

The People of Scottish Ancestry Who Brought Manitoba into Confederation

People of Scottish ancestry played several leadership roles in the events of 1869-70 in the “District of Assiniboia” and in the shaping of Canada as we know it today. Many of these people were Scots–Métis, others were married to Métis women.

Donald Alexander Smith, Lord Strathcona: (1820-1914) Donald Smith was a Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) officer¹, businessman, politician, diplomat, and philanthropist, builder of the Canadian Pacific Railway and developer of the West. He was born on August 6, 1820, in Forres, Scotland, the son of Alexander Smith and Barbara Stuart.

On December 27, 1869, Donald Smith arrived at Upper Fort Garry with his brother-in-law, Richard Charles Hardisty (Métis) as a special commissioner from the government of Canada to the provisional government established by Louis Riel. At noon on January 19, 1870 Donald A. Smith and Louis Riel addressed over 1,000 residents of Red River at an open-air gathering in the courtyard of Upper Fort Garry. Thomas Bunn chaired this meeting and Judge John Black acted as secretary. Smith read his letter of appointment from the Governor-General of Canada. At a meeting held the next day Smith read several more letters assuring the inhabitants of Red River as to the honourable intentions of Canada and he agreed to carry their wishes back to the government of Canada. After this meeting Louis Riel, seconded by A.G.B. Bannatyne, moved that 20 representatives of the English speaking population and 20 representatives of the French-speaking population should meet on January 25th at the Court House of Upper Fort Garry to consider Smith’s commission and what actions would be in their best interest.

Donald Smith’s efforts at settlement of the issues at Red River were hampered by the fact that he was not empowered to negotiate. However, his actions did enable Riel to argue for the formation of the Convention of Forty uniting the English- and French-speaking peoples. This assembly in turn gave way to a truly representative body, the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, the elected group which voted for the territory’s entry into the Canadian confederation. This group represented what was then the HBC’s District of Assiniboia and area which was about 100-120 miles square, subsequently called Manitoba.

Donald Smith married Isabella Sophia Hardisty (Scottish Métis), the daughter of Richard Hardisty, an HBC Chief Trader and Marguerite Sutherland (Métis) and the sister of Richard Charles² and William Lucas Hardisty³. Interestingly, William Lucas Hardisty

¹ 1868 - 1869 Chief Factor of the district Montreal including Labrador. On December 10, 1869, Donald A. Smith was appointed by the Canadian Government as Dominion Commissioner to inquire into the North West Rebellion. From 1870-1871 President of Northern Fort Garry Northern Department. 1871-1872 Commissioner, and 1872-1874 Chief Commissioner; 1874 - 1879 Land Commissioner. 1883-1889, H.B.C. Canadian Sub-Committee, 1888-1889 H.B.C. Deputy Governor. 1889-1914, H.B.C. Governor.

² Richard Charles Hardisty (March 3, 1831-October 18, 1889), was educated at the Red River Academy, he was a politician from the North West Territories. He married Eliza McDougall on Sept 21, 1866 while he was a Hudson's Bay Company employee. Richard ran as an Independent Conservative in the 1887 Canadian federal election and finished a close second in the Alberta District. Richard was appointed to the

was the great grandfather of (Edgar) Peter Lougheed, the first person of Métis ancestry to become Premier of the Province of Alberta (1971).

Isabella Hardisty lived with Smith *à la façon du pays*, and gave birth to their daughter, Margaret Charlotte, on January 17, 1854. Isabella, whose mother Marguerite Sutherland was of Métis and Scottish parentage, had married James Grant, according to “the custom of the country” in July 1851. She had given birth to a son, James Hardisty Grant, in July 1852, but the couple had separated soon after, apparently by mutual consent.

The circumstances of Smith’s marriage proved to be a lifelong embarrassment to him. His wife’s first alliance, *à la façon du pays*, and its termination had no legal standing. Thus Smith was compelled to have his union solemnized on several occasions.

Donald Smith served as an MP from Selkirk Manitoba 1870 to 1873, as an MLA 1872 to 1874 and again as an MP from 1874 to 1882. He then served as an MP from Montreal West from 1887 to 1896 when he retired to become Canadian High Commissioner in London. Donald Smith was a founder and first president of the St. Andrews Society of Winnipeg serving from 1871 to 1872.

