

Duncan McDougall Jr. (1837-1926) and Rosalie Lesperance (1838-1910)

By Jim Jerome and Lawrence Barkwell

Duncan McDougall was born at Red River on May 25, 1837, the son of Duncan McDougall and Marguerite McDonell (McDonald), the daughter of Alexandre McDonell and Susanne Laurin (Métisse). The McDougall family (Duncan Sr. and sons) lived near the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, opposite the Forks where they operated the ferry.¹ Duncan Sr. drowned in the Red River near Winnipeg in 1870. Duncan had a ferry service at the forks, crossing both the Red River and the Assiniboine River. He may have fallen off the ferry or slipped into the river by accident.

Duncan Jr. married Rosalie Lesperance, the daughter of Alexis Bonami Lesperance and Marguerite Grenon (Gourneau). Her father was a leader of the La Loche Boat Brigades and later retired to St. François Xavier. Duncan and Rosalie were married at St. François Xavier in 1858. Duncan Jr. was employed as a saddler for the Hudson's Bay Company as his father. They moved to Ste. Agathe and lived there for 20 years, then moved to Lorette where he farmed until his death on May 13, 1926. His brother Charles McDougall, married to Monique Klyne, lived in Butte, Montana. His brother Alexandre McDougall operated the ferry at St. Louis, Saskatchewan.



Duncan MacDougall
Photo courtesy of Yvonne Boyer.

¹ The ferries operated from "South Point" between the rivers and crossed the Red and the Assiniboine.



McDougall Family home

They had 12 children. The family lived in the parish of Ste. Agathe for 20 years before moving to Lorette. He died there in 1926.

Children of Duncan McDougall and Rosalie Lesperance:

- Amadée, born circa 1858, married Josephte Berard.
- Emelie, born circa 1859, married Alexandre Larocque, then Modeste Lagimodière.
- Marie Marguerite, born September 12, 1861 at St. François Xavier, died 1904 at Winnipeg.
- Alexandre, born December 22, 1862 at St. François Xavier, married Adèle Poitras.
- Rosalie, born May 21, 1864 at St. Boniface, died October 6, 1865.
- William, born November 8, 1865 at St. Boniface.
- Louis Alex, born March 26, 1867 at St. Boniface.
- Alfred, born March 21, 1869 at St. Boniface.
- Rosalie, born August 26, 1870 at St. François Xavier.
- Octave, born November 7, 1871 at St. François Xavier, married Melanie Larocque.

- Joseph Albert, born March 3, 1873 at St. Boniface, married Marie Véronique Josephine Delorme, the daughter of Pierre Delorme and Adelaide Beauchemin.
- Marie Adèle, born September 30, 1874 at St. Boniface.

Scrip affidavit for McDougall, Duncan; born: May 25, 1837; father: Duncan McDougall (Scot); mother: Marguerite McDonald (Métis); claim no: 761; scrip no: 5929 to 5936; date of issue: June 26, 1876; amount: \$160.

Scrip affidavit for McDougall, Marguerite (his mother) born: November 2, 1820; widow of Duncan McDougall; father: Alexandre McDonald (Scot); mother: Suzette Laurin (Métis); claim no: 760; scrip no: 5921 to 5928; date of issue: June 26, 1876; amount: \$160.

Scrip affidavit for McDougall, Rosalie (his wife); born: August 13, 1838; wife of Duncan McDougall; father: Alexis Lesperance (French Canadian; mother: Marguerite Guernon (Métis); claim no: 762; scrip no: 5937 to 5944; date of issue: June 26, 1876

Duncan Sr. and sons operated the ferry at Upper Fort Garry. J. J. Hargrave has much to say about the operation of this ferry in 1861:²

CHAPTER XIV.
1861.
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The "Pioneer" drew up by the river bank at St. Boniface, and the passengers prepared to go on shore. As the destination of Mr. Morgan and myself lay on the opposite side of the river and no bridge existed, we, along with a considerable number of our fellow travellers, took passage in the local ferry boat, which was ready to take us across. I have not yet mentioned this ferry, which is the only one existing, under the patronage of the Government of the colony, to which its management had ever been a source of vexation. The position of the ferry is at the confluence of the Red River and Assiniboine. Its purpose is to transport foot passengers and vehicles across either or both of these rivers. The means by which this is effected consists of two scows worked on ropes, a canoe and passenger skiff. By order of council, no other ferry boat is permitted to ply for hire within a radius of several miles from the site of the ferry. The name of the ferryman is Duncan Macdougall. He is a linguist, being competent to speak English, French, Cree and Gaelic, and in consequence of his abilities and usefulness as an interpreter, ought long before his present time of life to have occupied a good position. He is, however, inclined to conviviality, which circumstance has interfered as much with the progress of his fortunes as with the dispatch of his business. His house is situated close to the scene of his labours, on the south side of the Assiniboine, at the point where boats touch in making

² Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River*. Montreal: John Lovell, 1871: 183-185.

