

Nolin, Charles M.L.A.¹ (1838-1907)

Charles Nolin was born May 2, 1838 at St. Boniface. He was the son of Augustin Nolin² and Helen Ann Cameron. His father fought on the British side at Michilimackinac during the War of 1812. Charles married Marie-Anne Harrison³, the daughter of Thomas Harrison and Pauline Lagimoniere, a cousin of Louis Riel. She died and he remarried to Rosalie Lépine, the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Lépine and Isabelle Parenteau, the niece of Ambroise and Maxime Lépine, on August 27, 1878 at Ste. Anne, Manitoba. Rosalie died on May 22, 1927 in Onion Lake District, Saskatchewan, at age 78.

Children of Charles Nolin and Marie Anne Harrison:

- Adolphus/Adolphe Nolin, born January 16, 1861 in St Boniface. Adolphus witnessed the Frog Lake Massacre and saved some of the women who were captured, taking them to safety with Mr. Cameron and John Pritchard. He married Elise/Elisa Letendre (b: December 1860) on September 28, 1885 in the St Laurent des Grandin Mission (Saskatchewan).
- Augustin Nolin, born February 1, 1862 in St Boniface. He died November 13, 1871 in Ste. Anne.
- Thomas Nolin, born September 13, 1864 in St Boniface. He married Marie-Appoline Harrison (b: 1867) on August 6, 1888 in Ste. Anne.
- Marie-Anne Nolin, born June 5, 1866 in St Boniface. She married Pierre Parenteau (b: February 23, 1861) on April 2, 1883 in the St Antoine de Padoue Church, Batoche. He was the son of Jean-Baptiste Parenteau and: Pelagie Dumont.
- Caroline Nolin, born October 27, 1867 in St Boniface. She died on January 8, 1927 in Batoche. She married Jerome Racette (b: March 24, 1859) on May 21, 1883 in St Laurent de Grandin Parish Mission, Saskatchewan. He was the son of Charles Racette III and Helene Boyer.
- Pauline Nolin, born July 14, 1869 in St Boniface. She died on June 6, 1890 in St Laurent Saskatchewan. Pauline married Bernard Belanger (b: September 26, 1865) on September 20, 1887 in Batoche. He was the son of: Abraham Belanger Sr. and Marie-Anne Versailles.
- Charles Nolin, born 1871 in Ste. Anne. He died on March 7, 1871 in St Boniface.
- Joseph John “Caton-Joe” Nolin, born March 28, 1872 in St Boniface. He died in 1948 in the Turtle River district, near Edam, Saskatchewan or alternately at Marcelin (near Leask] SK. He ranched cattle in the district. He married Anne Boyer (b: August 16, 1870) on August 6, 1892 in the St Antoine du Padoue Church in Batoche. She was the daughter of Jean- Baptiste {John} Boyer and Elizabeth “Betsy” Bousquet.

¹ A signator to the November 19th, 1883, William Bremner petition from St. Louis de Langevin for a survey and patents to their land.

² Augustin Nolin held HBC lot 739 at Red River.

³ Marie Anne was born August 15, 1843 in St Vital Parish. They married circa 1860 in St. Boniface Parish Church. She died on December 12, 1877 in St. Boniface.

- Anne Angelique Nolin, born 1873 in Ste. Anne. She died circa December 11, 1873 in Ste Anne.
- Lucie Nolin, born 1874 in St François Xavier. She died on September 20, 1953 in St Louis, Saskatchewan. She married Patrice Tobie Lepine (b: September 8, 1868) on February 29, 1892 in St Laurent de Grandin Parish Church. He was the son of Maxime Lépine and Josephte Lavallee.
- Charles “Sandy” Nolin, born 1876 in North West Territories and baptized July 30th 1876 in Ste. Anne des Chênes, Manitoba. He died on August 1955 in St Louis, Saskatchewan. He married Caroline Marie Boucher (b: October 18, 1882) in 1903 in St. Louis, Saskatchewan. She was the daughter of Jean Baptiste Boucher Jr. and Marie Louise “Mariya” Bremner.
- Marguerite Virginie Nolin, born 1877 in Ste. Anne. She married Baptiste Boyer (b: October 8, 1872) on October 14, 1892 in St. Laurent Parish Mission. He was the son of Jean Baptiste {John} Boyer and Elizabeth “Betsy” Bousquet.

