

Lieutenant Jean Cyr. (b. 1848)

By Brian Cyr¹ and Lawrence Barkwell

Jean Cyr was born on December 1, 1848 at McKenzie River, the son of Jean Baptiste Cyr (b. 1825) and Marie Boucher). Jean married Madeleine Perreault dit Morin, born 1868, the daughter of Baptiste Perreault dit Morin Jr. and Catherine Grouette. They married on January 17, 1871 at Ste. Anne. The couple had five children:

- Joseph Jean Baptiste Cyr, born 1871 at Ste. Anne. He married Melanie Vermette, the daughter of Alexis Vermette and Philomene Beauchemin, in 1892.
- William Elzear Cyr, born 1873 at Ste. Anne, died at one month old.
- Alfred Cyr, born in 1874 at St. Boniface. He married Marie Alvina Vermette, the daughter of Pierre Vermette and Caroline St. Denis, in 1895.
- Marie Alpha Cyr, born in 1874 at Ste. Anne.
- Mathilde Cyr, born 1884. She married William Dumas, the son of Pierre Dumas and Isabelle St. Germain in 1909 at St. Boniface.

Not much has been written about Louis Riel's Calvary during the 1869-1870 Resistance. The reports of the day record the prowess of Calvary officers like Lieutenant Jean Cyr. It is evidence that the Metis were truly "the Lords of the Plains." The *New Nation* gives the following account on May 3, 1870 (page 1):

The Cavalry

Col. Commandant Gays² men were out again several days last week, going through manoeuvres as cavalry firing parties. One peculiarity of these exercises is that they are not those of mere recruits. It is, for the most part, like taking out a troop of old campaigners to keep up their acquaintance with a drill in which they had been perfected long since.

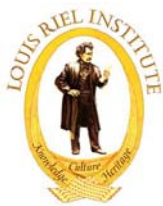
As proof of this, we would state that one day last week, the 30th ult., Lieutenant John Cyr, when armed with an old-fashioned double-barrelled gun, raced the half-mile course, and, before turning at the end, had discharged twelve shots, hitting the target each time. Without pausing a moment, he ran the course again, discharging an equal number of shots before drawing rein, and with like creditable results. If this is not splendid shooting, we do not know what to call it. Another day, one of the privates fired a common musket seventeen times during the mile-dash, hitting the target at each discharge; a second scored eighteen shots in a similar run, and a third cavalryman fifteen. Some days before, a

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² J.E. Norbert Gay, described as a 'soldier of fortune', was a Colonel of the Third Republic of France. He came to Winnipeg and stayed at the Emmerling Hotel in January of 1870. He initially described himself as a newspaper reporter. He became a supporter of Louis Riel and engaged in drilling the Metis Cavalry on modern European cavalry tactics. Gay apparently accompanied Riel and the Metis Cavalry when they went out to reconnoiter Wolseley's troops prior to their arrival at Winnipeg.

number of the infantry were engaged at target-practice, 300 yards. Out of 200 shots, 36 were centred.

Following Canada's designates assuming authority at Red River Jean Cyr became a target in the well-known "Reign of Terror." A report appeared in *Nouveau Monde*, October 15, 1870, an eastern newspaper, about a brutal attack on a young man named Cyr at Red River on September 17, 1870. The assailant was not named but was described as "an individual who lives with Mr. Schultz, who was of course, James Farquharson (Shultz's father-in-law). Farquharson had achieved much greater notoriety in the Winnipeg-Fort Garry settlement because of his leadership role in the September 13th drowning of Elzear Goulet, a Métis who had been a member of the Provisional Government court martial which tried Thomas Scott.



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