

## **Métis Veterans and Families of the Battle of the Grand Coteau Includes Oral History Accounts**

This battle took place between a Métis buffalo hunting party from St. François Xavier, led by Jean-Baptiste Falcon and the Cut Head (Pabaksa) Yanktonai (Ihanktonwanna), Dakota, led by Chief Medicine (Sacred) Bear, on July 15 to 16, 1851. We draw this conclusion because the location of the Battle of the Grand Coteau was just south of the big bend of the Souris River and to the north-west of Dog Den Butte. Thus it is more than likely that this confrontation took place with the Cuthead Yanktonai as the Métis were travelling over their traditional land. Since it was reported that 2,000 or more Sioux were in the attacking party there must have been more than one band. In 1856, General Harney identifies four bands:

1st Band of Yanktonais – “Two Bears” Chief. Their country is from James to Mouse [Souris] Rivers, on the east side of the Missouri River and now [Nov. 1855] near the mouth of 'Long Lake' - about 180 miles from here [Ft Pierre].

2nd Band of Yanktonais - 'Don't Eat Buffalo' ('Nobsedie') Chief. Their country is located about the 'Bone Butte' near the head of James River, about 150 miles from here [Ft Pierre].

3rd Band of Yanktonais - 'Big Head' Chief. Their country, is from here to mouth of Mouse River, now about 40 miles below Fort Clarke, on Missouri River, at 'Apple Creek'.

4th Band of Yanktonais – ‘Medicine Bear’ or ‘Cut himself’ Chief. Their country is from here to the mouth of Mouse River, on the East Bank of the Missouri - now about 250 miles from here [Ft Pierre].

This battle was actually a battle between the Cut Head (Pabaksa) Yanktonai and a hunting group of the *Nehiyaw Pwat* (literally Plains Cree-Nakota) alliance which was also known as the Iron Alliance. This historic polyethnic group comprised of Métis, Plains Cree, Plains Ojibwa (Chippewa), and Assiniboine (Nakoda or Stoney) peoples.<sup>1</sup> Most of the hunters of this group were descendants of either Plains Cree, Assiniboine (Nakoda) or Chippewa parents or grandparents. In fact one of the accounts included in

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<sup>1</sup> The people in this group were associated with the following bands, most of which were polyethnic in composition: Pembina Band, Little Shell Band, Turtle Mountain Band, St. Francois Xavier (Saulteaux Village) Band, Nakawiniuk (Wilkie's) Band, L'Ous Fou (or Crazy Bear) Band, Canoe Band (Nakoda), Four Claws (Gordon) Band, Nekaneet Band, Carry the Kettle Band, Rocky Boy Band, Montana Band, Muscovequan Band, Beardy's Band, Carlton Stragglers Band, Petaquakey Band (Muskeg Lake), Mistawasis Band, Dumont Band, Big Bear Band, Red Stone Band, Maski Pitonew Band, Bobtail (Piche) Band, the Moose Mountain group of White Bear Band, Striped Blanket Band and Prison Drum Band, and the Crooked Lakes group of Cowessess Band, Ochapowace Band, Kahkewistahow Band and Sakimay Band.

this monograph states that within the combined groups of Jean Baptiste Wilkie (Pembina) and Jean-Baptiste Falcon (St. François Xavier) 200 of the 700 hunters were Chippewa.

This monograph is a documentation of the Métis families who fought at the Battle of the Grand Coteau of the Missouri in 1851 in what is now the State of North Dakota. Accounts usually just name the Métis heads of families, however in this account we list the wives and children who would more than likely have accompanied the hunters as was the Métis custom at the time. We have based this record on Métis oral history from:

Gabriel Dumont's written account.<sup>2</sup>

Jean-Baptiste Laframboise's account as told by Gene "Chip" Laframboise.

Jean-Baptiste Falcon as told by Francois Xavier Falcon.<sup>3</sup>

Isabelle Fayant McGillis as told by Mary Agnes Beaudry Smith.<sup>4</sup>

Mgr. Langevin's Notes<sup>5</sup>: Battle of Grand Coteau<sup>6</sup>. French translations by Emilie Pigeon.

### **Jean-Baptiste Falcon's account of the Battle of the Grand Coteau:**

In this account, the brigade members listed are basically taken from a story told on May 23, 1938 to Father Picton by François-Xavier Falcon<sup>7</sup>, the son of 1851 hunt leader Jean Baptiste Falcon. He says the man killed was Louison Morin, vs. the usual account that Jean-Baptiste Malaterre was the one killed. Falcon is confused since he is telling his father's story some 87 years after the event. Picton's account says the event happened 85 years previous, when it was clearly 87 years later, i.e. 1851, not 1853.

Francois Falcon locates Louison Morin with the St. François Xavier Brigade when he was probably with the Pembina/Red River brigade since Jean-Baptiste Morin, his older brother (b. 1834) lived at St. Joseph's. Like Malaterre, Jean-Baptiste Morin<sup>8</sup> was killed by

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<sup>2</sup> Titled "Year: 1851." Manitoba Archives, MG7, D13, reel No. 375, from Belleau Collection, L'Assumption Abbey, Richardton, ND.

<sup>3</sup> As told to Father Picton, Ste. Anne des Chenes, May 23, 1938. Manitoba Archives, Roll 2, frames 000181 and 000182

<sup>4</sup> Melvin Beaudry "Letters from My Aunt." This article contains a handwritten account of the Battle of Grand Coteau, June 13-14, 1851 saved by his aunt, Mrs. Agnes Smith (née Beaudry) who was the great-granddaughter of Isabelle (née Fayant) McGillis, whom take part in the battle. The account may have been written from a newspaper story.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Philippe Adélarde Langevin (August 23, 1855 – June 15, 1915) was an Oblate priest and became the Archbishop of St. Boniface in 1895. He founded the La Liberte newspaper published in Manitoba on May 20, 1913. As archbishop, Langevin presided over the ecclesiastical province of St Boniface. As well as his own archdiocese, the province included the diocese of St Albert, which roughly corresponded to the southern half of the present province of Alberta, and the vicariates of Athabasca-Mackenzie and Saskatchewan. The first spanned parts of what are now the Yukon and the Northwest Territories as well as northern British Columbia and Alberta. The second stretched to Hudson Bay and the eastern Arctic from its southern border with St Boniface.

<sup>6</sup> File D SHSB01\_211\_p113-114.

<sup>7</sup> Note that Francois Xavier Falcon was born in 1861, some ten years after this event occurred.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Baptiste Morin dit Comtois. (1834-1875) Jean-Baptiste Morin was born on November 21, 1834 at St. Boniface, the son of Antoine Morin (b. 1809) and Therese Larocque.<sup>8</sup> Baptiste married Nancy Delorme (b.

the Sioux, but much later in 1875. Jean-Baptiste's brother Louison Morin (b. 1837) was married to Marguerite Gosselin, daughter of Francois Gosselin and Suzanne Lafournaise in 1862 at St. Norbert. He was a plains hunter but lived into the 1890s.

The account lists Jean-Baptiste Falcon as Captain of the Hunt, Father Lafleche as Chaplain, and Moise Breland as councillor.

*Sixty families went for buffalo hunting south of Moose Mountain (now Sask.). The caravan was composed of white Horse Plains hunters.*

*They were as follows:*

*Reverend Father Laflèche, chaplain, Jean Baptiste Falcon captain, Moise Breland councillor, James Whitford also going by the name of Jimmie Francis, Mi-- Vivier, Gilbert Breland, Cuthbert McGillis, W.J. McGillis, Angus McGillis Jr. J. Bte. Lavolette, Alexis Vivier, Magnus Birston, Donald Ross, Louison Morin, Rossignol, Pagé, Alexis Gervais, Charles Lagraille, Eddy Wells, André Trottier, Pierre Poitras, J.Bte. Faillant, Fidler, Wm. Thorn, J. Bte. Lafreniere, Cuthbert Patenaude, Michel Patenaud, Ledoux, Paul Gervais, Marc-Ambroise St. Math, Paul Paul, Pierre Leveille, Gabriel Leveille.*

*One afternoon they were scouting, they approached a few Sioux, but it was too late, they were already approached by the Sioux. James Whitford and Louison were made prisoners and spent the night at the Sioux'. Camping there was a Frenchman living with the Sioux.*

*Then they started preparations to defend themselves, they dug a big hole in the centre of the camp for the families and made a big circle with the carts, turning the carts the shafts up, so they made a rampart and worked all night digging trenches for the fighters outside of the rampart. Next morning they saw the Sioux coming passing by the ridge and recognized the prisoners' horses. They were about three thousands, and all of a sudden they saw a horseman coming, he was flying like a bird, and finally recognized it was James Whitford. But they could see nothing of Louison Morin. Morin, he had a poor horse and was caught by the Sioux, and shot one man dead also the horse. Then the battle started, they were all ready, they had their trenches, and Father Lafleche was in the centre singing hymns and praying and encouraging to defend themselves and their children, and when Jean Baptiste Falcon was going around acting as captain, his sister Isabelle was fighting in his place. She never left him alone during the three days battle, she would force him to rest and during that time she would shoot and she was a good*

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1841), the daughter of Joseph "Akkway" Delorme<sup>8</sup> and Isabelle Gourneau on June 16, 1862 at Pembina. Isabelle's father was a counsellor to Chiefs Little Shell II and III and her brother "Kar-yence" (Joseph Jr.) in turn was a counsellor to Chief Little Shell III.<sup>8</sup>

Jean-Baptiste and Nancy were a buffalo hunting family. They had four children between 1865 and 1872, born at Red River, St. Joseph, and Wood Mountain. Jean-Baptiste was killed by the Sioux at St. Joseph Mountain on July 5, 1875.

*shot too. Every time they would shoot, it was sure a Sioux would fall. And they would shoot from sunrise to sunset everyday.*

*After the first battle we went to see if we could find anything of Louison Morin (body). He was a man over six feet tall, and when we found his body it was about two feet long, his legs and arms were cut off. We had time to give him a decent burial. But for the Sioux there was two little lakes not far from the battle ground, the water was red with blood, they were washing their dead and wounded, but we could not find a corpse left, they hid them at once. We were sure we had killed many.*

*On the third day, they stopped about three o'clock in the afternoon, saying it was no use for them, but if you would stop your Manitou singing, we will take no time to wipe you out. "The Great Manitou was with us..." It was because Father Lafleche had his surplice, going around among the fighters and encouraging them and singing at the same time, then they stopped fighting them, then the retreat, and Rossignol was coming after them, and pushed them with his gun but never turned to look.*

*This story was told by Jean Baptiste Falcon, son of Pierre Falcon the Poet living at White Horse Plains and nephew of James Colbert Grant and Pierre Falcon dit Divertissant.*

Written by Francis Falcon son of Jean Bte. Falcon, and the mother was Marie Nolin.

Dated Ste. Anne des Chenes on May 23, 1938.

It was the last big battle with the Sioux, they were subdued and it's the White Horse Plain people who has done the work.

*Style encore plus enfantin que les chansons de Pierriche*

## **Eyewitness Account of the Battle of the Grand Coteau**

By Melvin Beaudry as told by Agnes Smith née McGillis Beaudry

Collected by Larry Haag

This is an article written by Melvin Beaudry, a Metis Elder from Seattle, Washington. It is a good account of the rescue of the St. Francois Xavier hunting party by the St Boniface-Pembina hunting group at the Battle of the Grand Coteau.

Letters from My Aunt  
By Melvin Beaudry

My Aunt, Mrs. Agnes Smith, passed away in Wenatchee, Washington. She had been born in Opheim, Montana, on May 21, 1913. She was the daughter of Marie (McGillis) Beaudry and Noel Beaudry. Among her papers was this hand written article, it appears as though

someone had copied it from a newspaper. Agnes knew and remembered well her grandmother, Isabelle (Fayant) McGillis (1838-1933) who played a part in this episode of Metis history. My great grandmother, Isabelle (Fayant) McGillis was in the party that came from Saint Boniface parish, she would have been a girl of thirteen in the year of 1851. Angus and Isabelle left Saint Francois Xavier in 1870 after the first Riel uprising. The Malaterre that was killed in the famous battle with the Sioux in 1851, was, Jean Baptiste Malaterre. He was the brother of my great grandfather, Louis Malaterre. My great grandfather, Louis Malaterre was living at Saint Peters Mission in Montana when the men (Gabriel Dumont, Moise Ouellette, Michel Dumas, and James Isbister) came down from Canada to induce Louis Riel to return with them to Batoche, in June of 1884.

Here is the story that was written in long hand:

Much ado has been made over the American frontiersmen. Compared to the Canadian variety they were nothing special although their descendants rate tops in the field of public relations.

Now I am here to tell you that there was nothing in North America that could hold a candle to the Red River fur brigades. They could out-fight, out-shoot, out-ride, any other breed of humans that has ever lived. And just to prove that they had other accomplishments as well, they produced enough descendants to form for a time a nation of their own.

The children never disgraced their fathers or their Indian mothers for that matter. They dominated the northern plains so completely that the fur trade lived off the produce of their hunting and operated under the protection of their guns.

Although there were Metis bands living throughout the whole northwest the largest concentrations were within a one hundred mile radius of Fort Garry (now Winnipeg). Here they formed the cavalry that protected the Hudson's Bay heartland, and from here they sallied forth every year to hunt buffalo and make the pemmican that formed the iron rations of the fur trade.

The fur country needed no protection from the Cree or Saulteaux. They were no threat; they were cousins of the Metis and in-laws of many of the traders themselves. It was the Sioux —“the tigers of the plains”— that had both the inclination and the power to destroy both the fur trade and the settlement at the Red River. The Sioux who were to fight three wars against the U.S. Government before it was safe for the Yankee frontiersmen to venture into the lands of the Dakota.

The Sioux had a great contempt for the U.S. Cavalry, the protectors of the invaders of their lands. They had learned by bitter experiences however not to hold the Metis of the Red River fur brigades in disdain. Every year it was necessary to venture further west in pursuit of the buffalos. The sale of the pemmican was a supplement to incomes made from the sale of furs and work as 'voyageurs.' It was also a social event, a time to meet

and visit once more. Most all of these people held some kinship to one another through blood or marriage or just as friends and all had a common bond as Métis.

The Métis with their women and children annually moved to the Sioux country where the herds were now located. As can be imagined it was a humiliation to the war like Sioux, who had no fear of the American army, to have been defeated by the Métis in past skirmishes.

From 1844 until 1851, a precarious peace had existed between the two peoples. The year 1851 would be the largest battle ever fought between the two and as it turned out the final one. As in the past, the large hunting party of 1851 was comprised of three brigades. One was from Pembina which is on the Red River on the American side of the line. Another from Saint Boniface parish and the one from the White Horse Plains, which was the Saint Francois Xavier parish, west of Fort Garry. Among this group was a girl of thirteen, Isabelle Fayant (my great grandmother). Also in the brigade from Saint Boniface parish, was a young lad of fourteen, he would become famous in Metis history. His name was Gabriel Dumont.

As they moved further west there seemed to be no danger from the Sioux, so the large party separated into smaller parties. Near the big bend of the Souris (Mouse River), and the headwaters of the Sheyenne River, south and a little east of present day Minot, North Dakota. Somewhere near the land mark (*Maison du Chien*) Dog Den Butte, on the Grand Coteau of the Missouri River, five scouts from Saint Francois Xavier met the largest band of Sioux anyone had ever seen. Some were to say later the number could have been over two thousand.

These scouts were surrounded by the Sioux, although there was a peace pact it was tenuous at best. It did not take long for the five men to realize they were to become prisoners. Two of them made good their escape at this time and were able to return to the hunting party and give the alarm. Preparations were made in the event that there should be a battle between the two factions. In the meantime the other three scouts, a McGillis, James Whiteford and Jean-Baptiste Malaterre were taken to the Sioux camp as prisoners. All the males in the Métis camp over the age of twelve years numbered only seventy six. The defensive tactics were traditional; carts were circled hub to hub to serve as a corral for the horses and oxen. Beneath the carts, pits were scooped out for the protection of the women and children. Outside the ring of cars rifle pits were scooped out with dirt piles serving as rifle rests as well as protection. As an omen of impending doom, there was an eclipse of the moon that Saturday night, of the 12th of July.

The plains Indians did not attack at night, thus the Métis had nothing to do but wait for morning. Jean Baptiste Falcon was in charge of the camp. Reverend father, Louis Laflèche, was there to minister to his people. In the morning the Sioux were in no hurry to attack as they knew the main party of Métis hunters was a long way off. This gave them plenty of time to paint themselves, sing songs, and make medicine. The priest had time to say mass, confess the sinners, and distribute the sacraments to those that wished to die in grace. The Sioux still in no hurry allowed further preparation for the coming assault.

During the darkness of the night two Métis had been sent off in hopes that they might locate the other hunters who would come to the aid of the pinned down camp. Suddenly down the slopes of the Grand Coteau came the advance party of Sioux followed by the pride of the huge camp.

The Métis offered the customary gift of tobacco and suggested the Sioux depart in peace after the release of the other two prisoners they had taken. They scorned the gifts and scoffed at the idea of retreat, saying they would soon have all that these Métis now owned. Then the main party moved in. At the head was a young chief in a beautiful "War Bonner" calling to the warriors, "this is a good day to die". Falcon ordered the camp to answer with a volley. Several warriors fell from their horses and the party fell back. In the meantime the two remaining prisoners, Whiteford and Jean B. Malaterre were under the guard of a white man that was living with the Sioux. This man allowed the two to escape. Whiteford on a fast horse was able to make it back to the circle of carts. Jean Malaterre however was on a slower horse; he managed to kill or wound three of his pursuers, but was overtaken and became a fatality.

The Sioux attacked again, unmounted they would fire into the camp hoping to hit things they could not really see. The Buffalo hunters of the camp being better shots and having clearer targets exacted a heavy toll on the attackers. Hours later and after many casualties the Sioux withdrew. After the enemy saw how few it took to repel the huge party they were shamed. The humiliation turned to anger. They again mounted a full scale attack and were again repulsed. They pulled back out of rifle range. This allowed the Metis to assess the damage done to them. (There was) one dead, the unfortunate, Jean Baptiste Malaterre, whom they now had to bury. The other damage was twelve horses and four oxen killed (the two men who served as witnesses to this burial were, Pascal Breland and Charles Montmini).

As night fell the Métis could hear singing from the Sioux camp, they were mourning those killed and no doubt preparing for the next days battle. Not being certain if the tworiders sent out for help ever found the main body, the Métis council decided it would be prudent to withdraw and seek them, Early the next morning camp was struck and they headed south. After an hours march the scouts reported the Sioux were in pursuit and an attack was again eminent. Once again the Red River carts were circled, pits hastily dug. Again the Sioux came in a dismounted attack.

This time the battle went on for five hours. Unlike the way the white men fought wars the Indians were not out to see how many they could kill or be killed. To retreat was the better part of valor. They could not resist one final mounted attack however. They circled the carts on horseback and fired one last heavy volley. This caused the slight wounding of three Métis. No one knows how many Sioux died but there have been estimates of as many as eighty or ninety. Before they left one of the Chiefs said they did not know the French, as he called the Métis, were protected by the "Black Robed Manitou" so well and from this time forward they would never bother them again. He lifted his long lance high in salutation and then galloped off.

Shortly after the Sioux had left, a party from the main camp arrived. However, the battle was over by this time.

In the seventh chapter of the book, *These Are The Prairies* by Zachary and Marie Albina Hamilton, in an interview with Mrs. Isabelle McGillis in 1928, Isabelle states she was in the party that came in a rescue and was able to help tend to those wounded.

Father Laflèche returned to Eastern Canada in 1858 and later became Bishop of Three Rivers.

Melvin Beaudry

We have also reviewed Louis-Francois Richer Lafleche's<sup>9</sup> account.<sup>10</sup> In Father Lafleshe's account the Cheval-Blanc (White Horse Plain) group consisted of 67 horsemen, all told 80 hunters some no more than 12 to 15 years old. The group from the Forks and Pembina consisted of 318 horsemen, but he says the two camps totalled roughly 700 men of whom 200 were Sauleaux from the Pembina group.

The Métis Scouts were captured on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. The St. Francois Xavier camp was attacked on the 13<sup>th</sup>. They then moved out on plain to meet up with Pembina group on the 14<sup>th</sup>, they endured five hours of fighting (but were attacked by a smaller group), then half hour later the large Pembina party arrives.

Lafleche describes the Métis and Indians in rather derogatory terms and does not name any of the people involved. He takes credit for praying for the divine intervention that saved the group. This had influenced all modern day accounts, such that the popular version is constructed as follows:

On July 12 the Métis scouts of St. François Xavier spotted a large band of Sioux. The five scouts riding back to warn the camp met with a party of 20 Sioux who surrounded them. Two made a run for it under fire but three were kept as captives. Two would escape the next day and one killed. On Sunday July 13 the camp was attacked by the Sioux. Lafleche dressed only in a black cassock, white surplice, and stole (a band of coloured cloth, worn around the neck with the ends hanging down parallel in front), directed with the camp commander Jean-Baptiste Falcon a miraculous defence against 2,000 Sioux combatants, holding up a Crucifix during the battle. After a siege of two days (July 13 and 14), the Sioux withdrew, convinced that the Great Spirit protected the Métis.

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<sup>9</sup> Born September 4, 1818, Lafleche was age 33 when the battle took place. An Oblate, he founded the mission of Ile a-la-Crosse in 1846 and was there until 1849. When Pope Pius IX nominated him to be bishop of Arath, he asked to be withdrawn from the nomination and be replaced by Alexandre-Antonin Tache because an illness had left him with an infirmity in his limb. In 1856 he returned east.

<sup>10</sup> L.F.R. Laflesche letter, September 4, 1851, published in *Vers l'Abime*, Paris, pp. 182-184.



**Letter from Mr. Richer Lafleche, missionary, to one of his friends.**

**Saint Francis of the Prairie of White Horse**

“Saint-Francois de la Prairie du Cheval Blanc”

September 4, 1851<sup>11</sup>

Translated by Paul Desrosiers

My Dear Friend,

I experienced a very real pleasure in receiving your letter of April 15, on my return from the prairie. The canoes from La Chine having arrived later than normal, I was forced to travel with my hunters before reception of the letters from Canada. The good news that you gave me from my beloved country warmed up my heart; we have to believe that the period of troubles has passed and the time of prosperity that has started will continue. For me, I do not have such happy news to tell you; I cannot tell you that the periods of troubles have passed for the Red River Colony; from all appearances, they have just begun. You already know how the extraordinary rise of water level has caused damages last year; however it was just the prelude to a double flood during this season; the first caused by the melting snow only delayed the seeding; but the second, which came following torrential rain fallen almost without interruption during the month of July and August has caused much more disasters. From human memory, we had never seen anything similar; the rivers are again overflowing their banks and have destroyed the crops in many locations and mostly in my parish; the abundance of rain on the land has caused considerable damage to the potatoes and peas. What escaped this disaster, especially the wheat crops, has a magnificent appearance and is now out of danger. Glory be to God because famine threatened us with all its horrors for next winter.

“But the prairie” will you say “that inexhaustible meat depot?” Well, it's mostly for the hunts that occur that the moment of crisis has arrived. I already had a chance to tell you about it, but now that I saw for myself what it's about, I can give you more details that will not be without interest.

Let's examine the position and expanse of these prairies where the Métis travel every summer in numerous caravans, to look for provisions. To this end, take a map of North America, notice the space between the Assiniboine River to the north, the Red River to the east. The Cheyenne River and Coteau des Prairie to the south; to the west by a line drawn from the mouth of the Souris River; and you will have under your eyes a region where bisons roam by the millions all year long. In this vast expanse of country, we only met a few clumps of bushes alongside the rivers. Without having seen it, we can hardly have an idea presented by these plains without borders. It is sprinkled by a few salt lakes, which have been placed there to irritate the thirsty hunter in time of great drought. The soil, which probably will never know the ripping of the plow presents a continuation of elevations and dips, less significant to the truth; it is generally sandy and this land, be it

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<sup>11</sup> Report On The Missions of the Diocese of Quebec, March, 1858 No. 10. Steampresses of Augustin by the Archdiocese Cote Co., 1853.

habitable would only produce meagre crops. We find in a few places mostly on the river banks of the Souris River, a few traces of iron mines. And so, it is a veritable desert, where will soon reign silence and solitude, if the progressive reduction of the buffalo herds continue. We walk entire months without noticing that we have changed places, such is the appearance of these locations offering monotony. Even though many thousands of savages roam the country in all directions we would not doubt that there would be a human being if we did not know it before.

A few rivers which have with time dug the river bed to a depth of 300 to 400 feet, offer some very picturesque sights. From the top of their elevated banks, we like to admire the little stream that snakes pleasantly between two rows of trees. We are surprised that such little flow could cause such a displacement of soil; for between the two banks of the rivers spreads normally a two or three mile wide valley, while the river flow is only fifteen to twenty feet.

The North West and West of this territory are visited by the Assiniboines and the Saulteaux; the South East by the Sioux more numerous than first two together and their mortal enemies. The Assiniboines, as their name and language indicate clearly are from the same family as the Sioux. The Saulteaux give the Sioux the name of "Pikanak", and to the Assiniboines, the name of "Assini-Pikanak" or "Sioux of the stones". Despite the ties of relationship and languages, because they get along well together, they none-the-less have waged a mortal war for a long time. To supplement their numbers the Assiniboines made an alliance with the Saulteaux. The savages of the prairies are generally the worst species; however the Saulteaux and the Assiniboines respect the life of the White and are satisfied to rob them every time that they can do it without exposing themselves to bigger danger. These last one known for very wise thieves. But the Sioux are without doubt the crueller of these people; if they are less thieving it's because they their skills to murder. Murder is the object of their burning desire and the goal of all their moves; to achieve this they are not scared of fatigue or fasting. They kill indiscriminately Whites or savages; there is only their cowardice that stops them.

A few Métis, while isolated had been massacred from time to time by the Sioux, but peace had not been openly broken between them. Until this present year, have always travelled this territory as masters, that they consider their homeland because many of them were born and have passed a big part of their youth here. Before settling at Red River, no savage nation had occupied this desert that formed a wall of separation between the warring tribes. Also the bison grazed in peace in countless numbers and were the only proprietors. They were only worried by the passage of war parties, which were looking for scalps. This is the reason these animals were so numerous at the arrival of the Métis.

While talking about war parties, I have to remind you happily that military art amongst the savages is far from being perfect. When it comes to start a campaign it is not necessary to make major preparations that ruins a nation; each soldier takes his "pakamagam" or tomahawk (casse tête – head breaker), his bow and his rifle and he leaves following his chief who only has the name of chief. The supplies present themselves on the trail, a horn dangling from the shoulder of each soldier is used as a

supple case. The number of warriors in those war parties varies greatly; 60 and 80 men form a normal contingent; 300 to 400 constitute a large party. Amongst them we do not talk about meeting the enemy but at his surprise, as they are such cowards that they would not want to openly attack an enemy that would have but one fifth or sixth of their numbers. Consequently, the excursion always is made with great precautions; and if it happens that they are discovered, the only convenient outing is to run away, Here is an example...One day the Métis, arriving at “la Maison du Chien” (House of the Dog) a butte (hillock) that hold a few wild chokecherry and Saskatoon trees.<sup>12</sup> Two hundred Sioux warriors were ambushed there; assuming that they were well hidden, they were waiting for their prey in complete silence. Luckily, our Métis, suspecting nothing take time to unharness their horses; and here they are, men, women and children, scattered and without rifles, rushing towards the bushes battling as to whom would get there first. “All of a sudden we were discovered” thought the Sioux “here they were charging at us.” And without that the greatest number were women and children, and that the men are without guns, pushed by terror, they run away with such haste that they abandon their light packs, in the middle of which is a magnificent ceremonial bonnet, all decorated with feathers. From this outing, they run up to the fort of Missouri where they relate still terrified the danger to which they have escaped and the chase given to them by the Métis. These, on the contrary, arriving behind the butte were very surprised to find the war bonnet, and understood with fear the peril to which their foolishness had exposed them.

When a party has discovered an enemy camp, they stop immediately and carefully hide while waiting for nightfall to come to their help. When thick darkness spread on the land, and a deep silence reigns in all the lodges, the warriors prepare themselves carefully for the attack. The chief encourages them and reminds them not to expose themselves to danger; thereafter we offer ourselves some recommendations, we bid our farewells to our friends and parents, we mourn in advance those who will stay on the battlefield. After all these ceremonies, the braves crawl wolf-like to the lodges; they stop shortly; they listen and hear only the beating of their heart troubled only by fear and hope; sometime protected by the snoring of heavy sleepers, they move with less fear. They are at two steps from their enemies; the first ray of light appears in the orient, it is the signal for the attack. In that solemn moment, everybody gets up; they discharge their muskets, accompanied by dreadful yelling; a second and third succeeds before the unfortunate attacked have time to realize what is happening. If they do not resist, and if they try to run, the assailants rush them with the “pakamagan” in hand; they beat without pity those that the gun has spared or merely wounded, and cut them up right away. The most courageous eat the heart and drink the blood still warm of their enemy; the scalps, the feet and the hands are threaded on sticks and worn in triumph. The massacre barely over that the band imagines having in pursuit the avengers of death the take headlong flight, each taking what he thinks is the safest route. You would not believe the excessive joy caused by the sight of those bloody remains scattered in the middle of camp; you have to be a witness to understand. The war chant start at once, the dances start and restart until the change of the season.

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<sup>12</sup> *Amelanthier Canadensis*, or *Pyrus Arenia*

These are in general, the war expedition of the savages. They look upon spring and fall as the most favourable seasons for these exploits. These barbarian scenes that you seem to find only in books, and that the tale alone makes you tremble are far from being rare over here. There have been more than six that happened around us in less than a year, and without a special protection from God your friend would inevitably become victim to this on-goings.

Even though my letter is already long, you will not be angry if I add a few details on these matters.

Last year (1850), I took the route to the prairie for the first time. The meeting place is always on the banks of the Pembina River; we come from all parts to organize the camp and to take to the prairie, everybody together. Ordinarily there are two camps, the camp from the Forks and Pembina, and the one from Cheval-Blanc (White-Horse) which is much less numerous. The organization is made in a general assembly and consists in the election of a leader charged in the direction of the camp, of a few guides to lead the march, and a certain number of captains who each take 10 men and have to enforce the rules of the camp, to maintain order, and to stand guard during the night, when the caravan is in the neighborhood of the Sioux. In each camp there is always a certain number of *Saulteaux* who are very awkward when the Sioux happen to come by. The caravan of Cheval Blanc (White Horse) was made up last year of 120 horsemen and 340 carts. As the buffalo were rather scarce we had to enter the hill (Coteau) of the Prairie. It is the most dangerous part, because of the facility to hide for the war parties, and to sweep down unexpectedly as the caravan often stopped and slowed down in its march by the numerous ravines. We received some meat from two Sioux, who arrived in the middle of our camp, before being recognized since their clothing closely resembled those of the *Saulteaux*. It was with the greatest difficulty that we managed to save their lives by covering them with our bodies from the guns of the *Saulteaux*. We were forced to guide them up to a distance of two leagues (6 miles) to protect them. After giving them a few presents we suggested to them not to step foot in the *Métis* camp, by telling them that even though we had no bad intentions towards them, we could not guarantee their safety, as we had to take up arms to defend them from the *Saulteaux*.

A while after, our *Saulteaux* with a number over a 100 decided to go to the Fort of the Prairies in peace, or rather in search of presents rather than for peace. The chief then came with great ceremony to beg me for a letter of introduction addressed to the bourgeois (Lord). I accepted with reluctance, after having made the liveliest recommendations to look after his young men, as a few of them were very suspicious. On August 4, they left for the fort and arrived there the next morning. They were noticed behind a butte (hill), they are busy cleaning up, seven Sioux come forward to acknowledge them. Arriving at the butte, they find themselves face to face with the *Saulteaux*, who having finished the difficult task of prettying themselves once again started their march. Running away would be what would please the Sioux, very surprised to be surrounded by such a large number of enemies; however flight is impossible, they therefore courageously come forward and present their hand without saying a word. "Pwanak...Pwanak....paskinutak" (the Sioux! The Sioux! Let's kill them ) cry a few

Saulteaux. The chief succeeds in stopping the explosion of hate that these words are about to produce. We take the road of the Fort with the newcomers; questions upon questions are put to them, but they do not answer. One of them finally takes the risk of talking; on his first word he is recognized and in a moment more than a hundred gunshots are directed at the seven unfortunates. Five are knocked down right away, and two have the strength to travel a few acres before falling. The brave Saulteaux, amazed at their own courage, had taken the precaution of fleeing while firing. Seeing their enemy fallen, they take heart, and knife in hand they fall upon their victims. One of these unfortunates, still very much alive screams with howling sounds while they cut him up. The slaughter completed our braves, who already believe seeing avengers behind them take flight at full speed bringing carefully the bloody spoils that they have taken.

What horror to see arriving in camp these fanatics drunk on the double pleasure of having massacred their enemies and having also escaped from danger. The emotions that we experience in such circumstances are felt rather than being expressed. If you could be a witness to the joyous emotions, with which they carry in triumph these cut up body parts still dripping with blood; if you could observe the frenzy with which they kiss these scalps, you would have an idea of the passion of vengeance that dominates the heart of our Saulteaux savages.

However the Sioux, that we were subject to complain about their inhuman massacre, are not any more worthy than their enemies. One of the two scoundrels to whom we had saved the life with so much trouble had gone directly to form a war party to attack the other camp; and of the two Métis horsemen that had gone away without precautions; the first fell pierced by bullets and arrows and the second wounded at the knee only owed his life to the cowardice of the enemies, who took flight leaving behind blankets, coats, etc, etc, so scared to be followed. And so for the last summer; let' now see about this one. (1851)

From what we hear, the Sioux had asked for help to their American agent to repel the Metis and he had answered; "If the lands where the Métis hunts belong to you defend them." And so these scoundrels decided to hit us during the summer. With these intentions, they have sent themselves tobacco from all sides during the winter, in order to unite as many people as they could during the hunt, and make their attack more successful. What was most unfortunate, was that, not receiving their newsletters, we did not know anything about those menacing preparations. In ordinary time that is on June 15 we took the route of the prairies; we were going with the simplicity of the dove but we did not have the caution of the snake. Although if the events of the last fall and those of this spring, where they attacked a lodge and killed 3 people, did not have the good effect to make us suspicious of the fate that was being prepared for us, at least was it such as to place us on our guard. After four days of march in the prairies we rejoined the camp of the Forks and Pembina, and two days later we met a large quantity of buffaloes; and so we could according to the divine providence, provide to the pressing needs of such a large camp that was in a state of fasting. We had to separate in that location in two camps, common at the time because by staying together we would not get full loads. However, the big camp declared that they had decided to proceed at the "Maison du

Chien” (House of the Dog) that we normally followed; they adopted this plan, not on a whim or bad faith but for safety, “because” we had heard it said “we had learned that the Sioux wanted to attack us, and there was too much danger to go that way.” For myself, I admit I had a lot of trouble persuading myself that they would dare attack our camp, and that is why I answered to the one who made these observations; “We run much less danger in a camp of 80 to 100 horsemen, than in the large camp. Being less numerous, each had sooner killed the number of animals that suited him, and after we are better on our guard. In a big camp, the opposite happens; we are sometimes obliged to follow the animals up to two leagues (6 miles) and so distanced from one another we are more exposed; furthermore we rely on the large number and the guard is made less carefully.”

We split up; but as our party had to move towards the Sioux, and such neighbouring had nothing inviting, we found ourselves reduced to 67 horsemen, while the other camp had 318. Even though weakened we hoped to make our charges very promptly; and without much risks being careful to always have a good watch. Furthermore, our friends from the big camp promised to come to our rescue, if they found out that we were being attacked by the Sioux.

As soon as we were on our way the last horsemen of the other camp gave chase to a small group of a Sioux party that they had discovered nearby; the latest events had made them resolve not to endure them close to us. We received news of these happenings right away, which did not greatly surprise us, because we were convinced that their war party had already discovered us. It was one more reason for us to redouble our vigilance. The march continued without other incident up to near Coteau-des Prairies (Hill of the Prairies or Big Hill) that we reached Saturday evening, July 12. As we were about to set camp after having climbed the first butte (hill) our scouts announced the discovery of a large camp. Who were those people? The Sioux? The Assiniboines? Or our friends from the other party? That is what the distance did not allow us to distinguish. However, the caravan chief gave the order to come back and to go find a camp in the prairie easier to defend; at the same time a few horsemen using binoculars went forward to recognize our neighbours; it was easy to accomplish that mission without being seen, by using a bit of caution. But caution is a virtue that does not match very well with the Métis behaviour. They simply group themselves on a butte (hill) where they cannot help but to be noticed. From there, with the help of binoculars, they recognize the Sioux, and notice that they are very numerous.

Despite all recommendations made not to go too far forward, and to come back as soon as they had achieved their mission; well! Many push their folly by wanting to make sure, from their own eyes, that the binoculars had not deceived them; they move forward straight toward the Sioux camp, with perfect indifference; instead of taking flight when the Sioux come to meet them they move towards their enemies! Three of our scatterbrains are made prisoners, two others escape to come and announce such bad news. What to do? To drive the Sioux at first sight, like we had done before was not practical; we have to think of a way to obtain the freedom of our men. To capture the first of the enemy band that present themselves seems the best reasonable plan. And so it was the one that would bring most success. However the savagery of a few of ours, to

whom the death of three of their parents massacred a while back, had left a bleeding sore in their heart, forced us to renounce that plan. They could not see themselves close to the murderers of their children without firing on them. During deliberation three Sioux appear in sight of the camp. Ten of our hunters go and meet them. After many ceremonies, they finally approach peacefully. "The French who are in our camp" say the visitors, "are well; they drink and eat without fear. We came to camp here farther than ordinarily, to trade with the Métis." They promise to immediately return the prisoners, on the enquiries that we made in regard to the worries of their families. However, this they did not accept. We made them promises to give them the next day tobacco, balls and powder; because they described pleasantly their misery. We recommended to them to come in small numbers and not to come close to camp. They announced us also that their band consisted of 600 lodges. Finally this encounter took place peacefully, and we split up with some nice words. We could right then appreciate the danger of our position. There was no doubt as to the treachery of these barbarians; having been discovered and not willing to openly attack our camp, they had made them prisoners in order to enter on the pretext of peace treaty, and to surprise us with less danger to themselves. Also we would have to be more simpleminded than the savages to be taken in by their plan; it was unanimously resolved that they would only enter the camp at the end of the gun. Right away we started to fortify our flimsy and moving ramparts of carts, and we hand each other through the wheels some poles that we attach as solidly as possible. We dig holes under the carts to place the women and children in shelter from the bullets; outside the circle, we raise some earthen redoubt to protect our hunters in case they found themselves overwhelmed by enemy fire. We better believe that we kept good watch all night.

It was precisely at the time of the full moon, and we could leisurely contemplate the solemn spectacle of the eclipse, that I had predicted to my people.

While my friends from Canada observe at their pleasure this admirable phenomenon of nature, I told myself, here I am...me, forced to face during this long and sad night a death which, even though seen through a cloud of doubt appeared nonetheless horrible. Ah! My dear friend, I will admit to you that I made there my sacrifice; because I expected to be cut up in pieces by the barbarians tomorrow. Humanly, it was the only conclusion I could arrive at. A camp of 600 lodges would give at least 2000 warriors; and what did we have to oppose them? Roughly 80 hunters, from which some of them were no more than 12 to 15 years old. We had a rampart, for sure, but what a rampart! Some carts placed side by side could stop our horses from fleeing; but how could they defend us from a hail of bullets. It was then, almost for sure, that there would be no chance of salvation for us; and without obvious protection from God ... the hand that writes these lines would now be suspended from a pole, and subjected to the plaything of the wind on top of a Sioux grave.

However, at the break of dawn, we had sent two runners towards the big camp to let them know of our critical position.

The next day, July 13, our scouts noticed the Sioux who had started to march; but what numbers! It is not only a few men, as we had acknowledged but a moving mass of men,

women, and children. Halfway, they make a stop. However, about 30 from our camp leave to meet them. Barely on their way one of the three prisoners appears. What will he announce us? Death and an inevitable death! As a few laugh at his fear;” Ah! My friends, you do not have to laugh; you do not have a life to hope for. We are facing a camp of 1800 lodges; and they told me that they wanted to enter our camp to raze everything.” It was probably 1800 warriors and not 1800 lodges that the Sioux had in this location. Our horsemen had joined the most advanced of the Sioux horsemen, and after having given them a few presents they want to try and make them turn back. Impossible to stop them. A few paces farther our men notice from a rise, the crowd coming towards them; they then understand that the only thing to do is return to camp where they arrive before the Sioux horsemen that they had not met. The die is cast, we have to fight, and there is not a moment to lose. “Courage! Courage my friends!” I repeated while circling the camp “you see that our enemies are numerous; but you also know that they are cowards. Remember that God is on your side and you have a father in heaven who sees how unjust is the attack of those people against you; fight courageously, it is He who commands you to defend your wives and children, and to protect your lives. Let us die like braves as long as we have a breath of life in our chest, let us use it to defend ourselves.” What do you say, my friend? Isn't that nicely acting like a general? And if the deceased Napoleon Bonaparte had heard me, wouldn't he have in passing thrown a few Legion of Honour crosses. At the same time I made a vow to make a solemn fast and to sing three high masses.

The Sioux were getting closer to the camp; we warn the closest one to turn back; we threaten him with a gun; but instead he brazenly tries to find a way to throw his horse inside the camp. Seeing that words and threats are not sufficient to scare him off, and that his people are joining him in great numbers force is upon us to act. We fire, and he falls after a few steps pierced with bullets. This unfortunate is precisely one of the two Sioux to which life we had saved with so much trouble last year. He just received his just punishment for his ingratitude since not content to have made “coup”<sup>13</sup> almost out of our hands, that he was coming at the head of his own kind to cut our throat. We did not forget the fate of the two other prisoners left in their power. But to what would have benefited to let the Sioux enter our camp? Our death could not save their life. These first shots resonated in the large band of Sioux; and an American, or an American Métis, who had under his guard one of the prisoners, asked him why we were firing at the camp. He told them even though he had his doubt about the affair answered him without trouble, “It's a discharge of happiness announce the peace; let's go ahead to be with the first one.” At the time he spurred his mount and moved a little to the right to get away from the crowd, the other one followed, whether he did not understand his intention or that he wanted to favour his escape. Seeing a chance for success, our man decided to flee, though perilous it may be, as the road to the camp was sprinkled with horsemen. He throws his horse in flight; the American Métis fires and misses by design or clumsiness. Each Sioux horseman who sees him throws himself in front to cut off his escape; the bullets whistle by his ears; already he is in sight of our camp where he is recognized. Like lightning, his companions run to meet him; his enemies take flight, he is saved and

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<sup>13</sup> coup – to make a blow.



rejoining his friends, he wounds, at the same time, the horsemen, who just shot at him, as well as his horse. We had a few moments of respite, from which I took advantage for encouraging our people. But while I was going around the camp, the Sioux already had surrounded the camp from all side and encircled it like a belt; their bullets criss-crossed above our heads. Our hunters skilful shooters, answer with more accuracy and accompanied their discharges with cries of joy, which push discouragement in the heart of their enemies, surprised by such unexpected resistance. Soon the bravest of these cowards having received their passport to the other world, the others have the wisdom not to imitate them and consequently keep themselves at a respectful distance. However we see them gathering at different points, we hear them yell their war cries, continuing their fire without much effect.