Children of Charles Nolin and Rosalie Lepine:

- Andrew Nolin, born 1854 in York Factory district, Manitoba. He was adopted by Charles Nolin; being a son of an Indian father and Métis.
- Charles Marie Nolin, born June 30, 1880 in Touchwood Hills, Saskatchewan.
- Gabriel Nolin, born September 18, 1882 in Batoche.
- Melanie Nolin, born August 6, 1883 in Qu'Appelle district, Saskatchewan. She married Baptiste Parisien (born circa 1881) on December 3, 1900 in St. Michel, North Dakota.
- Rosalie Nolin, born between. May - June 1884 in St. Laurent, Saskatchewan. She died circa March 8, 1889 in St Laurent des Grandin.
- Maxime Octave Nolin, born June 20, 1886 in Batoche.
- William Nolin, born January 7, 1889 in St Laurent des Grandin Mission Settlement. He married Christine Pratt on February 1, 1912 in Onion Lake, Saskatchewan.
- Alexander Ancelet Nolin, born November 4, 1890 in Batoche. He died on August 27, 1891 in St Laurent des Grandin Mission Settlement.

Charles Nolin was educated by Bishop Provencher and worked as a fur trader and merchant. In the 1850s, he and his brothers Joseph and Duncan moved to Pointe de Chêne (Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes) to cultivate the land and to the fur trade. In the late 1860s, Nolin brothers were successful and were part of the Conservatives Métis or “loyalists” who supported the Council of Assiniboia and of Rupert's Land transfer project in Canada. This group also included Pascal Breland and the Hamelins. Charles Nolin was a leader amongst the Métis who opposed Louis Riel’s actions. Later, in March of 1871, Charles wrote a letter of rapprochement to Louis Riel, who at that time was in exile at St. Joseph, North Dakota. Riel sent the following reply:

*Lettre à Charles Nolin, St. Joseph, April 17, 1871*⁴

⁴ PAM, MG 3, D 2. From Raymond Huel (ed.), *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, Volume 1, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985: 138.

Mon cher Cousin,

*Ce qui m'a le plus touché dans ta lettre⁵ c'est la noble demande que tu me fais. Celle de nous regarder de la même façon qu'avant les troubles. Oui! Assurément je le veux de tout mon cœur. Soyons deux bons amis comme nous sommes parents. Puisse le ciel rendre cette amitié entre nous deux permanente. Il est vrai que tout change sur la terre. La vertu seule ne change pas. Tous les deux nous avons joué un rôle important dans les affaires de notre pays. Si à présent nous sommes tous les deux assez forts pour être des citoyens paisibles et vertueux nos amis et tous ceux qui nous sont chers seront contents de nous. Et l'amitié qui est une vertu sera pour nous une source de joies bien douces, cher cousin
Ton ami.*

My dear Cousin, What touched me most in your letter is the noble request you make me. That of watching us (regarding ourselves) in the same way as before the troubles. Yes! Surely I want it with all my heart. Let's be two good friends as we are parents. May heaven make this friendship between us two permanent. It is true that everything changes on the earth. Virtue alone does not change. Both of us played an important role in the affairs of our country. If at present we are both strong enough to be peaceful and virtuous citizens our friends and all those who are dear to us will be happy with us. And the friendship which is a virtue will be for us a source of very sweet joys, dear cousin

Your friend

Charles was a member of the Convention of Forty under Riel and elected to the Provincial Legislature as member from Ste. Anne des Chênes in 1874 and 1878. Nolin then lived at Touchwood Hills before moving to Batoche in 1882. In 1883 he was living on a farm between St.

⁵ [Huel: Editor's comment] Le 17 Mars 1871, Nolin informés Riel de la maladie dans sa famille et de la mort d'un de ses enfants et il exprimait l'espoir que les mésententes qui avaient existé entre les deux ne provenaient que de différences d'opinion. (Nolin un cousin de Riel, avait retiré son appui au gouvernement provisoire en Janvier 1870 et s'était opposé aux mesures radicales de Riel. Le mouvement anti-Riel chez les Métis gravitait dans l'entourage de Nolin.) Nolin déclarait aussi que, quant aux sentiments, il appuyait toujours Riel Il est intéressant de noter que, dans sa réponse Riel, un caractère très sensible et généreux, concentre son attention sur la réconciliation et ne fait aucune mention de la maladie et de la mort qui ont frappé la famille de Nolin.

