

Provenance of Madeleine Wilkie/Gabriel Dumont Photograph
Edmond J. Mallet Collection, Emmanuel d'Alzon Library, Assumption College



Madeleine Wilkie Dumont and Gabriel Dumont, Red River Settlement, Manitoba, 1860s

Gabriel Dumont and Madeleine Wilkie were married 7 September 1857
in St. Joseph (now Walhalla), Pembina County, Dakota Territory (now North Dakota)

These dual photographs, mounted on a single cabinet card (6 ½" x 4"), were presented by Gabriel Dumont to Major Edmond J. Mallet in a letter dated 31 October 1887.

In October 1876, Major Mallet began a one-year tour of duty as an Indian Agent at Tulalip Agency in Washington Territory. Mallet returned to Washington, D.C. to again work for the Treasury Department from approximately 1880 to 1887. In the summer of 1888, Major Mallet was appointed by President Grover Cleveland to be Indian Inspector and Special Disbursing Agent. As Inspector, Major Mallet visited and reported on conditions at one dozen Indian Agencies and Schools. The majority of the photographs in his collection were taken at the Agencies and Schools. After one year as Indian Inspector, Mallet was appointed Chief of the Bureau of Swamplands.

According to a memoir of Mallet in the “Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de L’Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste D’Amérique,” during the forty years that Major Mallet was in Washington, D.C., he devoted himself constantly to promoting the multi-faceted interests of his fellow French Canadians in the United States and Canada. Major Mallet worked for the U.S. Government until his death in 1907.

Edmond J. Mallet’s manuscript and photograph collection was purchased by the Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste d’Amérique (now Catholic Financial Life Insurance) in 1917 along with Mallet’s personal library. Catholic Financial Life (CFLI) gifted Mallet’s papers to the Emmanuel d’Alzon Library, Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts, in December 2012.

The dual photograph cabinet card of Madeleine Wilkie and Gabriel Dumont now resides among the papers and photographs of the Edmond J. Mallet Collection, Emmanuel d’Alzon Library.

Also among the Mallet Collection is a three-page letter from Gabriel Dumont to Major Edmond J. Mallet which confirms Dumont’s presentation of the photographs to Major Mallet. Excerpt:

Stapleton, Staten Island, N.Y., 31st Oct^{bre} 1887

Monsieur Edmond Mallet

Washington, DC

Cher Monsieur,

J’ai été très heureux de recevoir votre [lettre] estimée

du 20 Courant; Je vous aurais écrit de suite mais

J’attendais les portraits que j’ai reçu seulement ce

matin du photographe, je vous envoie par ce courrier

deux portraits, l’un, avec défunt mon épouse lors que

j’avais 23 ans et mon épouse 25 ans, et l’autre portrait

avec mon ami Riboulet et sa dame; je regret que

je n’ai pas un autre portrait où je sois seul, à vous envoyer

en ce moment; ...

Gabriel Dumont

[English translation on next page]

Dear Sir,

*I was very happy to receive your esteemed [letter]
of the 20th [of the] current [month]; I would have written right away but
I waited for the portraits that I received only this
morning from the photographer, I am sending you by this mail
two portraits, the one, with my late wife when
I was 23 years old and my wife 25 years old, and the other portrait
with my friend Riboulet and his lady [wife]; I regret that
I do not have another portrait where I am alone, to send you
at this moment; ...*

Gabriel Dumont



Photograph of Gabriel Dumont with Madame Riboulet and her husband Émile Riboulet

Dumont referred to this photograph in the letter above

M. E. RIBOULET,
CORK
Manufacturer, Jobber and Importer.

EVERY DESCRIPTION OF
MACHINE CUT CORKS.

Vial Corks a Specialty.
P. O. BOX 105.

93 CENTRE STREET,

Stapleton, Staten Island, N. Y., 31st of Oct^r 1887

Monsieur Edmond Mallet
Washington, DC

Cher Monsieur,

J'ai été très heureux de recevoir votre lettre
du 28 Courant; Je vous aurais écrit de suite mais
j'attendais les portraits que j'ai reçu seulement ce
matin du photographe, Je vous envoie par ce courrier
deux portraits, l'un, avec défunt mon épouse lors que
j'avais 23 ans et mon épouse 25 ans, et l'autre portrait
avec mon ami Riboulet et sa dame; je regret que
je n'ai pas un autre portrait où je sois seul, à vos souhaits
en ce moment; dans ma dernière lettre, je vous disais
que par ma prochaine je vous raconterais mon voyage dans
le Dakota, mais je crois que ce serait si long, qu'il vaudrait
mieux que je vous le raconte de bouche, lorsque vous
viendrez, Car je serais très heureux de vous voir, seulement
je vous prierais de m'avertir deux jours à l'avance à fin que
je puisse me trouver à la maison, mon ami Riboulet
ainsi que sa famille serait très heureux de faire votre
connaissance.

Je vous dirai franchement que j'ai commencé il y a déjà
quelques temps en collaboration avec mon ami à écrire
ma vie que nous avons l'intention de faire publier plus tard.
Je vous raconterais tout au long mon voyage l'orsque
j'aurai le plaisir de vous voir, je vous citerais seulement
ici, les places où j'ai passé; en partant d'ici —
je suis passé à Lewiston, Montana, où j'ai rencontré
les premiers Métis, de là j'ai été à la Dépotville, et de là
voir les Piedgans à la Rivière aux Boullots après les avoir
vu j'ai filé le long de la Montagne comme on le nomme
à Orcha, les bords de la Rivière au Soleil jusqu'à la
Mission de St. Pierre, de là je suis revenu à Lewiston,
Montana; j'ai mis deux mois à faire ce voyage pour
revenir à Lewiston, de là je suis passé à Blaquette
dans le Missouri et de là au Fort Assenneboin sur la
Frontière Américain, de là j'ai filé le long de la Rivière
au Saix jusqu'à l'entrée du Missouri, c'est à dire où la
Rivière au Saix entre dans le Missouri jusqu'aux Réserves
Indiens, que j'ai suivis, d'abord les Sioux et ensuite
les Assenneboins le long de la frontière; j'ai omis de vous
nommer le Fort à la Rivière aux Meubles et de la Roche Jaune,
je suis revenu dans le Dakota, à la Montagne aux Tortues,
et à Saint Jean où il y a d'avantage de Métis, là se trouvent
les Réserves de Métis et de Chasseurs après la Montagne aux
Tortues je suis arrivé à Olga, Cavalier County, Dakota, de là à Neche
Dakota où j'ai pris les Chars pour m'en revenir à New York

M. E. RIBOULET,
CORK
Manufacturer, Jobber and Importer.

EVERY DESCRIPTION OF
MACHINE CUT CORKS.

Vial Corks a Specialty.

P. O. BOX 105.

93 CENTRE STREET,

3
Stapleton, Staten Island, N. Y., 31 Octobre 1887

Dans tous les places dont je vous parle, tous les gens m'attendaient
avec grande hâte, j'avais donc raison de vous dire que
j'avais hâte d'aller voir mes gens et que c'était inutile
je vous raconterais de vive voix les incidents de mon voyage.
Je regret de dire que je n'ai pas trouvé mes amis les
Crétiens dans le DAKOTA et dans le Montana aussi Comfortable
que veut bien le dire le Lieutenant McDonald: je les ai trouvés
aussi Malheureux que nous les avions représentés dans notre
pétition et en tout point dignes d'être secourus, et je les ai
trouvés plus Malheureux ce côté ci des lignes, qu'ils n'avaient
jamais été dans le Nord Ouest avant la rébellion.

