

A decorative frame consisting of two vertical columns on either side, topped with a pediment. The pediment contains a draped banner with a repeating pattern. The columns have a textured, stippled appearance. At the base of the columns are several steps leading up to the frame.

THROUGH

MEMORY'S

WINDOWS<sup>®</sup>

## T H R O U G H M E M O R Y ' S W I N D O W S

as told to Mary Sophia Desmaris Campbell  
by her uncle George William Sanderson in  
1934-1935-1936

I began my "bon voyage" Sept 29, 1846, at or near Port Nelson, Hudson's Bay. My grandfather had come from Scotland with the Hudson's Bay Company when a young man. My father was also an employee of the company. Our home was on the sea coast. Nearby was an island, whose shore at that time no man had been able to penetrate. Here the white whale came to have its young, and woe betide the man who ventured too near. When the wind blew from its direction one could hardly bear the stench of it.

A great many white whales were caught and killed by the native Eskimos, and here let me say, that instead of the proverbial slipper my mother used a piece of whale bone, so I know how it feels to be "whaled".

My father used to be sent inland by the chief trader at the post to trade with the Eskimos. I do not know what the Eskimos are like now, but at that time they were considered dangerous and very untrustworthy.

When my father's term with the Hudson's Bay Co. expired, he and my mother decided to return to the Red River Settlement, near where they had previously lived. [Winnipeg]

There was no church of any kind where we lived and my parents did not want us children to be brought up like heathens (my mother, who during our lifetime together, had always been my very best friend, counselor, and guide, was Elizabeth [Betsy] Anderson, a daughter of John Anderson also a native born Manitoban).

I was just a little fellow then, my brothers (2) and my sister afterwards (Mrs. Norquay) and I had not yet been baptized, so we stopped over for a short time at York Factory, and my parents had us baptized in the Anglican Church there. The Rev. Henry Budd was my godfather and for such a remarkable man, I must say he was not much of a godfather, but more about that anon.

On resuming our journey, a very heavy blow fell upon us all. My poor father was drowned whilst taking one of the boats over a dangerous point. My mother and we children were going along the shore, when suddenly he disappeared and was never seen again. That was a long time ago, but to this day I cannot look at a man rowing a boat.

When we reached our destination my mother and family settled down at Red River but not for long, the settlement was getting over crowded. My mother's father [John Anderson] with his seven sons and sons-in-law, and their families and Mr. Peter Whitford with all his sons and daughters moved west to what is now Portage La Prairie.

For some reason the Hudson's Bay Co. did not want this part of the country settled and threatened to send some of their pensioners to turn them back. These two courageous old men were determined they would not be turned back and would show resistance if necessary. I can remember quite well at our first stopping place that they arranged the Red River Carts to form a barricade. My grandfather told us children to be quiet and stay where we were told to, and we had to mind too.

Fortunately the company did not bother them. They all settled along the Assinaboine River and among these settlers I grew to manhood. My mother remarried, her husband was William Sutherland, a son of Capt. Sutherland of the Hudson's Bay Co.

Among my boyhood chums were Adams, Demers, Foulds, Birds, Whitfords, Pochas, and Andersons. Of these families, some afterwards moved to Saskatchewan and I am pleased to say that some of their descendants are now living near me, living links to a happy past.

Archdeacon Cochrane was the Anglican clergyman when I went to church and a better man never wore the cloth. The youths of the Parish all attended service, and here let me tell you there was no cutting up in church. If the boys got into any mischief at any time or showed any disrespect for their elders they had to answer to the Archdeacon for it.

Schools at that time were not what they are today, parents could send their children to school, but also could keep them at home if they wished. My step-father, who otherwise was kind to me would only allow me to attend school about three days a week, and perhaps, the fact that I was then, as I am now, a cripple my mother did not insist on my being sent. But oh how I wished to go to school, I have always wished for an education. In those days godfathers took their responsibilities seriously, and had my godfather on one of his numerous visits to Winnipeg done his duty by me and had me sent to a good school, as he could have easily enough, I should now be something better than a retired farmer. When I was grown up and my own master, I had no time to study, and now when I have the leisure I cannot see well enough to read.

Buffalo meat was our chief article of food. Every summer for weeks at a time the settlers moved to the plains and killed buffalo, dried the meat and made pemmican of some of it. They sold the robes to the Hudson's Bay Co. I have been told that when the hunter first began to chase the buffalo any old horse would do, but in later years one had to have a very swift horse. It took a good rider and a man had to be quick too to kill a buffalo. The guns were all muzzle loaders and the rider carried a powder horn on his right side, a shot or bullet pouch on the other, and the gun caps in his waist coat pocket. The bullets for immediate use he held in his mouth. The horses were well trained and could be guided by the motions and gestures, or leaning of the riders body. Being a cripple I had to forego the pleasures of the hunt, but I went often to the plains with my parents and saw the buffalo hunt and helped cut and dry the meat.