They appear to want to organize and advance as a body up to us; that is what we mostly feared as not being one against twenty we could not resist hand to hand. Fear takes over in their councils and they do not dare come closer; convinced that death awaits the first to open the route. As a matter of fact, the gap that they would have achieved in our weak rampart would have cost them dearly; we were all well decided to prove to them that a white values his life and does not give it away cheaply. Each with his knife on his belt, ready to replace his gun and your friend who had not considered convenient to his character to grab a gun, had decided at the supreme moment that he would raise his axe on the first scoundrel who would dare to raise his hand on my cart. Happily it did not come to this end. After a fusillade of approximately six hours one of the chiefs cried out "Hola warriors, we cannot kill the French and they are crushing us; we would be better off to leave. They could get mad for good and then they could come after us. Warriors let us go". It did not take more to discourage them and you better believe that their harangue clearly hear from our camp, redoubled our cries of joy. They immediately start their retreat, and resume gloomily their way from which they had triumphantly advanced. They were so sure to raze our camp, that they drove their horses harnessed to the shaft, in order to carry our spoils. But what a setback! Instead of our luggage, they only have to transport their wounded and their dead.

For me, in such an unexpected success, I only see a surprising protection of God. Still if we had come out with a slight chance, by losing just a few of our own. But no! Our good father had wanted to show us in a clearer manner with what affection he protects those who have confidence in him, and who asks for his help by the powerful intercession of Mary. The Sioux themselves, forced to recognize it, were crying in the heat of the battle;" You have with a Manitou who defends you." Not a single man was killed in our camp; only three were slightly wounded. And however thousands of bullets had crossed in all directions the narrow space that we occupied. Praise be given to the divine Providence! As for the loss of the Sioux, we did not know them but we estimated about a dozen dead.

I can assure you as we saw them leave that my heart felt very relieved. We could then breathe at ease, and roam on the battlefield. Each hunter went to examine the spot where he believed that he had seen an enemy fall under his shots and the blood clot that he would find, almost everyone realizing that he had not been wrong.

A sadder spectacle presented itself on the spot where our third prisoner had been shot, and who had not been able to escape! From the camp we had noticed his execution. His remains were there all mutilated; three knives were left plunged in his body, which had been pierced by 67 arrows and 3 bullets. The hands and feet had been taken, the arms were broken, his scalp taken, his skull fractured, his brain scattered all around. We gathered carefully scraps of his flesh and bones, and where we buried them with the usual ceremonies.

We were expecting the Sioux to come back to the attack *durant la nuit*; but they were satisfied to keep us awake by imitating the calls of different animals around our camp.

However our two runners sent to the other camp had their route cut off by a Sioux party, and had returned without fulfilling their mission. We were hoping however that two young men who had taken flight at the start of the firing would be more successful; actually this is what happened. Whatever the goal of their trip, we had nevertheless to retreat. To avoid a surprise during the march, we prepared the following arrangements. Four parties of horsemen would stay around one mile from the caravan, one in the back, one in the front, and the two others on the sides. They were to signal us as to the sight of the enemy, by crisscrossing two horsemen on a butte (hill). This way, we had enough time to camp. For faster movement, we proceeded with the carts on 4 columns, so that at the first alarm two ranks would move to one side and two ranks would move to the other, it would only leave to close the two ends to the ordinary width of the camp, and our rampart was ready in an instant. Barely were we on our way for half an hour that two of our horsemen from our rear crossed each other and the Sioux appear. They are less numerous than the previous day and also less passionate. We put our first lesson to the test; our carts are placed on double rank; our redoubt are raised at approximately half an acre from the rampart; which has the effect of keeping the enemy far enough so that they could not kill our horses. Like the night before, they encircle the camp, but they were careful to keep themselves out of range; it appears however that they had two people killed or wounded. They never reached anybody on our side; a few horses were slightly wounded. This time the firing lasted roughly five hours. Towards the end of that period, one of them advanced crying; "Stop! Stop!" He then asked to enter our camp. But as we could not answer for his life we did not want to let him in. He then told us that he would not return to attack us; but that they would break camp and go back. Barely had he finished talking that his companions ride flat out, and passing at a short distance, send a volley of shots screaming like some disparate person. It was the most terrible of their fusillade; the bullets hit the carts like hail. I thought that for the camp it would cost us dearly. It was not so; it was not more effective than the others. Our hunters responded to the best of their ability by crying for joy a thousand times repeated. The attack was ended.

The scoundrels were leaving at the right time. If they had continued for another half hour, their march would have been quickly accelerated. Our hunters from the other camp, warned by the two young men who had run away, were coming to our rescue and were already close enough to hear their last discharge; they joined us three quarter of an

hour after the departure of our assailants. These poor people, shaking hands with us, cried with joy, as they expected us to be massacred by the Sioux. For me, I felt at this moment a very deep emotion.

As we were this last encampment, we sent a letter to the Sioux, that we tied at the end of a pole. It was written in English, so that the American who was with them could translate it to them. Here is the rough translation.

*“The Metis to the Sioux:— Poor people: It was against the inclination of our heart, and even with great reluctance, that we were forced to fight with you; it is your doing; it is you who placed us in this cruel necessity. It is not necessary here to remind you our previous behaviour towards you, in order to convince you that we have no bad intentions in coming to hunt in the prairie; you know very well that we come peacefully to find our life. How many times did we not save your life, when you entered our camp even forced to quarrel with our Saulteaux parents to stop them from harming you! Each time that the occasion would present itself, you well know, we always tried to prove to you that we were good brothers to you hoping that finally you would have the spirit to do the same for us. On the contrary, you never missed an occasion to show yourself our enemies, slaughtering our fathers, our mothers, our brothers, and other parents, and that not only in the prairies, but right around our houses. Still even this spring did you not attack, as traitors, one of our families that had been separated, and where you have killed three people and wounded three more? However we have always forgiven you. To come back to the matter of today, we were informed of your cruel intention to enter our camp to raze it. And so were we forced to ask the justice of God by the force of arms; and evidently God declared Himself on the issue of this matter. We only had 80 armed men in our camp; you know how numerous you were on your side; you had possibly no less than 2000 warriors. See now the results of two attacks. You did not kill a single person in our camp; only 3 were slightly wounded. From the 3 prisoners, that you captured at our arrival, two also escaped safe and sound; and the third, that you massacred with such barbarianism is the only person that we have to be sorry for. For your dead and wounded, more than us you know the numbers. And now, poor people, you clearly see that you have acted against the will of God, since he came to our defence so well. We have thanked him from the bottom of our heart, for the protection he has given us; and as long as we love him, he will be our protector; he will be your enemy, as long as you are so cruel as you are and you do not want to follow his law. You have to fear Him. As of the future, we are warning you never to enter our camp and never to roam around it; we know too well that you do not have other intentions to ambush a few of ours and to kill them.”*

Here, exactly and honestly, how this affair happened. As I fear that it might be reported by a few American newspapers, who would have received their information from the Sioux, I thought I would tell you in all the details, to put in your hands the necessary documents for our defence if they wanted to attack us.

Maybe they will say that the Sioux have hatched this plot to the Metis from destroying the buffaloes and their land: here is what it is. The lands between the Cheyenne River

and the Pembina River on which the Métis make their hunt, are neither the Sioux, nor the Saulteaux. From human memory, none of these nations ever properly resided. The fear made it a desert; land that had never been crossed by sometime the Sioux, sometime the Saulteaux. The first who dared to sojourn are the Métis; the Saulteaux only go under the protection of the Métis; the Sioux thought to justify having come to camp in a location where we never saw them in fear that we would suspect their evil design. A few years ago one of their chief had asked the Métis, as border for their land, the Cheyenne River. And so the rights that the Métis have on the land are the same as the savages in general on the lands where we find them; the rights founded on occupation and possession of the vacant lands. They started to settle there, about 40 years ago; many amongst them were born there; they always enjoyed the land peacefully until now, and this is where they find their subsistence. Most certainly, those who would strip them of this property without compensating them would be guilty of a grave injustice. It is on these lands that the Sioux had come to attack them.

Our two camps after their reunion would consist of roughly 700 men from which 200 were Saulteaux. It was appropriate to go and tell the Sioux to respect a bit more the rights of the people. However these opinions were divided. Some of them wanted to pursue them right away. I looked this party as the best. I did not believe even so that it would be appropriate to counsel them. A large number, on the contrary, I thought that it would be better to let them go rather than to expose ourselves to miss our hunt in pursuing them. This advice prevailed, and we were satisfied to go and pass in front of their camp to show them that we did not fear them. They were already gone, and a few horsemen, who went to visit the place they had occupied, found a rampart made of soil and stone. This labour testified that they also had been scared. Ten days later a few Metis having gone to the fort of the Mandan's with Mister Lacombe, brought us the following news. In the two attacks the Sioux had 18 wounded men and 15 dead; we also killed 9 of their horses. After the last action, on the influence of fear, they hurried to leave; believing that we were getting ready to pursue them, they broke camp, and marched one day and one night without stopping in order to place themselves out of reach. Everywhere in the fort of the Missouri, we knew they gathered to make a foray on our caravan, and it was feared that they would succeed in their ugly design. They blamed themselves to have acted so awkwardly. "But also" did they add, "we did not think they would have the boldness to wait for us; we were hoping that they would run, in seeing us so numerous and that we would only have to knock them out and to take care of their spoils; that is why we had driven our horses all in harness." Furthermore, they had sent a war party up to the Pembina river to watch our march and to keep their camp informed. They had all the chances possible in their hands.

What would have become of us if one good morning they had swept up on us without warning? Even though we had not seen them again for the rest of our trip, this incident had bothered our hunt so much that we only brought back half a load.

They promise us a regular post, of two months between Pembina and the Entree; this measure will have the effect to expand our land of exile and to bring us closer to the

civilized world. I will take advantage to follow more closely the affairs of my beloved country.....

I am sincerely  
Your devoted friend

Louis Richer Laflèche  
Priest, Missionary

## **Account of the Battle of Grand Côtéau, 1851**

From Georges Dugas: *Histoire de l'ouest canadien de 1822 à 1869: époque des troubles*.  
Montreal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1906; pp. 119-130.

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### Chapter X

In 1851, Governor Ramsay from Minnesota visited the settlement [établissement] of Pembina – where French Métis had lived since the time of the colony – to agree on a treaty with the Indians. Realizing how unknown their rights were, the Métis abandoned Pembina completely and, with their missionary M. George Belcourt, founded another settlement twenty leagues [vingt lieues) further.

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It is also in 1851 that took place, in the prairie, during the hunting season, the famous fight between sixty Métis and two thousand Sioux warriors.

In the wild country, the fame of this heroic resistance did not go as far as it should have, but it certainly deserves to be acknowledged in history, and to be remembered as an achievement as admirable as those of all the greatest warriors.

Mgr Laflèche, then only a missionary priest, happened to be with the hunters and was attacked along with the sixty Métis hunters.

In June 1831, a group of hunters had left the mission Saint-François-Xavier and headed towards the prairies.

They reached the camps of St-Boniface and Pembina after four days; the number of horsemen was of three-hundred-and-eighty. It was enough to discourage any band to attack them; on the other hand there was too many of them to successfully hunt buffalos. After discussing the matter, hunters decided to form smaller groups. Nonetheless the majority thought it was dangerous to walk on Sioux territory in such small groups.

Everybody knew that the Sioux had spend the winter preparing for war, and that now they were searching for a favourable occasion to go forward with what they called a “coup”.

After pondering all the reasons to split in smaller groups, seventy-seven horsemen agreed to separate from the big group; the rest of them – three hundred and eighteen horsemen – remained together and took the direction of a place called “the house of the

dog” [Dog Den Butte]. Taking this direction, they were getting a little bit further from the Sioux territory.

To reassure their friends who expressed some worries, they promised to come and rescue them as soon as the enemy would be approaching. The groups parted.

As soon as they separated, the horsemen from the bigger group chased a small band of Sioux, decided not to tolerate their presence around them.

The news was immediately reported to the smaller group, prompting them to even more vigilance. In the following days their march went without incidents for the smaller group, until they reached a place called “Le Grand Côteau”, that was well known among hunters. They arrived there on Saturday July the 12th, at night.

After reaching the top of the first hill, they started building their camp and sent off few scouts to reconnoiter the surroundings. They soon discovered the presence of a big camp. The distance was still too important for them to say whether they were friends or enemies.

The chief of the hunters instructed his men to build the camp in the location most secure in the case of an attack; at the same time five horsemen approached the camp with binoculars to identify the group.

With a little prudence, they could easily have succeeded in their mission unseen; unfortunately prudence is not a virtue widely shared amongst hunters. The five horsemen walked on the top of the hill, in such a way that savages – with their exercise vision – could see them distinctly. With their binoculars, the Métis recognized not only that the neighbouring camp was Sioux, but that they were in very great number.

Out of simple common sense they should have immediately gone back to their camp to warn their friends, waiting anxiously a few miles back. However they did the opposite; without thinking, as if there was no danger in sight, they negligently pushed their horses towards the Sioux.

When the Sioux saw the Métis hunters approaching, twenty of them came without hostility on their horses to meet them.

Seeing the hunters’ confidence, the Sioux understood how easy it would be to catch them as prisoners; so they took their time.

The Sioux readily surrounded the hunters and asked to be led to the Métis camp. Only then, realizing that the Sioux’s only endeavour was to make war. did the hunters understand they had fallen in the enemy’s trap.

It was too late for discussion; all resistance was hopeless; they could only find ways to escape.

As soon as they started walking towards the Sioux camp, two prisoners escaped from their guards and reached their own camp. The three that remained under Sioux’s power were McGillis, Whitford and Malaterre.

The group of Métis were extremely worried for their detained friends. There were no doubts left about the Sioux’s willingness to start a war. The Sioux who had chased the escaped prisoners contended their fellow prisoners would be treated well, and set free in the next day. Trying to raise pity amongst the Métis, the Sioux emphasized their own poverty. They left and promised to be back with a small group during the next day.

None of the Métis was fooled by their expression; their insincerity was obvious. There was an attempt to deceive the Métis, so to be able to enter the camp more easily and slaughter them.

Not quite sure of how many Sioux camped near-by, the Métis felt too weak to engage in any offensive move. They decided to fortify their camp, and to defend it from assaults from within.