Veuillez je vous prie Cher Monsieur, présenter mes meilleurs
Compliments à votre famille et recevez les salutations
bien sincères de votre ami

Gabriel Dumont

Je vous remercie beaucoup du journal que vous m'avez envoyé
et j'ai beaucoup apprécié l'article qui vous concernait.

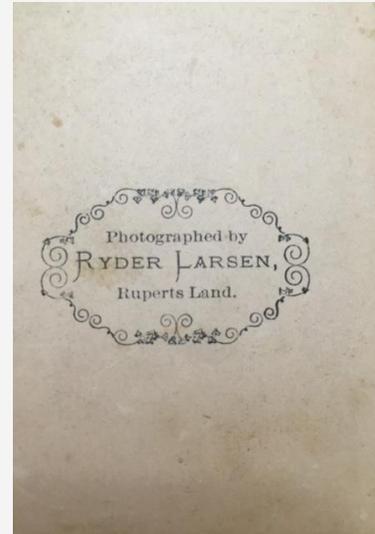
M. et M^{me} Riboulet me prie de vous présenter leurs
meilleurs Compliments

The name of the studio in which the photographs of Madeleine Wilkie Dumont and Gabriel Dumont were taken was not indicated on the front or back of the photos. There do exist, however, photographs of other people taken in the same studio with the same furniture, drapes, tassels, and floor pattern. Some of these photos have the photographer's stamp on the back.



Madeleine Wilkie Dumont

Gabriel Dumont



Thomas Sinclair, Sr.



Annie McDermot Bannatyne



Angus McKay



Helen (surname unknown)

The photographer was Ryder Larsen, a Norwegian who came to Rupert's Land, British North America, as a carpenter for the Hudson's Bay Company, eventually settling in St. Andrew's Parish in the Red River Settlement. Larsen set up photography studios in both Winnipeg and St. Andrew's that operated from around 1866 to 1869. In December 1869, deeply in debt and having alcohol problems, Larsen was involved in a brawl among men "*carousing at the house of Peter Pruden*" [his father-in-law] in St. Andrew's on Christmas Eve that resulted in him being charged with the murder of Thomas Johnstone. Larsen never came to trial. In late 1871 he left the Red River Settlement, abandoning his wife and child, and was never seen again.

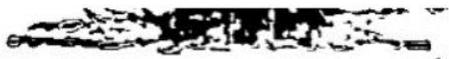
NOTICE.



The Photographic Gallery
constantly open.

Those indebted to me will
please settle accounts.
RYDER LARSEN,

The Rapids, St. Andrews,
J. n. 20th, 1869.



The Photographic Gallery
constantly open.

Those indebted to me will
please settle accounts.
RYDER LARSEN.

Town of Winnipeg,
April, 15, 1868.

Mr. Ryder Larsen is now taking
Photographs at the Rapids, St. An-
drew's, in a building belonging to
Mr. Mowatt. His place is nicely
fitted up for his business, and we
strongly advise our friends in that
part of the settlement to patronize

Mr. L's. pictures will always
compare very favorably with any
we have seen taken elsewhere.

GET YOUR PHOTOGRAPH.

Those who wish to get first class
Photographs of themselves or their
friends, can depend upon

RYDER LARSEN,

who has fitted up his new gallery in
this town. His gallery is open every
day between the hours of 8 a. m. and
5 p. m. Give him a call.

