

## **Gilbert Breland (b. 1838)**

Gilbert and his brother Moise (b. 1832) were both present at the Battle of the Grand Coteau when Captain Jean Baptiste Falcon and the Métis buffalo hunters from St. François Xavier (SFX) fought the Dakota on July 15-16, 1851.

Gilbert and Moise were the sons of Alexandre Boishue dit Breland<sup>1</sup> and Émilie Wells. Gilbert married Felecité Boyer (b. 1847) on 21 February 1865 in SFX. She was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Boyer and Helene McMillan. They lived at Red Deer River then at St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan.

Children of Gilbert and Felicité:

- Marie Adeline, born 1886 at SFX.
- Virginie, born 1868 at SFX.
- Cecile, born 1870 at SFX.
- Ernestine, born 1873 on the prairie near Red Deer River.
- Alexandre, born 1875 Red Deer River.
- Antoine, born 1878 at St. Laurent SK.
- Marie Rose, born 1880 at St. Laurent SK.

Gilbert was active during the 1885 Resistance at both Tourond's Coulee and Batoche. Gilbert was the scout who warned the Métis at Tourond's Coulee that Middleton's troops were approaching. Gilbert gives Father Cloutier an interesting account of the activities at Tourond's Coulee:

We left around 4:00 pm, the 23 April and we stopped there at the Father- Jean-Baptiste Vandal; we counted who was there, we left – we went for supper at the house of Roger Goulet – we took grain for our horses. We ate supper – it was night already. We killed a beef and a cow. From there, before all the troop left, we sent two Sioux to go scout out where the (soldier's) camp was and to come back to report, so we can go shoot at them during the night. The Sioux were not seen again – we got towards the camp and turned back (to come back) a bit, we did not find them. From there, two men left: Gabriel Dumont and Napoleon Nault to find the camp and to – to be chased (by the soldiers) and to draw them out. The others watched out for them – they went up ½ mile from camp and didn't get chased. From there, the Métis went for breakfast at Fish Creek. The 24<sup>th</sup> of April – at the home of the English, near Fish Creek, we took grain for the horses – there is no one at home. We feed the horses and Riel sent me back to scout. When I got there, to where we had waited for them that morning, I heard them (enemy soldiers) coming; but I saw them only later. I hid along the bush line, while approaching our camp. When the soldiers were 1 ½ miles from me, I charged, towards our people. The others had breakfasted and so I had breakfast then I placed myself on the road that rose up, we were there. I did not see

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandre was born in 1803. He was the son of Pierre Charles Berland (b. 1764) and Louise Belly. Alexandre was buried 15 June 1859 in St Francois Xavier, Canada. He married Émilie Wells, the daughter of John Wells (Wills) and Joseph Grant. She was born 1810 in the Northwest Territory.

them meeting with the horses, but we heard them. And so we attacked, pulling together all our gang and roaring to make them believe that we were very numerous. Constant battle – there was no commander, each was master of himself. They hit us always in the bunch. The soldiers advance thickly and they descend on our right to come by the trees. They were playing music and commanded; Get up and come on. There, they got to the bottom of the hill, and found themselves ½ of their body in water. I found myself with Isidore and Michel Desjarlais and Pierre Henry. We stayed there all day – I ran out of ammunition and asked for some from Damase Carrière who had a rifle the same as mine. The soldiers were near and they were shooting from up close. A dirt mound one foot high was protecting our heads and our bodies were in the water – when I shot all my ammunition, I climbed up, I didn't do anything else. No more ammunition. I watched them shoot. Hourie began yelling: Is there lots of people? The Métis said do not answer because we are few in number and the soldiers will take us. He asks to not shoot and he will go see. No answer to him. Never. Why do you not answer? Silence – he speaks in Cree. The soldiers abandon firing. The Métis make plans – they think they will be surrounded all night. And when we make our plans, our people arrive – seeing our people arrive; I climb the hill on the soldier's side. While climbing I found one of their guns: a rifle of 12 shot, 11 bullets still in it. And so I yell to our people to cross and we will pursue. The soldiers hear the yelling and turn back. I yell louder to our people and when I turn back to the soldiers, they run away. We were 45: and another 40 arrived. We were able to smoke and sleep – the Tourond Brothers were sleeping and we had to wake them up – we returned at night towards Batoche – we camped at Isidore Dumont's.<sup>2</sup>

Isidore Dumas tells a story of Gilbert fighting at Tourond's Coulée:

In the afternoon (the soldiers) crossed the cannon, too far for the gun to reach and they massacred the horses. The soldiers were not long on the long slope from the house to the coulee. We had a good time shooting at them. One stayed there all day, laying down, thinking he was out of range. He would move about mocking the Métis. Gilbert Breland shot him and he grabbed his leg, so he shot him a second time and he was quieted.

The famous trader Pascal Breland (b. 1811) married to Cuthbert Grant's daughter Maria Grant was Gilbert's uncle, Pascal was the younger brother of Alexandre Breland.



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<sup>2</sup> Cloutier, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, pp. 13-15.