

First Prairie-Recruited Militia Corps (1835)

On February 12, 1835, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Sir George Simpson, ordered the raising of a corps of 60 men, called the Red River Volunteers, to defend and police the colony. Each member agreed to "well and truly serve the same double office of Private in the Volunteer Corps and Peace Officer." They were to be ready to serve at all times, in exchange for which they were paid a modest annual sum. The commander of the unit, Alexander Ross, was also sheriff of the district. Some were renowned Métis military leaders, such as Jean Baptiste Wilkie, and Cuthbert Grant, as well as Francis Dease and Augustin Nolin, Métis who had fought on the British/Canadian side in the War of 1812.

As noted, a number of these Red River Volunteers were of Métis descent such as:

- Cuthbert Grant
- Gaspard Bruce
- John Baptiste Wilkie
- Louis Denis Laronde
- Augustin Nolin
- Louis Guiboche
- Thomas Bunn
- Francis M. Dease

The Red River Volunteers probably did not wear a uniform, and they used hunting weapons, but they nevertheless represented the first militia corps recruited in the Prairies.



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