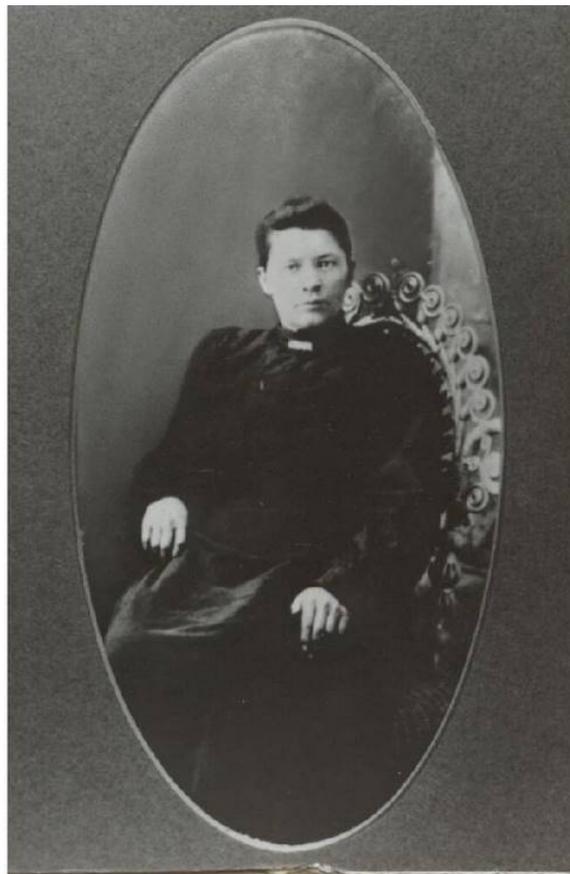
the crossing of the Red River. On this point, in consequence of its being the centre of traffic, several public houses have flourished. In the latter the ferryman has spent a good deal of his time, while some of the idle men around were stationed in the boats. The eye of the master not being on the subordinates, much laxity prevailed in working the scows, while the canoe and skiff were frequently appropriated by idle boys desirous of enjoying aquatic sports by stealth. The result was that often during the day passengers were obliged to wait for a shamefully protracted period before getting across, and after six o'clock in the evening, the silence was broken by the shouts of angry Englishmen, calling across the rivers for the means of transport, mingled with the entreaties of belated Frenchmen that "Mac Doug," as the latter pronounce the ferryman's name, would come to their assistance.

In addition to these evils the craft were in a very dilapidated condition. The flooring of the scows had been reduced to such a state of disrepair, that every step of the horses, or motion of the carts, deranged the boarding, sometimes to such an extent that, owing to the intervention of a tolerably central fulcrum under neath, one end of the board went down under pressure of a foot, while the other flew up with a certain degree of violence against the face of some neighbouring beast of burden. While the animal, whose leg had sunk through the flooring, was on his knees trying to recover himself, the other, who had received the stroke on his proboscis, might be on his haunches, the passengers shouting for mercy and assistance, the boatmen contemplating a leap into the water, and the scow floating in mid-channel of the river. The skiff, or canoe, when it was to be found on duty, was generally pretty heavily laden with muddy water, the result of protracted leakage or heavy rains.

The amount of obloquy incurred by this institution may be imagined. Outbreaks of public indignation constantly occurred on the spot, when cramped foot passengers, wet to the knees, issued from the inconvenient skiffs, or breathless carters urged their sorely tried horses or oxen to stumble at a trot over the unsteady flooring of the scows, in order to gain a little impetus previous to making the stiff ascent of about two in three, formed by the landing track leading from the water level to the summit of the river's bank. Then the sixpenny trumpet of the "Nor' Wester" blew, at fortnightly intervals, indignant peals embodying the longest terms of execration in the editorial vocabulary, and leveled at "the ferry nuisance." From time to time petitions, numerously signed by the "citizens of Assiniboia," praying for the dismissal of Duncan MacDougall from the office of ferryman, were presented to the council. Again and again the responsible committee of this body, in answer to the prayer of the petitioners, dismissed the obnoxious public servant, and, after much trouble and persuasion, prevailed on some eligible person to accept the situation. The new man, after repairing the dilapidated plant and engaging trustworthy subordinates, addressed himself to the giant difficulty of the undertaking before him, that of securing from each foot-passenger patronizing his craft the small sum of one halfpenny, and from the owner of each horse and cart the sum of four pence per trip. The storm which had blown in the time of his predecessor was as nothing to the tempest which would burst forth in the canoe of the new official on the bare intimation of so unwonted a proceeding, and new petitions, giving the lie to the old ones, were instantly set on foot, and numerously signed by the Canadian French population, praying

for the re-instatement of the generous "MacDoug," who scorned to touch the halfpennies of the poor and never refused credit to a friend. The upshot generally was that the bold interloper voluntarily resigned, after a short tenure of office, leaving the way clear for the triumphant return of the inevitable Duncan.