Governor William Mactavish: was HBC governor and governor of Assiniboia. He was born on March 29, 1815 in Edinburgh, Scotland, eldest son of Dugald Mactavish, a lawyer, and Letitia Lockhart. Shortly after coming to Red River, Mactavish married Mary Sarah McDermot, the Scottish Métis Catholic daughter of businessman Andrew McDermot. His brother-in-law Andrew Bannatyne served on Mactavish’s Council of Assiniboia and was later elected to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia led by Louis Riel

Mactavish was governor of Rupert’s Land and governor of Assiniboia during the Red River Resistance of 1869-70. His health was quite fragile during this time period, he travelled to England in May of 1870 where he died on July 23, 1870, one month after the Legislative Assembly voted to join Confederation. During this time, his sympathies lay with the older inhabitants of Red River, the Métis, the HBC people, and the descendants of the colonists brought by Selkirk, all of whom, he argued, should have had a voice in the transfer of Rupert’s Land. While attempting to obtain the aid of the Catholic clergy in persuading the Métis to wait for a legal settlement, he reported to the HBC in London in 1868 and 1869 his objections to the Canadian claims and to the surveys which preceded the legal transfer. Mactavish placed the blame for the unrest mainly on the Canadian party and to a lesser extent on the Canadian government. Some historians report that he had sent a message to Riel indicating he should form a government to quiet the unrest at Red River.⁴

Canadian Senate on the advice of Sir. John A. Macdonald on February 23, 1888. He died just a year later while still holding his Senate seat on October 18, 1889.

³ Peter Lougheed was born on July 26, 1928, the son of Edgar Donald Lougheed (1893-1951) and Edna Alexandria Bauld. His grandmother was Isabella Clark Hardisty (1864-1936), the Métis daughter of William Lucas Hardisty (Métis) and Mary Ann Allen (Métis). His grandfather was Senator James Alexander Loughheed, who married Isabella Hardisty on September 16, 1884 in Calgary. (Written with contributions and personal communications from Robert Lougheed, Isabella’s Hardisty’s great-grandson.)

⁴ N. J. Goosen, “William Mactavish”, in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. IX. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mactavish_william_9E.html.

Judge John Black (1817-1879): John Black was born on March 11, 1817, at St. Andrews, County Fife, Scotland. He arrived at Red River Settlement in 1839 and soon entered the HBC service as a clerk. In 1845, he married Margaret Christie (Métis), the daughter of Alexander Christie of Scotland, a governor of Assiniboia, and Anne Thomas (Métis). His wife died in 1853 and he moved to Australia. Upon his return to Red River in 1861, he was named president of the General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia, a position he held for eight years.

As one of the representatives named by the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia to defend the interests of the Red River colony, Judge John Black was called to play a major role in the events of 1869-1870 which led to Manitoba's entry into Confederation.

In 1869-1870, John Black was acting governor and, as such, called upon John Bruce and Louis Riel to appear before the Council of Assiniboia and explain the refusal to allow Lieutenant-Governor designate McDougall to enter the Red River colony.

John Black was also secretary, then chairman, of the Convention of Forty that led to the formation of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. He represented the parish of St. Andrews on the Convention of Forty. His participation was motivated by a desire for a peaceful resolution of the Manitoba question.

Black was elected as a delegate 'of' the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia to negotiate terms of confederation with Canada, together with Father Ritchot and Alfred H. Scott. It was Mgr. Taché who convinced him to be the spokesperson for the Anglophone population in the colony. On completion of the negotiations Black returned to Scotland.

Andrew G. Bannatyne (1829-1899): Andrew Bannatyne was born on the island of South Ronaldshay, Orkney in Scotland. He was appointed magistrate in 1861 and became a member of the Council of Assiniboia in 1868.

During the Red River Resistance in 1869, Bannatyne agreed to serve as postmaster in Louis Riel's Provisional Government representing the parish of St. John's, on the condition that they seek terms with the Dominion of Canada. In 1870, Bannatyne was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. He was married to Annie McDermott an Irish Métis. Anne's older sister Mary Sarah was the wife of HBC Governor William McTavish, and was resident at Upper Fort Garry during 1869-1870.

After Manitoba was created as a province in 1870, the first session of the Manitoba Legislature was held in four rooms of Bannatyne's Winnipeg house.

Andrew Graham Bannatyne was the 2nd president of the St. Andrews Society of Winnipeg serving from 1872-74, and 1875-82.