Once only did I ride after buffalo. My chum Jimmy Adams and I rode out together, when we got near the the buffalo I looked at Jimmy and he had his mouth open, laughing at the old bulls running. I had to laugh too and dropped the bullets out of my mouth, consequently neither of us fired a shot. The Pochas, father and seven sons were at that hunt and it was a pleasure to see how they could handle their guns and horses. Talk about your moving pictures, I can shut my eyes yet and see in memory what the screen could not portray.

When a Frenchman took his boy out to teach him to hunt he got along side of the boy and his horse and whipped the horse, if the boy showed any signs of cowardice or fright he laid the whip on him too. Consequently the French were good hunters. I only know of one occasion where a buffalo bull attacked a hunter. He turned around and before it could be prevented he ran one of his horns into the breast of a young Indian, lifted him right off the horse and ran away with him on his horns. He must have got his horn upward under the lads ribs. In the excitement of the chase no one took any notice of the accident. I will never understand why they were so careless or callous. When the chase was over they all began to look for the poor lads body and though they rode about for miles they could not locate it anywhere.

A herd of buffalo was a fine sight, the cows with their calves, the magnificent bulls, and a few steers among them. An Indian told me that those steers had been the victims of an attack by wolves on the calves. Wolves were plentiful those days and it would have been an easy matter for them to maim a calf.

Buffalo were not easy to domesticate, Suza Pocha once brought a calf home from the plains. It was never contented with the other cattle, always wandering away. Once all the cattle from the settlement went about twelve miles away led by Suza's buffalo calf. There was quite a to do over it. The old women were afraid they would lose their few cows, so indignantly they ordered Suza to butcher his buffalo calf, which he did.

Another article of food was "kas-pis-akun" wheat or bustin. Why it was called ' I do not know, but "kas-pis-wat" is an Indian word meaning to cook or brown quickly in a frying pan over a hot fire, about the same way they treat popcorn. The wheat was then ground in a coffee mill or grinder. The meal is again cooked in hot water or milk, like porridge. But quite thick, eaten with cream and sugar, this is a delicious and nourishing food. Nearly every family had a heating block. That was a block of wood large enough to have a hole about twelve inches deep, and eight inches in diameter, nicely rounded at the bottom, a wooden mallet with a long handle to beat barley for soup. It did not take long to beat or pound the chaff off the barley. Five or six pounds of good pot barley could be made at one beating. We could always buy tea and sugar from the company, also such luxuries as raisins, currants, and jam.

The Hudson's Bay Company brought skilled workmen from the old country, there were millers, millwrights, blacksmiths, carpenters,

and stone masons, in fact nearly all kinds of trades that were needed in a new country, and the very best of workmen they were too.

Many of the native boys were apprenticed to those skilled workmen, and became good carpenters, blacksmiths, etc.

I was apprenticed to a miller, but I did not make much headway. My boss a Mr. Robb Sanderson, loved to play the violin, and spent much of his time playing, he taught me more about music than milling.

### T R A D I N G

When my mother saw that I would not make a miller, she advised me to learn all I could about trading. I was about sixteen, but small for my age, so I was sent on a trading trip, with an old fellow from Missouri. We went west, sometimes we were around wood mountain, and went as far as where Medicine Hat is now, we also traded with the Blackfoot Indians.

Before leaving home, my mother warned me never to vex or quarrel with an Indian, especially a Blackfoot. The darn old Blackfoot women used to pity me because I was lame. They would kiss me whenever they got a chance. By God, I used to be pretty mad about it, but heeding my mother's warning, I did not let them see how disgusted and vexed I was.

When I got back home I thought I was a full fledged trader, so I went to Fred Baker's store to buy my mother a dress piece. She was a tall stout woman, when I said five yards, Fred Baker looked at me and said, "I thought you were a trader, You should know a lady like your mother always buys ten yards."

Of course styles in those days were not as they are now, the women made their gowns, long, wide and beautiful. Now adays, women look as if they tried to use as little cloth as possible. I must say that I admired the style in my mothers day. I went trading off and on when ever I got a chance to go out with a trader.

When I was nineteen years of age, my mother advised me to build myself a house, so I took a lot next to theirs, and built my self a small house. My mother helped me to furnish it, she said to me the day I was moving in, "now son, always keep your house clean and tidy, while your tea kettle is boiling, make your bed and sweep your floor. Never sit on, or make a catch all of your bed". Well, I think I have made good use of her advice, for though I am an old man, I never lay on my bed in the daytime, and I do not possess a couch or an easy chair. I would lose my self respect should I lay around on easy chairs or lounge in the daytime. Though circumstances have again made me a widower.

Well, to resume my story, I was now a man, and began trading in earnest with the Indians. I got a few ponies and carts, and got my

goods from the Hudson's Bay Company. Later on I got them from McDermotts and some from Ballentines.

