

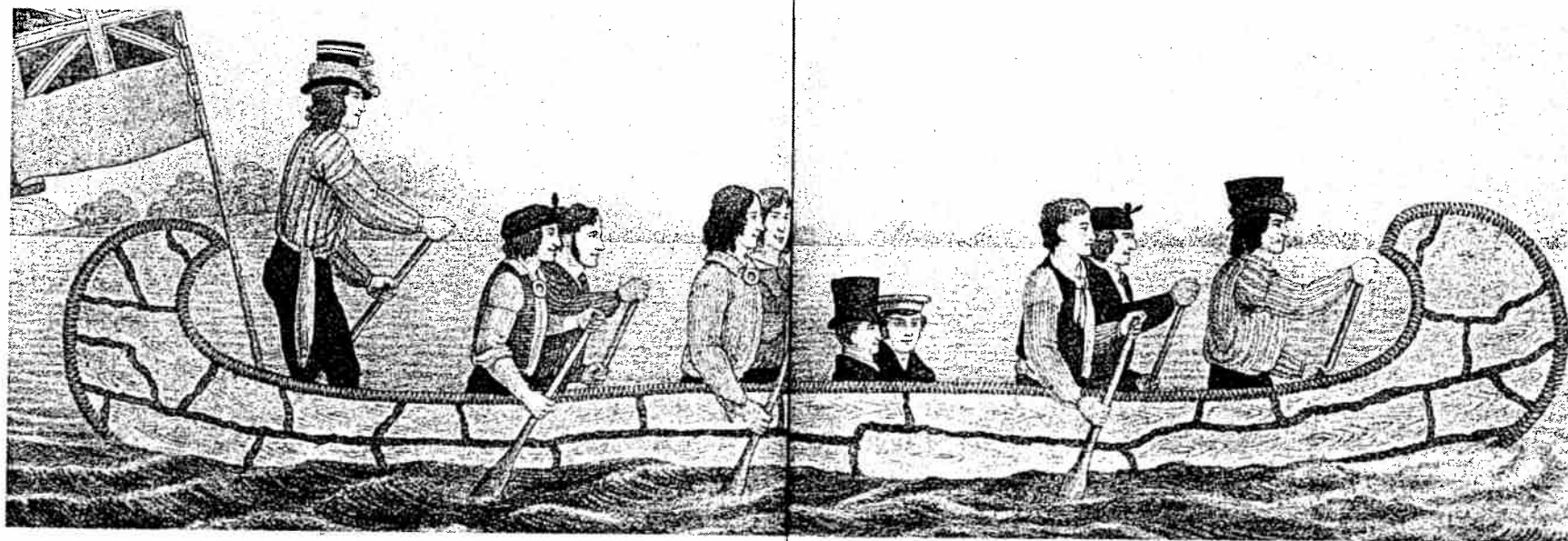


Essays in Honour of
JOHN E. FOSTER

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From RUPERT'S LAND *to* CANADA

THEODORE BINNEMA,
GERHARD J. ENS &
R.C. MACLEOD, *editors*



APPENDIX

Updating *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*

THOMAS FLANAGAN & GLEN CAMPBELL

I N 1985, the University of Alberta Press published a historical-critical edition of *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, consisting of four volumes of texts plus a reference volume.¹ John Foster played a significant role as a consultant although he did not edit any of the volumes. While the Louis Riel Project was based at the University of Alberta, the volume editors all came from other institutions, so John had to assist with the important task of coordination and liaison between project personnel and the host university. He especially was involved with the Press during this time, as he was chairman of their publications committee. Thus, it is fitting that a *Festschrift* honouring John's many contributions to the writing of Canadian history should include a chapter updating Riel's *Collected Writings*.

The Riel Project was largely successful in its goal of collecting and editing all of Louis Riel's known writings. However, it was discovered shortly after publication that two letters from Riel to Donald A. Smith, Lord Strathcona, had been missed.² Also overlooked in the John A. Macdonald Papers was a petition from Riel to A.G. Archibald, the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba; the *Collected Writings* had printed only a draft found in Riel's own papers.³ No other omissions have come to light, but two hitherto unknown letters from Riel, plus a fragment of English poetry, have also been discovered.⁴ The three omissions and the three new discoveries are presented here together with editorial commentary to explain their historical significance. In the years since 1985, several other Riel holographs have also been discovered that are of less historiographic importance because their contents were already known. These are briefly discussed at the end of this appendix.

Nothing presented here will revolutionize the study of Louis Riel, but it is still worthwhile to make these documents known. History is a cumulative discipline that steadily advances through uncovering and exploiting new

sources of information. With their pioneering use of documentary, oral, and archeological sources about native peoples in Canada, John Foster and his students have exemplified this aspect of the historian's craft. We are proud to be in their company in this volume.

☛ **Louis Riel to Donald A. Smith, 23 September 1870**

This letter is printed in Beckles Willson's biography of Donald A. Smith.⁵ Willson, a prominent journalist and author who had earlier written *The Great Company*, a history of the Hudson's Bay Company, had the cooperation of Smith's heirs, who gave him access to his papers.⁶ The original cannot now be found among the Smith papers in the National Archives of Canada or the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. Probably it has been destroyed, along with the second letter to Smith also included here; Smith's heirs burned most of his papers after Willson published his book.⁷

When he wrote this letter, Riel had taken refuge with the Oblate priest J.-M.-J. Lefloch in the village of St. Joseph, Dakota Territory, in the United States. The letter gives Riel's account of why he left Fort Garry on 23 August 1870, just before the arrival of Colonel Wolseley's expeditionary force. At Wolseley's request, Smith had governed Manitoba for eight days until the official governor, Adams G. Archibald, arrived on 2 September. After Archibald took up his office, Smith remained involved in attempts to bring peace to the troubled affairs of Red River. Although earlier biographers of Riel have used Willson's book, they have not drawn attention to this letter. That Riel wrote directly to Smith at this juncture suggests that they had already developed a personal relationship.