[Editor's comment] March 17, 1871, Nolin informed Riel the illness in his family and the death of one of his children and he expressed the hope that disagreements which had existed between the two were differences of opinion. (Nolin, a cousin of Riel, had withdrawn his support from the Provisional Government in January 1870 and had opposed Riel's radical measures. The anti-Riel movement among the Métis people gravitated around Nolin.) Nolin also stated that, as far as feelings go, he always supported Riel. It is interesting to note that in his response Riel, a very sensitive and generous character, focuses his attention on reconciliation and makes no mention of the sickness and death that hit the Nolin family.

Laurent and St. Louis de Langevin. Nolin was one of the 30 Métis of St. Louis who petitioned the government regarding fears of losing their land on the South Saskatchewan River.

Petition from St. Louis de Langevin on November 19, 1883

In 1883 the Métis feared losing their land to the colonization companies. A company of great concern to the Métis, the Prince Albert Colonization Company, had its headquarters in Ottawa but conducted its business in the Prince Albert area. They were granted land held by 35 Métis at St. Louis, the churches and a number of other non-Métis settlers who had been petitioning for title to their lands. The Company was owned by high ranking government officials who wished to maintain federal control over the region and enrich themselves at the same time.⁶ There were rumors that the company was going to confiscate the church and cemetery at St. Louis and remove all the bodies. Dumont felt that it was necessary to have young men on patrol to see that this did not happen.

An article which appeared in the *Toronto Globe*, dated February 12, 1883, stated, “These colonization companies were deliberately called into existence in order to furnish an indirect bribery fund for the election campaign.” The Prince Albert Colonization Company administered the area that had been set aside for the railroad and was in a position to realize huge profits. The land companies were unable to take actual ownership to much of the Prince Albert area because the land had previously been settled by the Métis and they were petitioning for ownership title. Because no clear title had been established for the land, emotions often ran high. In a letter to David Laird, Minister of the Interior, Father Andre said, “the lack of patents gave rise at times to serious dispute over the boundaries of claim.”

This is a November 19, 1883 Petition from William Bremner, and other Métis concerning land claims which the government subsequently ignored.

St. Louis de Langevin,
19th November, 1883.

SIR.— The undersigned farmers, residents of the parish of St. Louis de Langevin, on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, beg to set forth, as follows, their grievances in relation to the lands on which they are located.

Many of us are here since the year 1873, 1874 and 1875; others, in still greater numbers, since 1880. Each and all of us took up our lands in accordance with the method formerly prevailing on the lands of the Red River and Assiniboine—that is to say—in river lots.

In the autumn of 1880 we petitioned the Minister of the Interior, at Ottawa, for a special survey into river lots, as was granted to the Prince Albert settlement, and to a portion of the St. Lawrence settlement. We all signed that petition, not excepting Michael Canny, who has since entered his lot at your office as a sectional lot, and against whose action we hereby strongly

⁶ Some of the Prince Albert Colonization Company directors were leading Conservatives: Dr. C.F. Ferguson, MP for Leeds, John White, MP for East Hastings, Thomas McGreevy, MP for Quebec West, Hugh Sutherland later to be MP for Selkirk, William Sharples, brother-in-law to MP, A.P. Caron (Minister of Militia), Duncan Plumb (son of J.P. Plumb, MP for Niagara), J. Aikens (son of the Minister of Inland Revenue), A.T. Galt, brother of M.H. Galt MP for Montreal West and J.C. Jamieson, son-in-law of Mackenzie Bowell, Minister of Customs.

protest.

Since that date we have sent more petitions, at various times, for the same object, supporting the same with the influence of all persons in authority who took an interest in us, such as Messrs. J. Royal, M.P., D.H. Macdonall, Member North-West Council; L. Clarke, His Lordship Bishop Grandin, and Father Leduc.

Finally, Father Leduc, who had been sent as a delegate to Ottawa by the people of Edmonton and St. Albert, showed us the answer of the Government promising a special survey for all located lands on the Saskatchewan. Since then we have waited in vain for the new survey.

As we stated at the beginning, many of us have occupied our lots long enough to entitle us to patents, and yet there has been no way, as yet, of getting them entered at your office.

We beg of you to represent to the Government the grievances herein part set forth, and urge them to put an end thereto as quickly as possible for the welfare and peace of loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen of England.

