

THE RED RIVER RESISTANCE



* *Louis Riel, c. 1870. Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba (P.A.M.)*

Manitoba
Culture, Heritage
and Tourism
Historic Resources

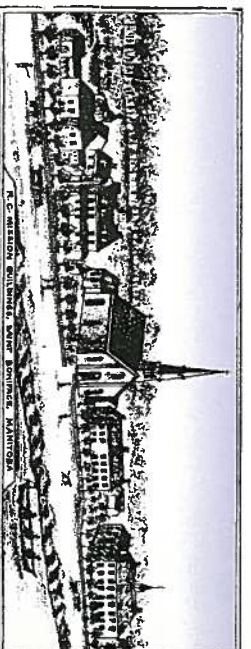


The Red River Resistance

On a snowy day in October, 1869, a group of nineteen unarmed Métis riders took a major step in changing the course of Manitoba's history. Confronting a survey crew that was staking out land west of the Red River for the anticipated arrival of Canadian settlers, the Métis stepped on the surveyors' chain, signalling their intention to oppose the distant Canadian Government's plan to annex the west for agricultural immigration.

For the previous year, the residents of the Red River Settlement had been apprehensive as the Hudson's Bay Company prepared to transfer control of present-day western Canada to the Canadian Government. While all the inhabitants of Red River — Scottish, French, Métis, English-speaking Métis, and Aboriginal — faced the impending change with anxiety, it was the French-speaking Métis, concerned about land ownership and language rights, who took action to oppose the land transfer. Louis Riel, who led the Métis riders that fateful day in October, provided focus for the discontent.

Louis Riel was born in the Red River Settlement in 1844 and educated in St. Boniface and Montreal. Chosen as secretary of the Comité national des Métis, he later became President of the Provisional Government, which led the struggle for a negotiated entry of the Red River Settlement into Confederation,



View of St. Boniface Mission, c.1869. Courtesy of P.A.M.

as a province rather than a territory. While Riel's militia kept the Canadian representatives from occupying the Settlement, it was Father Noël-Joseph Ritchot, parish priest of St. Norbert, who travelled to Ottawa with two other residents of Red River to negotiate the terms of the Manitoba Act of 1870. This Act, which conceded provincial status to Manitoba, also confirmed political rights, existing land ownership, use of the French language, and separate state-supported Catholic and Protestant schools.

Not everyone at Red River supported Riel and Ritchot. Opposition was centred around the Canadian Party, which was prepared to sacrifice the existing way of life in Red River in favour of the economic rewards to be reaped from filling the West with settlers from Ontario.

Although the struggle for the creation of Manitoba ended on July 15, 1870, with the proclamation of the Manitoba Act, the bitterness between the two opposing groups continued. Canada had sent a military expedition, under the command of Colonel Garnet Wolseley, to oversee the

transfer of power from the Provisional Government. With the arrival of the Wolseley Expedition at Red River in August, Riel and some of his followers were forced to flee the country. Because the Canadian Government repeatedly denied him amnesty for his role in the Resistance, Riel was unable to represent his people officially, even

though they elected him to the House of Commons three times. He remained in exile until 1884, when he returned to present-day Saskatchewan to lead the Métis in the North West Rebellion. For this action, Riel was found guilty of treason and hanged in Regina on November 16, 1885. A controversial figure, Riel was denied his place in Canadian history until 1992 when he was formally accorded status as a founding father of Manitoba.

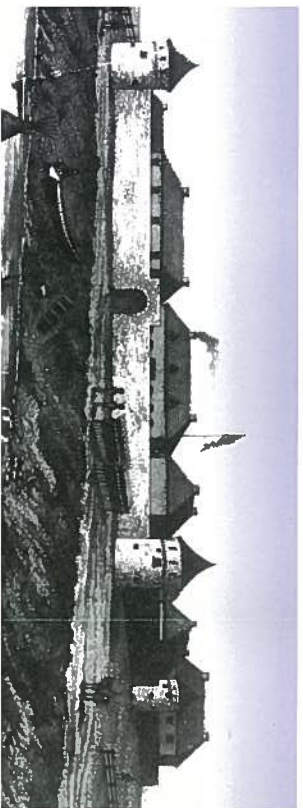
Many sites around the city of Winnipeg are associated with the events of 1869-70. The 16 sites highlighted in this brochure are located at nine different venues. They include a variety of interpretive experiences - historic buildings, statues, monuments, and markers that will help you understand the progression of events that led to the creation of a new province. The sites are organized, as much as possible, in a circular route, designed to be visited in one day, or if one prefers, individually. Together they tell the story of the Red River Resistance.