While deliberating about the steps to take, they noticed three Sioux horsemen coming in their direction. Around ten hunters reached them, preventing them from getting any nearer from the camp and getting more knowledge of their position. After standard ceremonies, they discussed peacefully for a moment.

The original plan of the Sioux had been a surprise attack of the camp; yet finding themselves discovered, they took prisoners so to have an excuse to enter the Métis camp the following day. But the Métis had no illusion on their position, and they decided to let them in only with a gun on the temple. As there were no hopes of rescuing the prisoners, they thought it was better to sacrifice them to the benefit of the entire camp.

They spent the whole night securing the camp, to safeguard it from rifle bullets. The carts were set vertically around the camp, and tied together with poles. To provide kids and women with a little bit of safety, they dug holes inside the camp, and the hunters erected fortifications outside, so to protect from the enemy's fire and to prevent it from getting too near. These fortifications were guarded all night long.

At nightfall, two horsemen were sent to report on the imminent attack and to request immediate assistance from the bigger group.

The following day, on Sunday July the 13<sup>th</sup>, scouts witnessed the launching of the Sioux march; but contrary to the past day, it was not one composed of merely a few horsemen coming to get presents, but an army of warriors going to war.

Half way to the Métis camp, they took a pause; around thirty hunters went to warn the Sioux against getting any nearer from their camp. At that moment, one of the prisoners, McGillis, escaped from the Sioux and screamed: "Ah! My dear friends, there is not life for us to hope for; do not laugh at my dread; we have to deal with two thousand Sioux; they admitted they wanted to enter our camp and slaughter every single one of us". These words did not reassure anybody but neither did they discourage the Métis excessively. They courageously approached the "avant-garde" of the Sioux army and, after offering a few presents, they once again advised them to back off. That was not however what the barbarians had in mind since their last council. Their numerical superiority had them smile at the idea of an easy pillage, and they would not let this opportunity pass. They faked not to understand and resumed their march.

The thirty Métis then understood that the smartest thing to do was to flee as fast as they could, and to get ready for the inevitable attack. They were chased by the "avant-garde" of the Sioux army, eager to forcefully enter the camp. M. Laflèche (Mgr Laflèche) had spent the entire night hearing his children's confessions, and preparing them for their imminent death. That perspective was what most hunters were now expecting, for they could not realistically hope resisting such a great number of warriors.

The missionary, dressed up with his surplice and his shawl, addressed the assembly with some encouraging words, inviting them to defend the camp vigorously and to surrender their life to the Sioux only at the greatest cost.

"Courage! My good friends, courage! You see that your enemies are numerous, but you also know how coward they are. Remember that the good Lord is on your side, and that you have a father in the sky realizing how unjust this barbarian attack is. Fight courageously; it is the Lord commanding you to defend your wives and your children and to protect their lives. Die if you have to, but die bravely!"

At the same time, he had them promising one day of fasting and three big masses in the case God saved their lives.

Reassured, the Métis waited courageously for the threatening attack to start.

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From the heights of the hills where they had camped the night before, the Sioux kept marching towards the Métis camp. Confident in their number, they promised each other an easy victory. They were far from expecting that a handful of men, hidden behind such miserable ramparts, would keep them away and, after confounding the elite of their warriors, ultimately defeat them. The Sioux were so certain of their victory that they even carried carts to transport the Métis' riches back to their own camp after their victory.

When the Sioux were close enough to be hit by the hunters' bullets, they were advised one last time to back off. Instead of going back, the army's "avant-garde" sent their horses to knock down the carts and forcefully enter the camp. There was no more time to waste; the most fearless Sioux were shot creeping on the ground, while the rest of them were forced to back off and to wait until the majority of their fellow warriors had arrived.

Hearing the first gunshots, prisoner Whitford realized that, without an ultimate attempt to recover his freedom, his life was going to end. Whitford was detained by an American man who had been living with the Indians for some time. He allegedly felt pity for Whitford, and decided to offer him the opportunity to escape. "If you have a good horse, he said in English, have it run as fast as possible and save your life. I will fake shooting at you, to not appear as a traitor in front of the Sioux. You may have a chance to reach your friends' camp. Whitford did not wait any longer. He knew that his horse was the fastest runner in the prairies and that, for a few miles at least, no Sioux horsemen could reach him. He decided himself on the trajectory and urged his horse to run. Never had he raced so rapidly in the prairies. Bent on his horse, he passed as a lightning through hundreds of stunned warriors. Although they all took a shot at him, not a bullet fortunately touched him. He is already in sight of the camp, where his friends promptly recognized him. He thinks he is safe already, but before he sets foot on the ground, he looks back and shoots in the head a Sioux who had followed him from very close. The old mother of Whitford was convinced that her son had already been slaughtered. When she saw him coming back alive and well, she said: "if you are tired, my son, go on and rest while I take your rifle and shoot at some of these scamps".

Soon, the whole of the Sioux army surrounds the Métis camp as a belt. Bullets whistle from every direction, passing over the Métis' heads, hidden underneath their miserable wooded carts. Very precise shooters, used to not wasting any bullet while hunting, they respond to Sioux' attacks with unsettling precision. Each bullet reaches its target and each new rifle release clears a new breach amongst the Sioux army. Soon, all the most fearless Sioux warriors have bitten dust.

Stunned by such resistance, the remaining warriors backed off, but they soon reappeared, screaming atrociously, trying with such savage screaming to scare the Métis, but this second attempt was as unsuccessful as the first.

What the Métis were most afraid of was to see the Sioux run in large groups towards the camp, to knock down the carts and forcefully enter the camp. Had they been less coward that is exactly what they would have done, their numerical superiority still being of one against twenty. But Indians are naturally coward. They cherish life and they dislike exposing themselves unless they are quite certain of their victory. Furthermore,



the hunters each had a long knife, and they were determined to show the Indians that white people do not let themselves killed like lambs. It is certain that in one on one fights, many Indians would have bitten dust before the most part of the cavalry would have invaded the camp. Thus the Sioux preferred shooting guns at a distance.

On the Métis side, no one had been hurt, while each rifle release definitively sent numerous Sioux on the ground.

At around three in the afternoon, one of the Sioux chief screamed that the French had a “Manitou” with them, which would prevent them from ever being hurt. He urged his band to leave the camp.

The “Manitou” they were referring to was M. Laflèche, the missionary. Seeing a priest dressed up with his surplice and his shawl discouraged the Sioux as much as it encouraged the Métis.

Despite the modest advantage of their number – two thousands barbarians – six hours of battle had cooled down their warrior mood. Thus they withdrew with their dead and injured companions packed in the carts originally brought to carry the Métis riches back.

Seeing the success they just had, the Métis recognized how much providence had looked after them in a special and extraordinary way. Seeing their enemies withdraw, they started breathing normally again. They got out of the camp to visit the battlefield and see the places where they had seen the enemy falling. Everywhere some warriors had been struck to death, they found bloodstains on the grass of the prairies. Malaterre, who had no opportunity to escape like his two companions, laid on the ground, pierced by 77 arrows and 3 bullets. Feet and hands had been removed from the body and taken as trophies; the skull had been smashed and the brain was spread on the ground. The Métis carefully gathered the pieces of flesh and bones and buried them religiously in the prairie.

The Sioux, planning to renew their attack on the very next day, did not retire very far.

In the middle of the night, the Sioux screamed dreadfully, trying again to scare the Métis. The Métis held a council and decided to stick to their retreat plan while waiting for the assistance of the bigger group. They were however putting too much hope in this assistance, for the two scouts sent to report on the attack had been forced back to the camp by Sioux horsemen before they accomplished their mission. They were however hopeful that two young people who had escaped at the beginning of the fire would have had more success. Whatever the outcome of this travel, they decided to start marching again, but they agreed on a few safety dispositions.

First, four horsemen would escort the group: one a mile in front, another one a mile behind, one a mile to the right, and the last one a mile to the left. To further secure their convoy, they had the carts marching in five columns, in such a way that, at the first alarm, two columns on one side and two columns on the other side, they would only need to secure both ends to build a camp they could defend from attacks.

Merely an hour after they started marching, they noticed, behind, two horsemen crossing on the hill, which was the signal of an imminent attack. The Sioux were already in sight. They were however less numerous and seemed less eager.

Using the experience gathered from the previous battle, the Métis set two lines of carts on each side and, at a distance of three chains in front of the ramparts, they erected fortifications. Those should keep the Indians [savages] at a fair distance. As soon as they finished fortifying the camp, they were surrounded by Indians and gunshots started again.

For a whole five hours, the two sides fought with equal vigour. Finally, a Sioux chief approached the camp, asking to be admitted inside. The Métis instructed him to back off if he wanted to stay alive. He said that the battle was over, that the Sioux were going to leave and never attack the Métis again.

Immediately after this speech, the whole band ran towards the camp, screaming terribly and, once positioned very near from the carts, they started shooting aggressively. It was their most terrible shooting so far. For a moment the Métis thought this attack would be fatal to them, but fortunately it turned out otherwise. The hunters reacted the best way they could: the attack was over. The Sioux withdrew at the right moment, for half-an-hour later, the bigger Métis group arrived to assist their brothers. These poor people cried with joy when they found their friends and family members alive. A big party followed in the camp. The group now seven hundred warriors, for three hundred “Saulteux” had joined the Métis. The occasion was good to give the Sioux a lesson on respecting people’s rights. However the opinions on that matter were divided.

Some wanted to start chasing them immediately; it was maybe the best thing to do, but the majority preferred letting them go peacefully and resuming hunting right away. Fortunately for the Sioux, this position prevailed among the group. They would otherwise have been destroyed, for the previous battles had left them out of ammunitions.

Upon leaving, the Métis tied a letter for the Sioux on a perch, convinced that they would be back around soon.

The Métis never got to know how many Sioux warriors died during this battle.

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This battle, which killed most of the elite among the Sioux army, must have been reported widely among their band, for from this moment on they never again dared attacking Métis hunters. Ten years later, they would be back with their legendary cruelty when they attacked a colony of whites at the Saint-Pierre River in Dakota but even then, they spared the Métis and their allies.

Rudolph Friederich Kurz also gives an account of the Battle of the Grand Coteau, made three months after the battle on October 14, 1851 at Fort Union, relayed to him by some of the single Michif men who went there to winter and work (150 miles directly west of Velva/Dog Den Butte) following the conclusion of their harvest season wherein the battle occurred. This account follows Lafleche’s by a month and 10 days.

Kurz, Rudolph Friederich. *The Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz: An Account of His Experiences Among fur Traders and American Indians on the Mississippi and the Upper Missouri Rivers during the Years 1846 to 1852.* (Translated by Myrtis Jarrell, Edited by J.N.B. Hewitt. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937: 190-193.

### **Mgr. Langevin’s Notes<sup>14</sup>: Battle of Grand Coteau<sup>15</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Philippe Adélarde Langevin (August 23, 1855 – June 15, 1915) was an Oblate priest and became the Archbishop of St. Boniface in 1895. He founded the La Liberte newspaper published in Manitoba on May 20, 1913. As archbishop, Langevin presided over the ecclesiastical province of St Boniface. As well as his own archdiocese, the province included the diocese of St Albert, which roughly corresponded to the southern half of the present province of Alberta, and the vicariates of Athabasca-Mackenzie and Saskatchewan. The first spanned parts of what are now the Yukon and the Northwest Territories as well as

French translations by Emilie Pigeon.

1. Le vieux Breland (Pascal), le chef du camp lorsque le combat des Sioux eut lieu aux sources de la Riviere des Chaweyennes.

(Old Breland (Pascal) was chief of the camp when the Sioux attack [on the Metis] happened at the source of the Chayenne River.)

2. Notes from his informant, presumably Jimmy Whitford, written in 1901.

Men and women listed:

- Charles Demontigny, le pere de ?.
- Antoine Desjarlais
- Whitford garcon (a boy) ? asked McGillis
- Pierre Pelletier (Assiniboine).
- Louison Antoine Houle et garçon.
- Jean Baptiste Malaterre
- Francis Laframbois – Sioux fesse.
- Pierriche Bonneau
- Laframboise injures a Sioux in the rear (above: Laframboise injured in the rear by a Sioux)
- Père de Gabriel Dumont, blesse à doigt (injured on the finger by a Sioux).
- Helene Gariepy, matante (my aunt) – Desjarlais.
- Isabellens Desjarlais.
- Marie Desmarais.
- 600 tentes (lodges) de Sioux, 7 ou 8 par tente.
- Chien long. (long dog)
- 70 guns
- One tent ? of 20 skins.
- Burnt Earth people (Sioux)
- Charles Gladu, ton oncle (my uncle) sans connaissance [without knowledge]
- Francois Gariepy, cousin.
- Deux SanSoucys, 1, de la Riviere aux Morts (River of the Dead, Netley Creek), 2 Kenesna.

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northern British Columbia and Alberta. The second stretched to Hudson Bay and the eastern Arctic from its southern border with St Boniface.

<sup>15</sup> File D SHSB01\_211\_p113-114.

Vieux Antoine Desjarlais brule dans la chapelle de Qu'Appelle, le pere Decorby voulait le sauver. (Old Antoine Desjarlais burnt in the chapel of Qu'Appelle, Father Decorby wanted to save him.)

Pere de Gabriel Dumont blesse poquet en au doigt. (Father of Gabriel Dumont injured on the wrist, on his finger)

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1. Antoine Morin au Lac du Diable.
  2. Larocque – Bottineau – Tsikane.
  3. Louison Morin frere la Wabisca, Ile de Corbeau, Lac du Diable.
  4. Roche Jaune – Buford Francis Gariepy.
  5. Basile Trottier, Roche Jaune – Buford – marie?
  6. Edouard Serre (Sayer ?).
  7. Antoine Gosselin

1st of August 1901 – Account from Old Gosselin, born 1818, his father from the Île of Orléans, his mother Assiniboine.<sup>16</sup> The Black Duck. [born circa 1790]

He speaks Cree, Saulteux, Assiniboine, Sioux, French. The Black Duck, Chief of the Turtle Mountain, adv. Of the Métis. He sent tobacco to Red Lake, Red Cedar Lake, Rainy River, Lake of the Woods, River of the Dead [Peguis's group at Netley Creek]. [This is an account of a battle in 1824 when Black Duck was killed]

He who smokes tobacco must be armed.

They waited somewhere in from of the mountain. Departure towards the land of the Sioux. Fear of allies. Coming to remember [they wanted to] save [accumulate] the scalps. Discovery of a small camp. Hesitation of the warriors. Black Duck laughed and made some cries.

