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Dispossession or Adaptation? Migration and Persistence of the Red River Metis, 1835–1890

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Article abstract

The period from 1870 to 1890 saw the widespread dispersal of the Red River Metis. In the past historians have attributed this migration either to the inability of the Metis to adjust to settled society, or to the forced dispossession by the Canadian government. Both these views have some validity, but oversimplify the causes of the Metis emigration from Red River. An examination of the changing nature of the Metis family economy and the dynamics of migration show that the Metis movement out of Red River had begun well before 1870 and was a response to new economic opportunities. Changes in the Metis economy after 1850, changes that integrated the Red River Settlement into a wider capitalist economy, also divided Metis society on economic and occupational lines and affected the decision whether to emigrate or not. Thus the dispersal of the Metis was in some sense an adaptive and innovative response, one that had a different effect on the various Metis groups.

Dispossession or Adaptation? Migration and Persistence of the Red River Metis, 1835-1890

GERHARD ENS

Résumé

The period from 1870 to 1890 saw the widespread dispersal of the Red River Metis. In the past historians have attributed this migration either to the inability of the Metis to adjust to settled society, or to the forced dispossession by the Canadian government. Both these views have some validity, but oversimplify the causes of the Metis emigration from Red River. An examination of the changing nature of the Metis family economy and the dynamics of migration show that the Metis movement out of Red River had begun well before 1870 and was a response to new economic opportunities. Changes in the Metis economy after 1850, changes that integrated the Red River Settlement into a wider capitalist economy, also divided Metis society on economic and occupational lines and affected the decision whether to emigrate or not. Thus the dispersal of the Metis was in some sense an adaptive and innovative response, one that had a different effect on the various Metis groups.

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Pendant la période qui s'étend de 1870 à 1890, se produit la dispersion des Métis de la Rivière-Rouge. Les historiens ont attribué cette migration à l'incapacité des Métis de s'adapter à la colonisation ou à la mainmise du gouvernement canadien sur leurs terres. Ces deux thèses se défendent. Mais elles simplifient à outrance les causes du départ des Métis de la Rivière-Rouge. Une analyse des changements survenus dans l'économie familiale des Métis et de la dynamique de leur migration montrent que leur exode a commencé bien avant 1870 et qu'il était la réponse à une nouvelle conjoncture économique. Les changements dans l'économie métisse après 1850, changements qui intègrent l'économie de la Rivière-Rouge à une économie capitaliste plus large, divisent aussi la société métisse dans son économie et ses modes de vie, et ils entraînent la décision d'émigrer ou non. En conséquence, la dispersion des Métis a représenté, d'une certaine façon, une adaptation et une innovation, ce qui n'a pas eu le même effet sur les différents groupes de Métis.

The scholarly debate about the migration and dispersal of the Metis¹ of Red River has generally focussed on some concept of the immutable nature of "Metis society," and has concentrated on the period after 1870. Those who argue that the Metis were essentially a "primitive people" saw the Metis exodus from Manitoba as a self-imposed exile, a return to primitivism. More recently, scholars have rejected this civilization-savagery dichotomy and argued that the Metis of Red River were a settled people with strong attachments to the land. In this view the Metis dispersal was, in effect, a forced dispossession by the Canadian government and aggressive capitalism. While these views have some validity, both oversimplify the causes of Metis emigration from Red River, and do not examine the role of the changing nature of the Metis economy in Red River. Specifically they do not analyze the bases of migration and persistence of the Metis in Red River previous to 1870. An examination of this earlier period not only provides a more comprehensive explanation of the dispersal of the Metis, but accounts for the variability in the Metis experience at Red River.

Both G.F.G. Stanley and Marcel Giraud, whose works appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, saw the Metis as a primitive people doomed by the advance of the agricultural frontier. Unequipped to deal with the new economic order, they were submerged by the land rush after 1870.² G.F.G. Stanley's early work on the Metis was, in fact, much coloured by the increased impoverishment of the Metis in the 1930s, which he saw as leading inexorably to their eventual disappearance.³ Stanley insisted that the troubles in the North-West (in both 1869 and 1885) were not primarily racial or religious, but normal frontier problems — the clash between primitive and civilized peoples. This view led Stanley to characterize Metis society as "static" and the Metis themselves as "indolent," "improvident," and unable to adjust.⁴ Migration was the only alternative to racial absorption by an unfamiliar aggressive civilization that flowed into Manitoba after 1870. While Marcel Giraud's classic study of the Metis presented a much more comprehensive view of Metis society, it adopted Stanley's cultural-conflict thesis in which the Metis were doomed by the advance of agricultural settlement. Maltreated, pushed aside, and unable to adjust, the Metis left Red River for the north and west where they attempted to rebuild their traditional life.⁵

This view of Metis emigration from Red River has been disputed by D.N. Sprague, a historian retained by the Metis Federation of Manitoba to undertake research into Metis land claims. In a series of articles and in a published collection of quantitative data

1. The term Metis, for the purposes of this paper, includes both the historical métis who arose in the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trading system, who chose to see themselves in various collectivities distinct from their Indian neighbours and the "white" community, and those individuals of mixed Indian and European ancestry who arose in the Hudson Bay trading system who held similar views as to their relations with Indians and whites.
2. G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto, 1961). Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien: Son rôle dans l'histoire de provinces de l'Ouest*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1945).
3. G.F.G. Stanley, "The Métis and the Conflict of Culture in Western Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 28 (1947).
4. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, 8, 18.
5. Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien*, 2: 1134.

relating to the Red River Metis, Sprague has argued that the actions of the Canadian government, preceding and following the Resistance of 1869-70, and the promulgation of the Manitoba Act, represented a deliberate attempt on the part of Prime Minister Macdonald and Ontario to appropriate Red River from the Metis, legally or illegally.⁶ Elsewhere, Sprague has argued that by 1870 the Metis of Red River were committed settlers, not primitive, nomadic hunters as Giraud and Stanley had claimed. Their subsequent migration to the North-West was to recover a livelihood denied them in Manitoba.⁷

Metis emigration from Red River, in fact, was tied very closely to the changes in their political economy from the 1830s to 1890. Metis persistence in, and migration from, Red River went through a number of stages of which the period after 1870 was only one, albeit the most dramatic. Until at least 1875, this emigration of Red River Metis was a response to attractive new economic activities that emerged in the fur trade after 1850. With the opening of new fur markets the Metis increasingly combined different types of economic activity in the same household: petty-commodity production, trading activities, and temporary wage labour. In effect, some Metis communities abandoned agriculture and increasingly specialized in the fur trade as new roles were opened to them. Migration was part of the relocation of labour consequent on this reorganization of the Metis family economy following the expansion of the capitalistic fur trade. Accordingly, the dispersal of the Red River Metis between 1850 and 1875 should not be seen primarily as the self-inflicted exile of a "primitive" people nor the forced dispossession by the Canadian government. Rather, it should be seen as an adaptive, innovative response to new economic opportunities. Only this broader economic view of the dispersal of the Red River Metis can make sense of the differential rate of migration, not only between the various Metis communities, but also within these communities at Red River. This is not to deny the fact that there were push factors involved in the Metis emigration after 1870 — in particular the hostility of the incoming Ontario settlers.

The main sources for this study of persistence and migration were three sets of quantitative records: the Red River censuses of 1835, 1849, and 1870,⁸ the North-West half breed scrip applications,⁹ and the land records of the department of the Interior and Winnipeg Land Titles Office. The "Half-Breed Scrip" commissions of 1885-86 accepted claims from those Metis who had left Red River prior to 15 July 1870. These applications for claims thus provide an indication of emigration from Red River for the period previous to 1870. These applications, allowed by other scrip commissions up until

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6. D.N. Sprague, "Government Lawlessness in the Administration of Manitoba Land Claims, 1870-1887," *Manitoba Law Journal* 10: 4 (1980); "The Manitoba Land Question 1870-1882," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15: 3 (1980); D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement 1820-1900* (Winnipeg, 1983).
 7. P.R. Mailhot and D.N. Sprague, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-1885," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17: 2 (1985).
 8. Manitoba. Public Archives (PAM), Nominal Censuses of the Red River Settlement.
 9. Canada. National Archives (NA), RG 15, North-West Half Breed Scrip Applications.

1906, gave the age and date of migration from Red River, home parish, and successive destinations. A more detailed analysis of persistence and migration has been carried out on the two Metis parishes of St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier, using the Red River censuses of 1835, 1849, 1870, and 1881. This has also been supplemented by a lot-by-lot analysis of the alienation of Metis land in these two parishes after 1870, along with a 10 per cent sample of the lots in the remaining parishes.¹⁰

To understand the transition that occurred in the economy of the Red River Metis in the period after the 1840s, and the effect this had on Metis emigration, some reference must be made to the Metis economy previous to the 1840s. By 1835 the various Metis communities of Red River had established a functioning way of life whose primary constituents were semiautonomous village communities and cultures. Their subsistence household economy was based on the buffalo hunt, small-scale cultivation, and seasonal labour for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). It was, in effect, a "specialized" peasant economy whose primary aims were to secure the needs of the family rather than to make a profit. This society would have conformed to A.V. Chayanov's concept of a peasant society, which posits a balance between subsistence needs and a substantive distaste for manual labour determining the intensity of cultivation and size of the net product.¹¹ While produce from the buffalo hunt and farm was exchanged in Red River for other goods, and while the Metis were engaged in other activities such as occasional wage labour, the family remained the main unit of production in an essentially noncapitalistic mode of production. Given the level of local technology at the time and the absence of any real market, this was a rational course of action.¹²

In the period before 1849, these peasant communities exhibited a strong geographic stability or persistence. Of the ninety-four families in St. Andrew's in 1835, 80 per cent were still persistent in 1849.¹³ In St. François Xavier 66 per cent of the ninety-seven families were still persistent in 1849. Those family heads who did migrate were generally

10. The information for this lot-by-lot analysis comes from the Abstract Book of the Winnipeg Land Titles office which recorded the first sales of these parish lots after 1870. Also used were the parish lot files (PAM, RG17 D2), which were files kept by the department of Interior on each river lot, pertaining to the ownership and patenting of parish land. Some files are missing from the set found in the PAM. These were files retained by the department of the Interior when the records were transferred to Manitoba in 1930. These missing files are now located in the Manitoba Act Files, NA, RG15, vol. 140-68.

11. A.V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Society*, ed. Daniel Thorner, Basile Kerblay, and R.E.F. Smith (Homewood, Ill., 1966).

12. While the HBC purchased pemmican, dried meat, and agricultural produce from the settlers of Red River at an early date, the annual demand was fairly constant while the population in Red River increased rapidly. John Elgin Foster, "The Country-Born in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1850," PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1973, 219.

13. Censuses of this period listed only the head of the family along with the number of adults and children in the family. A family was considered persistent if the head of the family listed in the 1835 census reappeared in the 1849 census. In those cases where it could be shown that the head of family had died in the intervening years, and the family was present and listed under another name in the 1849 census, the family was still considered persistent. This required cross-referencing the census returns with the parish registers.

younger and had smaller families and fewer resources. The limited qualitative evidence related to emigration from Red River before 1849 confirms this. In the 1830s and 1840s there was a small but steady trickle of emigrants to the USA from all communities in the settlement,¹⁴ along with the movement of Hudson's Bay Company servants and officers to other posts in the northwest. The one large movement consisted of the trek of twenty families to Columbia under the direction of James Sinclair. This migration had been organized by the HBC to counteract the projected American movement of settlers into Oregon.¹⁵ The impact of these migrations on the colony was, however, minimal.

Instead it was changes in the political economy of the Red River Metis in the 1840s, changes that integrated the colony into the wider world, which produced large upheavals. These changes were tied to the increasing Metis involvement in a new capitalistic fur trade, especially the emerging buffalo-robe trade. This resurgence of Metis involvement in the fur trade did not signal a return to "primitivism" or "nomadism," but the penetration of an early form of capitalism into the Metis family economy — that is, the increasingly close association between household production of furs and robes based on the family economy on the one hand, and the capitalist organization of the trade and marketing of these products on the other. In the context of Red River these developments emerged with the breakup of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly and the establishment of a new market for furs in the 1840s. Increasing Metis involvement in this new capitalistic fur trade, especially the emerging buffalo-robe trade, took place within the context of the Metis family economy. Involvement in this new "rural industry"¹⁶ led to an abandonment of agriculture by a segment of Metis, and was an important impetus to emigration from Red River.

An important stimulus to this new capitalistic fur trade was the establishment in 1844 of a trading post at Pembina, seventy miles south of Red River in the American territory. This had the effect of bringing the American market to the front door of the Red River Colony.¹⁷ Not only did this post create an alternative market, it became a source of supplies and capital that transformed the Metis economy of the region and precipitated an outburst of trading in furs throughout the Red River district. Especially important was the expansion of the buffalo-robe trade in the 1840s and 1850s. Buffalo robes had become an important and valuable trade item in the Upper Missouri in the late 1830s as the beaver trade waned¹⁸ and, in the Red River Colony, the price received for buffalo robes increased in the 1840s and 1850s. Buffalo robes had long been used by

14. Foster, "The Country-Born," 219n.

15. George Gladman to James Hargrave (Fort Garry), 3 June 1843, as cited in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-43*, ed. G.P. de T. Glazebrook (Toronto, 1938), 348.

16. As Irene Spry has written, the buffalo hunt "was, in fact, the basis of the first great industry in Western Canada." Irene Spry, "The 'Private Adventurers' of Rupert's Land," in *The Developing West: Essays on Canadian History in Honor of Lewis H. Thomas*, ed. John E. Foster (Edmonton, 1983), 54.

17. Alvin Charles Glueck, "The Struggle for the British Northwest: A Study in Canadian-American Relations," PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1953, 27.

18. Erwin N. Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Medora, N.D., 1986), 34-35.

traders and Indians as blankets and for packing furs, but their increasing value in the eastern market made them a prime trade item in the late 1830s and 1840s.¹⁹

An indication of the extent and expansion of this trade can be gleaned from the increase in the number of carts travelling annually to St. Paul. In 1844 only six carts are recorded as making the journey to St. Paul,²⁰ by 1855 four hundred carts,²¹ by 1858, eight hundred carts,²² and by 1869, twenty-five hundred carts were carrying furs and goods to St. Paul.²³ Fur sales in St. Paul, on the other hand, rose from \$1,400 in 1844 to \$40,000 in 1853, to \$182,491 in 1857, and an average of over \$215,000 annually in the following eight years.²⁴ The majority of these furs shipped to St. Paul from Red River were buffalo robes²⁵ and, by the late 1850s and early 1860s, St. Paul fur houses were sending “runners” to Red River to buy up buffalo robes in large quantities.²⁶ Norman Kittson, who had precipitated this new trade in the region by opening a post just south of the Canada/USA border at Pembina, was reported returning to Mendotta in 1857 with over four thousand buffalo robes.²⁷ In 1862 the settlement newspaper, the *Norwester*, commented that “the great business in this country is at present the trade in furs. . . . Farming, shop-keeping, and all other vocations whatsoever, dwindle to the merest nothing when compared, in point of profits, with this vast business.”²⁸ In 1865 alone close to twenty-five thousand robes had been shipped from Red River to St. Paul by Red River cart.²⁹

Increasingly the Metis took advantage of these opportunities, and became involved in commodity production for market (furs, particularly buffalo robes) rather than for home consumption. Rather than being sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company, their surplus was increasingly appropriated by merchant traders, many of whom were Metis themselves. Participation in this new trade cut across community and ethnic boundaries as both English and French Metis responded to the opportunities. The most important