St. Boniface (1,2,3)

French-speaking St. Boniface is the birthplace of Louis Riel as well as his final resting place. A bust in front of the **St. Boniface Museum** (1), a statue on the east side of **Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface** (2) and a plaque on the western wall of **St. Boniface Cathedral** (3), where he first denounced the actions of the Canadian Government, all pay homage to Riel's role as a spokesman for his people. Riel's tomb and that of his compatriot, Ambroise Lépine, who, like Riel, suffered persecution for his actions in 1869-70, are located in the cemetery in front of the Cathedral. The nearby St. Boniface Museum displays important artifacts of Riel's life, such as his original coffin, as well as depictions of Francophone and Métis life on the prairies.

Riel House National Historic Site (4)

In December, 1885, Louis Riel's body was brought in secret to this, his mother's home. Costumed guides interpret the life of Riel's family during the 1880s.



Church, that the Métis elected the Comité national des Métis with Louis Riel as secretary. As their first act, the Comité sanctioned the erection of a barrier across the Pembina Trail to keep out unwanted emissaries of the Canadian Government. Near the present church stands the **Riel-Ritchot Monument** (5). The rear of the monument provides a summary of the events that took place at St. Norbert. Across the street from the church is **La Chapelle de Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Secours** (6), built by Ritchot and his parishioners in 1875 to thank the Virgin Mary for her divine assistance in 1869.

In 1966, to commemorate the raising of the barrier or "La Barrière", L'Union Nationale Méritise de St-Joseph erected a stone cross near the site of the original barrier by the La Salle River. Today this monument can be seen at **Place Saint-Norbert** (7). Across the La Salle River from St. Norbert, at

St. Norbert Provincial Heritage Park (8), two commemorative plaques interpret the significance of St. Norbert and of "La Barrière". As well, the heritage houses there represent the different phases of St. Norbert's history.

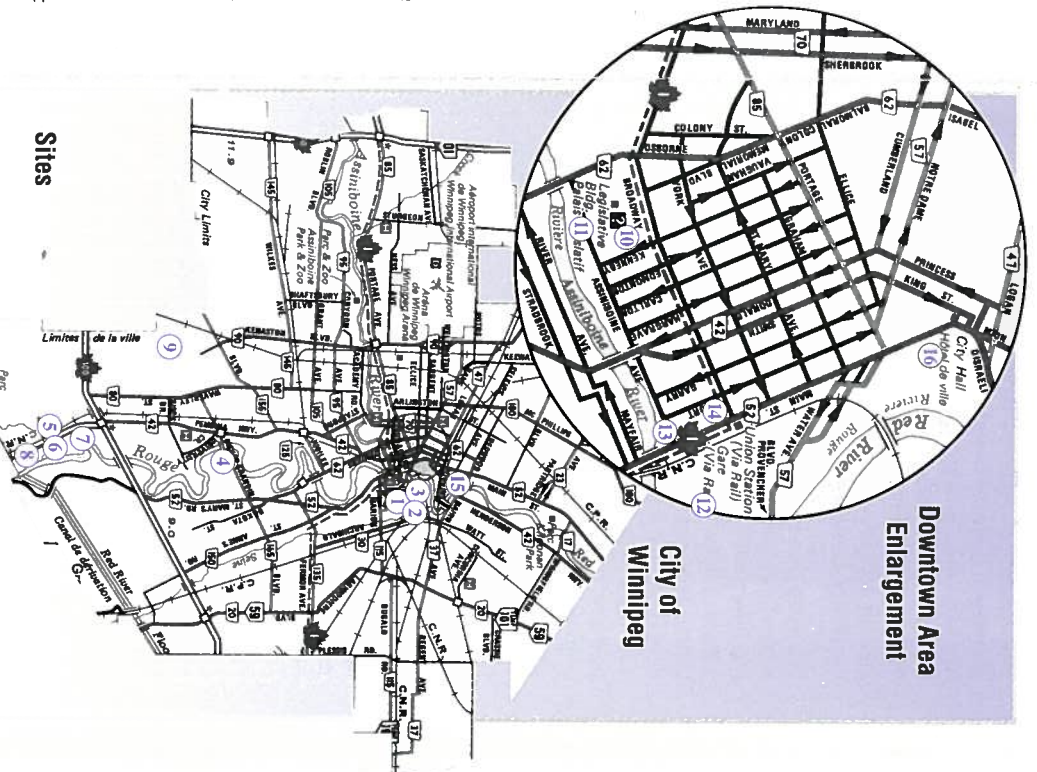
Don Smith Park (9)

