influenced by his young men. He could now see that the government had done more for him than they were required to do by the treaty. He was ready to go on to a reserve with such of his people as would follow him. He said they were all very ignorant of farming and the modes of settled life, and begged that the government would send a man to teach them who would have some patience with their ignorance and not get angry and abuse them because they could not do things at once. He spoke most reasonably and with apparent candor throughout, and concluded by asking for provisions to keep him while he gathered his men together and went to Pitt. If he went there as he agreed, the agent would know that he was in earnest, and then he would ask for something else when he had got to work. He got what he asked in the way of provisions and left town, and there is every reason to believe he is in earnest, and that with his settlement on his reserve one of the few disturbing elements in the Indian question will be quieted."<sup>21</sup>

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The Crees of Poundmaker's Band Attacked Battleford

Without His Approval

When Poundmaker's hungry Crees learned of the Duck Lake battle from the Metis messengers they determined at once to move on to Battleford and loot its stores, despite the Chief's disapproval, claims the historian J. Howard.

"The people of the village and settlers in the vicinity had ample warning of the Indians' approach and fled to the fort. Five hundred and twelve persons, about three hundred of them women and children, were brought inside the stockade. The town

was some distance away, beyond the range of the fort's cannon, and could not be defended; on the other hand the hilltop stockade was invulnerable to Indian attack.

The night of their arrival the Indians began sacking the village and continued this for days, until every house and store, including the Hudson's Bay post, had been emptied and destroyed."<sup>22</sup>

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The Belleville, Ontario newspaper, "Daily Intelligencer", brought the following report on April 17:

"Every house and store on the south side of Battle River has been ransacked and all the good not appropriated destroyed. All persons other than those occupying the town on the northside are homeless and many are destitute. If communication continues severed with the front, choke-dog\* and bacon will become the staple food in the near future. It is estimated that one-thousand head of cattle and six hundred horses were driven off by the Indians. Agricultural enterprises have been thoroughly checked and all seed in the country is destroyed and farmers generally ruined. The season is propitious, but all work is suspended. Several half-breed families are in custody for thieving and destroying property after the raid. It is feared that the Indians have materially injured Oliver's saw mill at Turtle River. It is reported that Instructor Payne's body was chopped up and thrown about the barnyard. Instructor Jefferson is a prisoner with Poundmaker. The persons within the stockade number five hundred and six."<sup>23</sup>

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\*(Choke-dog refers to hard Dorset cheese.)

The Crees ranged beyond the town also, burning everything that would ignite. Fleeing homesteaders reported that their way was lighted at night by the flames from burning homesteads. A few farmers, unable to get away in time were reportedly murdered. Battleford's inhabitants, safe inside the stockade had enough food (inside the fort) to last them for three months, but the siege, imposed by the Crees, was lifted after one month.

#### Returning Scout Brings News of Frog Lake Tragedy to Metis Community

While Battleford was under siege, a returning Metis scout, Isadore McKay, brought the message that two priests had been murdered by Indians in the tiny village of Frog Lake. The scout seemed unaware that not only the priests but nearly all the whites had been killed. He told the council that everyone had fled and that Clarke had supplied arms to Indians to fight the Metis. The scout explained:

"I came from Lake Assiniboia. I came by the winter road. I crossed the Saskatchewan at Carlton. Everyone had fled...The Indians at Sandy Lake and at Snake prairie fled to Lake Peche,

and I heard that they were equipped and all against us. They were equipped by Clarke.

I saw a man from Battle River, Philip Muskegon, 8 days ago. He said it was his second journey, that he was carrying letters; ...Paul Laronde read the letters which he showed, the letters were in the lining of his vest...The letters contained the news of Father Fafard and Marchand..."<sup>24</sup>

On April 2, Father Fafard and Marchand were celebrating mass. Indians came and went during the service but the priests managed to remain composed. Big Bear stood by the door frowning upon the members of his tribe who interrupted the solemnity of the celebration.

"Pere Fafard prayed. 'May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ keep my soul unto life everlasting...'

The eyes of the priests flickered briefly to the aisle of the church as another Indian entered, strode almost to the altar rail, lowered himself slowly to one knee, and stared at them unblinkingly.

Father Fafard gasped and reddened with anger. The newcomer was L'Espirt Errant, Wandering Spirit, War Chief of the Crees, and he was in full regalia...

The mass droned on. After the first glance Father Fafard paid no attention to the pagan chief kneeling mockingly before the altar, his implacable eyes following every movement of the priests...

The congregation was fascinated by the immobile figure of the war chief in the isle and the responses gradually grew fainter and died."<sup>25</sup>

After the service Wandering Spirit told Quinn, the Indian agent, to go to the Indian camp. Quinn refused. He was a proud and independent man who had lived long among the Native Peoples and was married to a Cree woman. Feeling himself safe among his wife's relatives he opposed the war chief's command 'Nea', (Go,) a second time. Without further hesitation, Wandering Spirit shot Quinn in the face. He dropped dead at Wandering Spirit's feet.

Within the next few hours, seven more people were shot seemingly without serious provocation: Charles Guin, a half-breed carpenter, John Williscraft, a mechanic, John Gowanlock, operator of a government-built flour mill, Delaney, the farm advisor and the priests Marchand and Fafard. George Dill, a trader and Will Gilchrist, an employee of the flour mill, ran for cover but were chased and gunned down a few miles away from the settlement. Only three whites survived the killings, namely

the widows Delaney and Gowanlock and William B. Cameron, a young Hudson's Bay Company clerk.

Charlebois attempts to explain the murders at Frog Lake as follows:

"The Frog Lake incident was the culmination of a series of events. For years Big Bear's band had been in a state of semi-starvation. They had been harrassed by the government agents attempting to force them onto land reserves which they knew were inadequate to their needs. They had reached the breaking point and were going to follow Louis Riel's advice to take captives and use them to bargain with Government authorities. However, their plan was upset by a confrontation between Quinn and Wandering Spirit."<sup>26</sup>

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The widows Delaney and Gowanlock remained as captives of Big Bear's band and wrote a small book, entitled, "Two months in the camp of Big Bear", after their release. The Battleford newspaper printed their stories in April 1885. An excerpt from Mrs. Delaney's account reads as follows:

"Mrs. Delaney's account.

