

# Season's Greetings

## The HISTORIAN

Newsletter of the St. Vital Historical Society  
600 St. Mary's Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2M 3L5  
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## Guided St. Vital for 32 years

# Joseph: the forgotten Riel



*Joseph and Amanda Riel*

Of all the historic figures in Manitoba, the most convoluted stories surround Louis Riel, the man who steered Manitoba in Confederation.

For starters, Riel never lived in Riel House since the River Road building was not erected until 1881; eight years after Louis left the area.

The house was built by Louis's younger brother Joseph who used materials from his mother's home near the Seine River to build on the west end of the Riel Homestead.

Some printed material claims the house was built in 1867 or 1868, which would have been quite a feat for lad of 11 or 12, since Joseph was born in 1857.

While Louis may be the Father of Manitoba, brother Joseph is certainly one of the many Fathers of St. Vital having served as reeve or a councillor for 32 years.

Another fact of fiction discovered on a so-called genealogy website managed by "a private person" contains a photo of Joseph as a child., and lists all of Joseph's so-called children. According to the author, Joseph and Amelia saw the birth of their first son in 1869.

There are two glaring faults in the genealogy, the first of which Joseph would have sired his first child at age 11, in Vermont.

In reality, Joseph Riel was married twice. On April 3, 1884, Riel married Eleanore Poitras who passed away on Sept. 3, 1892. Amanda Julienne Perreault became the second, and last, wife of Joseph Riel on April 4, 1894.

That is what is wrong with history, one person writes something totally false and the falsehood becomes "truth" to some people. — Bob Holliday

The St. Vital Museum 2015 calendars are now available. The calendars contain facts about St. Vital and pages highlight the accomplishments of former residents. Included is a page on the Henteleff Family who moved to St. Vital in 1927 to open a market garden; E.J. Casey, who ran a successful carnival/midway business from his St. Mary's Road office; and rocket scientist Yvonne Brill (nee Claeys) who couldn't take engineering at the University of Manitoba because there was no room for women to live, so the Arden Avenue resident went to the USA where gained her degree. In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded her the National medal of Technology and Innovation.

The calendars are available Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Museum, 600 St. Mary's Rd. The cost is \$5 each or three for \$10.

## 2015 CALAENDARS NOW AVAILABLE



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## Membership renewal time

It's that time of year again — time to renew your membership with the St. Vital Historical Society. Your \$15 membership helps pay for the printing and mailing of the four editions of the Historian and also defrays the day-to-day expenses of the St. Vital Museum.

Your membership also gives you the right to attend the Annual General Meeting and vote for the members of the board of directors. Most of all, your membership fee helps keep St. Vital history alive.



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# 2014: a very busy year for SVHS

Twenty-five members attended the Annual General Meeting Nov. 8 held in the rotunda of McElhoes & Duffy, located in the former St. Vital City Hall.

Joanne Phillips was elected to the Board of Directors. Longtime directors June and Gord Bell did not run for re-election.

Canada's Minister of Heritage, the Hon. Shelly Glover (MP St. Boniface) was unable to attend this year but sent along a message, part of which follows:

"I want to thank all of you—the volunteers and St. Vital Historical Society Board of Directors for the countless hours you give to preserving the history of this community.

Well done, each and every one of you.

"Each year I am amazed at how this museum is developing, and I am

always happy to stop by and see the new displays.

"I love to use this little museum as an example of what can be done on a small budget. You guys are the masters at making it work," the statement read.

Following is the report of Bob Holliday on the ins and outs of 2014.

"The past year has been one that has seen many changes at the St. Vital Historical Society and there is still more to come as we prepare to celebrate our 20th anniversary in 2015.

The biggest event in my mind was seeing the 1939 Fargo leave the fire hall Sept. 30 under its own steam as Leon St. Onge and Dave Reimer drove the truck to its temporary home in a former fire hall located at William Avenue and Cecil Street. The occasion marked the first time in about 40 years the truck's tires touched pavement. The truck will remain off premise until reconstruction of the floor is complete.

Construction plans have changed St. Vital Historian

drastically since the project was announced at the Pancake Breakfast. The changes were necessitated when the Winnipeg Fire Paramedics Service announced it has no intention of ever returning to the building. To that end, on Friday, Don and Judy Berthman, Jeff Whyte, Jolene Klassen and myself met with Brad Erickson and Brent Novak of the City of Winnipeg to discuss the possibility of the SVHS taking over the whole main floor, including the former paramedics' living quarters, where our new board room would be located.

One of the first orders of business for the new directors will be to strike a committee to meet with a city design team.

*"I love to use this little museum as an example of what can be done on a small budget. You guys are the masters at making it work." — Hon. Shelly Glover*

The second biggest event was the celebration of St. Vital musicians at the Travelodge East on May 24 headlined by Ray St. Germain.

The night was capped with performances by the McDougall boys: Robbie, Billy and Allan. The night drew an almost sellout crowd in the 300-seat facility. I would like to congratulate director John Kendle for ramrodding the event and for having the foresight to hire Dave Perich as stage manager and sound manager Roy Love.

Thanks also goes to directors Don and Judy Berthman, Kerry Pedrick, Paul Gentes; Richard Grant; and Jolene Klassen for their work that night, which combined with the breakfast, earned the SVHS almost \$6,000.

The revenue received a boost when Veepee Pedrick and director Lea Gorman purchased a block of tickets.

The day highlighted the energy and dedication of our volunteers: Cory Schreyer; Vanessa Russell; Mariska Maguire; and Chris Zaste. The four set up and took down the tables, which due to possible inclement weather, were set up in the former ambulance bays.

*(Continued on Page 4)*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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(Continued from Page 3)

As you've just heard, the SVHS is financially sound, but we have to be ever vigilant. I am happy to say that the Historian and the 2015 calendar are both money makers and combined with the membership fees, account for a large part of the revenue. That said, I would urge members and others to not forget the SVHS when making charitable donations. Tax receipts are given for all donations over \$10.

I would like to congratulate Brian Mayes on his recent re-election as councillor in St. Vital. Cllr. Mayes has been a solid supporter of the SVHS and we look forward to working with him and the two new councillors of the Riel Community Committee: Matt Alard and Janice Lukes.

We have forged a good working relationship with Canada's Heritage Minister Shelly Glover and our Provincial MLAs, Nancy Allan, Chris Melnick and Theresa Oswald.

It was because of Chris Melnick and Brian Mayes that the Arden 7 Plaza, honouring the seven Arden Avenue neighbours, was erected on Jules Mager Park, River and St. Michael roads on July 12. The members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers were taken prisoner when Hong Kong fell to the Japanese Imperial Army on Christmas Day 1941.

In 2013, MLA Melnick contacted Cllr. Mayes about stories circulating about the St. Michael 7. The councillor contacted the SVHS who set the story straight and introduced the pair to Sgt. George Peterson, the last living member of the group. The rest, as they say is history, and on July 12, of this year, the Plaza was unveiled.

In September, the SVHS purchased some display cases from the Winnipeg Police Museum and were given others,

two of which are already in the Museum. The rest are being stored in the former St. Vital City Hall until space is found in the museum

The following jewellery-type display cases were purchased: 4(6'x2'); 1-(5'x2') 1-(4'x2'); plus 5 (4'x4'x1') wall units, including tempered glass doors and locks. We were given a 4'-cubed display unit on a metal stand (glass on two sides) plus a 7'x33"x12" unit.

The display units are another step in our progression to becoming the focal point of displaying St. Vital history.

Another step will be digitizing our photos and other documents for easier storage and access through various computer programs. We will soon be receiving a donated G5 Mac for the storage of photos. Access to the photos will be through Photo Mechanic, a comprehensive photo identification system and search engine. We will have to purchase a flatbed scanner, which will also allow us to do scans off site.

