

Heroines of the 1885 Resistance: Marguerite Monet dit Bellehumeur Riel. (1861-1886). Spouse, Louis Riel.

Marguerite was the wife of Louis Riel and accompanied him to Batoche from Montana.. She was at her husband's side during the battle of 1885 until Riel surrendered May 15, to Middleton's scouts. Cold and hungry, Marguerite and her children hid in caves near Batoche while awaiting word from Louis. Instead Louis' brother Joseph appeared and took Marguerite and her children to live with Riel's mother in St. Boniface, Manitoba. Weakened by the events of Batoche and her husband's imprisonment, the premature birth and death of her third child added to her grief. Marguerite's suffering continued with Louis' execution for his involvement in the Resistance of 1885. After his execution she stayed with his family in St. Vital. She died of tuberculosis in May of 1886, the final blow dealt to a greatly diminished existence.

Marguerite was born January 15, 1861 at White Horse Plains, St. François Xavier to Marie Malaterre and Jean Baptiste Monet dit Bellhumeur. Her father was a Quebecer who married Marguerite Malaterre. Her mother was a Cree woman from the Fort Ellice area. Marguerite spent her childhood at Fort Ellice, near present day St. Lazare, Manitoba.

Jean Bellhumeur and his family moved to Montana to earn a living hunting buffalo. One of the men who accompanied him on hunting parties was a handsome young man named David Louis Riel, who caught the eye of the twenty-year-old Marguerite (1881). Louis, who was quite taken with the young lady, asked for her hand in marriage later that year. From his basic description, she was soft-spoken, dark skinned, tall and quite good looking. But his attraction to her lay in her strength of character.

They were married by "custom of the country" at Flat Creek. The prairie marriage was preformed in 1881, and Father Damiani – a Jesuit from St. Peter's Mission, Montana, formally married them in March of 1882, at Carroll, Montana. Marguerite had her first child, a handsome son named Jean Riel, who had the eyes of his mother, on May 9, 1882. Their second child, Marie Angélique, a pretty blonde little girl, was born September 17, 1883. Marguerite was known to be soft spoken, quiet, patient and is also said to have been petite and quite attractive. She took on the all responsibility of a plains wife: gathering firewood, cooking, cleaning and struggling on very little money and food. She was alone most of the time with her children, while Louis was fighting for rights of their people. Louis had a most devoted wife who worshipped him but feared the harm that could befall their family at the hands of his enemies.

In June 1884, Marguerite, Jean and Angélique accompanied Louis to Batoche, Saskatchewan, in spite of the looming conflict. She was at her husband's side during the battle of 1885 until Riel surrendered May 15, to Middleton's scouts. Cold and hungry, Marguerite and her children hid in caves near Batoche while awaiting word from Louis. Instead Louis' brother Joseph appeared and took Marguerite and her children to live with Riel's mother in St. Boniface, Manitoba.

Weakened by the events of Batoche and her husband's imprisonment, the premature birth and death of her third child added to her grief. Marguerite's suffering continued with Louis' execution for his involvement in the Resistance of 1885. After his execution she stayed with his family in St. Vital. She died of tuberculosis in May of 1886, the final blow dealt to a greatly diminished existence. She was buried beside her beloved Louis Riel in St. Boniface.

Their daughter, Marie Angélique died of diphtheria in 1897 just before she was to turn fourteen years old. Their son, Jean married Laura Casault, a daughter of a Québec family. Jean

died July 31, 1908, at the age of twenty-six from injuries resulting from a buggy accident. Jean and Laura had no children. (With contributions by Lorraine Freeman and Audreen Hourie.)

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.

Certificate of Death.

Municipality of *St. Boniface*

Name and Surname of Deceased.	<i>Marguerite Montetta. dite</i>
Date and Place of Death.	<i>May 24. 1886. Bellechumeur</i>
Sex—Male or Female.	<i>F</i>
Age.	<i>26 yrs.</i>
Occupation or Calling.	<i>—</i>
Religious Denomination.	<i>R.C.</i>
Where Born.	<i>—</i>
Cause of Death and duration of illness.	<i>Pneumonia</i>
Name of Physician, if any.	
Name, Description and Residence of Informant.	<i>Joseph Riel, Farmer, St. Vital</i>
When Registered.	<i>May 24. 1886</i>
Signature of Clerk.	<i>James E. P. Prudergast</i>
Remarks	<i>— widow of late Sr. David Riel</i>

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of an entry in a Register of Deaths now on record in the Archives of this Department.

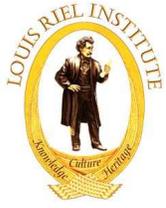
Hugh McKellar
Inspector of Vital Statistics.

Winnipeg, *Apr. 5th* 190*4*.



250-Aug.-01

Marguerite Riel's Death Certificate (Louis Riel Institute Historic Documents Collection)



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute