

Riel House History

Riel House National Historic Site occupies River Lot #51 [originally HBC Lot #793 then Lot #50] in St. Vital along the Red River. The lot runs between the Red River and the Seine River to the East. Riel's mother Julie Lagimodière Riel purchased this lot in 1864 and her son built the house. Although Louis Riel was born in the home on the Lagimodière homestead at the confluence of the Seine and the Red River in 1844, it is here, in the living room of his mother's house, where Riel's body lay in state for two days in December 1885. The house itself, a Red River frame building (a style of construction popular for this region) has been restored to how it was in the spring of 1886.



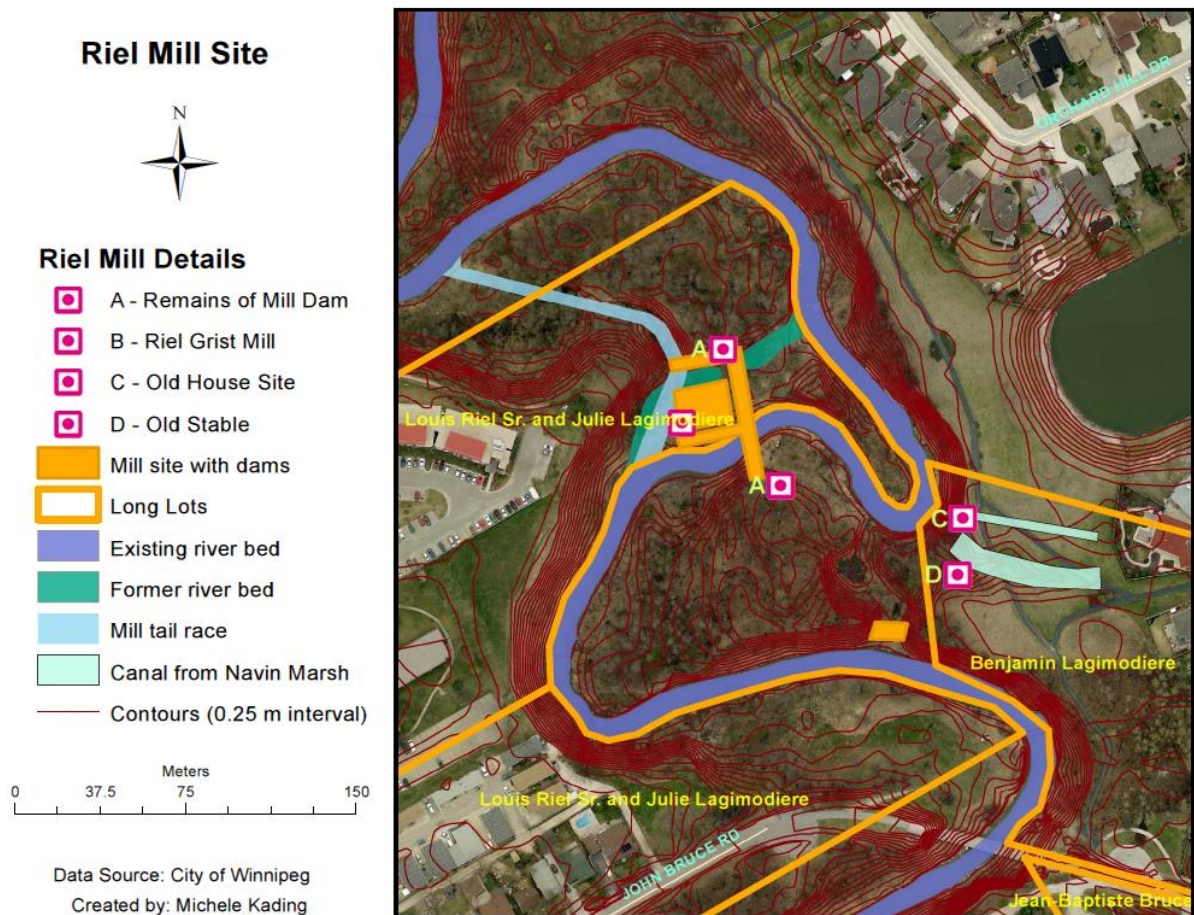
HBC Lot #793 was originally owned by Pierre Parenteau (b. 1797) and his wife Josephte Laurent in 1835. In 1849, it was sold to François Gendron (1795-1865) who was married to Angélique Lussier. In 1864 it was purchased by Julie Lagimodière Riel, Louis Riel's mother. In 1880-1881 Joseph Riel built a log home on the west side of River Lot 51 in the Parish of St. Vital where, in 1885, the body of his executed older brother Louis Riel was displayed for two days. The building has since been restored as a National Historic Site by Parks Canada. Joseph, used materials from his mother's home near the Seine River to build on the current location on the west end of the Riel Homestead.

Joseph remained at the family home, now Riel House, in St. Vital and farmed. He was always active in Red River Métis associations. Riel House was the first post office in St. Vital. In 1898, Joseph Riel received a grant and established the first auxiliary post office in the house itself. Joseph became Reeve of St. Vital in 1891. It was then an annual fight amongst Victor Mager, Joseph Riel and P. Dumas for Reeveship until 1912.¹

¹In 1892 P. Dumas was successful; 1893-1894, Joseph Riel; 1895-1898, Victor Mager; 1899-1900, P. Dumas; 1901-1902, Victor Mager; 1903-1910, P. Dumas; and 1910-1912 Victor Mager. Source: *St Vital Lance - December 17, 1931 - Vol.1, No.1.*

Louis Riel Jr. acquired his first land on January 23, 1869, when he purchased the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) lot 794 from Francois Lariviere.² This lot, four chains wide and about 80 acres in area, was adjacent to the Riel family lot in St. Vital (HBC 793); both ran from the Red River on the west to the Seine River on the east. They were later consolidated as St. Vital 51 in the Dominion Lands survey. Riel agreed to pay the picturesque price of “un boeuf de 2 ans faits allant sur 3, 100 lbs de boeuf; 22 boulines de tremble et une peau verte.” A new contract was drawn up June 24 of the same year with a money purchase price of £2 payable in September, £2 on All Saints Day, and £2, 5 shillings on New Year’s Day 1870. It is possible, however, that the new contract was never honoured. The document was not witnessed, and Lariviere later spoke of the land as having been sold in January rather than June 1869.

The Map of the original Riel home and Mill-Site on the east end of the river lot is shown below.



² Francois Lariviere (b. 1854) was the son of Louis Lariviere (b. 1815) and Marie Lambert (b. c. 1828).





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