The SVHS will continue to expand usage of our Facebook account and web site, both of which are attracting increased viewership due to more postings by Jeff Whyte and web designer Brenda Anderson.

The movie on the Fargo being driven across town has been seen by almost 2,100 viewers on Facebook

The Historian and other publications are now posted to the web site ([www.svhs.ca](http://www.svhs.ca)) one week after they are mailed to members. This expands the reach and gives better coverage to our valued advertisers. We are averaging more than 10,000 hits a month.

As postage rises, we are hoping more and more members will accept electronic versions of the Historian.

The use of electronic devices allows the directors to meet about four times a year. Regular up-

dates are sent to directors via e-mail. Any member wishing to receive the updates may register their e-mail addresses with Jenna Klassen. She is the new Saturday student replacing Chris Zaste, who has found a full-time job. Like Chris, Jenna is a history student at the University of Winnipeg.

I would like to thank our treasurer Jeff Whyte, who took over a difficult task from Lea Girman and used his computer and accounting skills to streamline the process of keeping the books. He has also expanded our reach through his knowledge of Twitter and linking with Facebook. We owe him a great debt of gratitude as he is usually at the museum for three hours on Wednesday and Saturday.

The delay in construction has greatly diminished the museum area because the back end of our bay is now used to store the shelving and artifacts that lined the walls. As well, restoration work on the fire truck has come to a halt due to the storage location in Weston.

For the past four years, the SVHS has hired a summer student under the Young Canada Works program which sees the Federal Government pay 75% of the salary. For the past two years, the application was not approved by the Canadian Museum Association until days before the successful applicant was to start work prompting us to send a letter to Minister Glover expressing our concerns, especially when the Historical Museum Association of St. James and the St. Boniface Historical Society were approved for three positions and the St. Boniface Museum received two students prior to the SVHS receiving approval. All of the aforementioned receive operating grants from city or province. Other St. Boniface agencies receiving approval weeks prior to SVHS were: the Univer-



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sity of St. Boniface (9); La Maison Gabrielle-Roy Inc.

Each year our application is straight forward, and each year when we inquire about late approval, we are told that other organizations write longer applications, which prompted Treasurer Whyte to wonder if the process is based on which agency can write the best essay.

We suggested to the Minister that funding be granted on a three-year and not an annual basis, something she was for prior to receiving her current cabinet position.

A copy of the letter to the Minister was sent to John McAvity, Executive Director of the CMA, who on Oct. 28 sent a reply, best described as a form letter, which did not address any of our concerns but insinuated we were fortunate since the money for our student had been returned by another organization. I will be filing a further letter to the CMA expressing our dismay. (The letter was sent, but there has been no response.)

We received our usual \$3,150 grant from Manitoba Heritage whose application is short and much easier to fill out.

We continue to use the City of Winnipeg Community Incentive Grant, which refunds the SVHS 50% of all expenses spent on displays. For that we thank Cllr. Mayes who was instrumental increasing the grant to a maximum of \$15,000.

For the second straight year, directors Don and Judy Berthman, assisted by Joanne Phillips, set up and took down the SVHS display at the St. Vital Agricultural Society fair at the St. Vital Arena. The display garnered rave reviews for the society and those in attendance at the two-day event.

On a sad note, the SVHS lost two staunch supporters this past year with the passing of Irene Gibson and Jim Mitchell. I did not know Irene Gibson personally, but I understand she was a tireless worker in the early days of the organization. Jim Mitchell lost his courageous battle with cancer on Oct. 8. For that past six years Jim did the custodial work at the museum.

Both members will be missed but remembered for their hard work and vision to further the development of the SVHS and its goals.

In closing I would like to present items on the lighter side, and both involve trucks, one real and two toys.

It seems that the last time the Fargo was licensed by the St. Boniface-St.Vital Community Committee in 1974, it was mistakenly registered as a 1946 not a 1939 vintage.