I did very well in my business of trading, though I must say, I never made any enormous profits by it. I can now look back with great satisfaction that I never tried to cheat the poor Indians neither did I ever sell them any intoxicating liquor, and I never had any trouble getting their trade. I stopped my trading when the Red River Rebellion started, but I resumed it again when the trouble was over.

I made enough money by it to start a good farm at the Little Saskatchewan, near Minnedosa.

I married Elizabeth Adams in the fall of 1870, I was only married three years, when I lost my dear wife, she left me with two little boys. My good mother came to my aid, she took my two sons to her home where she took care of them and would not give them up.

I married again in 1874, my second wife was Euphemia Whitford, a grand niece of Peter Whitford, one of the two first settlers of Portage La Prairie. With her I lived happily for forty years, she died in 1914.

In 1883, I sold my farm at Minnidosa, and moved to Prince Albert, where I bought the farm I am now living on. We were just nicely settled, when the North West Rebellion in 1855 occurred.

By God, I was in for it again, I had so much to do for myself I did not want to move into town with my family. My brother-in-law, Charles Desmarais, and I decided we would not move and leave our stock to starve. Before long we found we were to be arrested as rebels if we did not move into town, in fact, I was arrested so we did move. But when we got there every available house in the town was occupied, that is, the main part that was being guarded, so we stayed at the west end among the Pochas, Adams, and other country people who had been like ourselves compelled to move into town (Prince Albert).

We were not afraid, there were only a few French half breeds at Duck Lake though I do not know how many indians. However, there were not enough to scare us old timers. They let us go home in June, too late to put in a crop, we just plowed our land and the next year we all had bumper crops. I believe that was how and when we farmers started summer fallowing.

I had become such a roamer in my trading days that I found it hard to settle down so when seeding would be finished I would take a couple of teams and wagons and go freighting until haying time came around. That was something I did dearly like to do, not only was it remunerative but it was pleasurable as well. To start out from Prince Albert and go to Quapelle and back with a number of old friends and acquaintances, camp on the road, stop for lunch, build a fire and fry bacon, then eat out in the open air when the weather

was fine. When it rained we pitched our tents and camped. Oh, that was the life, we kept that up until the railway was built in Prince Albert, about 1890.

After that I settled down to land work all year round. I have had good crops and also poor crops, when I was younger and able to work my land I had some wonderful crops, as the years roll on I am not able to do very much.

I lost my wife twenty years ago (1914), had I known how lonesome I should become I would have married again, well perhaps I am rather old now, I love a good meal with plenty of meat and potatoes and a good smoke afterwards, in fact I have several smokes between meals. I sit on my little wooden bench (which I made in 1883) smoke and think of my happy times I have had, of the dear little ones I saw grow up and leave me. of the dear ones I have buried in the churchyard a short distance away and I calmly and contentedly wait for the end of my "bon Voyage", not death, for I know there is no death for the humble believer.

I never did see a real battle between the Indians and French but I was told of many by grandparents (Anderson). I am sorry I did not remember more, my grandmother Anderson was a French girl and here is a story she told me when I was a boy.

"When I was quite young, about fifteen we were out buffalo hunting somewhere near the Quapelle Valley. There were in our outfit about twenty white men, a few Cree Indians, several women and children. I had to help cut the meat and hand it up to dry. One evening we could see five horsemen on a hill in the distance, my father, who was acting foreman of the outfit on that trip sent two of our own men to go and see who they were. When they reached them they learned that they were Blackfeet and seemed to be quite friendly. They invited them to their camp for supper, one of the lads did not want to go but the other was quite willing, so as he did not wish to desert his friend he went too. When the supper was over every one seemed to be talking at once. A young woman singing to her baby in French said "Go away as quickly as you can and warn your people, there is treachery afoot, they intend to murder you all while you are asleep". This girl had been stolen when a child by the Blackfeet and had a habit of singing French songs to herself. One lad said to the other one, "let us make a rush for our horses", the other said, "there is no danger, I won't go yet" so he stayed and was never seen by his friend again. The other one rushed for his horse got safely back to camp and gave the warning, so when the Blackfeet came at mid-night they were cut down like grass, our men were ready for them on all sides. Early next morning we could see what was left, them rolling their dead into water, they probably thought that by doing so we could not take their dirty scalps.

## D A V I D   &amp;   D O U G   B O W   ( S A N D E R S O N )

When we came from Hudson's Bay, on that memorable journey when my father was drowned, a man named Thomas Bow, who was also retiring from the Hudson's Bay Co. Service, travelled along with us. He was well educated, could talk the Eskimo language, as well as French, English, and several Indian dialects. He had a brother, David, who was also very clever. Among their many accomplishments was step dancing, David also played the violin. I have often seen them dance the Red River jig, each with a cup full of water on his head, and never spill a drop. They would go through all kinds of steps and capers too.

These two lads were always invited to the weddings, both far and near. The French, who were well to do, always made a three day celebration when their children got married, and Thomas and David Bow, were always the first to be invited.