...We were followed and surrounded by the Indians. The two priests, Mr. and Mrs. Gowanlock, Mr. Williscraft, Mr. Dill, Mr. Gouin, Mr. Quinn, my husband and myself formed the party of whites. My husband and I walked ahead. When we had got about one acre from the house we heard shots, which we thought were fired in the air. We paid little or no attention to them. I had my husband by the arm. We were thus linked when old Mr. Williscraft rushed past, bare-headed. I turned my head to see what was the cause of his excitement, when I saw Mr. Gowanlock fall. I was about to speak when I felt my husband's arm drop from mine--and he said, 'I am shot too'. Just then the priests rushed up and Father Fafard was saying something in French, which I could not catch. My husband staggered over about twenty feet from me and then back again, and fell down beside me. I bent down and raised his head upon my lap. I think over forty shots must have been fired, but I could not tell what side the shot came from that hit my husband. I call Father Fafard and he came over and asked my husband if he say the 'Confiteor'. My husband said 'yes', and then repeated the prayer from end to end. As he finished the prayer, the priest said: -- 'My poor brother, I think you are safe with God', and as the words died upon his lips he received his death wound, and fell prostrate across my husband. I did not see who fired the shot. I only saw one shot fired; I thought it was for myself, but it was for my husband, and it finished him. In a couple of minutes an Indian, from the opposite side, ran up, caught me by the wrist and told me to go with him. I refused, but I saw another Indian shake his

head at me and tell me to go on. He dragged me by force away. I got one glance -- the last -- at my poor husband's body, and I was taken off. After we had gone a piece I tried to look back, but the Indian gave me a few shakes, pretty roughly, and then dragged me through the creek up to my waist in water, then over paths full of thorns and briars, and finally flung me down in his tent. I will not now stay to describe my feelings or attempt to give in language an idea of the million phantoms of dread and terror; memory seemed but too keen, and only too vividly could I behold the repetition of the scenes that had just passed before me.

There is no possibility of giving an idea of our sufferings. The physical pain, exposures, dangers, colds, heats, sleepless nights, long marches, scant food, poor raiment, etc., would be bad enough, but we must not lose sight of the mental anguish that memory, only too faithful, could inflict upon us, and the terror that altumate hope and despair would compel us to undergo."<sup>27</sup>

(The latter sentences portray the somewhat exaggerated style of writing popular at that time.)

#### Frog Lake Incident Could Also be Explained as the Result of a

##### Clandestine Liaison

When Jim Brady, former President of the Metis Society, was interviewed in 1960, he shed new light on the behind-the-scenes incidents which could have caused the killings at Frog Lake. Brady was informed that a clandestine relationship between an Indian woman and the local farm instructor played a significant role in the murders. This information was passed along to James Brady by an old friend. While the story was told to him the Indian woman was a visitor to the house in which Brady stayed. Brady later related the incident to Art Davis, professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

Davis: "Some years back you had a true story of the Frog Lake massacre, do you remember that?"

Brady: Yes, I remember that.

Davis: Well, why don't you tell me what the true story was...

Brady: In the year 1884...the Crees had been driven and forced onto their reserves...there was a number of Big Bear's band who had been allocated this reserve at Frog Lake and an agent had been sent up and the entire paraphernalia of the Indian Department...

At that time the Catholic missionaries had established themselves also at Frog Lake where they were busy proselyting (sic) the Cree Indians. Stationed there were the two missionaries...Fathers (Fafard) and Marchand. At that time among the personnel of the Union Agency was the Indian Agent Thomas Quinn. Quinn himself was of Sioux descent and a Catholic and it certainly didn't show good judgement on the part of the Indian Department to place him as a supervisor over the Cree...

Among them was the farming instructor Delaney, who was married and his wife resided with him on the reserve.

(Jim Brady then described a young Cree woman, by the name of Mrs. Peau--"the belle of the tribe"--who was married to the nephew of Wandering Spirit. The nephew had been a member of the "Chicken Lodge", a soldier society similar to the dog soldier society among the Cherokee. This society was a young men's organization which had the duty of policing members of the tribe, on the hunting camp or at important festivities. Wrongdoers were severely punished.)

...but due to the hard times, you see, the Indians they were starving so consequently many of them became converts to Catholicism...

Davis: They had food to hand out to converts:

Brady: And naturally they used this you might almost say as a political weapon, because Quinn himself was a Catholic and so was Delaney and between the two of them they would be influenced by the priests in the distribution of these supplies. These supplies were held over the heads of the Indians as a club...but Wandering Spirit's nephew had deserted the chicken lodge society and he had become a convert to Catholicism... He worked around the mission and got his food out of this. Well, he married this girl. Originally he had married her according to the pagan religion but after he became a convert he was lawfully married according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the summer of 1884, Delaney, the farming instructor, he happened to look at this girl, and she was about the most attractive one on the reserve, so naturally he made a play for her, with the result, you see, there was a sort of clandestine liaison going on...During the haying season, in 1884, Delaney took her away with him from her husband, and he took her out to the camp...and every Indian on the reserve knew that Delaney was shacking up with this woman and her husband resented it. He went to the missionaries and told them, 'That white man is running around with my wife tell him to stop. You people say you have a law against this.' Well, no one knows whether the missionaries intervened or not; but Delaney, he was Irish and a rather excitable character, and no doubt it wouldn't have done any good if the priests didn't seem to be able to exercise any moral restraint on him. After all, he was one of the most responsible of the Indian Department employees because he assisted with giving out the rations."

(The young man then put his views to the priests in this way:)

"Now, that never happens among us Indians because when a woman committed adultery it would be an affront to her family. Her brothers would put her to death or her own family would. Besides that, the Indian husband always had the right to punish his wife. So he gets pretty fed up with this one day so after she returns from one of her escapades he just grabs her and he beats the daylight out of her. As a result he found himself up on charges before the R.C.M.P. because the white man told her, under our law your husband can't touch you. It is wrong for him to do that. So he was taken and prosecuted and they put him in the cells at Fort Pitt

just as a sort of punishment to impress upon him that he mustn't beat his wife. It was at Fort Pitt that he served this very short period of imprisonment, about 30 days was the usual thing.

One of the things that infuriated the Crees was that when they had him in the cells at Fort Pitt one of the mounties used considerable violence on him...

When the young fellow came back to the reserve and he attempted to pick things up again with his wife, well, it just went from bad to worse. He was powerless because he had no means by which he could punish her or restrain her. He had lost face. Well he realized then that there was something wrong with this Christian religion who preached one thing and then practised another. Consequently you see he became a renegade, he went back from Christianity then. He went to his old brothers in the chicken lodge.

Well the Chicken lodge is a warrior's society and an affront against one is an affront against all and it is a matter of blood vengeance.

...Quinn didn't interfere. The Indian Agent he didn't make any attempt to discipline his employee and point out to him the seriousness of his actions ...When the (Frog Lake) rebellion began...they surrounded the whites in the church. Wandering Spirit sent some Indians to bring Quinn, because Quinn was not present at the actual massacre. Quinn refused to come. He was a stubborn man so they shot him. Well, they also shot the priests because they felt it was the only way they could get rid of this undesirable situation."

Davis: Have you ever seen any account of this in print anywhere?...

Brady: I have never seen it in print...

Davis: I suppose this shows that there is always more underneath the surface than appears in print.

Brady: Well, most historical accounts of any event differ because its always the ruling class that write histories."<sup>28</sup>

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#### The Archbishop of St. Boniface Wrote That the Frog Lake Murders

##### Were Not Committed without Provocation

Several months after the Frog Lake tragedy, the "Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette", printed a "Manifesto", written by Tache, the Archbishop of St. Boniface, which pointed out that certain non-Native individuals in the Frog Lake settlement had brutalized Indians. The persons who kept these brutalities from general knowledge, namely the Fathers Marchand, Fafard, were killed along with those whom they were striving to protect. Such poor treatment was not exceptional, the Archbishop added. The following excerpt from the Archbishop's Manifesto bears painful testimony of cruelty to Indians:

"I, therefore, do not in any way wish to justify the Indians, but as it is right that the truth should be known, and at the risk of exciting great surprise, I affirm that the massacres were not committed without previous provocation. I here envoke the testimony of one of the victims himself. The Reverend Father Fafard said in conversation with another missionary, who in turn related it to me: 'Such a one acts with shameful brutality towards the Indians. He will be killed some day.' The person alluded to was killed, and two devoted missionaries increased the number of victims they were striving to protect.