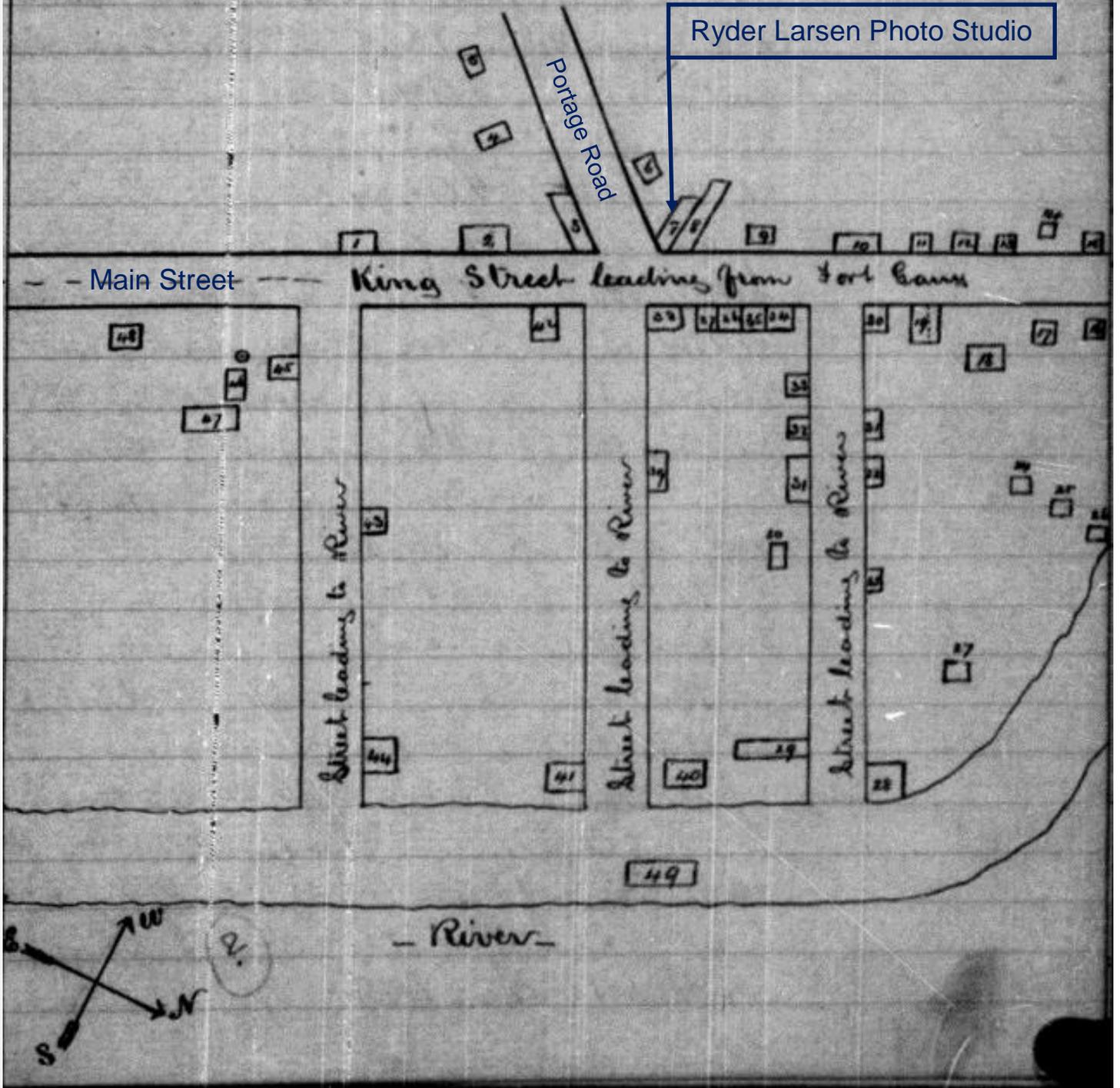
Winnipeg, Oct. 22, 1869. 55

The photographs of Madeleine Wilkie and Gabriel Dumont were taken in the Red River Settlement at a studio operated by Ryder Larsen, either in Winnipeg or in St. Andrew's.

Date of the Photograph

With regard to dating the photograph, Dumont stated in his letter that he was 23 years old when the photograph was taken. As Dumont was born in December 1837, he would have been 23 years old for most of 1861. The photograph could therefore be dated *circa* 1861. Ryder Larsen the photographer, however, was said to operate his studio *circa* 1866 to 1869. Combining that information, the best the photograph can be dated is the 1860s.