The skiff in use on the day, when, for the first time, I traversed the Red River, was of the kind called in the country a "Dugout." It is formed from the trunk of a large tree, the centre of which is scooped out, and the exterior shaped into the semblance of a canoe. It had no seats, and we were obliged to kneel down, one behind the other, on some damp straw hastily scattered over the wet interior, while a boy, seated in the stern of the docile skiff, with a single oar, worked alternately on either side of the canoe, paddled us quickly across.



Emily MacDougall Larocque Lajimodiere

Photo courtesy of Yvonne Boyer.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell

Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute

Map of McDougall Estate: Shown below, note the ferry is located at the bottom left.

This plan is a subdivision of the land shown on the plan of the M^c Dougall Estate, being composed of Lot 39 and Lot 40, and of part of Lot 39 in the Parish of St Boniface, in the County of Assiniboia, and is subject to the provisions of the Registration of Titles Act, R.S.A. 1911, Chapter 104.

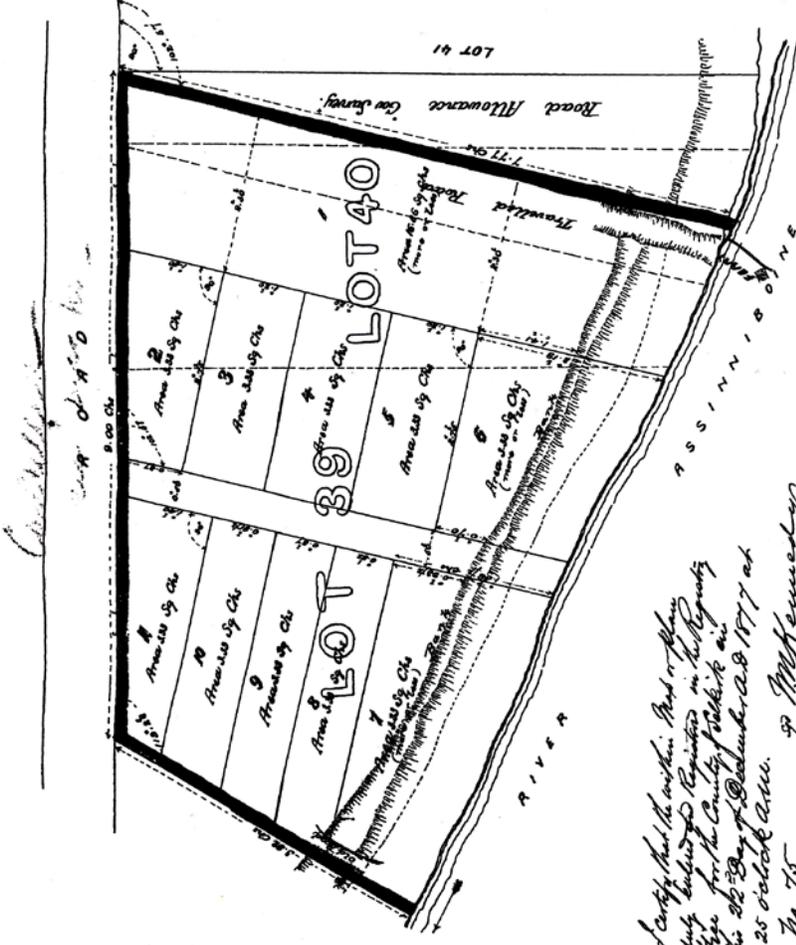
I hereby certify that I am a duly qualified and sworn Surveyor in the Province of Manitoba, and that I have surveyed the above described land, and that this plan is a true and correct copy of the original plan as shown to me, and that it is in accordance with the provisions of the Registration of Titles Act, R.S.A. 1911, Chapter 104.

July 17th 1911.

PLAN
OF SUBDIVISION OF THE
M^c DOUGALL ESTATE
(AS CLAIMED BY THE HEIRS)
 Being composed of LOT 40 and part of LOT 39 in the Parish of ST BONIFACE

SCALE
 1 CHAIN = 1 INCH

This plan is correct and is prepared in pursuance of the provisions of the Registration of Titles Act, R.S.A. 1911, Chapter 104.
 City Surveyor of the Parish of St Boniface
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 17th 1911.
 Deposited for Registration in the Office of the Registrar of Titles, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 17th 1911.
 Alex. McKeown, Registrar.



I certify that the within Plan or Plans is duly surveyed and Registered in the Registry Office for the County of St Boniface in the 26th Reg. of Assiniboia, C.S. 1877 at 11.25 o'clock a.m. of 7th March 1911.
 Alex. McKeown, Registrar.