A gentleman, whose veracity I cannot question assured me that some Indians had told him in 1884 that such an individual, whom he mentioned, 'treated them like dogs', and the same individual was also killed by the Indians who had lodged the complaint against him. I state these particulars so painful to relate, because the above are not the only exceptions 'to the considerate treatment to which the poor Indians have moral claim', and because I have in view the future a great deal more than the past."<sup>29</sup>

The Cree Chief Big Bear Arranged the Evacuation

of Fort Pitt to Avoid Bloodshed

After the murders at Frog Lake, the people of Fort Pitt were in dread of attack and took immediate steps to strengthen their position. The fort sheltered about 22 policemen and 28 civilians. The police were under the command of Capt. Francis Dickens, son of the novelist. Dickens tried to improve the defence of the fort by placing carts and cordwood between the buildings and then forming ramparts with sacks of grain and trade goods; but the fort's main problem was its inaccessibility to a water supply.

Big Bear's band had been joined by another band of Plain's Cree and together they approached the Fort on April 10. The Crees were bent on assaulting the stockade despite Big Bear's attempts to prevent an attack. Charlebois told the story of the Chief's solution to the dilemma.

"Big Bear could not persuade Wandering Spirit, or the Plains and Wood Cree warriors, not to attack Fort Pitt - an act which would undoubtedly result in the annihilation of the North West Mounted Police. Big Bear, however, found a solution by which no lives were lost. Big Bear offered a deal whereby the civilians would leave Fort Pitt and come into the Cree camp under his guarantee of protection. And, if the police would leave their arms at Fort Pitt, they would be allowed to depart. The Crees could claim a bloodless victory and the contents of Fort Pitt.

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Dickens agreed. However, as the Crees supervised the civilians' evacuation, Dickens hitched a team of horses to a previously prepared scow and quickly towed it to the ice-filled river. All the police, with their arms, jumped into the scow and started their slow drifting journey down river. The Crees were completely surprised and fired only a few shots, being more interested in taking the civilians prisoner and looting Fort Pitt."<sup>30</sup>

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No mention of Big Bear's compromise was made in A. Begg's account of Fort Pitt evacuation. He described the parlay between the Hudson's Bay Company officer MacLean and the Crees, which ended in MacLean's arrest by the Indians. In Begg's version, the "savages" were bent on mischief, and MacLean "sent word to Dickens to get away with his force as quickly as possible." MacLean then sent for his family to join him in the Cree camp. The diary of Corporal Sleigh, reprinted as part of Begg's chapter on the Frog Lake Massacre, explains that, "Big Bear sent letter down. Sent word for everybody to evacuate fort..."<sup>31</sup>

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The Police Escaped from Fort Pitt in a Leaky Scow. Many were

Frostbitten. Clothing Frozen on their Backs.

Entries in Corporal Sleigh's diary between April 14 to 22, were as follows:

"April 14 - No relief, and things look blue. Everybody in good spirits. H. Quinn, D. Cowan and Cl. Loasby, with three saddle horses, went out scouting to Frog Lake. Body of Indians at top of hill, 800 yards from fort. Two hundred and fifty Indians, armed and mounted. Had Dufresne, Sr., and Haplin, Hudson's Bay Company, prisoners. Big Bear sent letter down. Sent word for everybody to evacuate fort and give up arms. Doors barricaded, and men in places. Indians had big war dance on hill. Indians skulking through woods in every direction. Mr. MacLean, of Hudson's Bay Company, had parley with them on hill.

Double sentries in barracks. Two hundred and fifty Indians, on war path, surround us.

April 15 - Mr. MacLean, at noon, went on hill to parley. Three scouts came galloping through towards Pitt. Constable Cowan shot dead, Loasby badly wounded, and horse killed. Shots fired from loop holes; two Indians killed, Quinn missing, and two wounded. Mr. MacLean and Francois Dufresne taken prisoners. Mr. MacLean wrote down to his wife to come out and give herself up, and all the Hudson's Bay Company employees to do the same. The Hudson's Bay employees, twenty-two in number, gave themselves up to Big Bear. Impossible to hold fort now, so we had to gracefully retire across the river in a scow, and camped for night,

not forgetting to bring colors along. Nearly swamped crossing, river being rough and scow leading badly. General idea prevailing that we would be attacked going down river. Took Loasby along. Thus ended the siege of Fort Pitt.

April 16 - Up at 4:30 after passing a wretched night. Snowing fast, and very windy. Moving slow. Several men frost-bitten. Clothing frozen on our backs. Had some narrow escapes in ice jams. Camped at nine for dinner. Resumed trip at noon.

April 18 - Started at seven a.m. Day dull and cold. Much ice running.

April 19 - Sunday. Left Slap Jack Island at 7:13 a.m. Ran for five hours. Camped on Beaver Island, number 35. Ran on three hours, and camped on Pine Island for night.

April 20 - Here all day. Barricaded the scow. Inspected arms. Rough-looking parade. Wounded man better.

April 21 - Left island at 7 a.m. Eleven a.m. hailed interpreter Joseph Alexander and two policemen on south bank. They had despatches for us. They reported Battleford safe, and troops expected daily. Ran all day and stopped on small island for the night. River falling rapidly. Struck on sand-bars. All slept on board scow. Two men on picket.

April 22 - Started at 5:45 a.m., reached Battleford at nine a.m. Garrison turned out and presented arms. Police band played us into fort. Enthusiastic greeting. Ladies gave us a grand dinner."<sup>32</sup>

Toronto Newspaper Claimed that Government was "Misled" About True

#### Feelings of Native Peoples Before North-West Troubles

Several months after the North-West disturbances, the Toronto Daily Mail claimed that the officials in the Territories must have "grossly misled" the Ottawa Government about the feelings which existed among Metis and Indians, because the "uprising came like a bolt from the blue upon the agents" in the disaffected districts. The paper mentioned the names of Payne, a farm instructor murdered in the Battleford district, Quinn, Delaney and Father Fafard and Marchand. Peter Ballendine's role as government spy was outlined in this article also.

Excerpts from this article are printed herewith:

"It has often been alleged by the Opposition press that the officials of the North-West must have grossly misled the Ottawa Government touching the feeling which existed among the Metis and Indians just before the outbreak last spring. It is evident, however, from reports quoted by Mr. Dewdney in the North-West Council the other day, that the uprising came like a bolt from the blue upon the agents residing in the disaffected districts.