Southwest of this site, on October 11, 1869, Riel's men forced surveyors to halt their work until negotiations with Canada were completed. A provincial plaque interprets this event.

Legislative Building Grounds (10,11)

At the corner of Kennedy Street and Broadway, a bust of **Sir George-Étienne Cartier** (10), a Father of Confederation, honours his role in guiding the Manitoba Bill through the Canadian Parliament in 1870. On the riverbank south

of the Legislative Building, a provincial plaque as well as a **Statue of Louis Riel** (11) are fitting tributes to his role in the founding of Manitoba.



Downtown Area Enlargement

City of Winnipeg

The Forks (12,13,14)

At Winnipeg's most popular site, one can experience the City's past as well as its present. A federal plaque at **The Forks National Historic Site** (12) describes the events which created the "postage-stamp province" called "Manitoba". A short walk west along the River Walk provides access to **Bonnycastle Park** (13), located on the former site of Upper Fort Garry. It was occupied by Riel's followers on November 2, 1869, and thereafter served as the administrative centre for the Provisional Government. Riel's men quietly vacated the post on August 24, 1870, a few hours before the arrival of a Canadian military force led by Colonel Garnet Wolseley. The significance of the Wolseley Expedition is depicted in a provincial plaque here, as well as in interpretive panels at **Fort Garry Gate Park** (14), located one block north on Fort Street. This park contains the remnants of Upper Fort Garry, where opponents of the Provisional Government were imprisoned. It was here, on March 4, 1870, in one of the most controversial acts of the



Resistance, that the Provisional Government executed one of its most vocal opponents, Thomas Scott. A provincial plaque explains Ambroise Lépine's role in the Resistance.

John Christian Schultz, leader of the Canadian Party, who opposed the actions of the Métis in 1869. Courtesy of P.A.M.

Norquay Community Centre (15)

While negotiations to settle the dispute over Canadian occupation of the West continued in Ottawa, at Red River opposition to Riel's course of action was centered in the Canadian Party, led by John Christian Schultz. A plaque explaining Schultz's role in the early history of Manitoba is located at **Norquay Community Centre**, near the site of his former residence.

Sites

1. St. Boniface Museum, 494 av de Taché, St. Boniface
2. Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, 200 av de la Cathédrale, St. Boniface
3. St. Boniface Cathedral, 190 av de la Cathédrale, St. Boniface
4. Riel House National Historic Site, 330 River Road, St. Vital
5. Riel-Ritchot Monument, rue de l'Église and St. Pierre, St. Norbert
6. La Chapelle de Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Secours, rue de l'Église and St. Pierre, St. Norbert
7. Place Saint-Norbert, 3514 Pembina Highway, St. Norbert
8. St. Norbert Provincial Heritage Park, 40 Turnbull Dr., off Pembina Hwy., St. Norbert
9. Don Smith Park, corner of Scurfield Blvd. and Fleetwood Rd., Wharfedale Park