Below is given a rough outline of the Town of
Winnipeg as it is laid out at present [1869]

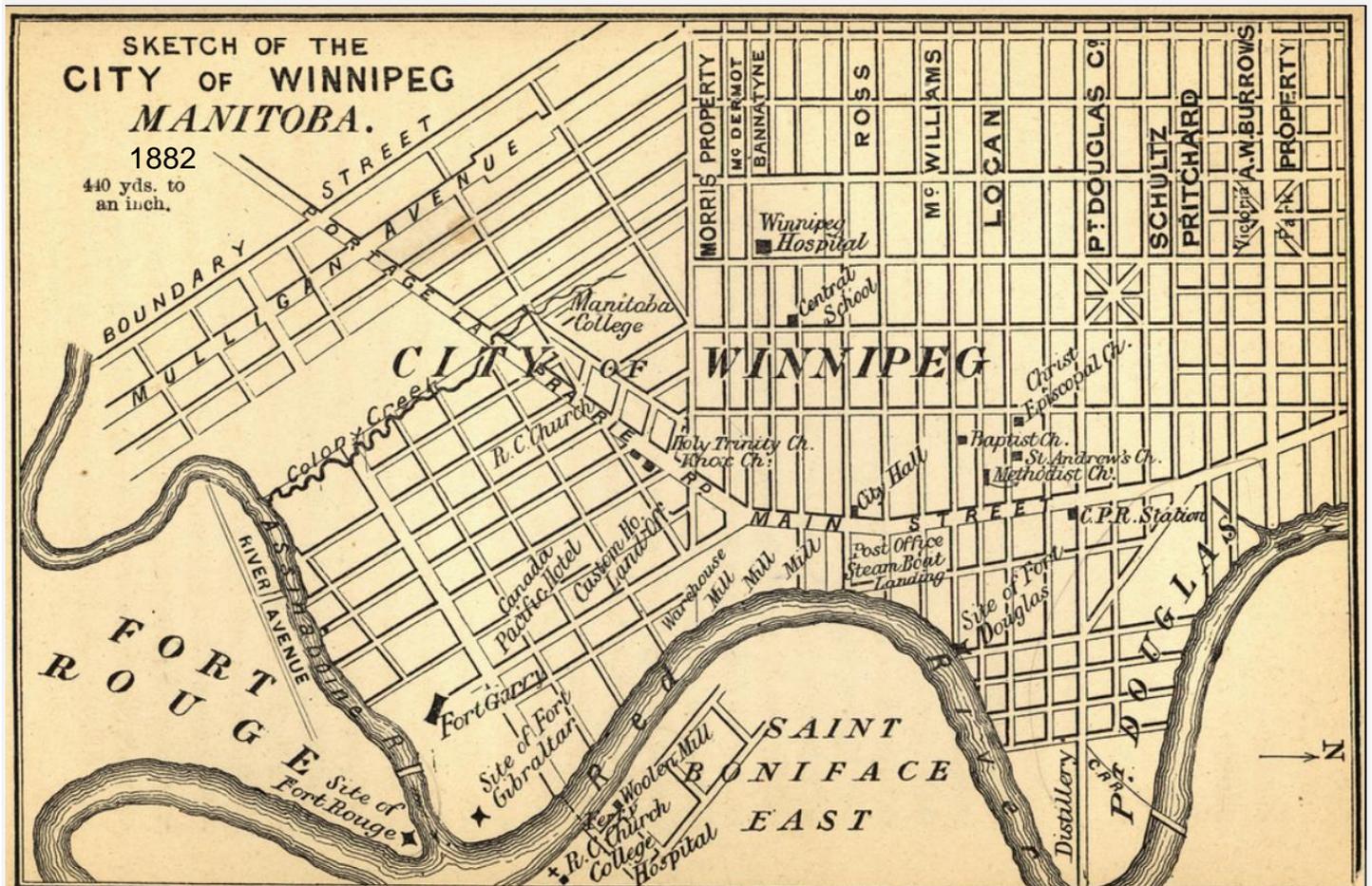
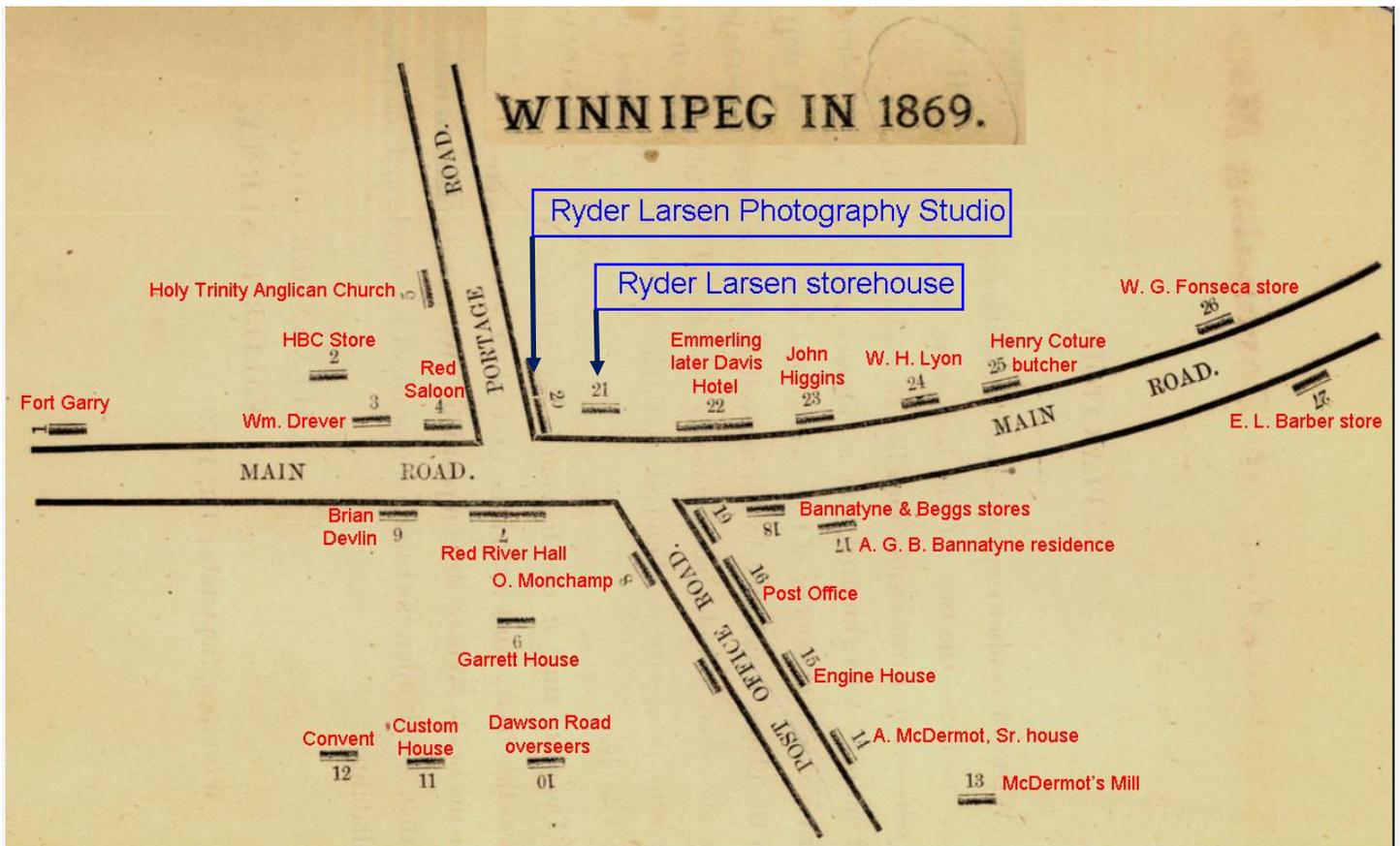


66

Saturday 4th December 1869.

