

Mary Jane McDougall (1844-1896)

Mary Jane was born at Lesser Slave Lake in January of 1844, the daughter of John George McDougall and Genevieve “Jane” Jaspard (Gaspard). Her father, a Scotsman, was the first Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company for the Edmonton District. Her mother, Genevieve, was a Métisse from the Têtes Plates Salish tribe.

George McDougall died in 1849 and after his death Jane (Genevieve) moved her family of seven children to Fort Edmonton. It was there that the children began to receive religious instruction from the Catholic Missionaries. In 1853, Jane moved the family to Red River and her daughter Mary Jane (b. 1844) entered the Catholic Boarding School. On December 23, 1862, Mary Jane became a novice in the Order of the Grey Nuns and took her vows on May 3, 1865.

Mary Jane worked for the Grey Nuns at St. Norbert to establish St. Mary’s Academy and Sister McDougall oversaw their boarding school. When she applied for her Métis land in 1875 she listed herself as a Nun at the General Hospital of St. Boniface. In 1890, she was named superior of the boarding school. Thereafter, she worked at Ste. Annes des Chênes and Qu’Appelle. She returned to run Provencher Academy. In 1895, she travelled to the Order’s mother house in Montreal and became ill while there and died in Montreal on November 3, 1896.

In 1857, Mary Jane’s brother, Daniel McDougall, along with Louis Riel and Louis (Laferté) Schmidt were attending school at St. Boniface with the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes when their mentor Mgr. Taché decided to send the boys to Bas-Canada to complete their studies in Québec in 1858. Louis Riel went to the Collège de Montréal, Daniel McDougall to the Collège de Nicolet and Louis Schmidt to the Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe.

On June 18, 1866 at St. Boniface, Daniel married Marguerite Bruneau (b. 1839) the daughter of François Bruneau and Marguerite Harrison. The couple were among a number of Métis families who moved from St. Boniface to areas further south such as Lorette after the troubles of the 1869-70 Resistance. Daniel first established a homestead on the south side of the Seine River near Lorette in 1869-71 and then obtained land on the north bank of the Seine prior to his death in 1880. He died as the result of a train accident in St. Boniface in which he lost a leg. He left his wife and two sons, François Daniel (b. 1872) and Alexandre (b. 1867) to survive him.



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