Your humble servants,

William Bremner Jun.	L. E. Letendre
Maxime Lepine	Wm. Letendre
Octive Regnier	Wm. Swain
Baptiste Boucher	Elzear Swain
William Bremner	Willie Bruce
John Ouellette	Ant. Richard
Chs. Lavallee	Isadore Boyer
Isadore Dumas	Solomon Boucher
James Short	J. B. Boucher Jun.
Ambroise Dumont	L. Schmidt
Eugene Boucher	Jos. Dumas
Henry Smith	Modeste Laviolette
Chs. Nolin	Moise Bremner
Norbert Turcotte	Jonas Laviolette
Solomon Turcotte	Alex Bremner

30 signatures

In 1874, Charles Nolin took part in the agitation that preceded the 1885 Resistance, and acted as a member of Riel's Council (Exovedate) at Batoche during the 1885 Resistance. However, he parted from Riel and Dumont when it came to the use of arms.

From July until November of 1884 Louis Riel and his family stayed with Charles Nolin at the Boucher Colony (St. Louis) on the South Saskatchewan River. On July 25, 1884 Riel wrote to his brother Joseph:

*Je demeure chez notre cousin Charles Nolin. Je suis ici avec ma famille. Si rien ne vient m'en empêcher, je m'en retournerai au Montana vers mois de Septembre.*⁷

From this home base, Riel along with Gabriel Dumont and other executive committee members addressed gatherings at Lindsay School near Red Deer Hill, Halcro Settlement and Prince Albert.

The Council of the Provisional government set up on March 19, 1885 tried Charles Nolin and William Boyer for acting against the cause but after defending themselves and pledging allegiance they were acquitted. On March 21, 1885 Nolin and Maxime Lépine were sent to Fort Carlton to demand the surrender of Major Crozier and the NWMP detachment. On March 21, 1885 at St. Anthony, Riel sent a letter to Major Crozier indicating “Messrs. Charles [Nolin] and Maxime Lepine are the gentlemen with whom you will have to treat.” To Nolin and Maxim Lepine he wrote:

Gentlemen,

If Major Crozier accedes to the conditions of surrender, let him use the following formula, and no other: “Because I love my neighbour as myself, for the sake of God, and to prevent bloodshed, and principally the war of extermination which threatens the country, I agree to the above conditions of surrender.”

If the Major uses this formula and signs it, inform him that we will receive him and his men Monday. [March 23, 1985]

Yours,

*Louis “David” Riel, Exovede*⁸

Nolin participated at Duck Lake then deserted and later fled to Prince Albert where he was locked up after surrendering. Jean Caron says, “He jumped on a whitish pony of little worth and returned to Batoche. At the crossing, he met Patrice Caron Jr. who had been sent by his mother to get some news concerning the rifle shots that were being heard.”⁹

Dr. Mulvaney, having interviewed a number of participants, reported:

A number laid the whole blame of the troubles upon Charley Nolin, who, they allege, was the prime instigator of the uprising, and the one responsible for Riel’s advent amongst them; but, they added, he cut connection with them when loud-mouthed agitation gave way to the rifle and the shotgun. He, however, had handed around the little paper badges, which they wore on the lapels of their coats, badges with religious devices.¹⁰

The Prince Albert nuns wrote in the *FCJ Journal* at the end of March, 1885 that the Métis Charles Nolin (when he reached Prince Albert after fleeing the Battle of Duck Lake) had advised Father André about the heretical views that Riel was expounding. Subsequently, while giving his anti-Riel biased testimony on the stand and during his cross examination, Father André made

⁷ PAM, MG 3 D1:

I live with our cousin Charles Nolin. I am here with my family. If nothing comes to stop me, I will return to Montana in September .

⁸ *The Queen v Louis Riel*, exhibit no. 5, Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1886: 168.

⁹ SHM, p. 6.

¹⁰ Charles Pelham Mulvaney M.D., *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*. Toronto: A. H. Hovey & Co., 1885::275.

many disparaging remarks about Riel and his heretical views. Much of this was hearsay and personal opinion and should not have been allowed.

Although Nolin was Louis Riel's cousin, he testified against Riel. The Métis at Batoche viewed him as a "vendus" or sell-out. He was later elected to the North West Territories Legislative Council in 1891 but was disqualified because of vote fraud. He died at Battleford on January 28, 1907.¹¹



Charles Nolin 1838-1907 and Rosalie Lepine 1850-1927
St. Laurent de Grandin, Provincial Archives Alberta OB3810

¹¹ Diane Payment. "Charles Nolin." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XIII (1901-1910). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994: 770-772.



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