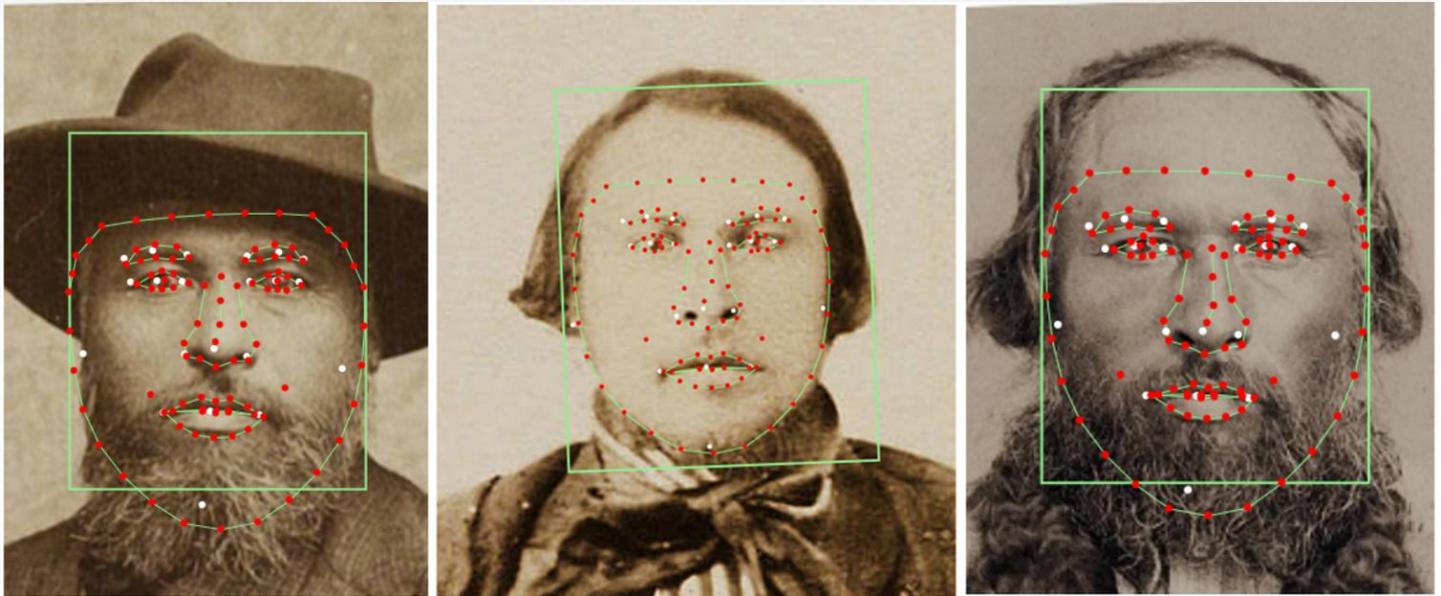
Explanation of Town Sketch

- 1 Store & Dwelling - Hudson Bay Coy.
- 2 Store & Dwelling - Wm Brewer Senr
- 3 Saloon - H. F. O'Leary
- 4 Presbyterian Church.
- 5 Episcopal Church - "Holy Trinity"
- 6 Butcher Shop & Dwelling - A. R. Guald
- 7 Surveyors Office & Dwelling - Rob Dennis.
Photograph Gallery - R. Larson
- 8 Store & Dwelling - H. McKenney.
- 9 Warehouse - H. McKenney.
- 10 Hotel - Geo. Emerling.
- 11 Store & Dwelling - John Higgins.
- 12 Store & Dwelling - A. Lindegar & F. Lindegar.
- 13 Store & Dwelling - W. H. Lyons.
- 14 Butcher Shop - H. Couler
- 15 House unfinished - John Sutherland
- 16 House unfinished - F. Lindegar.
- 17 House unfinished - R. Bird
- 18 Dwelling - A. B. Bannatyne
- 19 Stores - Bannatyne & Begg
- 20 Warehouse - Bannatyne & Begg
- 21 Tin Shop & Dwelling - Jas. Ashdown
- 22 Printing Office & Dwelling - "Red River Pioneer Newspaper"
- 23 Engine House - MacTavish Fire Engine Company No. 1.
- 24 Dwelling - Wm Ross
- 25 Dwelling - James Ross
- 26 Dwelling - Alex Logan
- 27 Carriage Shop & Dwelling - T. Lusted
- 28 Dwelling - Andw M. Dermott.
- 29 Warehouses - Andw M. Dermott.
- 30 Dwelling - James Mulligan
- 31 Dwelling & Photograph Gallery - latter by R. M. Laughlin.
Dwellings owned by Andw. M. Dermott
- 32 Gun Shop - J. Kennedy
- 33 Saloon - O. Monchamp
- 34 Watchmaker & Fancy store - F. C. Mercer
- 35 Harness Shop - Stalker & Wright
- 36 Warehouse & Carpenter Shop - G. Ellwood.
- 37 Stationery Store - H. St. Donaldson
up stairs - "Nor West's" Printing Office.
- 38 Ruins of House owned by A. M. Dermott &
burnt down some time ago.
- 39 Hotel - Garrett House by Chas. Garrett.



While the letter from Gabriel Dumont gifting the photographs to Edmond Mallet does, in itself, confirm the identities of the two people in the photographs, further investigation was undertaken by Elizabeth Maisey, Head of Technical Services and Special Collections at Emmanuel d'Alzon Library, Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts; Darren Préfontaine and the staff at Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Lyle Brennen, private researcher.