Dakotah, U.S.,
September 23d, 1870.

Sir,—

We can never forget the gross violation of country and property in which we have been treated. Expecting something far different from an honourable British officer, I, as the chosen head of the Provisional Government, which has administered here on behalf of the Dominion of Canada since last November, expected to receive Colonel Wolseley and Governor Archibald at Fort Garry and formally deliver up to the Government. My guards were instructed to fire a salute and the enclosed address was to have been read to the appointed Governor in token of submission to the régime of Canada, with our rights and liberties guaranteed to us. The proceeding was denied to us, and we fortunately had news of the temper of injustice animating the new

coming⁸ and if we are said to have fled it was to save ourselves and them from bloodshed.

You have already ascertained the truth of this from your people here, namely, that we remained at our posts until the last moment, only from a sense of the duty we owed our people.

Yours respectfully,
Louis Riel.

☛ **Petition to Adams G. Archibald, 9 December 1871**

The text printed below is from the petition in Riel's own handwriting, found in the papers of Sir John A. Macdonald. Although this manuscript remained undiscovered during the work of the Riel Project, an earlier draft was found and printed in the *Collected Writings*.⁹ The wording of this version is slightly improved over the rough draft but not significantly different in content. However, it includes the names of 26 signatories not found in the draft.

The invasion of Riel's home described in this petition was an attempt to execute an arrest warrant issued by a local magistrate on 23 November 1871. In February 1872, in order to avoid further attempts at arrest, Riel and Ambroise Lépine left for St. Paul, Minnesota. A translation follows the original French letter.

St Vital 9 Décembre 1871

A son excellence
Le lieutenant gouverneur
de Manitoba

Excellence,

Hier soir, vers 9 heures, 8 Décembre 1871, des hommes sont venus troubler la demeure de Monsieur Louis Riel à St Vital, en y entrant effrontément, et se disant porteurs d'un warrant pour l'arrêter à cause des troubles qui ont eu lieu à la Rivière Rouge pendant l'hiver 1869-70. Et après avoir constaté l'absence de Monsieur Louis Riel, ces hommes ont montré des armes à feu dont ils se sont servi pour menacer les femmes de la maison, l'un de ces hommes jurant qu'il tuerait ce soir-là Louis Riel pour satisfaire sa vengeance. Comme des warrants levés contre ceux qui ont pris part aux troubles de 1869-70 sont injustes à cause des arrangements implicites qui ont eu lieu [entre] le Canada et ce pays; et comme, à part cela, les violences que ces hommes ont faites dans la maison d'un citoyen paisible, sont, pour ne pas dire plus, tout

à fait hors de place, nous prions avec beaucoup de respect votre excellence d'empêcher que de pareilles injustices ne se renouvellent contre qui que ce soit de ceux qui se sont trouvés mêlés aux troubles 1869-70. Nous les personnes avoisinant la demeure de Monsieur Louis Riel ayant été plus particulièrement témoins des violences que les hommes susdits y ont exercés, nous hâtons de communiquer respectueusement à votre excellence la présente requête; espérons que le gouvernement prendra les mesures nécessaires pour amener à punition les coupables.

Humblement
de votre excellence
les dévoués serviteurs
nous nous soucrivons

Pierre Parenteau, Père	Bapt. Laderoute
Jos. St Germain	Louis Dumas
Louis Desrivières	Matthias Sansregret
Matthias Norman	Jos. Neault
Ch. Neault	Amable Gaudry, fils
Paul Proulx	Godefroy Neault
Benj. Neault	Maxime Lépine
François Marion	André Neault
Pierre St Germain	J.B. Ritchot
Pierre Parenteau, fils	Pierre Sauvé
François Frébucher	Joseph Sauvé
Bapt. Boudreau	Louis Carrière
	Damas Carrière
	François Poitras ¹⁰

TRANSLATION

St. Vital 9 December 1871

To His Excellency
The Lieutenant Governor
of Manitoba

Excellency,
Yesterday evening, about 9 o'clock, 8 December 1871, some men came to disturb the place of residence of Mr. Louis Riel in Saint Vital, entering brazenly, purportedly carrying a warrant for his arrest because of the public disturbances that took place in Red River during the

winter of 1869-70. And after determining the absence of Mr. Louis Riel, these men drew firearms which they used to threaten the women of the house, one of these men swearing that he would kill Louis Riel that same evening in order to seek revenge. As warrants issued against those who took part in the disturbances of 1869-70 are unjust because of the implicit arrangements made between Canada and this country; and besides that, the acts of violence committed by these men in the house of a law-abiding citizen are, to say the least, completely out of line, we respectfully ask your Excellency to make sure that similar injustices do not occur again against those who found themselves involved in the 1869-70 disturbances. We, the people neighbouring the residence of Mr. Louis Riel, having been moreover witnesses of the acts of violence committed by the above-mentioned men, respectfully expedite the present request to your Excellency, hoping that the Government will take the necessary steps to punish the guilty.

We, the devoted servants
of Your Excellency,
humbly sign our names¹¹

Pierre Parenteau, Père	Bapt. Laderoute
Jos. St Germain	Louis Dumas
Louis Desrivières	Matthias Sansregret
Matthias Norman	Jos. Neault
Ch. Neault	Amable Gaudry, fils
Paul Proulx	Godefroy Neault
Benj. Neault	Maxime Lépine
François Marion	André Neault
Pierre St Germain	J.B. Ritchot
Pierre Parenteau, fils	Pierre Sauvé
François Frébucher	Joseph Sauvé
Bapt. Boudreau	Louis Carrière
	Damas Carrière
	François Poitras

☛ Louis Riel to Joseph-Eugène Antoine, 2 January 1874

This letter is located in the Archives Oblates de Montréal, dossier Manitoba et le Nord-Ouest: Affaire Louis Riel et le Soulèvement des Métis. It was discovered by the University of Lethbridge historian Raymond Huel while doing research for a biography of Archbishop A.-A. Taché. Dr. Huel was also a member of the Louis Riel project and edited the first volume of Riel's *Collected Writings*.

Riel wrote this letter from the Oblate house in Plattsburgh, New York, where he was convalescing after a period of ill health. Around the same time, he also sent New Year's greetings to Archbishop A.-A. Taché and Bishop Ignace Bourget.¹² The recipient of this letter, the Reverend Joseph-Eugène Antoine, was the provincial superior of the Oblates in Quebec. The letter shows that Riel must have stayed with the Oblates in Montreal at some point in November-December 1873. Like the other letters Riel wrote in this period, this one is *en deuil* in memory of his sister Marie, who had died 25 January 1873.

2 Janvier 1874

Mon Très Révérend Père,

Je vous souhaite une bonne et heureuse année, à vous et à toute votre sainte communauté.

Que Dieu, pendant cette nouvelle année, bénisse votre santé. Qu'il réjouisse votre bon coeur en favorisant d'avantage l'ordre nouveau mais déjà si prospère qui a l'honneur de vous avoir pour Provincial dans cette partie de l'Amérique.

Mon Père, je tâche de mettre à profit les avantages de votre hospitalité. Suivant votre désir et votre généreuse invitation, je me suis mis ici comme chez moi.

En dépit de la sollicitude des Révérends Pères, des tours de voiture que je prends très souvent avec le gentil petit cheval de la maison, et malgré les soins de la bonne Henriette, ma santé s'affaiblit.

Il est donc à propos, mon Père, que je vous demande à ce sujet un petit souvenir devant le bon Dieu.

Veuillez agréer l'expression de mon respect et de mes bons sentiments.
Votre serviteur dévoué
Louis Riel

TRANSLATION

2 January, 1874

Very Reverend Father,

I wish you and your holy community a good and happy New Year.

May God bless your health during this new year. May He gladden your good heart in looking even more kindly on the new but already prosperous order which has the honour of having you as provincial in this part of America.

Father, I'm trying to make the most of your hospitality. Following your wish and your generous invitation, I've made myself at home.

Despite the constant attention of the Reverend Fathers, of the carriage rides that I often take with the order's nice little horse, and in spite of the care offered by the good Henriette,¹³ my health is weakening.

Therefore, Father, I'm asking that you pray for me.

Yours respectfully,
Your devoted servant,
Louis Riel

☛ Louis Riel to Donald A. Smith, 12 February 1874

This letter is also printed in Willson's biography of Smith.¹⁴ The abrupt opening and closing, without any of the usual formalities, suggest that the text printed by Willson was an extract from a longer letter.

Riel wrote this letter at a critical point in his career. On the following day, 13 February 1874, he would be elected for the second time as MP for Provencher.¹⁵ On 14 February, Ambroise Lépine would appear before Judge E.B. Wood in Winnipeg on the charge of having murdered Thomas Scott; an arrest warrant for the same charge was also outstanding against Riel.

In writing to Smith, Riel was addressing a fellow member of the House of Commons. Smith was the MP for Selkirk and, like Riel, would be re-elected on 13 February. While hardly a supporter of Riel, he favoured an amnesty for all involved in the Red River uprising as a way of bringing peace to the country. Moreover, he had been involved behind the scenes with Riel and Lépine in 1872, in conveying money to them so they could leave Canada and go to St. Paul, Minnesota.¹⁶ In writing this letter, which expresses his view of Thomas Scott's execution, Riel was trying to encourage Smith's efforts in favour of an amnesty. In fact, on 1 April 1874, Smith moved in the House of Commons that a committee of nine be appointed to investigate the amnesty question, and he became chairman of the committee.¹⁷

Incidentally, the letter shows that Riel was in the Dakota Territory on 12 February 1874. The existing literature places Riel in Montreal at this time, but it is not surprising that he would have made a trip to St. Joseph to be in closer touch with the attempts of his supporters to secure his re-election in Provencher.

Dakotah Territory,
February 12th, 1874.