Robb Sanderson (the miller) with whom I worked for awhile, used to be invited too, and sometimes he would take me along with him. That is when I saw Thomas and David at their very best, trying to beat the French boys dancing. David afterwards moved to Prince Albert, and died there.

T H E   S T O R Y   O F   O N E   W H O   W A S   L A T E R  
T O   B E C O M E   M R S.   T.   A N D E R S O N

Two young women went out of Fort Ellice, one fine summer morning to pick berries. The mother of one of the girls warned them to be careful as the Sioux Indians (American), who had fled from their country and were lurking around, were dangerous. They said they were not afraid, but would be careful.

I suppose the berries were better as they got farther away from the fort, at any rate, they went much further than they intended, and carelessly were separated. Hearing a loud crack, a short distance away, one called to the other, "Nechakos (cousin), where are you?" "I am here, but what was that noise? Oh, perhaps just a squirrel." After listening for awhile, they resumed their berry picking. Suddenly, one cried out, "the Sioux, run Nechakos, run". They both ran as fast as they could, but one was caught, the other got back to the fort, and gave the alarm. Every available person went to the rescue, but could neither find Sioux or victim. They searched everywhere, then decided the Sioux must have carried their captive off.

Towards evening a poor figure came walking into the fort, her clothing which had been white in the morning, was a bright scarlet color, just as though she was wrapped in a scarlet blanket. She had been hit on the head and scalped. Years afterwards I saw her at Prince Albert (I think she lived at Lindsey (Parish) for a few years). She always wore a black silk handkerchief wrapped around her head. She was Mrs. Thomas Anderson.



M R. S P E N C E

A man named Spence had married, but he and his wife could not get along so they decided to part, she went to the States and he stayed in Manitoba.

A few years afterwards, tired of living alone, I suppose he thought of taking another wife, so he went to the minister and asked him what he thought about it and if he would perform the marriage ceremony for them. The minister Rev. Henry George was scandalized. He would have nothing to do with it at all.

One day Mr. Spence came to my house and told me all his troubles. I said, "by God, Nechiva (brother), I won't see you stuck, if the minister won't read the church service to you, I will, go and bring your girl and a couple of her friends and I will marry you".

Well he did, and I performed the ceremony for them, he took his wife home and when the Rev. George found out about it, he went to their house and wanted to re-marry them. Mr. Spence said to him, "I asked you once and you would not do it, I consider myself as much married as if you had performed the ceremony, go your way, I would not love my wife any better if you married us again and this is a love match. They never had any children, just as well, perhaps I would have had to baptize them.

D E S M A R A I S

Another interesting wedding I attended was the wedding of an old Frenchman named Desmarais, his wife had died in the winter, and his sons, thinking he was mourning so much that he might become ill, took him to visit some of their friends below Winnipeg. The old father returned home in the spring. One day he said to his son, "what would you think if I should marry again? You know that the Desmarais clan never tolerated widows or bachelors in the family". The son replied, "Oh my father I would be delighted, if you wish to re-marry not only will I go and look for a suitable partner for you, I will make a grand wedding for you, I would be so proud to see you happy at your age.

The old man said, "You need not do so my son I have already spoken to one myself and you may go bring her for me". Well the son was as good as his word, he went and brought the bride home and made a grand wedding. It was at that wedding I saw David and Thomas Bow dancing with cups of water on their heads.

## F R E D R I C K   B I R D

I think Frederick Bird was about the happiest man I ever met. He was related to my step-father and often visited at our house, How we young folks enjoyed his visits.

My step-father had just a little bit of temper and was very easily irritated, but that did not matter to Fred, he would take a laugh out of him every chance he got. One day he said, "What is it they call a long fingered person?" "A thief", replied my step-father. "That's queer", said Fred, "Your fingers are very long Bill", my step-father became very angry but Fred just laughed at him.

On one of his visits he told about the time he nearly joined the church. He was apprenticed to a blacksmith named Bovette who had two lovely daughters just growing up. This man Bovette was always pestering him to join the church, it went on for some time and at last Frederick was getting tired of it, he did not want to turn Roman Catholic as his parents and all his friends were Anglicans. He set himself thinking of a way out so one day when the blacksmith spoke to him about joining the church Fred said, "Well, I have been thinking about it but I would like to know just what to do, I wish you would show me a few things, confessing, for instance". Bovette was delighted, he took a white cloth, spread it over his knees and told Fred to kneel beside him, then began to question him about his sins, at last it came to women. "Did you have anything to do with women?" "Yes," confessed Fred, "Who" asked Bovette. "Your daughter," answered Fred "Sacre," roared the blacksmith as Fred jumped up and ran out of the house. "Of course, he knew I was lying as I was not acquainted with his daughters, well, he never mentioned church to me after that".