(Source: p. 25 SHSB01\_211\_p115)

Sioux warriors saw them. They were camped near a lake far from the larger camp that waited the agents of the American government. More hesitations. The Sioux left their lodges. We killed 2 women that were hidden (and we) removed their scalps. More hesitations. Enough. No, said Black Duck. Then, the fog raised, and we could see the large camp. Black Duck ?? (illegible) - No, said his son, too late, if we die, it is your fault. An Assiniboine came to tell them to run away. Black Duck did not respond. I believe they are brethren of the Assiniboine. The Sioux were as numerous as the grass. They will annihilate you. Useless. So they went away. And the Sioux surrounded them like ??.

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<sup>16</sup> Francois Gosselin was married to Suzanne Lafournaise. He was the son of Michel Gosselin and Marguerite Duroleaux (Assiniboine).

3 women killed, 37 men killed in one hour. 3 Saulteux ran away. One ran away on foot, chased by warriors on horseback – entered a lake- walked on water. The Sioux came forward trampling in and returned. Another, enflamed, one... received an injury to the cheek (spear) to the arm and to the back. He threatened us with his unloaded weapon, accosting a young chief who jumped from his horse, jumped onto this horse, the best, chased by 2 cavaliers. One trips and falls.

-He was threatened with an unloaded weapon. The Sioux escaped, but the Saulteux took his horse. 50 Sioux injured, 10 killed.

( Source: p. 26 SHSB01\_211\_p116)

Historic notes of Mgr Langevin (suite)  
Combat des Sioux (sic!)

The Old Blondeau, 78 years, 9 March 1898

Before the battle, a Métis wanted to see the Sioux, his son wanted to accompany him, and his father refused. The 3 prisoners: James Whitford, living in Willow Bunch ; Jerome MacGillis, dead, J Bte Malaterre, killed by the Sioux.

Prisoners. They believed they were Assiniboine friends. They were kept in the tent of a *sauvage* that Jerome MacGillis knew. The Sioux protected them. They were threatened all night. The Sioux passed by and made the gesture of crushing grain in their hands. The peace calumet was offered to the chief of the group. At daybreak, the Sioux guards accepted the calumet. IT was a sign of death for the prisoners. They were put on horseback on their own horses. An American was in the midst of the Sioux, dressed like them. He asked: “Do you understand English? You are dead. Escape by going through the Sioux, not next to them.” James Whitford understood. Whitford and Jerome MacGillis had two runners [racehorses]; they ran away and escaped the bullets of the Sioux. James bragged: “There is not a single man like me.” “Shut up” said Mgr Laflèche, “thank God, it is he who saved you.” The poor J Bte Malaterre was stopped and cut into pieces.

(Source: p. 27 SHSB01\_211\_p117)

“They tied his hands, his feet on the saddle of horses. Before the escape of the 3 prisoners, a Sioux wandered and challenged (the Metis of the camps) “We shall kill them!” said the Metis. “No, said Mgr Laflèche, think of your people who are prisoners; if you kill them, they [the Metis] will be killed.” After the return of the prisoners, the cousin of the old Blondeau killed him, he cut his head and killed the Sioux. Many Sioux were killed. The Sioux threw bodies into a neighbouring lake. There were injured Metis. They had 60 guns. The Sioux, 800 lodges!!!

2) Note: the combat took place near dog den butte.

X This is false. The big camp of Red River hunters (St. Boniface, St. Norbert, Pembina) was near Dog Den Butte (butte some distance south of the curve of the Mouse river, on the side of the Coteau of the Missouri – Minot N. Dakota.) While the White Horse Plain camp was some 20 or 24 miles east of there, near the little birch lake [ÉP: *petit lacs aux bois blanc* – little lake of white wood] which made the sources of the Chayenne River. From the burial record of Malaterre in the St. Francois Xavier [parish record] by Mgr Laflèche, the remains of the unfortunate Metis were buried near the Chayenne River. However, this description leaves room for doubt because this river has two affluent [tributary] one also called “little fork” or the Grand Coulee comes some thirty miles north, passing a short distance to the east of the Butte à Morale, to connect to the south branch which runs in the ravines at the gorge they dug to cross. Neither M. Laflèche nor M. Lacombe mentions the butte, nor the branches of the river, nor the ascension of the Coteau.

(Source: p. 28 SHSB01\_211\_p118)

However, M. Laflèche says his group advanced towards the lands of the Sioux, which would seem to indicate that he followed the south branch. He specified that after having climbed atop the first butte of the grand coteau, cavaliers signalled the discovery of a large encampment, and immediately the chief of the caravan gave the order of going back down and choosing a most advantageous encampment for self-defence.

Translated by Emilie Pigeon.

## **Metis Veterans and Families Present at the Battle**

### **Men**

1. Birston, Magnus (b. 1828)
2. Blondeau, Simon (b. 1827)
3. Breland, Gilbert (b. 1838)
4. Breland, Moise (b. 1832)
5. Breland, Pascal (b. 1811)
6. Breland, Patrice (b. 1837)
7. Breland, Thomas (b. 1842)
8. DeMontigny, Charles
9. Dumont, Gabriel (b. 1837)
10. Dumont, Isidore “Ekapow” (b. 1810)
11. Dumont, Isidore Jr. (b. 1833)
12. Dumont, Jean-Baptiste “Sha ha ta tow” (b. 1805)
13. Dumont, Joseph (b. 1838)
14. Falcon, Jean Baptiste (b. 1826)
15. Fiddler, William (b. 1837)
16. Gervais, Paul (b. 1832)
17. Lafontaine, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1825)
18. Lafreniere, Jean-Baptiste, (b. 1828)

19. Lafromboise, Francois (b. 1827)
20. Lafromboise, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1806)
21. Lagraisse (Legrace), Charles
22. Laviolette, Jean Baptiste (b. 1826)
23. Ledoux, Antoine (b. 1814)
24. Leveille, Gabriel (b. 1841)
25. Levielle, Pierre (b. 1829)
26. Malaterre, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1815)
27. McGillis, "Jerome" Angus Jr. (b. 1837)
28. McGillis, Cuthbert (b. 1822)
29. McGillis, William (b. 1814)
30. Morin, Louison.
31. Page, Francois Xavier (b. 1833)
32. Patenaud, Cuthbert (b. 1838)
33. Patenaud, Michel (b. 1832)
34. Paul, Paul (b. unknown )
35. Poitras, Pierre (b. 1810)
36. Poitras, Pierre Jr. (b. 1836)
37. Poitras, Theodore Maxime (b. 1839)
38. Poitras, Tobie David (b. 1834)
39. Ross, Donald, (b. 1822)
40. Rossignol, Jean Baptiste
41. St. Matte, Marc Ambroise
42. Thorne, George (William) (b. 1797)
43. Trottier, Andre (b. 1816)
44. Trottier, Charles (b. 1839)
45. Trottier, Michel (b. 1832)
46. Vivier, Alexis (b. 1796)
47. Vivier, Alexis Jr. (b. 1829)
48. Vivier, Joseph (b. 1825)
49. Vivier, Michael (b. 1820)
50. Whitford, Francis (b. 1835)
51. Whitford, James Francis (b. 1792)
52. Whitford, James Jr. (b. 1829)
53. Wills, Edouard Jr. (b. 1837)
54. Wills, Edouard Neddy (b. 1806-12)
55. Wills, Edward (b. 1832)

## **Women**

1. Beaudry, Suzanne (b.c. 1809)
2. Bruyere, Marie (b. 1815)
3. Campbell, Marie (b. 1815)
4. Delorme, Catherine (b. 1825)
5. Delorme, Marguerite (b. 1824)
6. Demontigny, Marie (b. 1841)

7. Desjarlais, Françoise Flora (b. 1826)
8. Desjarlais, Marie (b. 1817)
9. Dumont, Pelagie (b. 1835)
10. Fagnant, Genevieve (b. 1835)
11. Falcon, Isabelle (b. 1819)
12. Falcon, Marie (b. 1825)
13. Fournier, Madeleine (b. 1825)
14. Grant, Marie (b. 1820)
15. Laframboise, Angélique (b. 1830)
16. Laframboise, Louise (b. 1807)
17. Laframboise, Marguerite (b. 1805)
18. Lapierre, Louise (b. 1830)
19. Marguerite Lavalée (b. 1800)
20. Lemire, Marie (b. 1805)
21. Martin, Françoise
22. McGillis, Isabelle (b. 1819)
23. McGillis, Marguerite (b. 1832)
24. Nolin, Marie (b. 1828)
25. Paul, Madeleine (b. 1828)
26. Paul, Nancy (b. 1829)
27. Short, Isabelle (1804)
28. Spence, Nancy Mary (b. 1797)
29. St. Germain, Ursule (b. 1830)

## **Children**

1. Breland, Clémence (b. 1849)
2. Breland, Patrice (b. 1837)
3. Breland, Cécile (b. 1838)
4. Breland, Marguerite (b. 1846)
5. Breland, Louise Lucie (b. 1848)
6. Breland, Marie (b. 1841)
7. Breland, Élisabeth (b.c. 1844)
8. Breland, Thomas (b. 1842)
9. DeMontigny, Appoline (b. 1849)
10. DeMontigny, Charles Jr. (b. 1845)
11. DeMontigny, Hermas (b. 1851)
12. DeMontigny, Marie (b. 1841)
13. DeMontigny, Philomène (b. 1843)
14. Dumont, Édouard (b. 1845)
15. Dumont, Elie (b. 1847)
16. Dumont, Isabelle Elizabeth (b. 1842)
17. Dumont, Xavier (b. 1840)
18. Lafontaine, François (b. 1847)
19. Lafontaine, Jean-Baptiste Jr. (b. 1845)
20. Lafontaine, Julie (b. 1848)



21. Lafontaine, Louis (b. 1850)
22. Laframboise, Augustin (b. 1844)
23. Laframboise, Augustin (b. 1844)
24. Laframboise, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1844)
25. Laframboise, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1845)
26. Laframboise, Jean-Baptiste (b. 1845)
27. Laframboise, Philomene (b. 1847)
28. Laframboise, Philomene (b. 1847)
29. Laframboise, Ursule (b. 1842)
30. Lafreniere, Ephigenie (b. 1850)
31. Lafreniere, Ursule (b. 1850)
32. Laviolette, Emelie (b. 1850)
33. Laviolette, Rosalie (b. 1848)
34. Ledoux, Chrysostome (b. 1849)
35. Ledoux, Gregoire (b. 1847)
36. Ledoux, Rose (b. 1844)
37. Malaterre, Eulalie (b. 1851)
38. Malaterre, Madeleine (b. 1842)
39. Malaterre, Rosalie (b. 1840)
40. McGillis, Cuthbert Jr. (b. 1844)
41. McGillis, Eliza (b. 1837)
42. McGillis, John (b. 1838)
43. McGillis, Lucien (b. 1848)
44. Poitras, Joseph (b. 1841)
45. Poitras, Eliza (b. 1843)
46. Poitras, Francois (b. 1846)
47. Poitras, Flavie (b. 1848)
48. Poitras, Appoline (b. 1850)
49. Ross, Catherine (b. 1849)
50. Ross, William (b. 1851)
51. Thorne, Cecile (1827)
52. Thorne, George Jr. (b. 1829)
53. Thorne, Genevieve (b. 1830)
54. Thorne, Angelique (b. 1834)
55. Thorne, Marie Josephte (b.1837)
56. Thorne, David (b.1839)
57. Thorne, John (b.1844)
58. Thorne, Nancy (b.1846)
59. Thorne, Marie (b.1849)
60. Elise, born January 11, 1851,
61. Vivier, Alexis (b. 1842)
62. Vivier, Bernard (b. 1840)
63. Vivier, Charles (b. 1847)
64. Vivier, Caroline (b. 1845)
65. Vivier, Iphigenie (b. 1851)
66. Vivier, Josephte (b. 1838)

67. Vivier, Marie (b. 1844)
68. Vivier, Michel (b. 1847)
69. Whitford, Andrew (b. 1839)
70. Whitford, Donald (b. 1843)
71. Whitford, Philip (b. 1848)
72. Whitford, Margaret (b. 1840)
73. Whitford, Nancy (b. 1848)
74. Whitford, Sarah (b. 1833)
75. Wills, Donald (b. 1840)
76. Wills, John Thomas (b. 1)
77. Wills, John (b. 1848)
78. Wills, Marie (b. 1841)
79. Wills, Marie Virginie (b. 1851)
80. Wills, Priscilla (b. 1847)

### **Biographies:**

**Birston, Magnus.** (b. 1828) Birston was a Scottish Half-Breed from St. François Xavier, the son of William Birston and Angélique Bercier dit Marchand. He has been described as one of the leaders of the “English Plains Buffalo Hunt” along with William Hallett. He was married to Madeleine Paul (b. 1828), the daughter of Jean Baptiste Paul and Angelique Piche.

Birston had been appointed to the Council of Assiniboia on August 6, 1868. The Council existed for 35 years, 1835-1870. He was the St. Paul delegate to Louis Riel’s Convention of Forty in 1870. He later moved to Duck Lake (now Saskatchewan).

On October 10 1885, he was tried for treason-felony at Regina for his Resistance activities at Duck Lake on 26<sup>th</sup> March and 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1885. He appeared before Judge Richardson on Monday October 26, 1885 and the judge stated that although some evidence weighed against the prisoner there were some favourable points for him, and sitting as a juror he could not convict. He warned the prisoner to be more careful of himself in the future. He was the only Metis other than Riel to go to trial.

Hillyard Mitchell had left Birston in charge of his store at Duck Lake before the battle there. Birston may have looted the store and burnt down Mitchell’s house but there was little evidence.

**Blondeau, Simon.** (b. 1827) The Blondeau family history notes that he and his wife were present at this battle. Simon Blondeau was born on the Pembina River, the son of Louis Blondeau (b. 1773) and Marie Louise Lafromboise dite Franche. He married Françoise Desjarlais (b. 1826), the daughter of Antoine Desjarlais and Marie Catherine Allary in 1850 at St. Boniface. She was also known as Julie Desjarlais.

**Breland, Gilbert.** (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 Metis buffalo hunters from St. Francois Xavier (SFX) fought the Dakota on July 15-16, 1851.

Gilbert and Moise were the sons of Alexandre Boishue dit Breland<sup>17</sup> and Emilie Wells. Later, Gilbert married Felecite Boyer (b. 1847) on 21 February 1856 in St. Francois-Xavier. 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 Felicite:

- 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 Tourond's Coulee and at Batoche. He was the scout who warned the Metis that Middleton's troops were approaching Tourond's Coulee.

Gilbert's uncle, trader Pascal Breland (b. 1811) was also at this battle. Pascal married Cuthbert Grant's daughter Maria Grant. Pascal was the younger brother of Gilbert's father Alexandre Breland.

**Breland, Moise.** (1832) Moise was born on March 19, 1832 at SFX, the son of Alexandre Duboishue Breland and Emelie Wills. Later, he married Sarah Delorme (b. 1842) on January 8, 1860, the daughter of Urbaine Henault dit Delorme and Madeleine Vivier at SFX. Sarah's uncle, Alexis Vivier was also part of this brigade. Moise was next married to Philomene Page on June 17, 1866. She was the daughter of Henry Page and Eliza Grant.

**Breland, Pascal** (1811-1896) Pascal came to be known as "Le Roi de Traiteurs"—"King of the Traders." He was born in the Saskatchewan River Valley on June 15, 1811 to Pierre du Boishué *dit* Breland and Josephte (Louise) Belley a Half-Breed. The family farmed at Red River, then in 1832, Pascal and his mother and two younger sisters moved from Red River to Grantown (St. François Xavier) to farm. Four years later Pascal married fifteen-year old Maria Grant daughter of Cuthbert Grant and Marie Desmarais. Breland's sister Marie was the mother of another famous Metis entrepreneur, Johnny Grant. Maria and Pascal raised a large family of six boys and nine girls. By 1849 Pascal was a very prosperous trader with his 380 acres of land in and around St. François Xavier. At the time he owned 12 Red-River-carts and had 22 horses. Initially, Pascal did

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<sup>17</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 Emelie Wells, the daughter of John Wells (Wills) and Josephte Grant. She was born 1810 in the Northwest Territory.

not have legal claim to his land but later he received an official land grant from the Crown in 1882. Breland spent a considerable amount of time on the Western Plains as a free trader in areas of Fort Pitt, Wood Mountain-Cypress Hills, Fort Qu'Appelle and Fort Ellice. As a result of Pascal's extensive involvement in the trade and his wealth, he gained a social prestige in the area and he was a member of "la bourgeoisie Métisse."

**Dumont, Isidore Sr. dit Ecapow.** (1810-1885) Isidore was Gabriel Dumont's father. He first married Louise Laframboise and they had seven children: Isidore Jr., Pélagie, Gabriel, Joseph, Isabelle, Edouard, and Elie. In the 1830s Isidore and his family moved to Red River and were living with his wife's parents until moving to the Saskatchewan River valley in 1840 near Fort Pitt. In 1848 he returned to White Horse Plain and for several years split his time between there and Saskatchewan. His second wife was Angie (Angele) Landry, the daughter of Joseph Landry and Genevieve Lalonde, they were married on June 10, 1867 at St. Norbert. They had three children; Marguerite, Joseph and Marie. Isidore Sr. was part of the original 1871 St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan governing committee and was elected as a St. Laurent Council member in 1873 and 1874. Isidore was a witness during the signing of Treaty Six at Fort Carlton on September 9, 1876. In 1878, Isidore and other Metis buffalo hunters at Cypress Hills wrote a petition asking for a special Metis reserve of land.<sup>18</sup>

Although not active in the fighting at Batoche Isidore did supply provisions and sheltered his son and others after the final battle. He died just after the defeat at Batoche. He is mentioned in the documents of the 1850s as trading at Fort Ellice. His nickname was "Ecapow" and the Cree Indians called him "Ai caw paw" (The Immoveable or Unshakeable One).

**Dumont, Isidore Jr.** (1833-1885) Isidore was Gabriel Dumont's older brother. He married Judith Parenteau (b.1847) before 1860 at St. Boniface. She was the daughter of Joseph Parenteau and Angelique Godon. They had eleven children. Isidore took part in the Battle of the Grand Coteau of the Missouri in 1851.

Isidore was a plains bison hunter who left Manitoba in 1870, lived as far west as Fort Edmonton and by 1872 had settled at St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan. Isidore was involved in the 1885 Resistance at Duck Lake and was one of the Metis Captains. He was killed on March 26, 1885 along the Carlton Road by Thomas McKay, Superintendent Crozier's English Half-Breed interpreter. At the same time McKay shot and killed Asiyewin, these were the first shots fired in the 1885 Resistance. Isidore Jr. is buried at St. Antoine de Padoue Cemetery, Batoche.

**Dumont, Jean-Baptiste "Sha-how-tow".** (1805-1884) Jean-Baptiste Dumont was the son of Jean Baptiste Dumont Sr. and his Sarcee wife Josephte. His brother Isidore "Ecapow" Dumont was also a Metis leader and buffalo hunter. Jean-Baptiste and his brother Isidore lead the peace negotiations with the Dakota held at Devil's Lake in 1862. Isidore was the father of Gabriel Dumont. Jean-Baptiste Jr. married Marguerite

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<sup>18</sup> Requesting a re-opening of the buffalo hunt between November 14<sup>th</sup> and February 15<sup>th</sup> each year and the granting of Metis "reserve" land (A strip of land 150 miles long along the American border beginning where the Pembina River crosses the border. This strip was to be fifty miles from south to north.

Lafromboise, the daughter of Joseph Laframboise and his Assiniboine wife Josephthe. He died at St. Laurent, Saskatchewan.

**Falcon, Isabelle.** (1819) Isabelle was the daughter of Pierre Falcon and Marie Grant. She married Andre Trottier, the son of Andre Trottier and Marguerite Paquette on May 7, 1839 at St. Francois Xavier. Her brother was captain of this brigade.

**Falcon, Jean Baptiste “Che-ma-na”.** (b. 1826) Baptiste was born near Devil’s Lake, the son of Pierre Falcon and Marie Grant. He married Marie Nolin, the daughter of Augustin Nolin (b. 1781) and Helene Cameron in 1846. He was the buffalo hunt leader for the St. Francois Xavier Metis. He died in 1910 at St. Anne, MB.

**Fidler, (William).** (b. 1837) William was born at SFX, the son of George Fidler an HBC employee, and Nancy Black. He married Marguerite McGillis (b. 1832), the daughter of Alexandre McGillis (b. 1798) and Marguerite Bottineau in 1851 at St. Francois Xavier.

**Gervais, Paul.** (1832-1868). Paul was the son of Jean Baptiste Gervais and Madeleine Bonneau. He later married Madeleine Page (b. 1836), the daughter of Joseph Page and Marguerite Morin in 1857 at SFX. Madeleine was the cousin of Francois Xavier Page also part of this brigade.

**Lafontaine dit Faillant, Jean-Baptiste.** (b. 1825) Jean Baptiste was born at SFX, the son of Jean Baptiste Lafontaine Sr. and Marie Rocheblave. He married Françoise Martin (b., the daughter of Francois Martin and Marguerite Racette in 1845 at SFX.

**Lafromboise, Jean Baptiste** (1806-1870) Jean-Baptiste Lafromboise was born in 1806, the son of Joseph Laframboise and Josephthe (Assiniboine). Joseph was born at Mackinac in 1776. Jean Baptiste was first married to Suzanne Beaudry (b.c. 1809), the daughter of Joseph Beaudry and Suzanne Latour, in 1827. He then married Angelique Parenteau, the daughter of Joseph Parenteau and Suzanne “Cris” Richard before 1860. He died on May 16, 1870 at St. Francois Xavier. His sister Louise (b. 1807) was first married to John Wills, then married to Isidore Dumont in 1833. His older sister Marguerite (b. 1805) was married to Henry Munroe Fisher then to Jean Baptiste Dumont who was father-in-law to her younger sister Louise.

Jean-Baptiste fought at the Battle of the Grand Coteau. His telling of the history as passed down in the family to Gene Lafromboise<sup>19</sup> at Turtle Mountain Band at Belcourt, N.D., is that Father Laflèche prayed for their deliverance all through the night after the fighting on July 13, 1851 and the next morning there was a thick fog and the Métis were able to escape from the Dakota, who could hear the carts but couldn’t precisely locate them. A thunderstorm and heavy mist at the end of the first day of fighting is also mentioned by father Lacombe.

Children of Jean-Baptiste and Suzanne Beaudry:

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<sup>19</sup> Gene says that his father told him the story as he had been told it by his grand parents.

- Francois, b. 1827 at Edmonton, married Marie Trottier, then Louise Chaboillez (Chaboyer) then Helen Rocheblave.
- Angelique, b. 1830, married Antoine Trottier.
- Augustin, b. 1844, married Louise Ledoux.
- Ursule, b. 1842, married Charles Trottier.
- Jean Baptiste Jr., b. 1845, 100 miles south of Brandon, married Elise Thomas.
- Philomene, b. c. 1847 at Red River, married Moise Landry.

**Lafreniere, Jean-Baptiste.** (b. 828) Jean Baptiste was born at SFX, the son of Antoine Lafreniere and Marie Versaille. He married Ursule St. Germain (b. 1830), the daughter of Francois St. Germain and Louise Morand in 1849 at St. Francois Xavier in 1849.

**Lagraisse (Le grace), Charles.** Probably from the same family as Baptiste Legraisse who was a guide for the Sinclair Expedition to Oregon in 1854 and later for the Palliser Expedition in 1857.

**Laviolette, Jean-Baptiste.** (b. 1826) Jean Baptiste was born at SFX, the son of Charles Laviolette and Elizabeth (Cree). He married Nancy Paul (b.1829), the daughter of Francois Paul and Marguerite Grant in 1848 at St. Francois Xavier in 1848.

**Ledoux, Antoine.** Antoine Ledoux (b. 1814), was the son of Jean Baptiste Ledoux and Madeleine Sauteuse. He married Marie Falcon (b. 1825), the daughter of Pierre Falcon and Marie Grant in 1841 at St. Francois Xavier, on February 17, 1841. Her brother was the leader of this brigade and her sister Isabelle, and husband Andre Trottier were also present at the battle.

**Leveille, Gabriel.** (1841-1883) Gabriel was born on December 1, 1841 St. Francois Xavier; the son of Pierre Léveill , born June 1783 at La Bois-St.Paul, Comte Charlevois, Quebec and Julie McKenzie, the M tis daughter of Alexander McKenzie and his wife Marie. Gabriel married Eliza Poitras (b.1843), daughter of Pierre Poitras and Marie Bruyere on 3 November 1864 at St. Francois Xavier. He died 8 April 1883 on the prairie at age 41. Gabriel was accidentally killed by his nephew, Paul Caplette.

**Leveille, Pierre.** (1829-1884) Pierre L veill  was born on January 14, 1829 at St. Francois Xavier. He was the son of Pierre L veill , born June 1783 at La Bois-St.Paul, Comte Charlevois, Quebec and Julie McKenzie, the M tis daughter of Alexander McKenzie and his wife Marie. He married Genevieve Fagnant (Faillant, b. 1835) the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Fagnant and Josephte Monet dit Belhumeur on September 15, 1856 at St. Francois Xavier. He died on February 16, 1884 at SFX, at age 55.

**Leveille, Pierre Sr.** (1783-1876) Pierre L veill , born on June 1783 at La Bois-St.Paul, Comte Charlevois, Quebec. He married Julie McKenzie, the Metis daughter of Alexander McKenzie and his wife Marie. He died on September 8, 1876 at SFX.

**Magdalis, Jerome.** Jerome does not appear in Falcon's account unless this is actually McGillis. However, A. G. Morice does mention him as one of the M tis scouts during the

Battle with the Sioux at the Grand Coteau. On July 13, 1851 he and two other scouts were taken prisoner by the Indians. He and one other scout were able to escape thanks to their swift horses. Jean-Baptiste Malaterre, the remaining prisoner, was killed by the Sioux.<sup>20</sup>

**Malaterre, Jean-Baptiste.** (1815-1851)

Jean Baptiste was the son of Jean-Baptiste Malaterre Sr. (b. 1871) and Angelique Adam.<sup>21</sup> Jean-Baptiste was first married to Therese Comtois, the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Comtois and Angelique Vallee in 1839 at SFX. They had three children. Therese died after giving birth to their third child in January 1846. He then married Louise Marchand dite Lapierre, the daughter of Antoine Marsant dit Lapierre and Louise Machegone in 1850 at SFX. They had a daughter Marie born on March 25, 1851. Jean-Baptiste was one of the Metis scouts during the 1851 Battle with the Sioux at the Grand Coteau. On July 13, 1851 he and two other scouts were taken prisoner by the Indians. The other scouts were fortunate to escape thanks to their swift horses. Jean-Baptiste Malaterre, the remaining prisoner, was killed by the Sioux. In Falcon's account he was buried near the battle site. Others report that his gravesite is at Butte de Morale, North Dakota, located nine kilometres northeast of today's Harvey, North Dakota.

On his return to his parish of St. Francois Xavier Father Lafleche wrote of Malaterre:

On July 13, 1851, we have buried near the Cheyenne River, the body of Jean-Baptiste Mal a Terre, slaughtered the same day by [Sioux]. We regained the cut off feet and hands, the chopped off hair and the cracked skull, and the brains scattered on the soil, having buried the body and also three bullets and 67 arrows planted in the body. Being present at the internment Pascal B\_\_\_\_<sup>22</sup> and Charles Montaine<sup>23</sup> who have undersigned and others who have not signed.

«Nous soussigné avons inhumé près de la rivière des Chayennes le corps de l'infortuné Jean Baptiste Mal à terre, massacré le même jour par les Sioux. Il fut retrouvé les piés et les mains coupés, la chevelure levée, le crâne cassé et la cervelle répandue sur la terre et ayant dans le corps en outre des trous coups de fusil, soixante sept flèches et trois couteaux plantés.»

**McGillis, Angus Jr.** was born on November 24, 1837, son of Alexander McGillis (b. 1798) and Marguerite Bottineau. Later, he married Isabelle Fagnant (b. 1838), the daughter of Jean Baptiste Fagnant and Josephte Monet dite Belhumeur in 1858 at SFX. His cousins Isabelle and Cuthbert McGillis were also part of this brigade.

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<sup>20</sup> Reyerend A.G. Morice, translated by Peter Gagne. French Canadians in the West. CD ROM version, St. Boniface: OMI, 1908: 329.

<sup>21</sup> Likely the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Adam and Josephte "Montagnaise." Her brother Joseph Adam (b. 1792 at Red Rivér) was employed with the HBC as a mail carrier. He lived in St. Norbert.

<sup>22</sup> Pascal Breland (1811-1896).

<sup>23</sup> Charles DeMontigny (b. 1819).