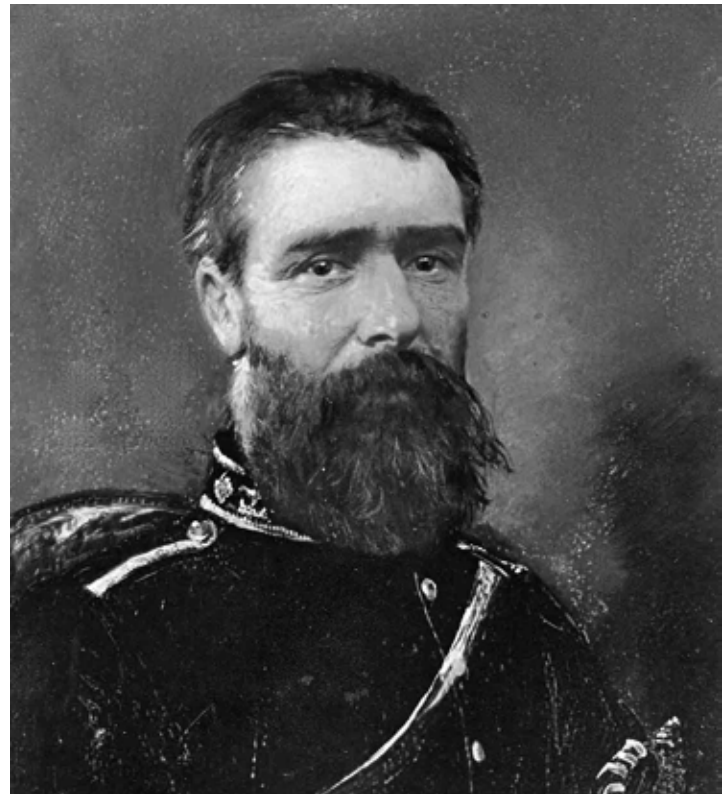
That mistake meant MPI would not change the vintage unless we could offer proof. Thanks to Jack Mavins of the Manitoba Classic and Antique Auto Club, we were able to prove there were 487 two-ton Fargos produced and ours was in the middle of the batch, and even though we have had possession for the past nine years, title has never been transferred from the City to the SVHS.

And finally, collectors envy the two-toy tin trucks on display in the museum.

I was watching the television show American Pickers when I spotted toys, which appeared to resemble the two trucks we have on display.

The toys were made circa 1931 by Buddy L in East Moline, Indiana and are worth an estimated \$300US each.

According to Jeff Richards of the Buddy L Museum, they could sell for a lot more to the right collectors.



*In 1874, Capt. Peter Tod arrived in St. Vital and leased 20 acres for the sum of \$50 annually. He brought over his family from Scotland in 1878. A founder of the St. Vital Agricultural Society, Tod was active in municipal politics as a reeve and school trustee.*  
(Photo courtesy of the Tod Family)

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The above photo display is of George Allan Birkett, who was killed Dec. 19, 1941 during the battle for Hong against the Japanese Imperial Army.

Lieutenant Birkett, 34, was killed while firing a Sten gun against the advancing Japanese. His actions allowed the remnants of his Winnipeg Grenadier platoon to escape to safety.

Birkett is remembered at the Sai Wan War Memorial in Hong Kong.

Of the 1,975 Grenadiers and Royal Winnipeg Rifles who defended Hong Kong, 1,418 died in the battle, or as Prisoners of War.

The photo was donated to the museum by the Winnipeg Grenadiers.

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# Fire truck will remain off site for longer time

The 1939 Fargo fire truck will remain in storage at a Weston-area former fire hall for an unspecified time.

The return delay is due to the decision by Winnipeg Fire Paramedics Services not to continue using the 100-year old fire hall as an ambulance station.

The decision by the WFPS has forced City officials to re-evaluate plans to replace the concrete floor in the three bays.