## J E A L O U S Y

One of my mothers sisters, Marie Anderson married a man named David Bow or I should say David Sanderson. He was a terribly jealous man, though I never could see why, his wife was a regular tartar and awfully homely. However, he could not bear to see her talk or smile at another man, he was always suspicious, they just lived a couple of lots away from our house. One evening he called for a visit, after he (Bow) and my step-father chatted for awhile, my mother got up and took her shawl saying, "O will go and sit with Marie for awhile", and went out. After she had been gone about a quarter of an hour David said to my step-father "Whatever took Betsy over to my house?" My step-father said, "I suppose she just wanted to have a chat with her sister". Well the poor man seemed to be in misery, he did not seem able to keep up his end of the conversation. At last he jumped up saying, "Bill, I can't stand this any longer, come with me and we will go and see what those two

hags are up to. You should know that when two women get their heads together there is mischief brewing". My step-father was greatly amused, he thought he would have some fun so he took his hat and went along. They went very quietly to David's house, the window curtains were drawn up together leaving only a small slit, but enough to peer through. "Look you", said David, "I told you so", the two women had spread a buffalo robe on the floor in front of the fireplace and were sitting sewing and of course laughing and talking as women will. David couldn't hear what they were saying, but could see them laughing. He then got into an awful stew, "There now Bill look at that, see them laugh, they are laughing about us, the husseys, and talking too. They are likely making some kind of plans to get rid of us, what shall we do?" My step-father was laughing so much he couldn't speak. "Come", said David, "this is no laughing matter, we will confront them", so he went to the door, pushed it open and rushed in. Of course the women were alarmed and indignant when they found all about it. David made all kinds of apologies but that did not do any good. Marie was wrathful for a long time afterwards. It would not have been so ludicrous had there been any strange men in the settlement but there was just our own folk, nearly every body was related, that was what amused my step-father so much.

Another time when out on the plains after buffalo, Uncle David took another of his jealous fits, I just don't know how the trouble started, he was in the tent quite close when suddenly we heard him yelling for "Marak" (that was king of a pet name he had for her). He was shouting "Marak, Marak, come quickly, Oh Marak bring the powder horn quick, I am poisoned", the old fool had taken a dose of poison that he kept for poisoning wolves. Of course Marie hurried, got him his powder horn and a cup of water, he poured about half a cup of gun powder into the cup, filled it with water and drank it. I expect that cured him in more ways than one for I never again heard of Uncle David being jealous.

He and his Marak lived to be very old, they are both buried side by side in St. Catherines Church cemetery, I can look over to the graveyard from where I sit and memories bring them back.

## T W E L V E   Y O U N G   R O B B E R S

Twelve young men, tired of the monotony of every day life (nothing exciting), resolved to become robbers. The settlers began to lose chickens, eggs, young pigs and couldn't understand. Sometimes the women would notice that their fireplaces (their outdoor cooking places, composed of a few stones and a tri-pod to hand their pots or kettles on and a few pots and pans etc.) had been used during the night. So the older folk held a meeting on the quiet to talk matters over. Some one said, "There are no strangers

out, it surely must be some of our own boys and young men who are committing these offences. Finally, after much discussion they made a resolution that they would bolt their doors at bedtime, and any members of the family out at that time would be let in on their return by the father and questioned after the second offence. They appointed a special council, including one official to the Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, to deal with the offenders.

After one of the young men were caught, his mother and father immediately took him to task the next morning. When he would not give any satisfactory answers, they called in the councillors. They gave him such a raking over, that he told who the leaders were, and all about their plans. They were not to do anything very serious, until they became very brave and efficient. The leaders would take a trip to the States, they would go with a freighter or trader pretending to be looking for work, and perhaps fall in with some real robbers, who might teach them some real stuff, and who might be induced to return with them.

These youths were all caught, called together and given a good lecture, they were then told how serious their offences were. Well, instead of going to the States, the leaders were sent the next spring to New Caledonia (as British Columbia was then called) in the care of some freighters by the Hudson's Bay Co. Years afterwards, one of the lads, by now an old man, told me how thankful he was that he had been caught in time.

When the Canadian Government took the country over from the Hudson's Bay Co., it retained some of the laws on the country, and I was told by the late Judge McKay, that the laws made by those early settlers were some of the laws retained.

#### A G E D I N D I A N R E L A T I V E S

Some Indians passing by our place one day, began to tell my mother something about an old Indian, she suddenly exclaimed, "why he is a relative of mine, and they should do him no harm. I will go and bring him home with me". She did just that. She hitched her favourite ox to the Red River cart and went after him, by George that was the oldest and ugliest human being I have ever seen and I have seen some in my day. He was so old the Indians thought he couldn't die, that he was turning out to be a weetigo or evil spirit, so they had decided to burn him alive, well my good mother looked after him for a year or more before he died. I often think of him now and feel sorry for the way I teased the poor old fellow when I thought no one saw me.