You yourself will recall that when, on February 17th [1870], Boulton was captured with 47 men, bearing arms under the walls of Fort Garry,

Scott was amongst them, and was thus captured a second time. When imprisoned for his attempt against the authority of the Provisional Government he was distinguished by his violent conduct. On March 1st, Scott and a fellow-prisoner forced the doors of their prison and called upon the rest to attack the guards. This time he was overpowered, but the Métis, knowing how kindly Scott had been treated, were so indignant at this violence that they laid hands upon him and would have avenged themselves on the spot, but for the intervention of one of the Council. It was lastly demanded that this man should be brought before a court-martial. I intervened, he was summoned before me, when I urged him to behave himself, and to promise that he would give no more trouble, so as to justify me in clemency, and in refusing to yield to the express wishes of the Métis. Scott replied with contempt and refused to behave himself as a prisoner, so that he was seen to constitute a danger to the government and the peace of the Settlement.

Consequently, as every means had failed, the 3d of March, this man Scott was brought before the Council of War. Witnesses having been heard made oath, he was solemnly convicted of treason and sentenced to death. On the following day he paid the penalty of plotting and taking arms against the government and against public peace and order under the authority which the people had confided in us.

♣ Louis Riel to Julie Riel, 9 August 1882

This letter was acquired in 1988 by the National Archives of Canada.¹⁸ Small excerpts printed in 1943 in the Ottawa newspaper *Le Droit* were included in Riel's *Collected Writings*,¹⁹ but this is the first time that the whole text has been made available to scholars. Unfortunately, a large tear at one corner affects all four pages of the folded manuscript. Reconstructed readings are interpolated in square brackets.

This letter is of particular biographical interest because Riel had not written to his mother or brothers and sisters for more than two years.²⁰ The reason for his long silence is not known; curiously, Riel mentions and apologizes for it in his letter, but does not explain it. There were two other times in his life when he cut himself off from his family: 1866–68, after his plan to marry Marie-Julie Guernon failed; and 1876, when he was committed to mental hospitals in Quebec.²¹ In both periods Riel must have felt that his family would not be proud of the situation he was in. He may have felt the same way in the years 1880–81, when he gave up his plan to marry Evelina Barnabé, the sister of a priest, and turned instead to Marguerite Monette dite Bellehumeur, the daughter of a buffalo hunter.

[Ca]rrroll 9 Août 1882
Madame V[eu]ve Riel

Bien chère Maman,

Je me fais souvent le reproche de ne pas vous écrire. [Je ne] fais pas bien de vous laisser dans l'incertitude [sur mo]n compte. Pardonnez-moi d'avoir été presque [deux a]ns sans vous envoyer de mes nouvelles. Vous [ête]s sans doute inquiète à mon sujet. Et de mon côté, je suis inquiet par rapport à vous, à mes frères, à mes soeurs et à toute la famille. Et croyez-moi bien que si mon silence m'a donné l'air de vous mettre en oubli, je n'ai pas laissé écouler un seul jour cependant sans prier le bon Dieu pour vous.

Je dois vous apprendre, bien chère maman, que je suis marié depuis plus d'un an. J'ai pris une fille de la Prairie du cheval blanc, une Métisse canadienne française. Elle s'appelle Marguerite. Elle est fille aînée d'un Monsieur que vous n'avez jamais, je pense bien, ni vu ni connu: Jean Monette dit Bellehumeur est son nom.

Je n'ai fait bénir mon mariage²² que cet [an au mois] de mars. Car par ici nous n'avons pas [l'occasion] de voir le prêtre plus qu'une fois par [an].

Ma femme m'a donné un petit garçon [qui est] bien portant, Dieu Merci. Il a trois m[ois au]jour d'hui. Il est venu au monde le neuf [mai]. Et comme les prêtres qui sont le plus p[rès se] trouvent à 150 milles d'ici, je n'ai pa[s eu] la consolation de le faire baptiser [mais il a] été ondoyé. Et en attendant la céré[monie mêm]e, sa mère lui fait faire voir a[u moins le] signe de la croix, en faisant mouvoir [sa petite] main droite et en disant les paroles pour lui. Elle aimerait tant que son enfant fût chrétien de désir.

Bien chère maman, je suis toujours pauvre mais pas plus découragé qu'avant. A mon retour de Miles City, il y a deux ans, j'ai perdu d'un seul coup trois chevaux qui sont morts de la gourme. Peu de temps après, les Sioux m'en ont volé deux. Et l'été passé, la gourme m'en a encore tué deux autres de file. Dans l'hiver, j'avais été bien malade, de sorte que les profits que j'avais faits en arrivant ici, ont été bien partis.

[Dans ce] temps-ci, je bûche du bois de corde. Et je le [vends] aux bateaux à vapeur qui voyagent sur [le M]issouri.

[Mon] beau-père a passé une partie de l'été avec moi. [Il a] eu le malheur de perdre, dans le mois passé, un [de ses] enfants, un petit garçon de cinq ans. [Après] cet accident, il est parti pour la prairie avec [toute s]a famille. Il est campé à vingt milles d'ici. Le [buffa]lo est tout autour de nous. On se procure de la [viande] fraîche aisément. J'ai encore un cheval. Il est bon [à la c]harette²³ et il réjouit²⁴ le buffalo.

Mon beau-père [l'a] emmené. Et il m'apporte de la viande de temps en temps. La semaine passée, il nous a apporté des dépouilles, des bosses et des langues. Nous en aurions eu pour en grand mois: malheureusement je n'ai pas bien salé cette viande, elle s'est gâtée. Il a fallu toute la jeter.²⁵ Et ces jours-ci nous sommes à la viande sèche. J'ai hâte que les chasseurs viennent nous faire une autre visite.

Il y a encore assez de buffalo pour que la chasse paye deux ou trois ans de plus. Et je pense qu'après cela, durant quelques années, il en restera tout juste pour entretenir les chasseurs, de sorte que nous espérons avoir du buffalo encore sept ou huit ans. Ces pauvres animaux essayent de se garder et se conserver en s'enfonçant dans les buttes et les mauvaises terres et c'est assez difficile de [les trouver quand ils] y sont. Comme le Montana est un vrai [paradis] nous sommes portés à croire que les dernie[rs buffalos] devront se faire tuer dans nos environs, e[st] les Métis(?), les] derniers qui goûteront leur bonne viande.

Voilà deux semaines de file que des acheteurs [de scrips] viennent me voir. Ils ont tous deux off[ert—] piastres pour celui de ma femme. Je n'ai [pas permis] qu'elle le donnât. J'ai la désignation de son [terrain. Je] serais content, si Joseph ou Alexandre avait [pu all]ler voir Monsieur Roger Goulet; et lui demandait [s'il pouvait] dire combien de piastres l'arpent, ce scrip pou[rrait se] vendre, s'il était vendu non pas aux spécul[ateurs mais] à un émigrant qui voudrait s'y établir. [On pour-rait] avec le revenu de ce scrip s'acheter des b[êtes à cornes.] Il y a des gens par ici qui ont jusqu'à [—] bêtes à corne.²⁶ On peut avoir des jeune[s vaches avec] leurs veaux pour 15.00 quinze pia[stres. Une vache] faite coûte 25.00 vingt-cinq piastres avec un veau.²⁷ Ces prix [sont?] le prix des vaches farouches ou marronnes. Les vaches domptées partent de vingt-cinq piastres et montent jusqu'à quarante. Il faut que j'essaye à élever des animaux domestiques. Et je serai bien content si je voyais²⁸ un bon jour, arriver²⁹ des gens de St Vital avec le plan de s'établir par ici. Nous tâcherions de nous placer proche à proche.

J'ai fait ce printemps une grosse entreprise. Je ne puis dire³⁰ si elle réussira. Il y a dans le Montana une compagnie riche et puissante qui a versé de la boisson aux sauvages tout l'hiver. C'est défendu par la loi. Je l'ai attaquée. J'ai de bonnes preuves en ma possession. Et si je réussis le moindrement elle pourra bien avoir à payer des mille piastres. Priez que le Bon Dieu me fasse réussir.³¹

Chère maman, je vous embrasse en vous souhaitant tout le bien qu'on peut souhaiter à une mère tendrement aimée. J'embrasse mes frères, beaux frères, soeurs et belles soeurs peut-être. J'ai écrit un petit mot à notre bien aimée Marguerite Marie, l'année passée. Ecrivez—

moi des nouvelles au loin. Mes respects à tous nos parents et amis. Votre fils, [Louis Riel].

Si vous écrivez à notre chère Soeur [Marguerite-Marie, dites-lui que je ne] l'oublie pas une seule journée [et que je l'aime] avec toute l'affection d'un frère.

Mes respects à ma tante Lacyprés, à Nanin, Charles, Paul et tous les autres. Est-ce vrai qu'Alexandre est marié? J'avais entendu dire qu'il avait pris une demoiselle Poitras. Si c'est le cas, nos femmes sont parentes.

Dites-moi ce qu'est devenue la terre de Cyrille Dumas. Comment cela a-t-il tourné? Le capitaine Alleyn, un acheteur de scrips de la montagne Cyprès va peut-être aller voir mon frère Joseph. Qu'il fasse attention aux questions de cet homme. Et surtout qu'il ne lui vende pas³² les droits que [nous] avons [—] être s[—] sur [—] Lor[ette?] êtes [—].

Donnez-moi des nouvelles de mon [—]

De mon oncle Romain, d'Augu[ste —].

TRANSLATION

Carroll 9 August 1882

Madame Riel, widow

Dearest Mother,

I get upset with myself for not writing you. It's not right that I leave you in a state of uncertainty about me. Forgive me for having let almost two years pass without sending you any news. You've doubtless been worried about me. As for me, I've been worried about you, my brothers, my sisters, about all the family. And believe me, even though my silence makes it appear that I've forgotten you, I haven't let a day go by without praying to the Good Lord for you. I must tell you, dearest Mother, that I have been married for more than a year.³³ I married a girl from White Horse Plains, a French-Canadian Métisse. Her name is Marguerite. She's the eldest daughter of a man that you have never, I believe, met nor heard of: his name is Jean Monette, called Bellehumeur.

I had my marriage blessed only this year, in March.³⁴ Because around here, we don't see the priest more than once a year. My wife has given me a little boy who is, thank God, healthy. He is three months old today. He was born on May 9.³⁵ And as the nearest priests are 150 miles from here, I haven't had the consolation of having him [properly] baptised but he has been provisionally baptised. And while

waiting for the ceremony, his mother lets him see the sign of the cross, moves his little right hand and says the words for him. She would like her child to be Christian by choice.

Dearest Mother, I am still poor but no more discouraged than before. Upon my return from Miles City, two years ago, I lost in one single blow, three horses who died from strangles.³⁶ Not long after that, the Sioux stole another two. And last summer, strangles killed another two, one right after the other. In the winter, I was very sick, so that any profits I had made, quickly disappeared.

These days, I've been cutting timber and selling it to the steam boats which travel the Missouri.