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19. These robes consisted of buffalo skins tanned on one side with hair on the other. In 1843 George Simpson, writing to the governors of the Hudson’s Bay Company, commented that the Indians in the Saskatchewan District were paying more attention than usual to the preparation of buffalo robes, and that there was a large trade in these robes for which there was now a demand in both Canada and the United States. The Hudson’s Bay Company, he added, intended to encourage this trade to the utmost extent of the company’s ability to transport the robes. Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), D4/62, fo. 11-14, Simpson to governors, 21 June 1843.
 20. Hattie Listenfeldt, “The Hudson’s Bay Company and the Red River Trade,” *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* 4 (1913).
 21. HBCA, D4/75, George Simpson to governor and committee, 29 June 1855.
 22. CMS Records, Incoming Correspondence, Letter Book VI, p. 368 (reel 6). Rev. Kirkby to the secretaries, 2 August 1858.
 23. G.F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto, 1963), 37.
 24. *Norwester*, 31 January 1866; “To Red River and Beyond,” *Harpers* (February 1861): 309-10.
 25. *Norwester*, 14 May 1860, 15 June 1861, 31 January 1866.
 26. *Norwester*, 14 June 1860.
 27. William John Peterson, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi* (Iowa City, 1968), 164.
 28. *Norwester*, 1 September 1862.
 29. *Norwester*, 31 January 1866.

component of this new fur trade, and the greatest impetus to wintering on the plains and hence abandoning agriculture, was the growing Metis involvement in the buffalo-robe trade. With its intensive labour demands, and the imperative for hunters and their families to winter near the buffalo herds as they drew ever further away from the Red River settlement, this trade significantly altered the geographic mobility of those Metis families who participated in it. The demands this trade, or household industry, placed on Metis families would draw them away from Red River in increasing numbers. As the demands for robes increased and as the herds moved further from the settlement, the practice of Metis families wintering near the herds became increasingly common. By 1856 Governor Simpson reported that the phenomenon of wintering villages had become widespread.³⁰

The point to be stressed here is that the buffalo-robe trade became a household industry for those Metis families involved in it. In securing the buffalo robes and hides hunting groups developed a considerable organization with a clearly defined division of labour. Some engaged only in riding and shooting, others in skinning, while still others followed up to stretch and tan the skins and robes.³¹ There was, in fact, a good deal of intensive labour involved in producing a buffalo robe for market, and this had a significant effect on Metis family formation. The Metis family became, in effect, a household factory in the production of buffalo robes, necessitating long absences from the colony and thus making it impossible to continue cultivation of their family river lots.

A further stimulus to the transformation of the Metis economy in the 1840s was the succession of bad crop years, which failed to produce enough even for subsistence. In the five-year period 1844 to 1848, only 1845 produced a harvest sufficient to feed the colony.³²

30. HBCA, D4/76A, Simpson to governors and committee, 26 June 1856.

31. Merrill Burlingame, "The Buffalo in Trade and Commerce," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 3:4 (1929): 287.

32. CMS Records, Incoming Correspondence, Letter Book IV, pp. 196-97, 213, 387, Smithurst to secretary, 18 November 1846; Wm. Cockran to secretary, 5 August 1847; Rev. James to secretary, 2 August 1848. PAM, Donald Ross Papers, MG1, D20, File 161, Alexander Ross to Donald Ross, 9 August 1847.

Table 1
Population and Cultivation in St. Andrew's
and St. François Xavier 1835 to 1870³³

	ST. ANDREWS				ST. FRANÇOIS XAVIER			
	1835	1849	1856	1870	1835	1849	1856	1870
Total Population	547	1068	1207	1456	506	911	1101	1857
Number of Single Adults	3	10	—	44	5	4	—	24
Number of Families	94	187	214	287	97	165	178	334
Average Family Size	5.78	5.66	5.64	4.91	5.16	5.49	6.18	5.47
Percentage of Metis Family Heads	53.6	68	—	75.1	74.5	82	—	91.2
Total Cultivated Acres	566	1366	1646	2002	594	527	582	1335
Average Cultivation/ Family	6.02	7.3	7.7	6.97	6.12	3.19	3.26	3.99
Average Cultivation/ Person	1.03	1.28	1.4	1.37	1.17	0.58	0.53	0.72
Cultivation/ European Family	4.04	10.6	—	10.35	4.62	5.1	—	18.8
Cultivation/ Metis Family	7.93	5.2	—	8.8	9.34	2.6	—	3.8

Faced with a limited market for grain and a succession of bad crop years, it is small wonder that a large number of Metis abandoned agriculture and concentrated on the fur trade for which there was now an expanding market. Even without bad crop years, Governor Simpson commented, "the want of market [for wheat]. . . has prevented any agriculturalist from expanding their farms and increasing their livestock beyond the requisite quantity to meet the demands of the Company and their own absolute wants."³⁴

33. Except for 1856, this information has been reconstructed from the nominal censuses of the Red River settlement. The 1856 figures come from the tabulated census.

34. HBCA, D4/68, Simpson's report of 1847, p. 264.

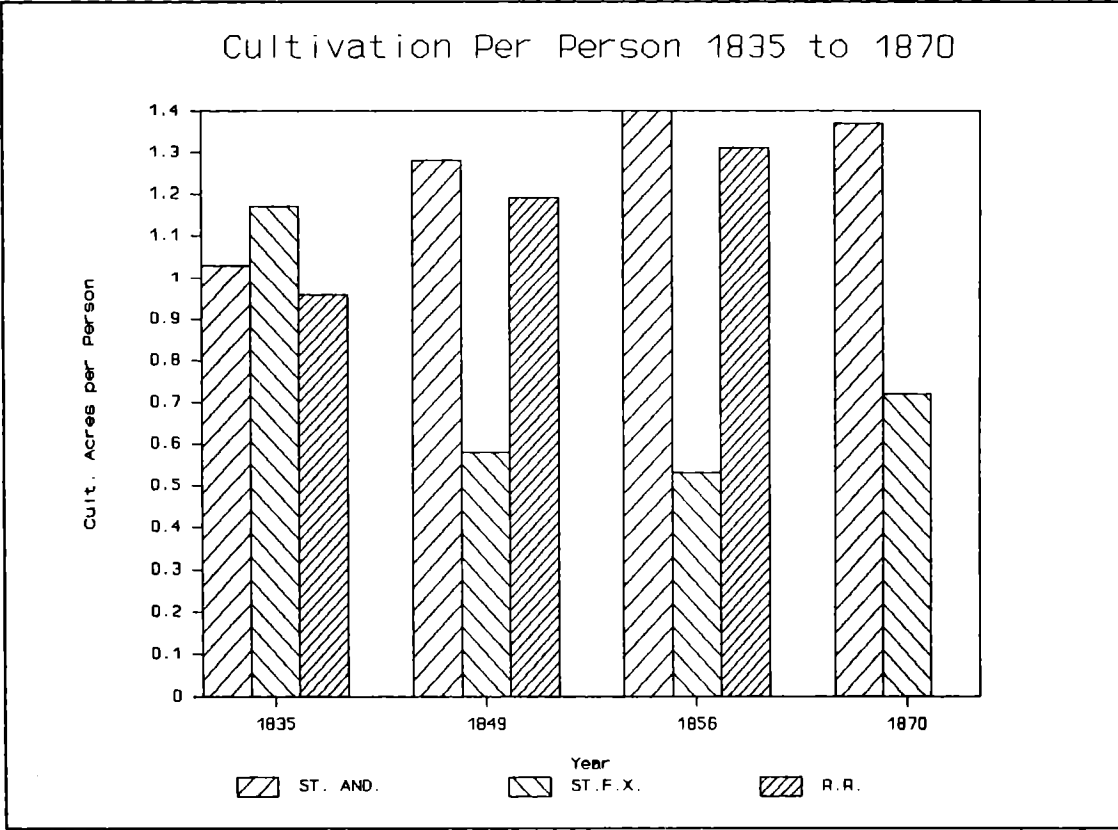


Figure 1
Cultivation Per Person 1835 to 1870

By the time the 1849 census was taken in Red River, it was clear that some Metis families were abandoning agriculture completely. While the total area under cultivation increased, from 3504 acres in 1835 to 6392 acres in 1849, some communities showed a decrease in cultivated acres despite the fact that their population had almost doubled. The connection between the new trading opportunities and the decline of agriculture was observed by the *Nor'wester* in discussing the decline of sheep farming in the settlement. Introduced in 1830, the number of sheep in the colony rose to a peak of 4222 in 1846, declined to 3096 in 1849, and to 2245 in 1856, and totalled even less by 1860. The reason for this decline, the *Nor'wester* noted, had to do with the increase in dogs in the settlement and this, in turn, was related to the increase in plains trading. "About the year 1848 parties commenced their excursion out of the settlement to trade with the Indian, and were of course accompanied by dogs. As the traffic and the dogs increased the sheep diminished. They were attacked and destroyed by the dogs."³⁵