Using face recognition software, the face landmarks on two known photographs of Gabriel Dumont at left and right were compared to the face landmarks on the photograph at center.



Seven known photographs of Dumont were visually compared to the photograph at far right.

Having established that the man in the dual photographs is Gabriel Dumont, it is reasonable to conclude that the woman is his wife, Madeleine Wilkie. The photographs were obviously taken at the same location and very likely at the same time. The original photograph is a single cabinet card with the dual images imprinted on it. There would be little reason for Gabriel Dumont to print and distribute cabinet cards showing him with any woman other than his wife Madeleine. They were married in St. Joseph (now Walhalla), Dakota Territory (now North Dakota) on 7 September 1857. The two appear to be close in age. By Gabriel Dumont's own words, these photographs were taken when he was 23 years old and Madeleine was 25.

In past years, it was claimed by some that the woman in the photograph was Julie Lagimodière Riel, the mother of Louis Riel. The provenance presented on previous pages does, in itself, exclude this possibility. A close examination of high resolution images of the Wilkie/Dumont photographs reveals that both the man and the woman have Métis facial features. Madeleine Wilkie was Métisse. Julie Lagimodière Riel was not Métisse, she was French Canadian. Julie Riel was born in 1822 and Gabriel Dumont in 1837. There does not appear to be a 15-year age difference between the two people in the photographs. The evidence does not support this being a photograph of Julie Lagimodière Riel.



Known photograph of Julie Lagimodière Riel



Photograph of Madeleine Wilkie Dumont

While clearly two different women, both photographs were taken in the studio of Ryder Larsen.

The provenance of the Madeleine Wilkie/Gabriel Dumont photograph was documented by Lyle Brennen, an independent researcher in Bel Air, Maryland, in cooperation with the Emmanuel d'Alzon Library, Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts.

1 August 2017