My father-in-law spent part of the summer with me. He had the misfortune of losing, last month, one of his children, a little five-year old boy. After this accident, he left for the prairie with his family. He is camped twenty miles from here. The buffalo are all around us. One can get fresh meat easily. I still have one horse. He's good pulling the wagon and he enjoys hunting buffalo. My father-in-law took him. And he brings me meat from time to time. Last week, he brought us some left-over meat, humps and tongues. We would have had enough for a whole month: unfortunately I didn't salt the meat well enough and it rotted. I had to throw it all out. These days we're eating dried meat. I can't wait for the hunters to pay us another visit.

There are enough buffalo for hunting to last another two or three years. And I think that after that, for several years, there will be just enough to sustain the hunters, so that we can expect to have buffalo for another seven or eight years.³⁷ These poor animals try to protect and conserve themselves by heading into the hills and badlands and it's difficult to find them when they're there. As Montana is a true paradise, we are led to believe that the last buffalo will be killed in our vicinity, and we will be the last to taste their good meat.

Two weeks in a row scrip buyers have come to see me. Both of them offered [——] dollars for my wife's.³⁸ I didn't allow her to give it up. I have the legal description of her land.³⁹ I would be happy if Joseph or Alexandre had been able to go and see Mr. Roger Goulet;⁴⁰ and had asked him to tell me how many dollars an acre this scrip would get, if it were sold not to speculators but to an immigrant who would like to settle there. With the revenue from this scrip one could buy himself some cattle. There are people around here who have up to [——] cattle. One can have young cows with their calves for fifteen dollars. A grown cow with a calf costs twenty-five dollars. These prices {are?} the price of wild or runaway cows. Domesticated cows start at twenty-five dollars and go up to forty. I have to try and raise domestic animals.

And I would be happy to see one of these days people from St. Vital arriving with the plan of settling around here. We would try to find a home nearby.

This Spring I undertook something big. I can't say if it will succeed. There is in Montana a rich and powerful company that has been selling liquor to the Indians all winter long. This is against the law. I attacked it. I have in my possession strong evidence against it. And if I'm successful in any way, it will have to pay thousands of dollars. Pray that the Good Lord allows me to succeed.⁴¹

Dear Mama, I embrace you wishing you all the love that one can have for one's mother. I embrace my brothers, brothers-in-law, sisters and perhaps sisters-in-law.⁴² I wrote a short note to our dearly beloved Marguerite Marie last year.⁴³ Send me news from afar. My regards to all our relatives and friends. Your son, [Louis Riel].

If you write to our dear Sister Marguerite-Marie, tell her that not a day goes by without me thinking about her and that I love her with all my brotherly affection.

My respects to my Aunt Lacyprès, to Nanin, Charles, Paul and all the others.⁴⁴ Is it true that Alexandre is married? I had heard that he had married one of the Poitras girls. If that's the case, our wives are related.⁴⁵

Tell me what has become of Cyrille Dumas' land.⁴⁶ How did that turn out? Captain Alleyn, a scrip buyer from Cypress Hills, is perhaps going to go and see my brother Joseph.⁴⁷ He should pay attention to this man's questions. And above all, he should not sell him the rights that we have [——] to be [——] on [——] Lor[ette?] [you] are [——].⁴⁸

Give me news of my [——]

Of my Uncle Romain, of Auguste [——]⁴⁹

♣ Poem, November 1885

These lines, in Riel's handwriting,⁵⁰ are a variant of a verse published in *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*.⁵¹ Like the verse, they would have been composed by the Métis leader while he was awaiting execution in Regina jail:

The reading of the scripture
And of its Holy letter
Helps on greatly: that is sure.
But without the practice
Of its divine maxims
Such reading goes too short a piece.

The works first: then the hymns!
Louis "David" Riel.

Other Documents

A number of Riel manuscripts discovered since 1985 do not need to be included here because their contents are already known through printed or facsimile versions. They are itemized below and briefly discussed for the benefit of future researchers who may some day be interested in consulting the original manuscripts.

- In 1986, the Provincial Archives of Alberta identified a Riel holograph among a miscellaneous collection of material transferred in 1975 by the Legislative Library.⁵² The document is a partial draft in Riel's hand of the autobiographical notes published in the Toronto *Globe*, 17 November 1885.⁵³ It was apparently saved by Laurent Legoff, an Oblate missionary stationed in Alberta at various times from 1882 to 1923. Father Legoff probably got it from fellow Oblate Alexis André, Riel's confessor at Regina, who had custody of Riel's prison papers and transmitted the autobiographical notes to the *Globe* for publication.

This draft is very close to the published version except for differences in the dates of three events in Riel's life:

Event	GLOBE Date	Manuscript Date
Enters Grey Nuns' school	1 April 1853	1 September 1853
Enters Christian Brothers' school	1 December 1854	1 September 1854
Arrives in Montreal	1 July 1858	5 July 1858

Probably, the dates in Riel's draft are correct and the discrepancies with the *Globe* version stem from printing errors.

- Another interesting discovery is a holograph version of Riel's last will and testament, dated 6 November 1885, acquired by the National Archives of Canada in 1991.⁵⁴ This text was published in two slightly different versions by the French-Canadian press shortly after Riel's execution, but the original remained unknown until acquired by the NAC. It matches the version published in *Le Manitoba* rather than that printed in the Quebec newspapers,⁵⁵ but there may also have been another redaction that went to Quebec. Riel was in the habit of rewriting important compositions, often several times.
- In 1991, the media reported the discovery in North Vancouver of a 26-page "poetic saga by Louis Riel."⁵⁶ It was written in a leather-bound

ledger also containing minutes of meetings of L'Académie Canadienne de Québec, 1860–65. The owner, Louise Painchaud, said she had inherited the book from her family. Some of her ancestors, she also said, had been involved in operating the Beauport mental asylum, where Riel was confined from 1876 to 1878. A facsimile copy of these 26 pages turned out to be already in the possession of the National Archives of Canada because J.R. Painchaud had loaned the same ledger to the Archives for copying in 1960. The poems appear to be authentic and were thus included in the *Collected Writings*, but the pages written in the ledger are not in the hand of Riel.