This brief sketch of the Metis economy between 1835 and 1870 makes it clear that by the 1830s the Metis communities in Red River combined subsistence agriculture and hunting to secure the needs of the family rather than to make a profit. Differences in cultivation between communities began to become apparent in the late 1840s as some Metis abandoned agriculture to pursue new economic opportunities in the emerging capitalistic fur trade, especially the buffalo-robe trade. This transition was more evident in St. François Xavier than in St. Andrew's, which continued to rely on peasant agriculture to a much greater degree. With the growing importance of the robe trade in the 1860s, Metis families in Red River were increasingly forced to make a decision between subsistence agriculture or the hibernement existence which went with the trade.³⁶ Hibernants (literally winterers) were those Metis who spent the winter on the plains to be nearer the buffalo herds. The best or "prime" buffalo robes were those taken from the animals in the winter when the hair was thickest. As the buffalo withdrew further from Red River it was thus necessary to winter on the plains. These Metis lived in temporary camps ranging from a few families to large encampments replete with a resident priest. Most Metis families did not have the capital required to remain in Red River and still continue in the buffalo-robe trade. The wealthier Metis, on the other hand, could outfit relatives or employees to visit these camps and trade for buffalo robes.

35. "Sheep Farming in Red River," *Nor'wester*, 14 May 1860.

36. The literature on the hibernement experience is not large but is growing. The best contemporary description is found in the letters and writings of Father Decorby located in the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The best historical study to date is R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster, and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hibernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," report prepared for the Alberta Department of Culture, Historic Sites and Provincial Museums Division (April 1987).

MIGRATION AND PERSISTENCE OF THE RED RIVER METIS, 1835-1890

From the information given in the North-West scrip applications, it is possible to see that permanent emigration from Red River began to increase in the 1850s,³⁷ and that the parishes experiencing the greatest emigration were St. François Xavier, St. Andrew's, Portage la Prairie, and St. Boniface (see Table 2 and Figure 2). This timing corresponds very closely with reports of when hivernement camps were becoming more permanent.³⁸

Table 2
Metis Migration from Red River Before 1870

PARISH	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
St. Peters	23	3.8
St. Andrew's	38	6.3
Portage	63	10.4
St. Pauls	7	1.1
St. Johns	5	0.8
Ft. Garry-Winnipeg	25	4.1
St. Boniface	76	12.5
St. Norbert	22	3.6
St. Vital	15	2.5
St. Charles	4	0.7
St. James	4	0.7
High Bluff	2	0.3
Poplar Point	3	0.5
St. François Xavier	187	30.9
Scratching River	1	0.2
Kildonan	3	0.5
Ste. Agathe	2	0.3
Baie St. Paul	20	3.3
Headingly	1	0.2
Unknown	105	17.3
TOTAL	606	100.0

Source: Scrip Records

37. These North-West scrip applications should not be regarded as a comprehensive record of all migration from Red River. For example, those Metis who migrated to the United States and never returned to Canada, would obviously never have applied for scrip. Further, since scrip claims were only made after 1885, over fifteen years after the event they recorded, migration from Red River was probably under-reported in all periods but probably more so in the 1830s and 1840s due to the death of Metis individuals. Despite these shortcomings, scrip records are useful in determining the general trends of emigration from Red River.
38. These hivernement camps, consisting of merchants and hunting families, ranged in size from a few families to upwards of two hundred. Some known hivernement sites included Turtle Mountain, Qu'Appelle River, Wood Mountain, Touchwood Hills, Cypress Hills, Souris River, Petite Ville, Buffalo Lake, Lac Ste. Anne, La Coulée Chapelle, Lac la Vieille, Coulées des Cheminées, St. Laurent, and Prairie Ronde.

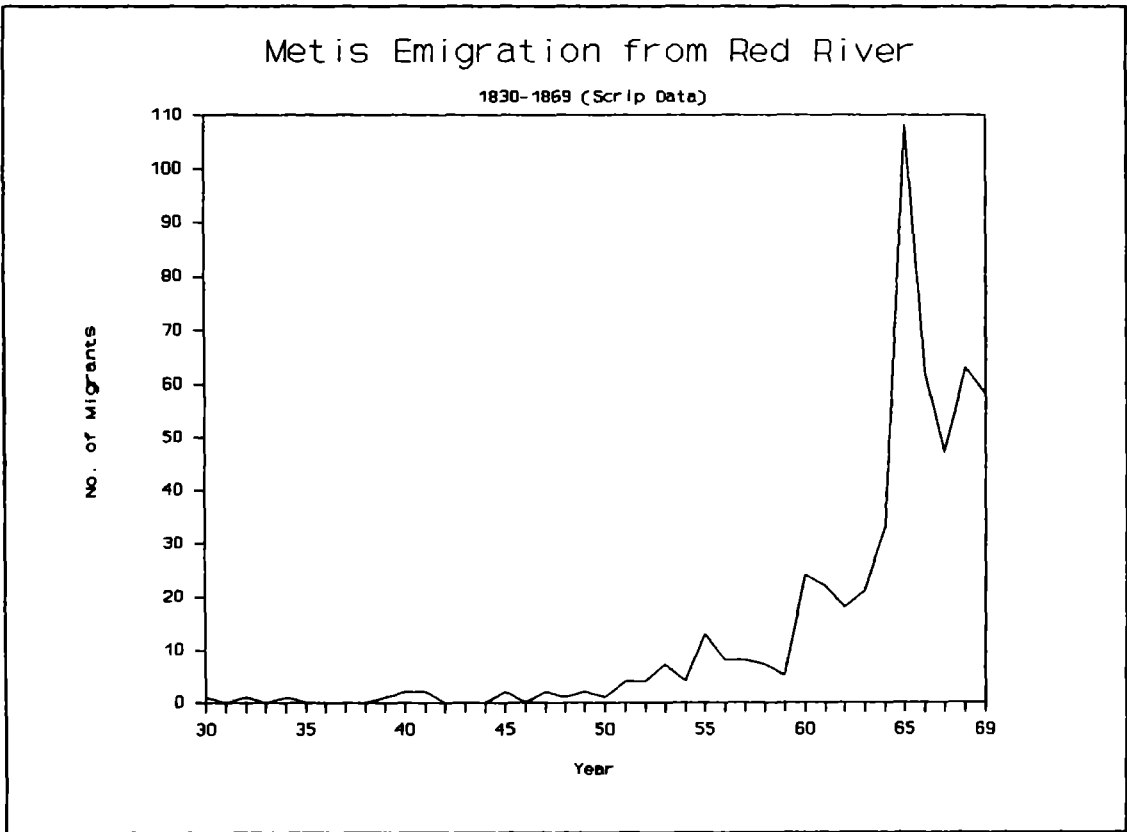


Figure 2
Metis Emigration from Red River

That these emigrants were responding to the exigencies of the buffalo-robe trade can be tested by examining the association between the number of migrants leaving Red River³⁹ and the rising buffalo-robe prices between 1847 and 1869 (see Figure 3). This scatterplot shows a positive linear relationship between the two variables, and the .67 correlation coefficient calculated from this data indicates a significant positive correlation between rising buffalo-robe prices and Metis emigration from Red River.⁴⁰ The destination of the individual migrants identified in the scrip applications further reinforces the association between the robe trade and Metis emigration. The majority of those leaving Portage went to Victoria, a settlement of English Metis buffalo hunters, while those from St. Andrew's left for both Victoria and the Saskatchewan Forks area. Those leaving St. François Xavier and St. Boniface, the two French Metis parishes which had the highest number of emigrants, left for the hivernement sites of Qu'Appelle, Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan Forks, Lac la Biche, Cypress Hills, and the Fort Edmonton area.⁴¹ In 1864 the *Nor'wester* reported that twenty-five French Metis families were leaving Red River for Lac la Biche. While they were taking their stock and farm implements, the main purpose of the migration, the correspondent noted, was to bring them near the buffalo, the pursuit of which would engross much more of their time than agriculture.⁴²