**McGillis, Cuthbert.** Cuthbert was born on December 22, 1822, the son of Angus McGillis and Marguerite Notinikabon. He married Marguerite Delorme (b. 1824), the daughter of Urbaine Henault dit Delorme and Madeleine Vivier, on February 1, 1842 at ASt. Francois Xavier. His sister Isabelle was married to Edouard Wills, they were also part of this brigade.

**McGillis, W. J. William.** William was born c. 1814, brother of Cuthbert, son of Angus McGillis and Marguerite Notinikabon. He married Marie Campbell, the daughter of John Duncan Campbell and Catherine Montignais in 1836 at St. Francois Xavier. William was employed as a plains hunter by the HBC. Reportedly he was one of their highest paid plains hunters.

**Montmini (DeMontigny), Charles.** Montmini's name appears in an account from the Pembina brigade. The two men who served as witnesses to the burial of Malaterre were reported to be, Pascal Breland and Charles Montmini. This man is actually Charles DeMontigny born November 12, 1819, the son of Rene Ovide Testard Seur de Montigny and Joseph Fagnant. Charles married Marie Desjarlais (b. 1817) circa 1841. She was the daughter of Antoine Desjarlais and Marie Catherine Allary. Their daughter Marie later married Edward Welsh Jr. who was also part of this hunting party.

**Montmini, Charles (b. 1819).** In other accounts Pascal Breland and Charles Montmini witnessed the burial of Jean Baptiste Malaterre, buried near the Rivière des Chayenne, killed by the Sioux, feet and hands cut, scalped, with a broken skull, his brain lying on the ground. He had gun wounds, 67 arrows and three knives sunk in his body. The exact quote: «Nous soussigné avons inhumé près de la rivière des Chayennes le corps de l'infortuné Jean Baptiste Mal à terre, massacré le même jour par les Sioux. Il fut retrouvé les piés et les mains coupés, la chevelure levée, le crâne cassé et la cervelle répandue sur la terre et ayant dans le corps en outre des trous coups de fusil, soixante sept flèches et trois couteaux plantés.»

**Pagé, François Xavier.** (1833-1912) François Xavier was born at St. François Xavier. He was the son of Joseph Pagé Sr. (b. 1783) and his second wife Agathe Letendré (b. 1790). François Xavier married Philomène Lavallée (b. 1843). He was a representative to the Convention of Forty and served on Riel's Red River Council in 1870 representing his home district of St. Francois Xavier. During the Reign of Terror by the Red River Expeditionary Force following Manitoba's entry into confederation Pagé was arrested and imprisoned by Wolseley's troops along with François Xavier Dauphinais and Pierre Poitras.

**Patenaude, Cuthbert.** (1838) Cuthbert was born at SFX, the son of Michel Patenaud and Marguerite Zhezhegwegeweg (Ojibway). Cuthbert later married Marie Piche (b. 1842), the daughter of Louis Piche and Charlotte Genthon-Dauphinais on February 5, 1861 at SFX. This family were members of Little Shell and Turtle Mountain Band, although struck from the rolls in 1892.

“Corbette Pacnaud” was one of the Metis struck from the Turtle Mountain Band Rolls: National Archives, Record Group 75, Special Case 110, Exhibit "B": List of names



stricken off from the Rolls as parties not entitled to the benefits of a Treaty with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa [September, 1892].

**Patenaude, Michel.** (1832) Michel was born at SFX, the son of Michel Patenaud and Marguerite Zhezhegwegeweg (Ojibway). He later married Therese Piche (b. 1837), the daughter of Louis Piche and Charlotte Genthon-Dauphinais on January 20, 1857 at SFX. He did receive Metis scrip under the Pembina and Red Lake Treaty:

Halfbreed" Land Scrip: National Archives, RG 75, Entry 364, "Treaty of April 12, 1864, Red Lake and Pembina Half-Breeds," Scrip Stubs, Number 228 [checked], dated July 15th, 1873, 160 Acres, delivered July 16th, 1873, issued to Michael Packnaud, sent to Agent Douglass.

This family was part of the Little Shell Band and were paid annuities in 1865 and 1866:

Patnode, Michael [1866-7]  
Annuity: MHS film M-390 (Roll 3), U.S. Chippewa Annuity Rolls:  
Pembina Annuity Roll, Ais ance's Band, 1865:57  
.....- 1 man, 1 woman, 5 children \$ 35 paid  
Pembina Annuity Roll, Little Shell's Band, 1866:3/21  
.....- 1 man, 4 children \$ 12.50pd

In 1892, Michel was one of the Metis struck from the Turtle Mountain Band Rolls: National Archives,: National Archives, Record Group 75, Special Case 110, Exhibit "B": List of names stricken off from the Rolls as parties not entitled to the benefits of a Treaty with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa [September,1892].

**Paul, Paul.** Paul Paul was the son of Paul Paul Hus and Marie Francoise Joinville. He married Marguerite Lavallee, the daughter of Ignace Lavallee and Josephte (Cree), she was born in 1800 at Ile a la Crosse Saskatchewan. Their daughter Francoise Paul born 1817 was married to Francois Dauphinais. Their son Antoine Paul was born on June 31, 1828.

**Postras, Pierre.** (1810-1889) Pierre Postras was born in 1810, at Fort Esperance, Qu'Appelle Valley, Northwest Territories. His mother was Marguerite Grant, sister to Cuthbert Grant and his father was Andre Henri Postras from St. Foye, Quebec. Andre Postras was one of the founders of St. Francois Xavier. This was a buffalo hunting family always active on the plains. The family was quite large with relations on both sides of the border. Andre, sometimes known as Henri died circa 1831 at St. Joseph, Dakota Territory. Pierre Postras married Marie Bruyere, the daughter of Jean Baptiste Bruyere and Francoise (Serpente) on November 27, 1832 at St. Boniface. They had eleven children together.

Pierre Postras was a representative to the Convention of Forty representing his home district of St. Francois Xavier. He was also a delegate to the previous Convention of 24, November 16, 1869. Pierre became one of the 24 members of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia led by Louis Riel. On June 24, 1870, Hon. Mr Pierre Postras seconded Hon.

Mr Louis Schmidt's motion "That the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia accepts, in the name of the people, the Manitoba Act", thus entering the Dominion of Canada on the terms proposed in the Confederation Act. He would also witness the signing of Treaty Number 4 in the Qu'Appelle Valley, in 1874.

**Ross, Donald.** (1822-1885)

Donald Ross, also known as Daniel Ross, was born at St. François Xavier, the son of Hugh Ross<sup>24</sup> and Sara Short. He married Catherine Delorme (b. 1825), the daughter of Urbaine Henault dit Delorme and Madeleine Vivier, on May 22, 1848 at St. Francois Xavier. Later, they moved to a claim south of Tourond's Coulee. Ross was a member of Riel's Council (Exovedate) at Batoche during the 1885 Resistance. Ross was one of the men who came to the rescue of those trapped at Tourond's Coulee:

**Rossignol.** Probably Jean Baptiste Rossignol dit Blue who was married to Marguerite Descouteau (b. 1834) the daughter of Joseph Descouteau. This was a Turtle Mountain/Pembina family. Jeandron Rossignol, was on the Pembina Annuity Roll for Way ke ge ke zick's Band in 1868. Augustin, Louis, Felix, and Etienne Rasignole also took Metis Scrip under the Pembina and Red Lake Chippewa Treaty provisions.

**St. Matte, Marc Ambroise.** Ambroise was the son of Paul St. Matte. Paul was the eldest child of Martin Jerome (b. 1801) and Elizabeth Wilkie (b. 1809) the daughter of Alexandre Wilkie and his Chippewa wife.

Copy of letter HB 3677 enclosing Power of Atorney in his favour to draw Scrip from Ambroise St. Matte, son of Paul St. Matte.

St. Matte, Ambroise; for his deceased sister, Philomène St. Matte; address: Winnipegosis, Manitoba; born: Winter, 1873 near Water Hen River; died: 1896, 17 April at Winnipegosis, Manitoba; father: Samat Paul (deceased Métis); mother: Suzanna Gervais (Métis); heirs: Isabelle St. Matte, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3052 for \$34.28; William St. Matte, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3053 for \$34.28; Mary Campbell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3054 for \$34.28; Caroline Chartrand, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3055 for \$34.28; Cléophas Paul, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3021 for \$34.28; Suzanne St. Matte, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3056 for \$34.28; Ambroise St. Matte, scrip cert.: form D, no. 3057 for \$34.29; claim no. 289.

**Thorne, George** (b. 1797). George is mistakenly identified as William. George Thorne married Marie Lemire (b. 1805), the daughter of Pierre Lemire and Marie (Blackfoot) on September 15, 1828 at York Factory.. George Thorne died in St. Francois Xavier on May 26, 1887. Their children were:

- Cecile, born 1827, married to Paul St. Denis.
- George Jr. born 1829, married to Nancy McLeod., in 1853.
- Genevieve, born 1830, died in 1879.
- Angelique, born 1834, married Alexis Campbell.

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<sup>24</sup> Hugh Ross held HBC lot 1518 at Red River.

- Marie Josephte, born 1837, married Pierre Pelletier, then Joseph Fleury.
- David, born 1839, married Madeleine Auger.
- Abraham, born 1842, died in 1843.
- John, born 1844, married Helene Demontigny, whose parents were part of this hunting brigade.
- Nancy, born 1846, married Charles Demontigny, the brother of Helene Demontigny (above).
- Marie, born 1849) married Louis Desjarlais.
- Elise, born January 11, 1851, married Joseph L'Hirondelle.
- Catherine, born 1855, married William Bourke.
- Julie, born 1857.

**Trottier, André** (b. 1816) Andre married Isabel Falcon, the daughter of Pierre Falcon and Marie Grant. Andre was the son of Andre Trottier and Marguerite St. Denis dit Paquette. Their sons, Charles (age 12) and Michel (age 19) were likely present at this battle. Charles later became the leader of the Metis from Prairie-Ronde, south of Saskatoon; he had wintered there since the mid-1850s. Charles Trottier (born 1839) and Michel Trottier (born 1832) appear on 1863-64 Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa Treaty as numbers 444 and 457 when they were given Red Lake Half-breed Scrip in 1875.

**Vivier, Alexis.** (1796-1876) Alexis was the son of Alexis Vivier Sr. and Marie Anne (Assiniboine). He married Isabelle Short (b.c.1804) the daughter of James Short and Betsy Saulteuse in 1834 at St. Francois Xavier in 1834.

**Vivier, Michel.** (b. 1820) Michel was the younger brother of Alexis noted above, also the son of Alexis Vivier Sr. and Marie Anne (Assiniboine). Michel married Madeleine Fournier (b. 1825), the daughter of Francois Fournier (b. 1796) and Angelique Methote, on January 11, 1842 at St. Francois Xavier.

**Wills, (Welsh, Wells), Edward Jr.** (1837-1919) Edouard Wills was born on August 11, 1837 at St. Francois Xavier, the son of Edouard Wills and Isabelle McGillis. His father-in-law was also part of this group as he later married Marie DeMontigny the daughter of Charles DeMontigny and Marie Desjarlais in 1863. His sister Priscilla Wills was married to Jerome Lafournaise. Edouard signed a petition for a Metis reserve in Montana, sent by Louis Riel to General Nelson A. Miles on August 6, 1880.

**Wills (Wells, Welsh), “Neddy” Edward Sr.** (b. 1806) Edouard was the son of John Wills (Irish) and Marguerite Grant (Metis). He married Isabelle McGillis in 1829 at SFX. Edouard Wills Sr. (b. 1812) is listed on the 1850 Pembina Census where Edouard Sr. is shown as a hunter. Edouard Wills and his son Edouard Jr. both signed the 1878 Cypress Hills Metis Hunting Band petition for a reserve. They also signed Louis Riel's 1880 petition for a Metis reserve in Montana.

Edouard Wills was born near the site of Fort Gibraltar, Red River, the son NWC Partner John Wills (Irish) and Josephte Grant (Metis). Josephte was Cuthbert Grant's sister, thus

Cuthbert was Neddy's maternal uncle. John Wills had built Fort Gibraltar which was later destroyed by the HBC in 1816 during the trade war between the two companies.

In 1829, at St. Francois Xavier, Edouard married Isabelle McGillis (b. 1818) the daughter of Angus McGillis (1774-1842) and his Metis wife Marguerite Notinikaban Vent de Bout (b. 1780 at Fort William).

On September 17, 1886 Edouard received his Metis Scrip. In his application he states that he had left St. Francois Xavier in 1866 to follow the buffalo. From 1866 to 1881 his family had always wintered at Cypress Hills. On July 15, 1870, he states he was living at Wood Mountain and thus was eligible for scrip under the Dominion Lands Act. At the time of his 1886 application he said he had been living for five years at Lewiston, Montana. He gave his occupation as farmer, hunter and freighter. At the time of application he listed his seven living children as:

- Edward (b. 1837)
- Donald (b. 1840)
- Priscilla (b. 1847) the wife of Jerome Laboucane dit Lafournaise, living at Battle River.
- Johnny Thomas (b. 1851), married Louise Wilkie, the daughter of Alexander Wilkie and Louise Gariepy on March 14, 1883..
- Marie Virginie (b. 1851) at Pembina, the wife of Michel Langevin.
- Appoline, the wife of Joseph Laverdure
- James (b. 1858)

**Wills, Isabelle (McGillis)** (b. 1819) Isabelle was the daughter of Angus McGillis and Marguerite Notinikabon. Her brother, Cuthbert McGillis was also part of this brigade. Isabelle married Edouard Wills, the son of John Wills and Josephte Grant in 1836 at SFX. Her brother, Cuthbert McGillis was also part of this brigade. She married Edouard Wills (b. 1806), the son of John Wills and Josephte Grant in 1836 at SFX.

**Whitford, James Jr.** (1829-1872) James Whitford was born in 1829 at St. Andrew's Red River, the son of James Whitford Sr. and Nancy Spence. He married Mary Robillard, the daughter of Peter Robillard and Margaret (Indian) on December 31, 1851 at White Mud River. They had ten children.

**Whitford, James Sr. aka Jimmie Francis.** (1792-1872) James Whitford was the son of James Peter Whitford and Sarah (Indian). He married Nancy Mary Spence (1797 near fort Pitt), the daughter of Magnus Spence (Scot) and Cristiana (Metis) in 1820 at St. John's Red River. They had thirteen children. By 1886, both James Whitford Sr. and James Whitford Jr. were among the Metis and French of Oak Lake who petitioned Archbishop Taché for a resident priest, noting that they had no one among them to baptize, marry, or bury them, and their children were unable to take catechism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Archives of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Fonds Archevêché de Saint-Boniface, Petition pour avoir un prêtre au Lac des Chênes, October 8, 1886.



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