

## **François-Xavier Letendré.** (1841-1901)

By Lawrence Barkwell and Heather Hallett

François-Xavier *dit* Batoche<sup>1</sup> was born in St. Boniface on March 8, 1841,<sup>2</sup> the son of Marie Julie Hallett and Louison Letendré *dit* Batoche. François-Xavier married Marguerite Parenteau (born 1843) in the parish of St. Norbert, Red River on May 19, 1863 at St. Norbert. Marguerite's parents were Pierre Parenteau and Joseph Delorme. Pierre was a Justice of the Peace for St. Norbert.

His father, Louison *dit* Batoche was born at St. Boniface between 1797 and 1805, the son of Jean-Baptiste Letendré from Quebec and Joseph "Crise" (Cree). Louison's father and Emmanuel Lussier were among the twelve men who were with David Thompson when he crossed the Rockies to the Columbia River in the winter of 1810-11. Louison married Marie Julie Hallett at Fort Carlton in 1821. Louison and Marie were living at the North West Co. post "La Montée" just upriver from Fort Carlton. They were living at Red River in 1823, they tried farming and had thirty acres under cultivation. They left Red River after 1829, and spent a number of years following the buffalo hunt and living as traders. They are listed in the 1850 Minnesota Census at Pembina and Louison appears on the Chippewa of Lake Superior and Mississippi treaty list in 1854 and again on the Taylor Falls, Minnesota treaty list of 1870. In 1853, the Hudson's Bay Co. traders are reporting that the Metis Free Traders Isidore Dumont, Louison Batoche, Emmanuel Champagne<sup>3</sup> and Abraham Belanger are giving them stiff competition at Fort Carlton trading horses and provisions.

Louison was a celebrated buffalo hunter and trader. Sometime during the 1860s, he had established a number of small trading posts on the South Saskatchewan River and permanently settled in what became known as Batoche in 1871. He is shown as part of the original governing committee for St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan in 1871. Some of Louison's uncles and his brother and their families went west to settle around St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne just north of Edmonton.

Thus, François-Xavier and his father were the founders of the settlement of Batoche. It was a few miles upstream from the Oblate Church headquarters at St. Laurent. They were very good businessmen. François-Xavier dealt heavily and very successfully in furs, and became a very wealthy man. He built the finest house west of Winnipeg before the North West Resistance in 1885. After established himself at the crossing on the South Saskatchewan River 1872, he built a trading post and ferry at this location. The place became known as Batoche's Crossing or simply Batoche. His ferry competed with that of Gabriel Dumont located about 15 kilometres south. In 1878, Letendré sold his ferry to fellow merchant Alex Fisher. At that time, he was proprietor of one of the largest trading posts in the North-West. The whole community was also prospering by then.

---

<sup>1</sup> Both father and son were called Batoche.

<sup>2</sup> Although his Scrip Application says he was born November 1838

<sup>3</sup> Champagne and Batoche were brothers-in-law.

Letendré operated a store at Batoche, Saskatchewan and along with the Vennes had a network of posts at Carrot River, Fort à la Corne, Meadow Lake, Stony Creek, Frog Lake, fishing Lake and Isle à la Crosse districts. He hired local traders, freighters such as Moise Parenteau, Châlins Thomas, William Letendré and Edouard Dumont, interpreters and store clerks. His son-in-law Charles-Eugène Boucher and Philippe Chamberland worked as clerks in Batoche. He also hired Metis as farm labourers and cowboys to raise horses and cattle at his ranch in the Minichinas Hills south east of Batoche. Letendré's trading activities took him to Winnipeg, St. Paul and Montreal.

Francois-Xavier and his wife donated money to help build the Roman Catholic Church of St. Antoine de Padue at Batoche. He also paid for the famous "Bell of Batoche".

He did not participate in the Resistance, however his home was used as Louis Riel's headquarters. Francois-Xavier left Batoche with this wife and several children and went north to another one of his posts in the Carrot River region of Saskatchewan before the Resistance began. His uncle, Andre Letendré, fought and died on May 12, 1885, the last day of fighting at Batoche.

Francois-Xavier suffered great losses from the Resistance. He claimed \$32,972.44 in damages to his house and store. He was later compensated by the Rebellion Losses Commission for over one-half of the cash value of the property he lost. He returned to Batoche after the Resistance and farmed until his death in 1901.

*Reference*

Payment, Diane. "François-Xavier Letendre, dit Batoche." Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. XIII (1901-1910). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994: 595-596.

Payment, Diane. *The Free People-Li Gens Libres*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell  
Coordinator of Metis Heritage & History Research  
Louis Riel Institute