The Red River-based buffalo hunt was by this time on its last legs with no more than one hundred and fifty carts participating in 1866.⁴³ The herds were now too far away, and to continue in the buffalo-robe trade necessitated migration. In the autumn of 1869 alone, forty families left St. François Xavier and Pembina to winter at Wood Mountain, and many never returned.⁴⁴ Large numbers of Metis from St. François Xavier also returned to the region of Battleford in the fall of 1869 because of the large buffalo herds there in past years.⁴⁵ In order to find large herds by the late 1860s it would have been necessary to travel five hundred miles from Red River.⁴⁶ While large hunts continued to take place, these no longer originated from Red River.

39. These are the individual migrants identified in the scrip applications.

40. To calculate this correlation coefficient using simple linear regression, robe prices at year N were paired with migrants in year N+1 since price information cannot affect market behavior before it can become known. The coefficient may be said to measure how closely the correlation approaches a linear functional relationship. A coefficient value equivalent to unity denotes a perfect functional relationship and all the points representing paired values of x and y would fall on the regression line representing this relationship. Correlation coefficients are expressed in values ranging between -1 and +1. The nearer a value is to either of these extremes, the better is the correlation between the two variables. If the value is positive then the correlation is direct; as the independent variable increases, so does the dependent variable. If the value is negative, the correlation is inverse.

41. North-West Half-Breed Scrip Applications.

42. *Nor'wester*, 21 June 1864.

44. *Henri Létourneau Raconte* (Winnipeg, 1980), 44.

45. Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien*, 821-22.

46. F.G. Roe, *The North American Buffalo* (Toronto, 1951), 396.

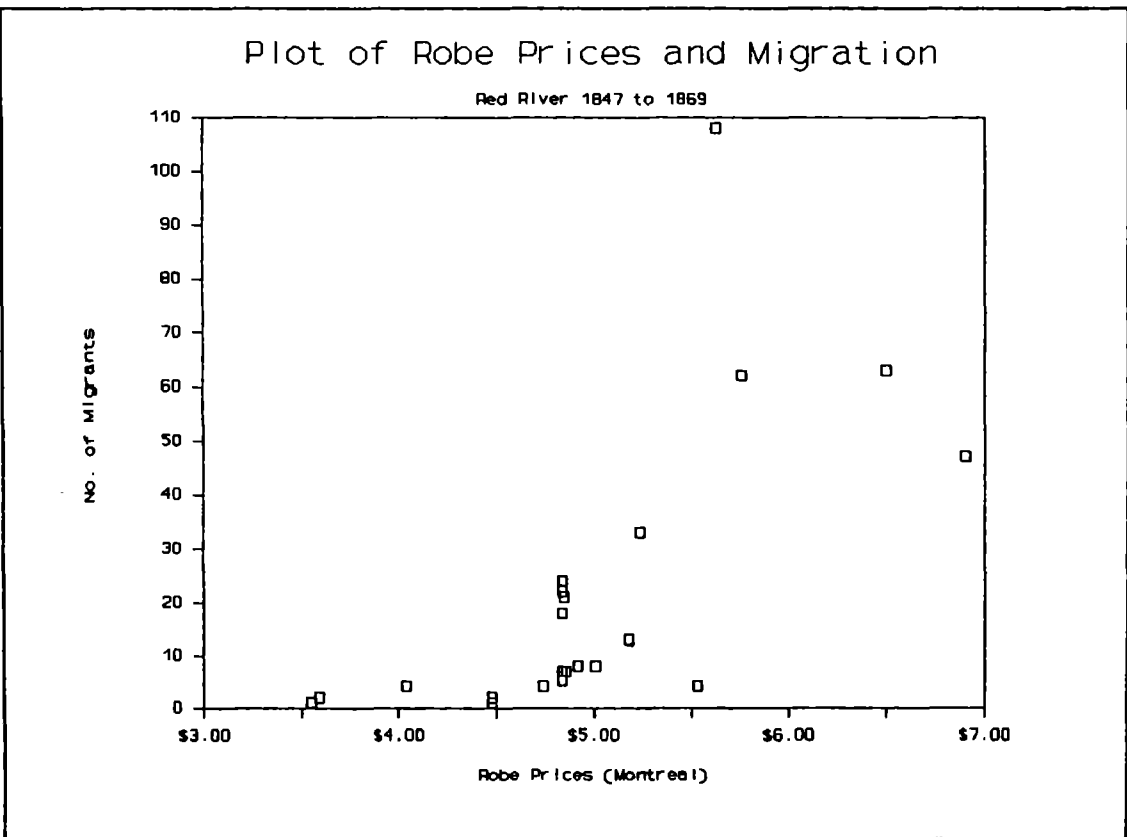


Figure 3
Plot of Robe Prices and Migration

A more detailed statistical analysis of migrants, identified by linking the censuses between 1835 and 1870 in the parishes of St. François Xavier and St. Andrew's, shows the extent to which emigration affected all sectors of these communities.⁴⁷ Almost none of the 1849 census variables were significant when cross-tabulated with those heads of family who left the parish between 1849 and 1870. Those variables that had some degree of association with migration in the period 1835-49 had little or no relationship in the period 1849-70. It would appear that the economic attractions of the fur trade after 1849 affected even those who had substantial amounts of land under cultivation. Likewise, other indications of wealth, such as the number of buildings and livestock, had little predictive value with regard to who would or would not emigrate in the period 1849-70.

These trends continued in the period after 1870. However Confederation, along with the attendant land surveys and Dominion land regulations, which effected a change in the way property was viewed, added a new dimension to the movement out of Red River. The increasing importance of land ownership in the new political order can be seen clearly in both St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier. In both parishes there was a

Table 3
Cross-tabulation of Census Variables with
Migrants: St. Andrew's 1835-81

	1835-49	1849-70	1870-81
Race	.16*	.15*	.07
Age	.24	.22*	.20
Family Size	.16	.11	.17
Sons under 16	.14	.15	.05
Sons over 16	.13	.07	.07
Buildings	.24	.10	.39
Horses	.12	.04	—
Total Livestock	.27	.17	—
Carts	.13	.03	—
Cultivated Acres	.23	.13	.40
Total Acres	—	—	.34

Note: The measure of coefficient used here is "Cramer's V" which is derived from Chi-Squared. Cramer's V measures the independence between the variables cross-tabulated. A value of zero would indicate there was no relationship between the variables, while a value of 1.0 would indicate a perfect relationship between variables.

* Contingency coefficient used instead of Cramer's V. In a two-by-two table, however, it has the same value as Cramer's V.

47. Migrants in this case consisted of heads of family as these were the only individuals identified in the censuses up to 1870. A head of family was considered a migrant if he/she was identified in one census and did not show up in the subsequent censuses. Those heads of family who had died in the intervening years and were recorded in the burial registers of the respective parishes were not recorded as migrants.