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...Instructor Payne, Mr. Delaney and agent Quinn, who were murdered, had sent down most favorable reports of the bands at Frog Lake and the Eagle Hills. Peter Ballandine, a man brought up among the Indians and employed to make a confidential report regarding Big Bear's sentiments towards the government...Quinn, like Ballandine, had spent his life among the Bands, had Indian blood in his veins, and was married to an Indian wife. He had not been appointed for any political service, but solely because of his fitness. It is safe to say, therefore, that when his knowledge of the Indian character failed to reveal to him any sign of the plot that was on foot, no ordinary white office-holder, however, proficient in his duties, could have foreseen it. Delaney and Payne were also first-class officers and it goes without saying that Rev. Fathers Fafard and Marchand enjoyed the confidence of the savages to some extent, yet we know how terribly they were deceived. The truth is the Indian can keep a secret. When he is planning an uprising, he does not adopt O'Donovan Rossa's method of proclaiming his intentions from the housetops, but works in the dark, sending and receiving messages in a manner that arouses no suspicion. The Hindoo possesses the same faculty of silent organization, witness the suddenness with which he precipitated the mutiny in 1857. In a region like the North-West, it is never safe to assert that the Indian population is loyal. No savage can be loyal to our civilization, for he knows that it means the extinction of his race."33

PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE

IN CHAPTER SIX OF THE PROJECT

MIDDLETON	General of Canadian Dominion Military Forces .
POUNDMAKER	Cree chief camped at Cut-Knife-Hill.
BIG BEAR	Cree chief from the area of Frog Lake.
OTTER	Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of the Second Column which marched to the South Saskatchewan from Swift Current.
HERSCHMER	Superintendent of the Mounted Police whose force joined Otter's Second Column.
CROWFOOT	Blackfoot chief whose band did not take part in the uprising.
JEFFERSON	Federal Government agricultural representative, from Battleford, for a short time imprisoned by Poundmaker.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Battle of Cut-Knife-Creek

#### Introduction to Chapter Six:

While General Middleton was engaged in the fight at Fish Creek, Lt. Col. Otter was on his way from Swift Current to Battleford. On the evening of April 16, the Colonel and his troops crossed the Saskatchewan River. Five-and-a-half days later they reached Battleford and set up camp close to the town. Three companies of soldiers were sent to occupy Battleford and shortly thereafter the inhabitants, which were still in the police barracks since Poundmaker's camp had raided the town, returned to their homes.

Chief Poundmaker and his band were living about thirty-eight miles from Battleford at Cut-Knife-Creek. With the Chief were a group of Stoney Indians, and it was rumored that Big Bear and his band were on the way to join Poundmaker's camp. Poundmaker expected an attack from government troops at any time. He had sent word to Riel that he was in need of help, but Riel was in no position to comply with the Chief's request because he knew that Middleton's army was stationed close to Batoche and ready to strike at any moment.

On May 1st, Otter decided to lead a surprise attack on Poundmaker camped at Cut-Knife-Creek. He had heard that the chief was hesitating between war and peace and felt that if a junction of the two great Chiefs, Big Bear and Poundmaker, could be prevented, an imminent threat to his forces would be removed. To Middleton he wrote that he set out on a "reconnaissance", but in view of the force of three hundred men, and three guns which accompanied him, his true intentions can be readily detected.

The battle between the Crees and Otter's men was intense. At one point the militia were nearly surrounded, but somehow managed to maintain an exit through which they retreated. Six hours after the beginning of the engagement, Otter and his men withdrew and returned to Battleford. It was due to Poundmaker's and Fine-Day's restraint that not many more militia men were killed or wounded as they escaped through the narrow bottleneck kept open during their retreat.

A day later, Poundmaker's band journeyed to Big Bear's camp. After the battle of Batoche, the Chief and his people surrendered to General Middleton. The General accused Poundmaker

CHAPTER FIVE



PERSONALITIES WHICH PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE

IN CHAPTER FIVE OF THE PROJECT

RIEL                   Metis leader stationed at Batoche.

DUMONT               General of Metis army stationed at Batoche.

MIDDLETON           General of Canadian Dominion military forces.

HOWRIE               Cree interpreter for the Mounted Police,  
stationed at Carlton.

TROTTIER             Metis from the Batoche area.

LEPINE               Metis from the Batoche area.

CARON                Minister of Defence, stationed in Ottawa.

SCHMIDT             Secretary of the Metis Council, stationed  
at Batoche.

BRELAND             Metis of advanced age who worked as a scout  
for Dumont. Breland was a member of the  
North West Territorial Council.

WHITE CAP           Sioux Chief.

SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS DISCUSSED

IN CHAPTER FIVE OF THE PROJECT

April 15             Surrender of Fort Pitt.

April 17             Middleton's army arrives at Clarke's Crossing  
on the South Saskatchewan River.

April                (Exact date unknown.) Riel yields to Dumont's  
plan of ambushing Middleton's troops. Dumont  
dispatches messages to Big Bear, Poundmaker,  
and the Sioux of White Cap's band so that they  
may assist him with the ambush.

April 24             Battle of Fish Creek. Metis victory over  
Middleton's forces.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Battle of Fish Creek

#### Introduction to Chapter Five:

After the surrender of Fort Pitt many Indians in the Territorial joined Big Bear's band. The fall of the fort had melted away any lingering doubts about the invincibility of the Mounted Police. Reports of isolated Indian raids spread terror in the hearts of the settler's in the West and many fled to seek safety beyond the boundaries of the Saskatchewan district. Macdonald had valid reasons to foresee the possibility of a general Indian uprising. It was for this reason that the government had dispatched the greatest number of troops it could muster into the North-West. Although the Metis forces were estimated to be no more than one-thousand, the number of treaty Indians were close to twenty-thousand. There were also numerous other Half-breed settlements between Wood Mountain and St. Albert which sympathized with the Metis grievances and could have provided men and arms to support an uprising.

The government's military commanders had two primary objectives for their campaign in the Territories. The first objective was to localize the "rebellion." This was done by the immediate despatch of guns and men to Fort Qu'Appelle. The rapidity with which these troops were thrown into the North-West from Eastern Canada kept quiet the disaffected Indians and Metis in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The second objective was to crush the armed resistance of Indians or Metis by military force. The original intention of Major General Middleton had been to move against St. Antoine or Batoche with two separate columns but with the rising of Poundmaker and Big Bear it was deemed advisable to despatch three different columns against three principal centres: Batoche, Battleford and Fort Pitt.

General Middleton was in charge of the column against Batoche. After a strenuous march from Fort Qu'Appelle the force arrived at Clarke's Crossing, on the South Saskatchewan, on April 17th. At this point Middleton divided his troops into two groups who marched in parallel fashion alongside opposite banks of the river towards Batoche. By April 24, the General and one half of his troops had reached a thickly wooded coulee through which ran a little creek. This area was known to the Metis as "Tourond's Coulee," or "Fish Creek."



When the Canadians approached the coulee they were surprised by Gabriel Dumont and his men who were well hidden along both sides of the creek. A fierce battle ensued. During the fight the Canadians had forty men wounded and ten killed. The Metis lost four men and had two wounded. General Middleton's column did not reach the site of the battle until late in the evening. At this point both sides had been under heavy cross-fire for many hours and were ready to withdraw. A thunderstorm followed by sleet and rain had soaked and chilled the fighting men during the afternoon. When Dumont suggested to pursue the retreating Canadian his remaining force of 56 men was unwilling to comply with his wishes. Impressed by the extraordinary stamina and courage displayed during the battle Gabriel pressed the Metis no further and returned with them to Batoche.