When trading with the Indians who have always been my friends, I have heard some very interesting tales. An Indian once told me

that his grandfather saw the first white man who came up the Red River and landed where the Stone Fort at Winnipeg was afterwards built. He said his grandfather was sitting by the river when in the distance he heard something go PAH, PAH, PAH, he jumped up and listened, the sound seemed to be coming nearer, becoming frightened he climbed up the river bank and hid in the bushes nearby and watched. In a little while something like a house came floating up the river, he thought it must be "Manito", or "Weetigo", too frightened to run he just stood where he was with his hair raising on his head. The thing came near the shore and a person or "Manito" came ashore, he looked about then called to the "Manito" or "Weetigo", who also came ashore carrying axes or weapons. When they began to chop down trees and carry wood to the thing they had come in he knew that were human beings, for he had never heard of "Manito" or "Weetigo" chopping down trees. Mustering all his courage and calling on his own "Powakin" or guardian spirit to protect him, he went down to the shore and made himself known to the leaders. The newcomers were very pleased to see him, they gave him food to eat and many grand presents. They told him they would come again at the same time next year and asked him to tell all his friends to come and meet them. The next summer the white men came again and brought lots of fine presents with them, also goods to trade for their fine furs. They built a stone fort afterwards known as Fort Rouge.

#### K I N G   C H A R L E S

Among the French Canadians who settled at the Red River, was a family named Demers. They came from the far north, somewhere within the Arctic circle. The father was with the French Trading Company. There was no church or missionaries where they had been stationed, so the sons, though nearly grown up, were not baptized until they got to the Red River Settlement. These boys were lucky enough to be able to choose their own Christian names.

On the Sunday morning they were to be baptized, they were discussing suitable names for themselves, and each other. One said he would name himself Jean Baptiste, that was the name he liked, one said he would have the name Francois, another said he would take the name Michael. The other lad laid he would not give himself such common names as his brothers were choosing for their selves, he would have a royal name. They all received the names they had chosen, but imagine the surprise and consternation of their parents when the youngest whispered something to the priest and the priest said "King Charles I baptize thee" etc.

## C O U R T I N G

Courting in the 1860's was rather a difficult matter, the girls were rather scarce, that is there were more boys than girls in our settlement. The old ladies were very stingy of their daughters, and a fellow had a hard time to get a chance to talk to one alone.

The houses were nearly all log houses with two large rooms, one for sleeping and the other a living room, which they used for a kitchen, dining room, sitting etc.

We had nothing to take the girls out for a drive in, except the red river carts, and they squealed so you couldn't hear anything, if one did go out in a cart. About this time I was grown up, and began looking around for a wife. George Adams, an English pensioner, had some beautiful daughters, but of course the old lady was ever watchful. I watched my chance though, and one evening while Mrs. Adams was milking I got near enough to the girl to whisper a few words to her, she gave assent and after that I braved the old lady, and got her consent.

I then married Elizabeth Adams in the fall of 1870.

## T H E R I E L R E B E L L I O N

The Riel Rebellion started when I was twenty three years of age. I am not writing a history, so I will only tell of my own Experiences.

About the middle of 1870 a man came into the settlement and told us we were to go to the Scotch Settlement (Kildonan). I have found out since that there are always busy bodies making more trouble than is necessary on these occasions, but I was young then, so of course a bunch of us went. We were to hear what the leaders of the different churches would advise us to do, so we started out, mostly Natives of the Country, English and Scotches Half Breeds, a few men from Eastern Canada who had come with the surveyors, and some French Half Breeds from Portage. Among these were old Mr. Pocha and his three sons, Suza, William and Johnny, a man named McLean and his son Farquar, also a man named Scott. These are the only ones I will mention in my story.

When we got to the place of meeting, I forget whether it was the church or school house, nearly every one had gone home. Our Captain (I believe his name was Boulton) and the others decided to return to Portage and High Bluff.

We took our horses and sleighs as far as Headingly, left them there and walked the rest of the way. By the time we got to

Kildonan there were over forty of us. Each of us was given a gun, a muzzle loader of course, and only three bullets, enough powder for the shots so we were not very formidable.

Riel had sent us word that we should follow the road and if we had any arms we should keep them to ourselves, and not make any show of them. There is no doubt everything would have been all right had we followed the road as we were bid.

When we got to the place near Fort Garry, where the road made a detour, we halted for awhile and held a council. Some of the men from Eastern Canada wanted to show off and defy Riel's orders, they wanted to go straight across the forbidden ground. Old Mr. Pocha advised them to follow the road, I myself, talked for sometime and tried to induce the Captain to let us follow the road. For my own part I was not afraid of the French Half Breeds, though we were just forty four in number and there were five hundred men in the fort. I knew Riel and many of his adherents, in fact I was related to some of his leaders.

The young fellow named Scott swore and said we were a bunch of cowards, at that, the Pocha's, father and sons took offence, Suza was going to slap him, but the old stopped him and said, "let him alone and perhaps he will find out that the little French..... are not afraid of him, come Captain, we will pass by the Fort". Off we started again, I will not say we were marching, we were all walking anyway we could, the snow was deep.