- In 1995, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba paid \$4000 in the auction market for the last letter of Louis Riel to his wife, 5 October 1885.⁵⁷ As with his will, the contents of the text were already in the public domain.⁵⁸ The text of the original manuscript agrees exactly with the version published in the *Collected Writings*.

Notes

- George F.G. Stanley, gen. ed., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, 5 vols. Vol. I, 1861–1875, Raymond Huel; Vol. II, 1875–1884, Gilles Martel; Vol. III, 1884–1885, Thomas Flanagan, Vol. IV, *Poetry*, Glen Campbell; Vol. V, *Reference*, George F.G. Stanley, Thomas Flanagan, Claude Rocan (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985). Hereafter cited as *CW*.
- Allen Ronaghan brought to the attention of George Stanley, general editor of the Riel Project, the existence of the letter of Riel to Smith, 23 September 1870 The letter of 12 February 1874, which is in the American but not the British edition of Beckles Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal*, was discovered by Thomas Flanagan while double-checking Ronaghan's reference.
- Brought to the attention of Glen Campbell by Lionel Dorge.
- Louis Riel to Joseph-Eugène Antoine, 2 January 1874, Archives Oblates de Montréal, dossier Manitoba et le Nord-Ouest. Discovered by Raymond Huel. Louis Riel to Julie Riel, 9 August 1882. National Archives of Canada, news release, 12 September 1988. It is now in NAC, MG 27, I F3 Louis Riel, vol. 4. The fragment of poetry is printed as a photographic copy in Pierre Alfred Charlebois, *La Vie de Louis Riel* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1991), 193. It is not in the earlier English version of Charlebois's book, *The Life of Louis Riel* (Toronto: NC Press, 1975).
- Beckles Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915; 2 vols.), 1: 392. With trivial differences of spelling and punctuation, it is also in the British edition of the same book (London: Cassell and Company, 1915), 260.
- Ibid.*, 1: x-xi.