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The foregoing summary describes the events before and during the battle of Fish Creek. The documents which follow present an account of the action from diverse positions. Documents selected attempt to portray the involvement of groups and individuals in the battle rather than the battle itself.



The government's first objective had been to localize the "rebellion," the second, to crush the Metis resistance by military force.

After the surrender of Fort Pitt many Indians in the Territory joined Big Bear's band. The fall of the fort had melted away any lingering doubts about the invincibility of the Mounted Police. Reports of isolated Indian raids spread terror in the hearts of all white settlers in the West and many fled to seek safety beyond the boundaries of the Saskatchewan district. Sir John A. Macdonald had valid reasons to foresee the possibility of a general Indian uprising. It was for this reason that the government had dispatched the greatest number of troops it could muster into the North-West. Although the Metis forces were estimated to be no more than 1,000, the number of Treaty Indians was close to 20,000. There were also numerous other Half-breed settlements between Wood Mountain and St. Albert which sympathized with the Metis grievances and could have provided men and arms to support an uprising.

G. F. Stanley outlined two primary objectives of the Canadian government's campaign.

"The first object of the Government was...to localize the rebellion...This was accomplished by the immediate despatch of men to Qu'Appelle, even prior to the fight at Duck Lake. The rapidity with which these and subsequent troops were thrown into the North-West from Eastern Canada kept quiet the disaffected Indians and Metis in the Qu'Appelle valley...

...the second object was to crush the armed resistance of the Indians and Metis by military force. The original intention of the Major-General had been to move against St. Antoine or Batoche, ...with two separate columns, but with the rising of Poundmaker and Big Bear it was deemed advisable to despatch three different columns against the three principal centres: Batoche, Battleford and Fort Pitt."<sup>1</sup>

1. Stanley  
"The  
Birth of  
Western  
Canada"  
[ibid.,  
p. 354,  
355.

The three men in charge of the columns, were General Middleton, who planned to take Batoche, thus relieving Prince Albert; Colonel Otter, who was to march from Swift Current to relieve Battleford; and General Strange who set out from Calgary via Edmonton to move against Big Bear. Middleton and Strange hoped to effect an eventual junction at Fort Pitt.

Middleton's men marched through wind, hail and snow to Clarke's Crossing.

On April 17, Middleton had reached Clarke's Crossing. There

he divided his force into two columns. The second column was transported across the South Saskatchewan River to march parallel with the first column down the river towards Batoche. This move proved to be a disadvantage to Middleton on April 24, when the General met Dumont's men in the area of Fish Creek, (also called "Tourond's Coulee.")

Middleton describes the march to Clarke's Crossing as follows:

"We had a terrible march, in the face of a regular blizzard of wind and hail the whole day, with not a tree or bush to break the force of the wind. It was fearfully cold, and we had constantly to dismount and walk to restore our circulation. We halted half-way, but could not make a fire, and so had to do without our hot tea.

We reached the Crossing about 4 p.m....There were a few houses on our side of the river, one of them being inhabited by a Mr. Clarke and his wife...

The south branch of the Saskatchewan River is here about 200 yards broad with a powerful current running about four miles an hour, high banks, and a wide deep border of the thickest and stickiest mud on each side, in which were embedded large boulders of huge blocks of ice." 2

A soldier in Middleton's army reported the march to Clarke's Crossing and eventual arrival at Fish Creek.

"April 17 - Friday. Clarke's Crossing. Marched at 7:30. It was very cold last night and this morning. Had no wood to cook our breakfast...had nothing else but hardtack to eat...Not a tree seen all day. Had to pick all the wood we could find on the way. The roads were frozen this morning. One of the Captains wanted to make a fire last night not feeling well and had to pay one of the teamsters \$1 for a stick, everyone down on the teamster...I believe we have marched 200 miles since leaving Fort Qu'Appelle and are 86 miles from Prince Albert by the sun table. Do not know when we will get across the river. There are two or three log houses with thatched roofs and one stone house...

April 18, Saturday. We were allowed to sleep until 7 a.m.

It is a raw stormy day with snow falling...Hay is \$60 per ton, potatoes \$2.50 per bushel, bread 40¢ per loaf and can hardly be got....Saskatoon is 15 miles away and has about 40 houses." 3

The same diary has a later entry which reported a salary of \$50 for April. The salary rate provides a comparison for the cost

of hay and food. Despite fatigue and cold the men of Middleton's army engaged in a tug-of-war. A few individuals were disciplined, for "sleeping on the job," and "swearing" at the Sergeant Major:

The diary continues:

"April 20, Monday...Great excitement over a tug of war between 12 of the 90th and 12 of the teamsters. The teamsters got the best of it both in wrestling and in the tug of war. The 10th Crenadier beat both teamsters and the 90th....One of 4 company men was put in the guard tent for swearing at the sergeant Major.

April 21, Tuesday. Had milk and bread for our tea last night. There was one of the picket from No. 1 Company fell asleep while on duty last night. He was placed under arrest.

April 22, Wednesday...Blake that was under arrest for swearing at Sergeant Major Watson was ordered to have 4 hrs pack drill today. He would not do anything he was told so he was brought back to the guard tent and handcuffs put on. I believe he will be given another chance tomorrow...It is said that the Mounted Police have changed their uniform as some of the rebels have Mounted Police uniforms and it would be hard to tell them apart...We will know the Mounted Police and Prince Albert by their signals. They will raise their hands three times to the tops of their heads and we will raise our right hand three times." 4

April 24, at Fish Creek, the "Creeds" kept up a continuous fire.

"April 24, Friday...we heard firing in front 9:30 a.m. We had run in some rebels, firing commenced immediately. Some of our scouts and cavelry(sic) were wounded and I believe two killed. The Creeds(sic) kept up a continual fire and so did we but it was almost impossible to see them, as they took cover in the bush.

5.  
Soldier's  
Diary  
P.A.C.

Went through some of their houses but did not disturb anything.

It seemed as though they had just got up from breakfast." 5

Indian Scout would not abandon his relative.

Metis Scouting Reports of the same period give accounts of two Indians on horseback who were pursued by militiamen, and of Mr. Breland who went to discover the whereabouts of the Police.

"No. 2 - Scouting Report.

Translation

Report of We-cha-we-co-pewin.

"When I left here I walked all night...I think their camp is on the hill on this side of the river. On the hill are some tents and in the hollow are, I think, most of the tents. It is a quarter of a mile or more from the river. We saw nothing on the other side...When we saw the horsemen who were already ahead of us. They passed about half a mile from us, between us and the river. We fled from the bank to the open, and as we were at the distance they were cutting off our road. There were at least 30 of them. Those who pursued us were few in number. My partner said to throw away our blankets, and we threw them away. He was nearest made us a sign to stop but I said he wants to catch us. Whip, he said to me let us pray and I thought of God. I said I will try to die rightly thinking of God, and we prayed hard, crying to God. They would descent every time they wanted to fire on us, and when I saw they wanted to fire I would cry out to separate and we would separate. There were lots of little old holes and their horses stuck...I saw that my partners horse was giving out...I always wound round behind and cried: "Courage, courage." Then I said that I would not abandon my relative alive and I said to him that I would not leave him when I said so he cried out for joy which encouraged me also...I said to him "Courage fly try to get away from me because I want to defend myself, I want to fire on them" and I made him go further on and I came back and fired on them. When I saw that my partner had got away, I also fled balancing on my horse and crying out for joy...after we fled we saw fire near...."