William Garrioch Jr.: William was born 4 July 1828 to William Garrioch of Orkney, Scotland, and Nancy Cook (Métis), a daughter of William Hemmings Cook of London, England and Kahnawpawmakan (Cree). In about 1851, Garrioch Jr. married Mary Brown, daughter of Henry Brown (of Orkney) and his wife Elizabeth or Isabella (of Rupert's Land).

On March 1, 1870, Garrioch Jr. was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia as representative of the parish of St. Mary's Laprairie (now Portage la Prairie).

John Lazarus Norquay Sr.: John was born on 19 April 1837, the son of Henry Norquay (Métis), and Henry's second wife, Mary 'Polly' Anderson (Métis). John Lazarus Norquay was the grandson of Oman 'Omie' Norquay, of South Ronaldshay, Orkney, Scotland, who had settled at Red River with his wife Jean Morwick (Métis).

On March 1, 1870, Norquay Sr. was elected by public meeting of the parishioners of St. Margaret's to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. However in the first election in December of 1870, it was his cousin John Norquay Jr. who was elected to represent High Bluff in the Manitoba Legislature.

George Gunn: George was born on December 11, 1833, the son of Donald Gunn of Caithness, Scotland, Margaret Swain (Métis).

Both George Gunn and his father Donald Gunn were among the English-speaking members who attended the Convention of Twenty-four held in the Court House, adjoining Fort Garry on November 16, 1869. George Gunn participated as elected representative for St. Anne's, and Donald Gunn for St. Andrew's. George Gunn Jr. was also present, in the same capacity, at the Convention of Forty. On February 23, 1870, the people of St. Anne's parish declared him their choice for representation in the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. Gunn, however, objected to the informality of this proceeding and insisted on another election. On 28 February, therefore, after receiving the 'majority of votes' taken at the St. Anne's schoolhouse he was re-elected.

James McKay: James was born circa 1827 the son of James "Big Jim" McKay, born circa 1797, in Sutherlandshire Scotland and Marguerite Gladu a Métis from Cumberland House. James was an elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia representing the parish of St. James. He also served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

William Fraser: William was born on June 17, 1832, the son of James Fraser born at the Isle of Alva, Scotland, and Anne Bannerman also born in Scotland. William served as an HBC Councillor of Assiniboia (1868-1870). He was then elected to represent the parish of Kildonan in the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia.

James Ross: Ross, also Métis, was born in 1834, the son of Alexander Ross born at Nairnshire, Scotland and his Okanagan wife, Sally. At the Convention of Forty in 1870 he was elected to represent the parish of St. John's. James Ross was the Chief Justice of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia.

John Sinclair. John was born in 1835, the son of James Sinclair and elected in 1870 from the parish of St. Peter's (the Indian Settlement) to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. John's Scottish lineage is unclear.

Thomas Sinclair Sr.: Thomas was born in 1809, the son of Chief Factor William Sinclair born in 1766 at Harra, Orkney, Scotland and Nahoway (Margaret) Holden, the Métis daughter of George Holden an HBC officer at York Factory and his Cree wife. Thomas was elected from the parish of St. Andrew's to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. He died on March 23, 1870 and his son was appointed to replace him.

Thomas Sinclair Jr.: Thomas was born in 1841, the son of Thomas Sinclair Sr. and Hanna Cummings a Métis. The Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia made a motion of condolences to the family on March 26, 1870 and indicated that Thomas Sinclair Jr. was to continue with the offices held by his father.

William Auld Tait: William was born at Headingley in 1826, the son of William Tait Sr. of Orkney, Scotland and Mary Auld, the daughter of William Auld and a Cree woman. Her father, William was at one time the HBC Governor. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. William Auld Tait Jr. married Johanna Gunn the daughter of John Gunn and Ann Sutherland. Tait was elected from the parish of Headingley to the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia on February 22, 1870.

Those interested in the history and culture of the early Scottish settlers at Red River can view the exhibits at the St. Andrews Heritage Centre which houses a wide selection of artifacts, clothing, and memorabilia from the 1800s and early 1900s. The displays also feature maps of the early river lots along the Red River in St. Andrews parish. The St. Andrews Heritage Centre is now located at the St. Andrews Rectory National Historic site, a rectory completed in 1854, located at 374 River Road, St. Andrews, Manitoba. The Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg also has a significant number of artifacts from this time period.

References:

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