Table 4
Cross-tabulation of Census Variables with
Migrants: St. François Xavier, 1835-81

	1835-49	1849-70	1870-81
Race	.18*	.06*	.16
Age	.30	.14	.12
Family Size	.28	.08	.09
Sons under 16	.13	.12	.09
Sons over 16	.12	.01	.09
Buildings	.33	.14	.43
Horses	.20	.20	—
Total Livestock	.25	.16	—
Carts	.32	.10	—
Cultivated Acres	.32	.10	.33
Total Acres	—	—	.38

strong negative association between emigration on the one hand and the amount of land owned and cultivated acreage on the other. This new importance of land and property was not lost on the Metis. Even before the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada, many Metis had their land surveyed to secure proof of possession.⁴⁸ The grants of land to Metis children and Metis heads of family were also main points in the negotiations leading up to the Manitoba Act. The Metis knew well that the land question involved nothing less than their stake in the new province.⁴⁹

There was, however, a significant difference in the number of migrants leaving the two parishes in the period from 1870 to 1881. While the proportion of rather than percentage of 1870 residents who left St. Andrew's in the period 1870 to 1881 was 35 per cent, that of St. François Xavier jumped to 60 per cent. This large differential was not due to any difference in land ownership, as the percentage of heads of family that owned land in the two parishes was almost equal.⁵⁰ Further, this large increase in emigration from St. François Xavier cannot fully be explained by the greater commitment of the French Metis to the buffalo-robe trade.⁵¹ Rather, this difference in migration rates

48. PAM, Parish Files. These files document numerous claims surveyed by Roger Goulet, between 1860-69.

49. *Le Métis*, 13 juillet 1871.

50. Fifty-six per cent of St. Andrew's families and 52 per cent of St. François Xavier families listed in the census of 1870 owned or were recognized as being in possession of river lots. These figures are deduced by cross-referencing the 1870 census, surveyor returns, parish files, and the land titles abstract book. The rest of the families in the parish were residing on lots owned by other members of the extended family (in effect patriarchal compounds), or squatting on others' land.

51. Previous to 1870, St. François Xavier experienced approximately 8 per cent to 14 per cent more emigration (between censuses) than St. Andrew's, but between 1870 and 1881 this differential jumped to 26 per cent.

between St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier must be attributed to the linguistic and religious intolerance of the new settlers arriving from Canada.

Writing to John A. Macdonald in 1871 Lieutenant-Governor Archibald warned that the French Metis were very excited,

not so much, I believe by the dread about their land allotment as by the persistent ill-usage of such of them as have ventured from time to time into Winnipeg from the disbanded volunteers and newcomers who fill the town. Many of them actually have been so beaten and outraged that they feel as if they were living in a state of slavery. They say that the bitter hatred of these people is a yoke so intolerable that they would gladly escape it by any sacrifice.⁵²

In 1872 Father André reported that the French-speaking Metis wintering near Carlton held with an invincible repugnance any thought of settling in Red River again. Too many changes, at odds with their customs and morals, had taken place in both social and political realms.⁵³ The arrival of the Wolseley Expedition in 1870, in fact, instituted a reign of terror in the settlement. Intent on avenging the death of Thomas Scott, the Ontario volunteers acted in defiance of all law and authority and established virtual mob rule in Winnipeg in 1871-72. It was not safe for a French Metis to be seen near Fort Garry, the location of the land office, and those who did venture into Winnipeg risked life and limb.⁵⁴

Father Kavanagh, the parish priest of St. François Xavier, who himself was almost killed by Protestant extremists on his way to Winnipeg, also complained that while the Metis of his parish had designated the lands promised them in the Manitoba Act, this had scarcely stopped the Orangemen from Ontario from occupying the same land. In the face of this infringement on what they took to be their land, Kavanagh reported that some Metis had begun to defend themselves, but most were abandoning the struggle and, in growing arrogance and resignation, were leaving for the plains. Many were, in fact, offering to sell their lands to the same Protestants: "Selon toute apparence nous sommes donc enveloppés et engloutis par le *protestantisme* et l'*orangisme*. C'est si visible maintenant, que ces personnes influentes dont j'ai parlé plus haut, en conviennent; mais il est bien tard!!!"⁵⁵ While these land issues were also problems for the English Metis of

52. A.G. Archibald to Macdonald, 9 October 1871, reprinted in *Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 37 Vic. (1874), vol. VIII, "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territories in 1869-70," Appendix (No. 6).

53. *Le Métis*, 3 avril 1872.

54. There were, in fact, a number of deaths and scores of attacks and beatings attributed to the soldiers in Winnipeg. This reign of terror has been painstakingly documented by Allen Ronaghan, "The Archibald Administration in Manitoba, 1870-72," PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 1987, 417-21, 500-05, 596-607.

55. Archives of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface (AASB), Fonds Taché, T9222-9224, Kavanagh to Taché, 14 août 1871.

St. Andrew's,⁵⁶ the language and religion they shared with the newcomers made the issue of contiguous reserves less important, and the conflict over land less bitter.

An analysis of the alienation of river lots in the parishes of St. François Xavier and St. Andrew's, and a sample of the other parishes between 1870 and 1890 bears out the timing of this exodus. In both parishes and in Red River generally, the alienation of river lots⁵⁷ peaked in the periods 1872-75 and 1880-82 (see Figure 4). The first period coincided with the delays and frustrations over the granting of Metis lands, but it also represented a continuation of the exodus, which had begun previous to 1870, of those Metis involved in the buffalo-robe trade. This early glut of river-lot sales would seem to contradict Mailhot and Sprague's assertion that 90 per cent of those Metis found in the 1870 census were still in the settlement in 1875. According to Mailhot and Sprague this high percentage indicated that the Metis were indeed "persistent settlers," that their exodus after this time was due to government lawlessness, and that the land surveyors were part of a conspiracy to overlook most Metis while recording a few.⁵⁸ The evidence, however, does not support Sprague's argument.

A more detailed analysis of individual lot sales in St. François Xavier, St. Andrew's, or Red River generally shows a more rapid rate of alienation. In St. Andrew's, where there was a comparatively high rate of persistence (66 per cent from 1870 to 1881), 15 per cent of the 1870 land-owners had sold out by 1875.⁵⁹ In St. François Xavier, 27 per cent of the parish land-owners had sold their lots by 1875⁶⁰ and, in a 10 per cent sample of lots in the rest of the parishes, 29 per cent of the land-owners in 1870 had sold out by 1875.⁶¹ Moreover these figures, which take only land-owners into account, underestimate the number of migrants by 1875.⁶² While there is no doubt that government delays in dealing with Metis lands affected their migration from Red River, there is little evidence that land surveyors deliberately overlooked anyone. In St. Andrew's 86 per cent of those residents in possession of river lots in 1870 were recognized as occupants at the time of the survey. Of the remaining 14 per cent, where the surveyors listed a different occupant, 11 per cent had sold their lot between the census of 1870 and the survey, and the

56. There were numerous articles and reports of meetings about the land question in the English Metis parishes in the *Manitoban* in the early 1870s.

57. For the purposes of this analysis of persistence and migration, the alienation of a lot was defined as the passage of the river lot out of the family. Thus a sale of a lot by an older parent to a son was not considered an alienation. Likewise a sale to a daughter, son-in-law, or wife was also not considered an alienation.

58. Mailhot and Sprague, "Persistent Settlers," 5.

59. Forty-eight lots of 297 were sold in this period. The figure of 297 lots, when there were only 288 numbered lots in the parish, was arrived at because different families often owned half lots. The HBC reserve was not included in the totals.

60. This represented seventy-one of 229 lots. Again the figure of 229 was arrived at in the same way as it was in St. Andrews.

61. This represented sixty-one of 208 lots. While 258 lots in total were examined in the sample survey of the other parishes, fifty-eight of these were vacant in 1870.