No. 96 -- Scouting Report  
Translation

Report of Mr. Gilbert Breland who went to discover the Police at Clarke's Crossing.

"We made for the Crossing to the last cow hill. From there we could see people walking on foot...There seemed to be about forty horses. On the way back we met the same Indian whom we met before. He was fasting. We killed a little yearling ox belonging to Goulet perhaps. The Indian told us that he had left the mountain 20 days ago, that the Police wanted to go take an Indian who had broken the doors of a shed this winter. When they caught the Indian his father fired on a Policeman and killed him..."

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Riel reluctantly agreed to Dumont's plan of harrassing Middleton's troops.

Metis scouts had told Dumont that Canadian army was close to Clarke's Crossing and he was anxious to carry on an active plan

of guerilla warfare. His plan was to get ahead of Middleton's troops and harass them by night. He hoped that by preventing them from sleeping the men would become demoralized and lose the incentive to fight. Riel would not agree to Dumont's plan. He wished to have the enemy strike the first blow and the Metis to rally in defence "under the Almighty hand of Divine Providence." 7

7. Sessional Papers Ibid. P.A.C.

Dumont yielded to Riel's plan and remained in Batoche, impatient under the restrictions imposed upon him. He finally became impatient and pointed out to Riel that he was giving the enemy too many advantage. "All right!" said Riel, "do as you wish." 8 Dumont quickly despatched messages to Big Bear, Poundmaker and the Sioux of White Cap's band. He then prepared an ambush along the road leading to Fish Creek to hold up the progress of government troops until the arrival of Indian allies.

8. Dumont's Account 258 P.A.C.

On April 24, the battle of Fish Creek was fought between the Metis and one of Middleton's columns.

Louis Schmidt's account of the Fish Creek battle begins with a description of a hasty breakfast which corroborates the observation recorded in the mentioned diary, "it seems as though they had just got up from breakfast." "The Metis...Breakfasted hastily in the coulee of Tou rond or Fish Creek, as it has since been named. Their repast, barely begun had to be abandoned for the enemy arrived.

Taken thus by surprise, they could take no considered positions for combat. Also the greatest number, Gabriel with them, had to withdraw following the windings of the coulee, until they were out of sight of Middleton's soldiers. They met again at the house of Calixte Tourond where they deliberated on the means to take to return with advantage to the charge and especially to aid these brothers that they had left in the coulee.

Those, numbering about 50, after having tied their horses up to the trees along the river, found shelter near the top of the banks, in the cragginess of the terrain worn by the water, and sheltered at the same time by trees.

There they faced Middleton and his entire army and held their own through all that long and dismal and snowy day.

Happily a good number of Riel's best shots, like Philippe Gariepy, James Short, Beau-ble Laverdure, Gilbert Breland, and others were there. They did much harm to the enemy who couldn't dislodge them. I don't know how many gunners they knocked from

their guns. One or two among the riflemen had taken them specially as targets...

Towards noon, a spokesman advanced. It was the interpreter Peter Hourie...He cried to the Metis to surrender, that they would not suffer.

9.  
Memoirs  
of  
Louis  
Schmidt  
P.A.C.

But James Short cried in his turn: "You withdraw, or I kill you--Arass ki ka paskisotin leave us alone." And the battle resumed." 9

The skill and determination of the Metis in battle was obvious.

P. Charlebois wrote that the first to fire upon the Metis were Boulton's Scouts which were joined by the B and F Companies of the 90th Battalion.

"Besides Boulton's Scouts Middleton had more than 300 men, making a total of 524 or whom 60 were teamsters.

Dumont's 130 men rapidly dwindled. A few fled when firing began. Others felt that they were useless once they had fired all their power and shot. But the skill and the determination of the Metis is obvious when their poor equipment and small numbers are considered. There were but 54 remaining, when Edouard Dumont came with reinforcements from Batoche to drive back Middleton's troops." 10.  
Charle-  
bois  
Ibid,  
p. 180

Trottier, a Metis who fought at Fish Creek, tells of the arrival of reinforcements:

"When they came up I shook hands with them saying, 'We are only forty-eight, and I think many have been killed. As I spoke, I saw six of our people come out of another wood, bringing our number up to fifty-four. Then when our people had come, they (the Metis) wanted to follow them, (the government troops,) but I called out: 'Do not follow them, we have done enough for the present.'...I said to them: 'We must try and find carts to take home the wounded this evening'....When we got together at Tourond's house I found out that there had not been many of our people killed; only four were missing."

During the Battle I asked continuously where my children were, Trottier reported.

Part of Trottier's report portrays the concern the Metis had for the safety of their next-of-kin during the fighting. He told Garnot:



"...I asked continually where my children and nephews were, and I thought that all our people had been killed except a few, for no one answered me but two of my boys, and every time we stopped firing we prayed to God...It was about 5 o'clock in the evening, I called out, 'Where is Johnny?' (My brother's boy,) and I heard him answer about a hundred yards from us. Immediately after his answer they (Middleton's troops) fired three cannon shots and some rifle shots in that direction. Sometime afterwards I stood up and went to see all the people...Then my young nephew said to me, 'Uncle, come here, I want to speak to you.' I answered, 'Do not stirre nephew and do not fear, I will not leave you, I will go and see my horse and then I will go to you.'" 11

"A Policeman spoke to us in the Cree tongue," Lepine reported.

Maxime Lepine, a member of the Metis Council engaged in the battle, recounted the incident of contact with a Police spokesman who spoke the Cree tongue, also. Louis Schmidt, in his description of the Fish Creek fight, identified this person as the Police interpreter Hourie. Lepine gave the following account:

"...all day the bullets seem to fall like hail. And after... we heard a man from among the Police shout to us, speaking in the Cree tongue. He said 'his name is Borie,' and...'that we must be hungry,' and he asked to be allowed to visit us. He also asked us to tell him how many we were. And some of the others answered him. But they would not let him come. I was inclined to let him come, and felt tempted to tell him to come, but I thought it better to say nothing for fear of making a mistake and being blamed afterwards. It occurred to me that while he was with us the police would not fire, and meantime night would set in and we should be able to get away. But immediately afterwards our people came up and the soldiers fled and did not fire again, and we came away.

12.  
Sessional  
Papers  
Ibid.  
p. 18

We prayed all day, and I think prayer did more than the bullets." 12

"I found a lot of Sioux, Crees and halfbreeds going up the coulee to head off Police," said Gabriel Dumont.

Gabriel Dumont's account of the Battle of the 24 April went as follows:

"Mr. Champagne arrived...He reported Police coming from the direction of Little Mountain, on the Fourche Road. He asked for

thirty men to come...He asked Mr. Riel if he would come with them. Mr. Riel consented, asking for forty men. Nearly all the people wanted to come away. In the end some fifty came. After eating at Roger Goulet's we sent the Sioux out as scouts...We halted on the other side of the coulee...I myself rode out further. I went out of the moonlight into a tuft of trees...hearing nothing but the flute. When I got back to our people they were on their knees, praying...We killed an ox for breakfast, and got hay for our cattle. Before eating we sent Mr. Gilbert Breland to see if the enemy were coming. After we had eaten he came in.\* He said that the cavalry were coming on in front. We saddled twenty-seven horses. Then we went down the coulee and posted ourselves about a half a mile from our people. Mr. Bte. Deschamps told us he saw a trooper passing alonge and then some ten on the other side...We then mounted and prepared for a rush. While we were watching, one of them showed himself to me about 150 yards off. His horse turned sharp about and we rushed straight for him. Our men fired...I think they hit him at the first shot. He was no longer able to handle his horse; then I followed him and fired two shots at him...We exchanged fire again for a short time. The police then came down at once alongside a wood. I...met some people coming down. They were nearly all Sioux. I was told a Teton had been killed. I asked him, 'Are you dead?; He answered me: 'No.'.....Napoleon Neault called out to me: 'Mr. Dumont, I think the Indians and the Sioux are going to run, You better go and stop them.' As I saw many of our people who were in good heart, I answered: 'Yes, I'll follow them.' When I got near the horses I found a lot of people there: Sioux, Crees and some half-breeds, going up the coulee ahead of the police in order to head them off...With some of the Sioux and some half-breeds there were fifteen of us...an Indian said to me: 'Do not leave us; if you do many will run away.' I held on for a while and then said to them: 'Try and fight yourselves for a while; I will go and see our people, and I promise to come back to you. When I hear my men shouting sturdily I know they are in good heart." 13

( \* See Breland scouting report on page 79 in this chapter.)

"I don't know if I killed many, but I should not have missed often," said Gabriel after the battle of Fish Creek.

Middleton's troops at one point nearly encircled the Metis but as their pincers were closing the Metis suddently attacked the left wing,

"When they saw that I was making it too hot for them" Dumont related, "they began to put cannon volleys into the thicket where I was. Branches breaking all about me were warning me that it wasn't prudent to stay here. I don't know if I killed many, but I should not have missed often." 14

13.  
Gabriel  
Dumont  
Report  
on  
Battle  
of  
April 24.  
Sessional  
Papers  
Ibid.  
p. 21,  
22

14.  
Charles-  
bois  
Ibid.  
p. 182

At one time the opposing forces were so close that Dumont shot through Middleton's fur cap. Several other soldiers were wounded, among them John A. Macdonald's son Hugh John Macdonald. Gabriel Dumont finally set fire to the prairie grass to make the enemy back off, since they faced the wind. This manoeuvre proved successful and "the red-coats ran off without a backward look," 15 Dumont recalled.

15. Charles-  
bois  
Ibid.  
P. 182

"The Rebels advanced under cover of smoke out of the ravine," reported Middleton to his superiors.

General Middleton sent a Militia and Defence Report of the battle at Fish Creek to Ottawa headquarters on May 1st, 1885.

Excerpts from this report are as follows:

"I had previously informed you of the divisions of my forces, and on the morning of the 23rd both columns advanced on the two sides of the river, with a scow moving between them. We halted about 18 miles down the river....After a quiet night we started on the morning of the 24th at about 7 a.m. with the usual military precaution....

Though I was led to believe that the Rebels would not come so far to the front to attack us, still I was aware of the existence of a rather deep ravine or creek about five or six miles ahead....One approaching some bluffs...we suddenly receive a heavy fire from a bluff and some ground sloping back on our left, which fire was luckily too high to do mischief...the enemy gradually retired along the ravine, while our men advanced slowly to the crest of a deeply wooded part...In this former ravine a small party of Rebels made a stand, in what we found afterwards to be some carefully-constructed rifle-pits. These men were evidently their best shots - Gabriel Dumont being amongst them, but were, so to speak, caught in a trap...These men were gradually reduced in number until, from a position of our men, it was almost impossible for them to retire, and they continued to fire at intervals, doing a good deal of mischief. Captain Peters, with great pluck and dash...gallantly attempted to dislodge them, but they were so well covered and were able to bring such heavy fire on the party advancing without being seen...that I resolved to leave them....contenting myself with extending more of the 90th in front to watch them and sending some shells into the bluff now and then....In the meantime, having seen the part of the 90th extended....I galloped across to the right...On arrival there I found that the enemy was in force, trying to turn our right having set fire to the prairie as the wind was blowing towards us... The Rebels at this time advanced under cover of smoke out of the ravine....and the firing was tremendously hot, my A.D.C. Lieut.

Doucet, and several men being hit."

Middleton reported that his men were driven back a little at first but soon rallied and advanced, holding their own.

Middleton continued:

1leton "Our men were forced back a little at first, but soon rallied  
ance and advanced steadily, holding their own and taking cover well  
ort until using the enemy's own tactics, we fairly drove them back,  
dleton as they could.  
1,

5 sional By about 2 p.m. the enemy had disappeared and all firing  
ers ceased, except from the men in the ravine, who seemed by their  
6 voices reduced in number, and whom I endeavored to reach by means  
..C. of the guns from the opposite side of the ravine, I think success-  
fully, from the amount of blood afterwards found in the pits and  
a dead Sioux found near there." 16

Dumont: My soldiers fought well; to encourage one another they sang the Falcon song.

P. Charlebois cited Gabriel's account of the battle, as follows:

"I said to a Sioux, who was with me, that I would try to go through the bush to come out behind the enemy, so as to make them think we were much more numerous. A young Indian said, if you leave us, we shall all run away.

"I reassured him by saying that I was going to the 47 men who were still in the ravine. As it happened, I started to go, but I couldn't get there; it was circled by enemy sharpshooters, who, having crossed the ravine lower down, had climbed into the woods on the other side, and their cannon constantly spat shrapnel.

"Still my soldiers in the ravine fought well, encouraging one another. Isadore Dumas, however, became fearful; so, to renew his assurance, he began to sing an old song of Napoleon I, The Song of Pierre Falcon. The others picked it up in chorus, and all regained their courage.

"Unable to rejoin them, I turned back to the men I had left in the prairie thicket. My Sioux had gone, and I had but seven men remaining. I attempted to rejoin my men in the ravine, but it was impossible to get there without facing certain death.

"I took my seven men for something to eat at Calixte Tourond's place. It was then about sunset.

"I had hoped to get help from Batoche. But Riel did not want to allow men to leave; he reassured the people, telling them that we would not suffer much harm.

"Meantime my brother, Edouard, hearing the cannon, had asked Riel to allow him to leave. Finally he said: when my kin are in danger I cannot remain here, and he raced to us with 80 horsemen.

"I had managed to shift the enemy lines; the regulars had backed off while the volunteers continued the fight.

"We hurried into the thicket at their rear, and on hearing our shouts they ran, leaving some of their baggage. The doctor forgot his medicine chest, with two bottles of brandy. We drank his health.