7. Donna McDonald, *Lord Strathcona: A Biography of Donald Alexander Smith* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1996), 8
8. Willson added [*sic*] at this point, but there is no obvious error in the text.
9. The printed version is in *CW*, 1–107. The manuscript version is in the Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, NAC, MG 26A, 78079–92.
10. At the top of this page, another hand has written “Pierre Parenteau AM / 9 Déc 1871,” and an indecipherable word over the name of François Marion.
11. Of the 26 names, all but two can be identified in the tables in D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983). Fifteen were neighbours of Riel in St. Vital; five were from one area of St. Norbert (lots 134–153); two were from St. Boniface; and two were from St. François-Xavier. Most were young men in their late teens or early twenties. December 8 is a Catholic holy day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Those signatories who did not actually live in St. Vital may have been there visiting relatives or attending a celebration of some sort.
12. *CW*, 1–186, 1–187.
13. Unidentified.
14. More precisely, it is printed as n. 1 in 1: 359 of the American edition. It is not included in the British edition (it would belong on p. 237). The American and British editions are not quite identical, perhaps from having been copy-edited by different publishers.
15. Certificat d'élection à la Chambre des Communes, 13 February 1874, Riel, *CW*, A1–012
16. Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, 1: 453–56.
17. *Ibid.*, 495–96.
18. National Archives of Canada, news release, 12 September 1988. It is now in NAC, MG 27, I F3 Louis Riel, vol. 4.
19. Riel, *CW*, 2–095 and 2–096.
20. Louis Riel to Joseph Riel, July 1880, *CW*, 2–072, is the last known preceding letter. His brother Joseph wrote to Louis on 22 May 1881 that he had heard nothing from him since August 1880. PAM, MG 3 D 2. His sister Henriette Poitras wrote in the summer of 1882 that they had not heard from Louis in more than two years. Draft reply to Evelina Barnabé, PAM, MG 3 D 2.
21. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 26, 70.
22. *Sic*.
23. *Sic*.
24. The *Dictionnaire Historique de la langue française* (Paris: Robert, 1992), 1075, notes that in Canadian French, the verb “jouir” maintained its former meaning of “to take advantage of, or pleasure in, one’s company” “Réjouir le buffalo” would therefore mean that the horse enjoys being with the buffalo, i.e., he enjoys the hunt.
25. *Sic*.
26. *Sic*.
27. The words “avec un veau” were added by Riel in superscript.
28. Following “voyais,” Riel has crossed out: “quelque bon quelqu’un de St Vital quelque”.
29. Following “arriver,” Riel has crossed out “quelques”.
30. Following “dire,” Riel has crossed out “s’il”.
31. The paragraphs that follow have been written vertically on the left-hand sides of all four pages of the letter, beginning on the last page and ending on the first. On page 2, Riel writes also in the space at the top of the page.
32. Following “pas,” Riel has crossed out “de terre”.
33. Louis married Marguerite à la mode du pays 28 April 1881 on the Musselshell River in Montana, *CW*, 2–085, note 1.
34. Louis and Marguerite were legally married by Father Joseph Damiani, S.J., in Carroll, Montana, on 9 March 1882. The marriage certificate is in *CW*, 2–085.
35. Jean Riel was born 9 May 1882 near Carroll *CW*, 2–096, note 2.
36. Streptococcus equi, inflammation of equine respiratory tract.
37. In fact, commercial buffalo hunting ended in Montana in 1883–84. Frank Gilbert Roe, *The North American Buffalo: A Critical Study of the Species in its Wild State*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 461–62.
38. Riel is using the term “scrip” loosely. Marguerite, as the child of a Metis head of family, qualified for an allotment of 240 acres of land under s. 31 of the Manitoba Act, 1870. Thomas Flanagan, “Louis Riel’s Land Claims,” *Manitoba History* 21 (Spring 1991): 9. Scrip was a different legal instrument that could be redeemed for Dominion Lands; it was distributed to the Metis parents.
39. Riel must mean the legal description of Marguerite’s allotment, which was located in Sections 10 & 15, Township 10, Range 10 West of the 5th Meridian. *Ibid.*, 12, note 97. Allotments were more valuable once the legal description was known. See Thomas Flanagan and Gerhard Ens, “Metis Land Grants in Manitoba: A Statistical Study,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 27 (1994): 83–84.
40. Joseph and Alexandre Riel were Louis’s two younger brothers. Roger Goulet was a Metis surveyor from St. Boniface who at this time was working at the Dominion Lands office in Winnipeg. He would have been knowledgeable about land prices.
41. Riel tried to prosecute Simon Pepin and the CA. Broadwater Company for liquor sales to Indians. See *CW*, 2–086. He wrote to Joseph Riel on 1 April 1884 that the legal action had failed. *CW*, 2–124.
42. Because he had been out of touch for two years, Riel could not know whether his younger brothers might have married in the meantime. Joseph, who was born in 1857, was looking for a wife as early as 1879 (Louis Riel to Julie Riel, 2 May 1879, *CW*, 2–064). He finally married Eléonore Poitras on 30 April 1884. Alexandre, who was born in 1863, married Elise Poitras 14 June 1881, so Riel did have one sister-in-law at the time of this letter.
43. Marguerite-Marie is Louis’s sister Sara, a Grey Nun, whose religious name was Sister Marguerite-Marie. The letter Riel refers to has not been found.
44. “Tante Lacyprès” is Josephite Lagimodière (1810–1897), the wife of Amable Nault and the mother of André Nault. She was called “Lacyprès” because she was born in the Cypress Hills. “Nanin” was a family name for her son André Nault, who also lived in St. Vital. “Charles” is Charles Sauvé, another neighbour in St. Vital. “Paul” is Paul Proulx, a French-Canadian living in St. Vital. He was married to Angélique Nault, a cousin of Riel.
45. They would have been second cousins. François Poitras, the father of Alexandre’s wife Elise Poitras, was the son of Henri Poitras and Marguerite Grant. Jean-Baptiste Monette, the father of Riel’s wife Marguerite, was the son of Michel Monette and

- Marguerite Grant. Marguerite Grant must have been married twice, although the details are unknown.
46. Riel refers to lot 533, which he had bought from Cyrille Dumas in the early 1870s and resold to Joseph Delorme in 1878. The paperwork was more or less completed in 1879. Maybe a few details had been left for Joseph to deal with. See Flanagan, "Louis Riel's Land Claims," 5–7.
 47. This must be the same person as the Captain Allen mentioned in a batch of papers that Riel took to Winnipeg in June 1883, hoping to sell some land and scrip on behalf of Metis living in Montana. One paper states: "He [J.B. Falcon] sold his allotment to Capt. Allen." *CW*, 2–106.
 48. Riel had a land claim near the village of Lorette, but little is known about it. See Flanagan, "Louis Riel's Land Claims," 4, 8.
 49. "Mon oncle Romain" is Romain Lagimodière, a brother of Riel's mother "Auguste" is perhaps Auguste Harrison, a cousin of Riel who lived in Ste. Anne des Chènes.
 50. The poem is printed as a photographic copy in Pierre Alfred Charlebois, *La Vie de Louis Riel* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1991), 193. It is not in the earlier English version of Charlebois's book, *The Life of Louis Riel* (Toronto: NC Press, 1975). Although Charlebois calls the poem "the last words written by Louis Riel," there is really no proof for that assertion.
 51. The verse is addressed to Charles Slater, a 22-year old officer of the North-West Mounted Police who was stationed in Regina at the time of Riel's imprisonment:

Charles Slater
The reading
Of the scripture, and its letter
Must lead us well to practicing
Before we can expect to reap
CW, 4–156
 52. PAA, 75583.
 53. *CW*, 3–149, *CW*, 3–147, is another partial handwritten draft, and *CW*, 3–148 is a draft in typescript form.
 54. NAC, MG 27, I F3 Louis Riel, vol 4. See Michel Wyczynski, "Louis Riel's Will," *The Archivist* 20 (1) (1993): 23–25.
 55. The version from *Le Manitoba* is printed in *CW*, 3–122; the other is in *CW*, 3–123. The differences between them are purely stylistic.
 56. "Poetic saga said to be the Riel thing," *Globe and Mail*, 22 October 1991.
 57. "1885 Louis Riel Letter Auctioned for \$4,000," *Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1995.
 58. *CW*, 3–110.