

John McNab Ballendin McKay. (1831-1907)

John McKay was always known as “Jerry.” He was born at Fort Ellice on June 7, 1831, the son of the famous fur trader John Richards McKay and Harriet Ballendin His maternal grandfather was Chief Factor John Ballendin whose father and grandfather ran the HBC operations at Forts Severn and York on Hudson Bay. Jerry was known for his prowess in foot and snowshoe races and speed with dog teams. He was a fine Highland dancer and great horseman, known for his ability to balance himself on one foot standing on his saddle while riding at either a trot or a gallop. He could pluck small objects from the ground or shoot under his horse’s neck while ridding at full speed. He was one of the best buffalo hunters on the plains. His services as an interpreter and mediator were used extensively since he spoke, Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Michif (French-Cree).

Jerry married Mary McCorrister, the daughter of Alexander McCorrister and Catherine Jones in 1857 at St. Andrews, Red River. They had nine children.



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