

Joseph Godon. (1839-1905)

Joseph Godon was the son of Louis Godon II (b. 1808)¹ and his Nakota (Assiniboine) wife, and the grandson of Louis Godon I, a voyageur with Alexandre Henry at Pembina in 1801. His mother was Isabella Isaac (b. 1825). She was sister-in-law to Little Shell Band Counselor Louis Lenoir. Joseph married Caroline Larocque², the daughter of Joseph Larocque and Sophie Marchand on January 9, 1860 at Pembina. They had fourteen children:

- Elzear, born October 8, 1861 at Pembina.
- William John, born December 20, 1863 at Ste. Agathe.
- Jerome, born May 15, 1866 at Ste. Agathe. Jerome married Mary Madeleine Lilly (b. 1873). She was the daughter of James Lilly (b. 1841) and Marie Catherine Perrault dit Morin.³
- Marie Adeline, born 1867, died 1871 at Ste. Agathe.⁴
- Joseph, born April 19, 1868 at Pembina.
- Joseph, born September 8, 1870 at Pembina. He married Marie Forget on June 5, 1893.
- Virginie, born January 27, 1872, at Rock Lake. She married Patrice Gagnon on September 5, 1888..
- Philippe, born May 23, 1874 at Rock Lake, married Emma McIver. Phillip died in WWI on May 3, 1918 and is buried Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France.
- Alexander, born 1877, died February 24, 1883.
- Elie Joseph, born September 3, 1878 at Rock Lake. He married Marie McIvor November 27, 1900. He died March 20, 1963.
- Albert, born 1880.
- Marie Louise, born December 16, 1882 at Rock Lake. She married Francois Swan, November 17, 1902.
- Joseph Moise, born October 8, 1884.
- Marie Caroline, born October 27, 1886 at St. Jean Baptiste. She married Julien Fifi on May 14, 1904. She died in Winnipeg on March 13, 1982.

¹ This family was enumerated in the 1850 census at Pembina as household # 42. Louis appeared in the Red River Census in 1838, 1840 and 1843.

GODON, Louis #214, Louis Godon, age __, Native, Catholic, 1 married man, 1 married woman, 1 son (-16), 3 total inhabitants, 1 house, 1 stable, 2 mares, 1 ox, 1 bull, 2 cows, 3 calves, 4 pigs, 1 cart, 2 acres. (1838 E.5/9) page 13.

#229, Louis Godon, age __, Native, Catholic, 1 married man, 1 married woman, 2 sons (-16), 4 total inhabitants, 1 house, 1 stable, 1 horse, 1 mare, 3 oxen, 1 bull, 2 carts, 2 acres. (1840 E.5/10) page 13.

#207, Louis Godin, age __, Ruperts Land, Catholic, 1 married man, 1 married woman, 2 sons (-16), 1 daughter (+15), 1 daughter (-15), 6 total inhabitants, 1 house, 1 stable, 1 horse, 2 mares, 2 oxen, 1 pig, 2 carts, 1 canoe, 2 acres. (1843 E.5/11) page 9

² Scrip affidavit for Godon, Caroline, wife of Joseph Godon; born: September 22, 1843; father: Joseph Larocque (Métis); mother: Sophie Marchand (Métis); claim no: 421; date of issue: June 5, 1876

³ Catherine Morin was daughter of Louis Morin and Marguerite Malaterre.

⁴ Scrip affidavit # 808 (Ste. Agathe) for Godon, Joseph, as sole heir of his deceased daughter Marie Adeline Godon; father: Joseph Godon; born: not given; died: 7 March 1871; mother: not given.

Joseph Godon and his wife took annuity payments in 1871 as members of the Turtle Mountain Band.

Joseph received Halfbreed Scrip under the 1863-64 Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa Treaty:

Gadon, Joseph (1838) [1850 U.S.]

Godon, Joseph [R.L. Scrip #391]

Minnesota Territorial Census, Pembina, 1850, family 42/42, born Red River Br. National Archives, RG 75, Entry 363, "List of Persons to Whom Scrip was Issued under Red Lake & Pembina Treaties..." Halfbreed Scrip No. 391 issued May 8, 1874, under the authority of Secretarial Decision, May 6th, 1874, delivered May 8, 1874 National Archives, RG 75, Entry 364, "Treaty of April 12, 1864, Red Lake and Pembina Half-Breeds," Scrip Stubs, Number 391, dated May 8th, 1874, 160 Acres, delivered May 8th, 1874, issued to Joseph Godon, delivered to Agent Douglass son of: Gadon [Godoin], Louis (1820) and, Isabella (1820).



Joseph Godon at the Grassick homestead in 1898. Picture by Mary Grassick.

Joseph was a fur trader with the Hudson Bay Co., and farmer in the Floral District of Manitoba near Pilot Mound. He was a boy of 15 years when he participated in the last Sioux battle which took place at the "Old Mound", on or about 1855. Prior to settling in the Floral District west of the Floral School on the east side of the Pembina River in 1887, he resided in the area of the junction of the Red and Pembina Rivers, just south of the International Boundary. Joseph had travelled extensively in the North West Territories and had taken part in buffalo hunts and many other events.

Joseph Godon, A True Pioneer⁵

The east ½ of section 24-4-12W was part of the Floral School District, since it is on the east side of the Pembina River. Joseph Godon entered on the SE 24-4-12W on the 11 Apr 1887, Mr. Gordon being the 1st owner to bring the ¼ to Patent, under the provisions of the Homestead Act. The registration for Mr. Godon's property was in the name of "Joseph Godon or Gordon". Property records indicate the use of "Gordon", however, no records of a Joseph Gordon exist in the HBC files or the census. It is noted that many homesteads, which did not necessarily have the arable acres required by the Act, were given special permission to receive Patents because the required arable acres were not available, and the owner had demonstrated a sincere interest in the land. It is also reported that Mr. Gordon went by the name of Mr. "Godon".

It has been reported that the last big battle with the Sioux Indians in Manitoba, took place at the "Old Mound", north of Pilot Mound. The following report is taken from "Reunion, Pilot Mound 50, District 75", July 1954.

The late Joseph Godon – who spent most of his life in the district and who, as a boy of 15, took part in the final encounter, killing 23 of the Sioux himself, gave an account of this affair to several of the old timers in the district. It was a much larger encounter than the average Indian fight, as both sides were out in force. The buffalo hunters, camping at Barbour's Lake in the woods a few miles north of town, had located a large herd of buffalo and had driven them northward to the edge of the bush. Finding two of their hunters missing and their horses and rifles gone, it was later learned that they had been killed by the Sioux. As night was falling they returned to camp.

The next day, a beautiful September Sunday, the hunters advanced in strength towards the Old Mound. A little over ½ mile north of the hill, in the neighborhood of the ridge, the Sioux were assembled in strength. A running fight, on horseback in Indian style, resulted in the complete wiping out of the Sioux. 597 Sioux were killed and buried on the western slope of the Old Mound. 2 survivors were allowed to carry the story of the massacre back to their people. "There were over 1500 buffalo hunters on horseback on the Old Mound when the fight was over," said Mr. Godon in relating his experience of this memorable encounter.

The following excerpt is from a story titled "A Pioneer Neighbor", by Mary Helen Grassick, of the SW 20-4-11W, a neighbor to Joseph Godon. Miss Grassick was 16 years of age in 1887, and would have become well acquainted with the Godon family. Miss Grassick also reports that the Godon's raised 6 or 7 boys. A trail was visible that led from the bottom of the hill near the Godon residence, easterly up the slopes and through the bush to the top of SW 19-4-11W. This was an access trail to the Godon farm, and general access to the Pembina River.

⁵ From: <http://www.pilot-mound-mb-history.ca/J%20Godon.pdf>, downloaded July 21, 2011.

“One of the picturesque figures remembered by the pioneers at Floral S. D., north of Pilot Mound, is that of Jos. Godon. His farm was the SE 24-4-12W, on the banks of the Pembina River. An old Hudson’s Bay man, a French half breed, with apparently a streak of Scotch in him as he claimed that his name was originally Gordon. He was honest and upright, a true gentleman even if he did lack the polish we usually associate with that term. His broken English and his vivacious manner of gesticulating when telling a story made him most interesting. From the time he was known in Floral he farmed on a small scale. True, his farm was hilly and but little suited to farming, but to him it was an ideal farm. There was fishing and hunting at his very door!

There was the valley where his cattle might graze, and enough arable land to raise oats for his horses. What more need a man wish for? Among the Indians he was looked upon as a great man and many a feast and Pow-Wow was held at his home. He, of course did a good deal of trading with them. He would leave Pilot Mound with his buckboard loaded with such articles as he knew they wanted. These he bartered for skins or whatever he could get that in time might be sold to the white man.

He loved a good horse and was a superb rider sitting on the horse as if he were a part of it. In the early days he had been in many a buffalo hunt and had participated in many a skirmish with the Indians.”

Additional information was found concerning Joseph Godon at the Provincial Archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Winnipeg. Joseph Godon, Métis, was born in 1839 at St. Boniface, in the old Assiniboia. He was the Métis son of Louis Godon (Métis) and Isabel Isaac (Métis). Joseph was employed by the HBC, at the trading post Pembina, and would have done much traveling as a fur trader and been involved in many of the significant events in the 1860’s, 70’s, and 80’s that surrounded the Métis people.

There were 2 villages centered in Pembina (ND) in the 1790’s. These fur trade posts were established around the forks of the Pembina and Red Rivers. That area was prone to flooding (1826, 1851, and 1860). Father Dumoulin established his mission on a ridge north of the Forks about ½ mile south of the 49th parallel in 1818. The community was moved to St Francois-Xavier in 1823. I

It has been reported that Joseph was from near Pembina, prior to his homestead in the Floral area. Therefore, in all probability, he was living in the US near the forks of the Red and Pembina.

The next report available about Joseph is his involvement with the Buffalo Hunters when he participated in the final battle against the Sioux at the “Old Mound”, on 20-4-11W, north of Pilot Mound. Joseph was reportedly 15 years old at the time, so therefore the dispute at the Old Mound took place in 1854.

Joseph was a resident of Pembina for sure by 1867. He was designated as a witness to the death of Joseph Sakin in 1867, he was 28 years old.

The National census taken in 1870 indicates Joseph was living near Pembina and in 1859 or 1860, he had married Caroline Larocque (1843 -), daughter of Joseph Larocque. The census shows the following children born to Joseph and Caroline, Elisa, (1860-), William, (1863 -), Jerome, (1865 -), Marie, (1867 -), and Joseph, (1869 -).

It was in 1869 that Canada had bought the HBC land and on Dec 1, 1869, had made the transfer. The settlers had not been informed and it was at this time that Louis Riel, a well educated man of the day, was chosen as a leader, by the Métis, to dispute the land takeover. The Métis were very concerned about their land, culture, and livelihood.

In 1870, in Manitoba, there were approximately 12,000 people; 6000 Métis, 4000 Half Breeds, 1500 Whites, and 500 Indians. In 1870, in the Manitoba Act, 1.4 million acres of land was set aside for the Métis people. The award of property was done in the form of a document called "Scrip", which entitled the owner of the document to a portion of land within the Dominion. The Act also set forth the condition that the HBC would retain 45,160 acres of land around their trading posts.

In a national census taken in 1891, Joseph (50), and Mary (Caroline?? 50), were homesteading on the SE 24-4-12W, in the District of Floral, RM of Lorne, and had the following children: William, 26, Joseph, 20, Philip, 18, Eli, 10, Mary, 8, Maurice, 6, and Sarah, 4.

Mary Hellen Grassick had taken his picture (above) in the 1890's. "When Joe appeared before me, sitting on his well groomed horse, instead of him wearing his usual moccasins, buckskin coat and wide brimmed felt hat, he wearing light grey trousers, a long tailed black coat, much worn, and on his head uncomfortably perched was a hat of the "Christy Stiff" style. And in his hand he held a buffalo horn, which was of the last buffalo he shot. He gazed at it lovingly and handled it almost reverently".

The attached photograph is the one that Mary Grassick speaks about in her story about the "Pioneer Neighbor". The picture was taken on the Wm Grassick homestead on the SW 20-4-11W. (Photograph provided by Priscilla Grassick, of Pilot Mound).

Also, in her story, Mary Hellen Grassick describes Joseph's return trip to Winnipeg, "Joe had not seen Winnipeg for 30 years. His memories of it were as it was in the 70's. He decided he would like to see it again so in 1903 went there. He came home dumfounded. "Buildings everywhere, big buildings. When me there before just 2 or 3 little houses, now all big." It must be noted that a minor error factor appears occasionally in the birth records from the very early days.

Further into the story titled "A Pioneer Neighbor", by Mary Grassick, of the SW 20-4-11W, a neighbor to Joseph Godon: "For weeks Dr. Ferguson had been treating him for a sore leg, with success, but old traditions die hard. Joe, though apparently one with the white men, was at heart an Indian. Although he idolized Dr. Ferguson for what he had

done for him, his mind reverted to the Indian methods of treatment, and finally his old belief in the Indian medicine man asserted itself and unknown to the Doctor, he sent for one.

His treatment was harsh. In several places on the leg a rusty, unclean needle was inserted to the bone, then some concoction of supposed medical value was poured into the openings. Stoically, he bore the operation but in a few hours the pain was excruciating and again Dr. Ferguson was sent for. This time the case was hopeless. The limb was reeking of poison. When told about his condition he did not seem concerned about himself, but asked his son to get Mr. Grassick there quickly. Mr. Grassick went at once and found that he wished to make a will. "The old woman she work hard, she look after babies, me want her to have everything," were his first words. A simple will was drawn up and signed by witnesses there.

"Is that all Joe?"

"No dat picture your girl pulled me for. Mine spoiled, me want another one for my old woman."

"All right Joe."

"And when me die, bury me at St. Alphonse. Good fence around graves der. Me no want cattle and horses walking over me."

He lived a day or two after this. The picture was printed and taken to him. Before giving it to his wife he gazed long and fondly at it. "An dat a fine pony, and dat horn – you give dat horn to Dr. Ferguson – him good man," and to Dr. Ferguson the horn was given who still treasures it for the memories it brings to him of one of "Nature's Noblemen". Joseph Godon Sr. died on Nov 3rd, 1905. (Cemetery Transcription, Manitoba Genealogy Society Inc. 2002). And, as he had requested, he is buried at the St. Alphonse cemetery, NE 34-5-12W, behind the church, on the hill – although today it is not fenced, it is very well maintained.

Property records indicate that his Will was probated in December of 1905, and on August 12, 1912, Caroline Godon sold the SE 24-4-12W to Joseph Allard.

Sources:

- Compiled with the assistance of Gloria McNabb. Personal communication, November 15, 2018.
- <http://www.pilot-mound-mb-history.ca/J%20Godon.pdf>, downloaded July 21, 2011.



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