What is known is that the floor in the bay occupied by the St. Vital Museum must be replaced as chunks of concrete keep falling into the basement. The floor is braced by a number of teleposts.

Until a further engineering study is completed, the fire truck will not return to 600 St. Mary's Road..

The Board has informed the City that the former ambulance bays could be used to display a genuine Red River cart and a birch-bark canoe which have been offered to the St. Vital Museum.

Meanwhile hours of negotiations have been undertaken between the SVHS and City officials with more on the horizon.



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Many thanks to the St. Vital Historical Society  
for preserving our history



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**From your St. Vital team!**

## Staff members learn from students during school tours

On Oct. 2, 90-plus LRSD staff members went on a “field trip” to 20 schools, where they had a chance to see first hand teaching and learning in action.

Here is what a few of our staff members had to say:

“This was a fabulous idea, not only for us to go out to the schools, but for us to be able to interact as a group with peers outside our departments,” said one staff member.

“We had a wonderful tour at École Varennes. We saw that through Varennes ver l’avenir environmental group, shared school vegetable garden, the shadow municipal elections, and the student volunteering at local food bank, They were the students learning to build community, become responsible citizens.”

At Windsor School, four Grade VIII student-ambassadors along with Principal Ken Bartel acted as tour guides.

Highlights included: finding out that the school has two COWS – computers on wheels; seeing first-hand how junior high students watch out for younger students; discovering the school’s willingness to offer classroom space to a daycare and after-school-program following a fire at the Windsor Community Centre and helped

organize collection events to help furnish.

Louis Riel Arts & Technology Centre impressed everyone with the range and depth of the programs offered. Because ATC is closely linked to local businesses, students can actively engage with the community, a first step on the road to good citizenship.

Every year the division hosts new teachers to upwards of six sessions helping to explore student supports, technology and philosophy of education. This year 52 new teachers together with some principals and established teacher leaders participated in a poverty simulation conducted by the staff of United Way.

Each participant was provided with a role such as a father, a teenaged son, etc. and over the course of the morning had to explore what it was like to deal with banks, high-priced loan agencies, social services and law enforcement while living in family poverty.

A group of 90 people shared their insights into what life is like for not only many of our children, but many moms, dads and caregivers that we interact with on a daily basis.

The forum had an affect on the participants, some of whom shared their

views on what they learned

“I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated having the opportunity to participate in the Poverty Simulation. It was a great opportunity for staff to come together to focus on the realities of our community.”

“I found the Poverty Simulation an excellent rounding experience and would like to contact United Way for the purpose of having them repeat the simulation at our school.”

“Although I can’t claim to fully comprehend what it would be like to live in poverty, the simulation made me feel helpless and powerless in ways that I rarely if ever deal with in my own personal day-to-day life. Thanks to the simulation exercise I believe I now have a better appreciation of what living in poverty might feel like.”

“Participating in the simulation was a HUGE reminder of the complexities our families face daily. The difficult choices and realities for families and children directly impacts our schools. It is essential that we understand and are aware of our communities for which we serve. Providing supports and interventions to help reduce barriers creating schools that are inclusive and model tolerance, acceptance and empathy.”

### Child poverty facts in Manitoba

- 20% of children in Manitoba have had contact with Child and Family Services (same as the rate of children living in poverty). One of the highest in the world.
- The most recent census track the number of children in foster care:
- The national rate is 0.5% of children under 15 are in foster care. Manitoba meanwhile has 1.9%, the highest in Canada, followed by the territories and Saskatchewan.
- 80% of the children with no contact with CFS finish Grade IX on time, while only 21% of children who are in care for 1-plus year, finish in Grade IX on time.
- 76% of children with no contact with CFS graduate within six years of entering Grade IX; 10% of children with 1-plus year in care.
- 50% of girls in care became teen mothers; in contrast to 4% of children with no contact with Child and Family Services.