When we came near the Fort, a man on horseback, shot out of the gate like an arrow, then another, and so on until ten or twelve came out. One rode towards us, and stopped to speak, He held up a white handkerchief in his right hand. We stopped, but where was our captain or the brave young Scott? Neither came forward so old Mr. Pocha walked up to the rider and said in French, "good day, What do you want?". The man answered, speaking French also, "our leader, Louis Riel and his Officers, wish you all to come into the Fort, and have dinner with them", well that was very acceptable, we wouldn't dream of refusing such an invitation, as we had not had too much to eat since we left home. We were all ushered into the Fort where we had to stay more than a month.

As we were going in I saw a man beckoning to me, I looked at him and saw he was Jean Demers, a nephew of King Charles Demers. He asked me to point out a man by the name of McLean, I could not see McLean just then but promised to do so when the opportunity occurred. I was delayed a few minutes by this encounter, so when I got inside my companions were not to be seen, but I expected they would be by the time we were seated at the dinner table. A guard saw me looking about, so he came and showed me where my friends were. By George, I got a terrible shock, when I saw a man with a big pan full of pemmican going from man to man and letting them help themselves, that was the dinner we were invited to.

After we had dinner, we were all searched and all papers and

letters and so forth were taken from us. They then counted up and found that one was missing, there had been forty four on the road and now there was only forty three. Well they went out and searched for the missing man, after awhile they brought him in, he had got into a ditch near the wall of the Fort. I had a laugh on the sly when they pushed Farquar McLean into the room, saying, "here in where we want you boy, not in the ditch",

We were all put into a large room to sleep, there were no beds so we just bunked on the floor and benches. Most of us had a buffalo robe of our own, My brother Jim (who later ranched at Medicine Hat) and I, slept together. We would have been quite comfortable had it not been for that man Scott making such a racket. He would kick the board partition, yell and curse, and was most impudent to the guard.

One night when Scott was especially troublesome, and noisy, a guard walked in and asked what all the trouble was about. He said, "Now you fellows had better be quiet, if I have to come in again tonight, I will bring a billy with me, and the man who is making the noise will get it over the head". On the whole we were used fairly well, we had all the pemmican we could eat, and tea to drink. The Frenchmen themselves, had nothing else except that they had sugar in their tea, and we had none, (of that I am quite sure, for I often went into their room whilst they were eating.

The Roman Catholic priest made a special intercession for us to Riel, and his guards. He asked them to use us as well as they could as we were just poor natives like themselves and it was not our fault we were captives.

It was my duty to carry the regular food to our own men, a big pan of pemmican. Sometimes the pemmican was very good, and other times it was moldy. When we got the good pemmican, we put what we did not eat away, I have racked my brains trying to remember just how and where we kept it, but I have forgotten. However, we always had a supply on hand and whenever the pemmican was moldy we threw it out through the window. Finding this out the man in charge of the stores, wanted to cut down on our rations. One day when I took my pan to get filled, he just filled it about two thirds full, I said, "that was not enough". He began to scold and say I was being impudent. There was another man lying on a bunk not very far away, and he looked up and asked what was wrong, I answered, "he won't fill my pan to the top", and I showed him the pan two thirds full. The man I was quarreling with said, "they are getting too much, whenever the pemmican is the least bit moldy they throw it out the window to the dogs". The officer said, "that is none of your business, you are here to dish up the food, not measure it. Give these English and French half breeds all they want to eat, I expect when they are at home, they have plenty of beef and pork to eat, not half starved like you". So after that I had no trouble getting my pan filled and you can bet I took care to pick it well whenever I saw that the pemmican was good.

When we were in prison a few days, some of the town folk came



in and asked Riel if they could supply us with one meal a day. Riel told them they could do so, they could give us what ever they wished. They raised a subscription among the inhabitants as the town was very small. They must have all given something, for after that we got one good meal a day, cakes, pies, bread, and butter and sugar for our tea.

Some years ago, I picked up and began to read a history of the Manitoba Rebellion, the story told of the great hardships we endured as prisoners and how we were starved, it must have been written by someone who knew nothing about it, for it was nothing but a lot of damm lies, we were well treated.

This Scott was so obnoxious and made so much trouble that some of our men asked the guard to have him removed. He was put into a room next to the one we occupied. There was just a board partition between his room and ours, and we could hear everything that was said there. A day or so later we heard him asking the guard if he could see Riel, in a short time Riel came into his room, of course we were listening and peeping through the knot holes as well. When Riel came in, Scott said, "where are my papers?" Riel answered "I do not know anything about your papers, what sort of papers did you have?" Scott then cursed, "You God dam son of a bitch, I will have my papers in spite of you". He was awfully mad, Riel answered, very quietly, and said, "that is no way to speak to a human being,. a man like you coming from a civilized part of the country, should know better than use such language, you will all get your papers and letters back before you leave Here".

