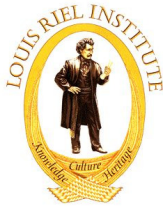


## St. Peter's Mission



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Louis Riel conducted a Parochial School in connection with St. Peter's Roman Catholic Mission located just west of Cascade, Montana. It was in the spring of 1883, weeks after becoming an American citizen, Riel accepted a teaching position at the Catholic mission of St. Peter's on Montana's Sun River. He and his family shared the house of James Swain while there.<sup>1</sup> He remained there until 1884 when the Metis summoned him to Saskatchewan.

At St Peter's, Riel taught many of the Metis children at the mission, including Marie Beauchamp, Marie Christine, William, Sara and Simeon Swain, the children of James Swain and Elise Nomme (Nomee); Marie and Adophe Beauchemin (Bushman, father of current Choteau Little Shell member, Myrtle Reardon); Helene de Montigny; Marie Azur, the child of Gabriel "Gabe" Azure and Cecile LaFromboise; Flora LaRance, the child of Basile and Marguerite LaRance, all three buried in the Teton Canyon Metis cemetery today; and James and Joseph Gray (ibid, p. 378: see also Flanagan. "Biographical Index." *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, Vol 5, in which Flanagan provided genealogical data in individuals mentioned in Riel's writings, identified those who were Metis, and specifies those who were from Pembina).

Riel also attended a political meeting of the Metis there, at which Gabriel Azure was elected "Chairman of the Assembly" and then spoke to the group (p. 377). Finally, many of the Metis at St. Peter's gave Riel their power of attorney to sell their Canadian "script" rights while on a trip to Winnipeg, including : James Swan Sr. and his wife, Marie Arcand; Louis Malaterre and his wife, Euphrosine Lapierre; F.X. Lapierre and his wife, Marie Rose Swan; James Swan Jr. and his wife, Elise Nomme; Louise Morin and her husband, Alexandre Azure; Euphrosine Malaterre and her husband, John Pambrun; Cecile Courchene and her husband, J. B. Falcon; Charles Malaterre; Genevieve Arcand; and Antoine Azure (ibid, pp. 277-283). Here in the two lists of

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<sup>1</sup> James Swain Jr. was the son of James Swain Sr. and Josephte Descoteaux. He was married to Marie Arcand (b. 1834) at St. François Xavier in 1850. Their daughter Marie Rose Swain was married to Resistance fighter Francois Lapierre another man who accompanied Riel to Batoche from St. Peter's Mission in Montana in 1884. James' second marriage was to Elsie Nommé. Riel's family shared his house at St. Peter's Mission in Montana in the early 1880s. James and his brother John travelled to Batoche with Louis Riel in 1884. John was killed during the 1885 Resistance.

names above are many of the individuals and families that were later associated with Augusta and Choteau, and even in the later years with Great Falls. Riel's correspondence makes it clear that they were a social and political community in the early 1880s.<sup>2</sup>

St. Peter's is the third mission in Montana, St. Mary's of the Bitter Root being the first, St. Ignatius of the Flathead the second and St. Peter's the third. It was located first in 1859 at Priest's Butte, near the town of Choteau in Teton county, moved the same year or the next to Fort Shaw on Sun River, that on March 3, 1860.

On Feb. 14, 1862 St. Peter's Mission was located "six miles above the mouth of Sun River on the Missouri river," and the place was named 'Flood,' the same name it bears today, only the name now is only that of a railroad flag station. The exact location of the Mission would probably be the Longeway ranch of today. In 1866 the Mission was moved to its present location. At one time 500 children were being taught there, but that was long ago.

Several fires devastated the buildings, stone though they were, the 1,100 acres property was leased and the Ursuline Sisters, owners of the property, came to Great Falls and the Ursuline academy here is the result a long jump from the St. Peter's Mission of 1859 at Priest's Butte, or 1862 at Flood, six miles above where Great Falls now stands.



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<sup>2</sup> From SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON THE LITTLE SHELL CHIPPEWA TRIBE'S FEDERAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT: SUPPLEMENTAL CHRONOLOGY OF DOCUMENTS, 1870-1994.

St. Peter's as it was. As can be seen from the photographs below, the original belfry has been moved to the left and the back "L" shaped portion of the building is gone.



St. Peter's, photo by L. Barkwell, 2009.





St. Peter's photo by L. Barkwell, 2009.



Photo by Nick Vrooman, 2009.



Alter at St. Peter's. Photo by L. Barkwell, 2009.



Scott Mainwaring and Nick Vrooman, both of Helena, Montana, inspecting the inside of the Mission Church, 2009, photo by L. Barkwell



St. Peter's with the Bird Tail Rising behind. Photo by L. Barkwell, 2009.





Detail of the log notching on the Church. Photo by L. Barkwell, 2009