62. In 1877, only two years later, Father Kavanagh reported that the population of St. François Xavier was only 967 persons, almost nine hundred less than it had been in 1870. AASB, Fonds Taché, T18442, Kavanagh to Taché, 17 février 1877.

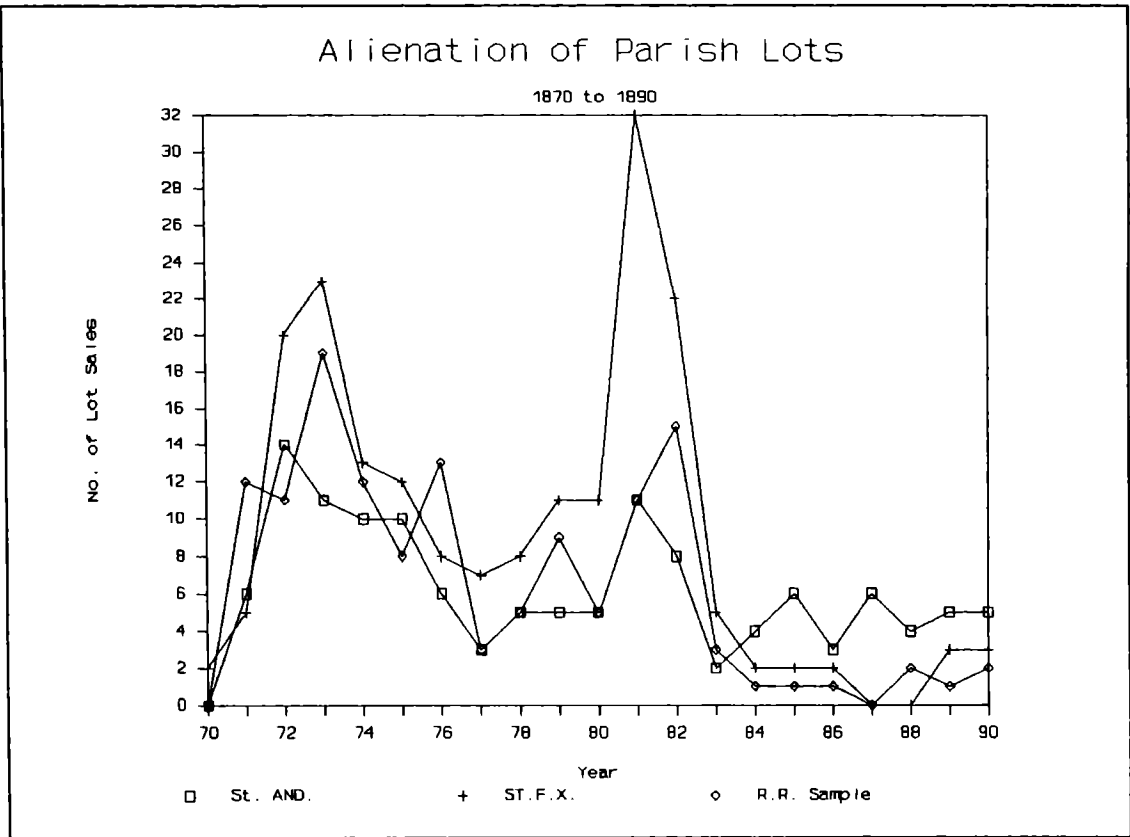


Figure 4
Alienation of Parish Lots

occupant recognized by the surveyor claimed the land through the 1870 resident. In only four lots — 1 per cent of all lots — was there no legal explanation for the difference between occupation in 1870 and recognition by surveyor. This high percentage of recognition by the surveyors was also the case in St. François Xavier (see Table 5).⁶³

The sample survey of the other parishes had a higher percentage of lots declared vacant by surveyors (10.58) despite the fact that someone subsequently claimed they had occupied the lots in 1870. It seems most likely that most of these cases occurred in the

Table 5
Recognition of 1870 Occupants by Surveyors

Survey Recognition	St. Andrew's		St. François Xavier		Red River Sample	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1870 Occupant	261	86.42	200	84.74	148	71.15
Metis	195		170		98	
Europeans	66		30		43	
Non-1870 Occupant but Intervening Transaction	33	10.92	23	9.75	36	17.31
Metis (1870 Occupants)	18		18		25	
Europeans (1870 Occupants)	15		5		11	
Non-1870 Occupant Unexplained	4	1.33	9	3.82	2	.96
Metis (1870 Occupants)	2		9		1	
Europeans (1870 Occupants)	2		0		1	
Vacant	4	1.33	4	1.69	22	10.58
Totals	302	100.00	236	100.00	208	100.00

recently settled parishes of Ste. Agathe and Ste. Anne. Here, few improvements could have been made to the lots, making it difficult for surveyors to determine occupancy in the absence of someone on the lot at the time of the survey. This benign interpretation of this discrepancy is more than supported by the details of the individual cases. Of the twenty-two lots (10.58 per cent) judged to be vacant by surveyors despite later claims to the contrary, sixteen (7.69 per cent) were later awarded to the 1870 claimants anyway. Thus, in all, two hundred of the occupied 208 lots (96.15 per cent) from the sample study of the other Red River parishes were eventually patented to persons deriving their claims from the original 1870 resident. This compares favorably to both St. François Xavier (94.49 per cent) and St. Andrew's (97.35 per cent). These findings also contradict Sprague's wider thesis that the Metis left Manitoba because they had trouble proving their claims to river lots.⁶⁴ In the two parishes studied in detail there were very few cases

63. The sources for this reconstruction are the 1870 census, surveyors returns, parish files, and land titles abstract books.

64. D.N. Sprague, "Government Lawlessness," and D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation*, 27-28.

of nonrecognition by surveyors, and no evidence that claims were refused because of lack of evidence about occupancy. All that was necessary to prove occupancy in most cases was the sworn affidavit of a neighbour that the claimant had been the recognized owner of the lot previous to 1870.

Those Red River Metis who held onto their lots in this period generally did so until 1880, when the real-estate boom in Winnipeg and surrounding area made river lots prime real estate. Sales in this period might well be seen as taking advantage of a financial opportunity, allowing Metis a cash stake to reestablish themselves on larger farms elsewhere. The upsurge of emigration in this period also coincided with the loss of political power by the Metis in Manitoba. The connection between the loss of political power and emigration is perfectly illustrated in the person of Louis Schmidt. On losing his seat in the legislature in the 1878 election in St. François Xavier, Schmidt packed his bags and moved to Batoche.⁶⁵

An examination of the destination of those who left after 1870 illustrates how the two peaks of emigrations (the early 1870s and the period around 1880) differed. While there is no consistent time-specific quantitative data that can be used to analyze the destination of migrants, individual references in parish files and other sources give some indication. Of those leaving in the early 1870s, many left for Metis wintering sites, in effect continuing their involvement in the buffalo trade. Pascal Breland, writing to Alexander Morris in 1873, noted that there were a great many Metis wintering at Wood Mountain. Of the four leaders he mentioned, two were St. François Xavier Metis who had been enumerated in 1870: Pierre Boyer, a landless Metis, and Pierre Poitras, who owned lot 41 and would sell it in 1874.⁶⁶ Similarly, François Swain left St. François Xavier with his parents in 1872 to move to Cypress Hills, while John Pritchard Mckay and his son sold lot 214 to the Catholic church in 1872 to winter on the plains.⁶⁷ *Le Métis* also reported that large numbers of Red River Metis had settled in the vicinity of Wood Mountain and near Carlton in the early 1870s.⁶⁸ This type of migration, while more impelled than before 1870, could still be characterized as adaptive to the trading economy of the early seventies.

Those who sold their lots later (1879-90) had already made the decision to farm. Their exodus after 1878 reflected the difficulty of commercial grain farming on narrow river lots. The problem was especially acute in cases where a head of family died without specifying a sole heir. In all cases encountered of this type, the heirs decided to sell the lot instead of subdividing it, moving elsewhere to farm.⁶⁹ Lists of claimants for "Halfbreed Scrip" in the settlements of St. Louis de Langevin, Batoche, and Duck Lake in the

65. PAM, Louis Schmidt Memoirs.

66. PAM, Morris Papers, Pascal Breland to Lt. Governor Morris, 10 May 1873.

67. PAM, St. François Xavier Parish Files; *Henri Létourneau Raconte*, 36.

68. *Le Métis*, letter of Father Lestanc, 23 janvier 1877; letter of Father André, 3 avril 1872.

69. This information is found in the parish files located in the PAM. These files recorded the alienation of these lots and often enclosed wills where they had a bearing on the transmission of the lot.

mid-1880s read like the parish rolls of St. François Xavier.⁷⁰ In 1882-83 alone twenty families, many of them from St. François Xavier, moved to Batoche from Red River.⁷¹ Not all who left the parish lots in the late 1870s and 1880s went to the North-West, however. Many simply sold their lots to homestead and settled in areas of Manitoba where it was possible to live with kin and friends. Some from St. François Xavier moved to St. Eustache, St. Rose du Lac, or Ste. Anne, while a number of families from St. Andrew's moved sixty miles north to the community of Grand Marais on Lake Winnipeg.⁷² A new settlement also arose ten miles east of St. Andrew's on Cook's Creek. According to James Settee this settlement was started in 1871 and comprised fifty adults by 1872.⁷³ Probably the largest offshoot community of St. François Xavier in Manitoba was the Metis settlement at Rivière aux Ilets de Bois, south of the Assiniboine. By the 1880s, Father Kavanagh was making regular trips to the mission (St. Daniel) to minister to the approximately thirty Metis families residing there.⁷⁴ Families such as the Emonds, Delormes, Lillies, Prudens, and Gagnons sold their parish lots and bought larger farms here (the majority of Metis settled on township 7, range 5 W).⁷⁵

A final determinant affecting the persistence and migration of the Metis of Red River, and one which explains, to some extent, the differential rates within communities after 1870, is that of class. While difficult to define and document in the social flux of Red River in the 1860s and 1870s, it was none the less observable. The one study that has dealt with this issue in the context of the Metis dispersal from Red River is Nicole St-Onge's work on the dissolution of the Red River Metis community of Pointe à Grouette (Ste. Agathe).⁷⁶ St-Onge sees the emergence of two distinct Metis groups separated by the late 1860s on economic and occupational lines; on the one hand were the trading and farming elite, and on the other the poorer bison hunters. In her analysis the richer traders and farmers were able to hold onto their land much longer than the poorer buffalo hunters, who had largely sold out and left the community by 1876. The fact that Metis speculators were involved in the buying out of their kinsmen suggests to St-Onge that the dispersal of the Metis was related to class rather than ethnicity.⁷⁷

This pattern corresponds roughly to what occurred in St. François Xavier. Increasing involvement in the buffalo-robe trade after 1850 also fragmented Metis communities on socio-economic lines, and this explains a good deal of the differing rates of migration within communities. Those Metis families who were involved at the production end of the buffalo-robe trade had less land and fewer cultivated acres, and

70. *Detailed Report upon All Claims to Land and Right to Participate in the North-West Half-Breed Grant by Settlers along the South Saskatchewan and Vicinity West of Range 26 W 2nd Meridian* (Ottawa, 1886).

71. Diane Payment, *Batoche, 1870-1910* (Saint Boniface, 1983), 24.

72. PAM, Parish Files; PAM, interview of Elsie Bear by Nicole St-Onge, 16 May 1985.

73. CMS Records, C.1/0, I.C. reel 26, J. Settee to CMS, 9 December 1872.

74. AASB, Fonds Taché, T23724-23725, Kavanagh to Taché, 22 avril 1880.

75. Crown Lands Branch, Patent Diagrams; *The Rural Municipality of Dufferin, 1880-1980* (Rural Municipality of Dufferin, 1980).

76. Nicole J.M. St-Onge, "The Dissolution of a Métis Community: Pointe à Grouette, 1860-1885," *Studies in Political Economy* 18 (Autumn 1985).

77. *Ibid.*, 157-62.

were generally the first to emigrate. The destination of these migrants was, in most cases, Metis wintering sites in the North-West. Continued involvement in the buffalo-robe trade for merchant traders, on the other hand, was not as dislocating. Not involved in the production end of the industry, this bourgeoisie could afford to stay in the settlement outfitting younger sons and relatives to undertake trading missions and, at the same time, maintain their river lot farms. Many of these wealthy Metis families remained in Manitoba through the 1880s, and became prominent in provincial politics.

J. Daignault, arriving in St. François Xavier in the 1870s from Quebec, observed that the parish was divided on socio-economic and geographic lines. While all got along with each other, there were distinct lines. Those Metis who lived in the Pigeon Lake community to the west of the church⁷⁸ were closely tied to the buffalo-robe trade as hunters, and held to traditional cultural practices. They were known as the "Purs." By contrast those Metis living to the east and south of the river and involved in the buffalo-robe trade as merchant traders and farmers were identified as living in "Petit Canada." These Metis made a show of imitating the French Canadians in their customs and dress.⁷⁹ The third group mentioned by Daignault was the emerging group of French Canadians from Quebec, who were starting to displace the Metis in the parish.

An analysis of the persistence of these two identifiable Metis classes corresponds to the pattern identified earlier, and the chronology of emigration identified by St-Onge. Of the nine landowning families resident at Pigeon Lake in 1870, only five retained their land after 1875, and only three past 1880. Those identified by Daignault as residing in "Petit Canada" all retained their land beyond 1881. My analysis differs from that of St-Onge in the emphasis placed on the actions of the federal government. Agreeing with Sprague, she argues that the poorer Metis hunters "left because of changes in the Manitoba Act which they were unable to circumvent." Incapable of establishing their improvements, and unable effectively to challenge adverse decisions related to their claims as the more affluent Metis were able to, "they sold, abandoned, or were swindled out of their claims for small amounts of money."⁸⁰ This theory, however, is not proven and little evidence is presented. St-Onge does show that the poorer Metis left first, but nowhere establishes that the motivation or the cause for their leaving was their inability to establish their claims. A closer examination of this charge, discussed earlier in this paper, in fact shows it cannot be supported.

In my analysis the decision to migrate was more a function of the changing Metis family economy and its involvement in the buffalo-robe trade. Increasing Metis involvement in this trade after 1850 necessitated an occupational specialization for those families involved and a consequent abandonment of agriculture. When the exigencies of the trade forced a permanent hibernation existence, emigration was the result. This emigration began well before Manitoba's entry into Confederation and continued to the

78. The body of water known as Pigeon Lake was situated on river lots 122 to 129. This was the former bed of the Assiniboine River, which through the natural process of erosion had relocated itself further south. Lots here were subdivided a good deal more than in the rest of the parish, and consequently had smaller acreages.

79. J. Daignault, "Mes Souvenirs," *Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface* (février 1945): 28.

80. St-Onge, "The Dissolution of a Métis Community," 162.

mid-1870s when the buffalo-robe market collapsed. If there was an element of coercion in the Metis exodus from Red River, it was the intolerant actions and behaviour of the incoming Protestant settlers from Ontario.

Metis migration from Manitoba after the mid-1870s had other causes. Those who had retained their land to 1880 had, in fact, made the decision to farm rather than concentrate on the robe trade. The spate of river-lot sales, and the exodus from the Metis parishes in the early 1880s, were in response to high land prices during the real-estate boom of 1880-82. These sales gave the Metis a cash stake to reestablish larger farms elsewhere. By the late 1870s and early 1880s, there was a growing recognition of the limitations of the narrow river lots for commercial grain farming, and those Metis who wished to continue farming combined with occasional wage labour and freighting could best do this farther west. Those leaving in this period left to homestead in other areas of the province, or to join the growing Metis farming communities in the North-West.