After that Scott was taken out of his room once or twice, I forget just how many times. (The papers he spoke of were plans of what should be done with the rebels when they were conquered.)

One morning a guard came in and plugged the holes in the partition with pemmican, we knew something was going to happen. As soon as his back was turned we pulled a couple of the plugs out and took turns looking into Scott's room. We saw two men come in and tie a white cloth over his face and take him out, that was the last we saw of poor Scott.

After awhile a guard came in, he happened to be Suza Berlea, who was married to my aunt, I knew him quite well, so I asked him what had become of Scott. He was very quiet and just said, "be very careful", and beckoned me to follow him out, we went into one of the bastions and looked out of the window. There was an empty barrel lying in the snow, and beside it the snow was stained red with blood. I can assure you we all felt bad, as he was one that went with us. There is no doubt that he would have been spared and let when we were, had he behaved himself.

We did not know very much of what was going on while we were prisoners, but we heard everything after we got out. I was told by men on whom one could rely that Scott had just two bullet wounds in his body. (one was made with a revolver). The Captain of the

guard loaded the guns for the men who were to do the shooting and they were not allowed to load their own guns, but could see that the Captain was just loading with powder wad.

There was a young Fenian among them, I think his name was Donahue, who told the Captain he would lead his own gun, that was the man who killed Scott, for he was the only man who could have had a bullet in his gun.

Some years later, this same Fenian was at a place in the United States (I think it was St. Cloud, Minnisota), he went into a saloon and began boasting that he was the man that had shot Scott. There was a gentleman there who listened for awhile and then walked out. He went home and got his revolver, on the way back to the saloon he met the Fenian on the street, he stopped him and said, "so you are the man who shot Scott, eh?" "Yes, I am", replied the Fenian. "Well", said the gentleman, "no man can come into my country and boast of his cold blooded murdering", he raised his revolver and shot the Fenian dead.

After doing this deed, the gentleman walked down the street and into the police station, he gave himself up and asked for a speedy trial. He got his trial almost immediately, there were several witnesses who had heard the Fenian boasting and saw him shot too.

I was glad when I heard that the gentleman had got off. This story was told several times to myself and others, by Mr. J. F. Wray of St. Cloud, Minnisota, and corroborated by Nelson Peterson and Mr. George Hodges. These three American gentlemen of the highest report, and were very well known in Manitoba. I could not think of doubting their word.

About the only thing we could not find out was, what became of Scott's body. I asked several, but they always answered that only the ones who had charge of the body knew what had been done with it. It was generally believed that it was shoved under the ice of the river and had floated away. When the river was clear of ice in the spring they dragged the river just before the fort, but could not find anything.

I was speaking of the shooting of Scott afterwards to some of the French half breeds, and they said that Riel was not in favor of shooting Scott. There were men in that Fort who could make Riel do what they told him, that if they let Scott off, they would attend to both Scott and himself as well.

Riel was not the vain ignorant man some people said he was, to my mind he was a very quiet man, a good speaker and well educated, his, and his people's demands were not unreasonable. Within a very short time after the rebellion was over, nearly all their demands became the Manitoba Act.

Everything seemed to be quiet after Scott was gone, we were let out a few at a time. My brother Jim and I got out together when

had been in about a month, the snow was all gone by then.

We went home to High Bluff, and before long all our friends who had been with us were home too. The new Government gave each one of us one hundred dollars, that was quite a lot of money in those days.

From about March the 1st the French began to leave for home, by the time I was released only about half of their members were still there, they nearly all were home at seeding time. I expect they were tired of just lying around with nothing to do. By the time the troops came only a few remained in the fort, and these fled on that very morning. They knew the troops would come up the Red River, and had scouts out watching and listening. When the scouts came and reported the troops were near, they got an old Frenchman dead drunk, and left him sleeping on the floor, that was the only person in the Fort when the troops arrived. I never knew what they did with the old fellow.

The Hudson's Bay Company had sold their interests in the Country for a vast sum of money, the Fort was nearly empty of provisions when the Rebellion started, the French did not take anything, but the food they ate. Had they wanted to plunder they could have taken the dry goods. There was also a thousand bushels of wheat stored at White Horse Plains, that they never touched.

After the Rebellion was over everybody wanted to know the whys and where fors of the Rebellion, you must remember, there wasn't any newspapers to read, so a public meeting was called.

One man got up and said that Riel was given the keys to Fort Garry by McTavish himself, he told how McTavish met Riel inside the fort, behind one of the store houses and handed him the keys saying, "here, start your rebellion but mind no bloodshed", When he got that far, employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, stopped him and broke up the meeting. It was said the company got a lot of money out of the Rebellion, they got paid for all loses.

The Hudson's Bay Company was a fine company, they brought the very best of goods from the old country, and they treated their pensioners and employees in the very best manner. Law and order was well kept under their rule, but money was their God, they were very greedy for money.