

Frédéric “Le Gros” Genthon. (1856-1941)

Frédéric Genthon was born July 4, 1857 at Red River, the son of Joseph Genthon and Josephite Marion. He was a grandson of Councilor William Dease and Marie-Louise (Jerome) Dease.

Frédéric was educated at St. Boniface and at age 16 began driving Red River Carts to the HBC at Fort Carlton. Frédéric is described as a huge man standing over six foot four inches and weighing more than three hundred pounds. He was known for both his prodigious strength and his virtuosity on the fiddle. Because of his size he was called “le Gros.”

In 1878, he married Josephite Nault at St. Boniface. After his marriage he worked for his father’s freighting business. In 1885, his uncle, Horace Belanger, a chief factor for HBC, appointed Genthon as an assistant at Moose Lake. He was later made HBC agent at Cumberland House and The Pas. Later he was given the position of surveyor at Winnipeg.

Genthon was always in great demand to play his fiddle at every important social occasion. One wealthy man gave him a valuable racehorse for playing at his daughter’s wedding. Another time the Honourable James McKay paid Genthon with a two-seater bobsleigh for playing at a big dance at Deer Lodge.

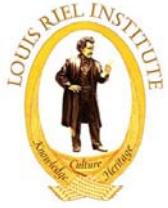
Year after year, Genthon was champion fiddler of Manitoba. In 1926, he won the Manitoba Championship Cup for Old time fiddling and in the 1930s Genthon was the fiddling champion of Western Canada. His playing of the Red River Jig was recorded for posterity, by the National Museum. The interested listener can hear his fiddling on the recently released CD, *Drops of Brandy* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2001).



Reference:

Walter H. Randall, “Genthon the Fiddler”, *The Beaver* 1942, 15-17.

Photo credit: from Randall, above p. 15, Frédéric is on the right.



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