

Henrietta Ross. (1830-1873)

Henrietta Ross, the Metis daughter of a well-known retired fur trader who held many positions of authority at Red River, also remained prominent in Red River society throughout her short 42-year lifetime.

Henrietta was born on May 17, 1830, the daughter of Alexander Ross and Sally an Okanogan Indian, the daughter of Shen-a-ma-ken and Kin-em-te-qu. Her first suitor for marriage was John Gunn Jr. As early as July of 1853 he was under the impression that she had agreed to marry him. However, Reverend John Black arrived in September of 1853 quickly swept Henrietta off her feet to the dismay of John Gunn. Henrietta married Reverend John Black on December 21, 1853 at her father's home, "Colony Garden."

John Black also opened the church and a school in Kildonan.¹ His interest in education led him to found Manitoba College in 1851. This college later became the University of Manitoba. Just prior to his arrival the Hudson's Bay Company had granted the Presbyterian community £150 and a plot of land at Frog Plain (about five miles north of Upper Fort Garry) in 1851, in lieu of its rights in the Church of England's Upper Church (later St John's Church), where it had worshipped. On this site at Frog Plain the Kildonan church was completed in 1853.

Black's Kildonan church was used as an assembly point for forces opposing Louis Riel in February 1870, although, Black was active with other clergymen in attempts to keep peace between the English and French speaking sections in the settlement. He was present at the mass meeting held at Upper Fort Garry on January 20, 1870 and was appointed to a committee that was to arrange for the election of the English delegates to the "Convention of Forty," which met six days later.

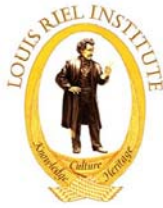
Children of John Black and Henrietta Ross:

- William, born January 11, 1855, married Catherine Sutherland.
- Sarah Margaret, born August 24, 1856, married Frederick Hanhurst Francis.
- Alexander Ross, born 1858, died December 26, 1865.
- James Hunter, born February 27, 1860, married Francies Zembia Hagarty.
- Robert Burns, born November 10, 1863, died March 19, 1865.
- Donald Mathew, born August 11, 1864, died January 7, 1866.
- John Henry, born July 15, 1866, died 1935.
- Ann Isabelle, born December 23, 1868.
- Henrietta Rose, born February 4, 1871, married Thomas Laidlaw.

Scrip affidavit for Black, Henrietta; Husband: John Black; died: March 21, 1873; born: May 17, 1830; father: Alexander Ross (Scot); mother: Sarah Ross (Indian); heirs: her children Wm. Black; Sarah Margaret, wife of F. St. Francis; James;

¹ The synod of the Presbyterian Church hoped that Black, with his knowledge of French, might also work among the Métis and Indians.

John; Henry; Fanny; Isabella Henrietta Black; claim no: 1733; date of issue:
August 8, 1876.



Edited and Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute