

Bruce, John. (1830-1893)

John Bruce, a Métis carpenter and sometime legal practitioner, was president of the Provisional Government of Red River in 1869. He was born in 1830, at Ile à la Crosse, the son of Pierre Bruce (1785-1864) and Marguerite Desrosiers (1785- c.1830). He married Angélique Gaudry (Vaudry, Beaudry), born 1830, the daughter of Pierre Gaudry and Marie-Anne Hughes. The family were resident at St. Norbert. His brother was La Loche Boat Brigade leader Jean Baptiste Bruce (1809-1890) born on September 15, 1809 at Ile-à-la-Crosse. Bruce was enumerated in the Red River census of 1849 at St. Boniface, already married at about age 19, living with a wife but without children and as yet without a house or other property. By 1856 Bruce and his wife had a son and a daughter.

Children:

- Jean, born 1855.
- Remi, born 1857.
- William, born 1861.
- Joseph, born 1864.
- Marie Rose, born 1869.



John has been described as tall and dark-featured with a sober looking face. He often worked as a legal advocate for the Francophone Métis. He was reportedly fluent in English, French and a number of Indian languages. On October 1869, Bruce was elected President of the Métis National Committee, the first move to resist the annexation by Canada. As a member of the legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, Bruce was appointed to the committee to devise a code of laws for the Settlement, he also served as the Commissioner of Public Works in Riel's Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. He was appointed a judge and magistrate by Archibald the first Lieutenant Governor. Bruce appeared as a witness against Ambroise Lépine in his trial for the murder of Thomas Scott. On 20 March 1877,

Bruce was awarded patent to Lot 12, 161 56/100 acres, in the Parish of St. Norbert, but within two years he appears to have decided to leave the new Province of Manitoba that he had had a part in creating. He was recorded as at St. Joseph, Pembina, on 3 June 1879 where he stood in as Godfather at the baptism of Marie Marguerite Bruce. John Bruce was enumerated as residing in the same place in the 1880 United States Census. Bruce and his family moved to Leroy, in what is now North Dakota. He died there on October 29, 1893.

Scrip affidavit for Bruce, John; born: 1830; father: Pierre Bruce (Métis); mother: Marguerite Derocher (Métis); claim no.: 1806; scrip no.: 6281 to 6288; date of issue: July 12, 1876; amount: \$160.

Scrip affidavit for Bruce, Angélique; wife of John Bruce; born: 1830; father: Pierre Gaudry (French Canadian); mother: Marie Anne Hughes (Métis); claim no: 807; scrip No: 8269 & 6296; date of issue: July 12, 1876; amount: \$160

Reference

Ronaghan, N.E. Allen. "John Bruce." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XII (1891-1900). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990: 131-133.



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