"I thought of pursuit, but my boys were wet and chilled to the bone; it had rained all day. It was now about eight o'clock in the evening.

17.

Quimet: "May Providence be blessed, during the whole day of continuous La Question and bitter fighting, we lost but four men; two Sioux, my nephew Metisse As St. Pierre and Jose Vermette. Two others were wounded; Francois cited in Boyer, my nephew, and Michel Desjarlais, who died three days P. later.

Charlebois  
Ibid.

P.P. 182  
183

"We took our dead and our wounded, then headed for Batoche." 17

An eyewitness reported: In the Canadian camp a tent flag hid the bullet's work. It was the most horrible sight I ever witnessed.

Both forces received help at the last moment. As explained (in the foregoing account) by Gabriel Dumont, the Metis were eventually supported by 80 horsemen; among them Edouard, Gabriel's brother. Middleton's help came from his second column which had made their way across the river; but the Canadians did not press forward to attack again. The General was still not certain of the strength of Dumont's force. His militia men withdrew tired, chilled and shocked by the casualties they had suffered. Dumont suggested a counterattack, but his men were no longer willing to sustain the action. Ready for respite they withdrew, also.

A correspondent with the government forces wrote of the cease-fire at Fish Creek:

"At five o'clock the firing from the enemy had almost entirely ceased and there was every indication that not more than a dozen remained in the ravine, the largest part of the force having escaped to the eastward. One would naturally ask why they were not completely surrounded. I cannot answer the question any more than you can why the thirty-five mounted rebels who had a parley with Howie, the interpreter, were allowed to ride to the east out of their rifle pits and jeer at our troops, who were ordered to retire to the camp by the river bank. Neither can I explain why the scouts reported this morning that these same thirty-five were allowed to retire to this ravine. The hospital tents were in the rear of the centre, and the accommodations for the wounded were ample. Every comfort was given to those who were hit, and the doctors were cool and efficient. The dead whom we were able to bring from the field were laid beside one of the hospital tents, and were allowed to remain in plain view. The moral effect of course was bad. Later a tent flag hid the bullets' work. The character of the wounds was two-fold. Where the forty-five calibre Winchester had been used the orifice of the hurt was clean cut. At close quarters their (the Metis) shot guns made very jagged and terrible injuries. Duck shot, round ball, pieces of lead, irregular in shape, had been used in loading the guns, and in many instances the probe followed the track of one bullet, while the mortal wound lay in a totally different direction." 18

18.  
C.P.  
Mulvaney  
Formerly  
of No. 1  
Company  
of  
Queen's  
Own  
Rifles,  
The  
History  
of the  
North-  
West  
Rebellion  
A.H.  
Hovey  
& Co.  
Toronto  
1885

The soldier's diary cited earlier recorded an entry relating to the dead and wounded, on April 26:

19.  
Soldier's  
Diary  
P.A.C.

"Took a walk round to see the dead and wounded yesterday afternoon. It was the most horrible sight I ever witnessed." 19

Of the Canadian militia, ten were killed in battle or died of wounds, and forty were wounded.

Middleton told Caron that he regretted the list of killed and wounded was so large. He explained:

"A little after finding the firing had ceased and the enemy fled, except the two or three whom I left there for the reason above mentioned and as a thunder storm was coming up -- having removed the dead, and sent off the wounded, we pitched camp amidst a severe thunderstorm in an open spot close to the scene of the fight, which had been selected by Lord Melgund, as above mentioned. I append an official list of the killed and wounded, which I regret is so large, but which is not larger than might

be expected, considering the circumstances under which we were attacked, and the fact that not a man in the force but myself had ever before been under fire. Moreover I had only about 350 men in action and I estimate the enemy at about 300. As regards their loss, all we actually found on the field was three dead Indians, but I am confident they must have sustained a tolerably severe loss, as they would not have abandoned so strong a position, and one, from the amount of food we found in the different houses, they evidently expected to occupy for some time." 20

20.  
Caron  
Papers  
Report  
of the  
Major  
General  
Command-  
ing  
Appendix  
A  
P.A.C.

In closing Middleton mentioned the assistance of a little bugler, "William Buchanan," of the 90th Regiment, "who made himself particular useful in carrying ammunition to the right front when the fire was very hot; this he did with particular nonchalance, walking calmly about, crying: 'Now boys, who's for cartridges.'" 21

21.  
Caron  
Papers  
Ibid.

The Metis losses were four killed and two wounded.

On May 13, Middleton reported to Caron that the "rebels" had intended to capture and to hold him as hostage so that they might negotiate terms with the Government. He also reported the Metis losses but inaccurately told of a much higher number of casualties.

"May 13th. I find from papers captured at Batoche yesterday that the number of the Rebels at Fish Creek was 250 under Gabriel Dumont, that they had intended to let me enter the ravine or crest, and then destroy us, taking me prisoner, and holding me as a hostage to assist them in making terms with the Government at Ottawa. Their scheme was defeated by my having my scouts so far in advance, which obliged them to fire on them, and thus disclosed their position. I also find now that the Rebels had 11 killed or died of wounds, and 18 wounded at Fish Creek.

22.  
Caron  
Papers  
Ibid.

FRED MIDDLETON

Major General

Commanding Canadian Militia and N.W.

Field Force." 22

Middleton said later that he had men and officers who had never been under fire. Officers and men were "green," he said.

Middleton was severely criticized for his decision to divide the Canadiana forces and for "having exposed himself unwisely," at the Battle of Fish Creek, but he defended himself saying:

"I couldn't do otherwise," I had green troops, and, worse still, green officers -- green in the sense that they had never been under fire before. They did well and bravely, but while you can drill a man into a soldier in a few months, it takes years to educate officers in whom a general commanding can have implicit confidence. If I had been in command of regulars, or, possibly, if Lord Melgund had been with me from the first, I would have taken a position in rear of the line of battle, set up my flag, and sent my orders. I would have done this, that is as soon as the troops had been inspired with confidence. I value my life as much as any one can, and it is not necessary to prove my bravery, at least in England where I am known, but it was necessary that I shouldn't dodge. By the way, "pointing to his Astrachan cap with a smile," if I had been ducking when that fellow hit me the bullet would have gone into the top of my head and my quietus made. If I hadn't exposed myself you would all have been scalped. I am in an embarrassing, but not a novel position." 23

23.

C.P.

Mulvaney

Ibid.

The following excerpt from a Militia correspondent's letter gives an idea of the feelings with which the Canadian troops regarded the enemy:

"The feeling that the Half-breeds have been wronged, that the Government had been criminally negligent in its treatment of their claims, and that the politicians should be held accountable for the whole trouble, grows more deeply rooted and more widely spread. The sight of these comfortable homes and the coupled knowledge that the men who reared them, suffered the rigours of frontier life and fostered a love for the very soil itself, cannot get sufficient title to raise \$10 by mortgage on one thousand acres brings home to every man the reality of the resident's grievances." 2

24.

C.P.

Mulvaney

Ibid.



BATOCHÉ PROJECT

PART THREE

CHAPTERS SIX AND SEVEN

