

# Metis Land Grants in Manitoba

## A Statistical Study

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*The Manitoba Act provided for substantial grants of land to the Metis inhabitants of the new province. Until recently, most historians viewed the intentions of the federal government in relation to these land grants in a favourable light, blaming overwhelming numbers of Ontario immigrants and the character of the Metis themselves for the rapid transfer of the lands out of Metis hands. This consensus came under attack during the 1970s and 1980s, as new research shifted the blame to the government's administration of the land grants. This study of the land grants received and lots sold by a sample of Metis families in Manitoba challenges both earlier arguments. The authors conclude that the Metis had little difficulty receiving title to the lands promised them in the Manitoba Act, that they behaved rationally in the land market of the 1870s and 1880s, and that they received, on the whole, substantial monetary benefits when they sold their lands.*

*La Loi sur le Manitoba prévoyait d'importantes concessions de terres pour les Métis qui habitaient la nouvelle province. Jusqu'à récemment, la plupart des historiens considéraient d'un oeil favorable les intentions du gouvernement fédéral en ce qui concerne l'octroi de ces concessions de terres et blâmaient le nombre considérable d'immigrants de l'Ontario et le tempérament des Métis pour le transfert rapide de ces terres à d'autres mains. Pendant les années 70 et 80, ce consensus a été remis en question car, par suite des résultats de nouvelles recherches, le blâme a été attribué à l'administration des concessions de terres par le gouvernement. La présente étude des concessions de terres reçues et des terres vendues par un échantillon de familles métis met en doute les deux arguments précédents. Les auteurs tirent les conclusions suivantes : les Métis ont éprouvé peu de difficulté à recevoir les titres des terres qui leur avaient été promises en vertu de la Loi sur le Manitoba, ils se sont comportés de façon rationnelle par rapport au marché foncier des années 1870 et 1880 et, dans l'ensemble, ils ont reçu des avantages financiers importants lorsqu'ils ont vendu leurs terres.*

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THE MANITOBA ACT provided for substantial grants of land to the Metis<sup>1</sup> inhabitants of the new province: 1.4 million acres to be distributed to the “children of the half-breed heads of families”; confirmation of title to the river lots which the old settlers, most of whom were Metis, had already occupied; and grants of land to commute the “rights of hay and common” that settlers had enjoyed under the Hudson’s Bay Company regime.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent legislation also granted each Metis “head of family” (a phrase that included both fathers and mothers) \$160 money scrip redeemable in Dominion Lands.<sup>3</sup>

Until the 1970s most historians viewed the intentions of the federal government in relation to these land grants in a favourable light. Donald Creighton admitted that the implementation of the grants had a troubled history, but argued that Prime Minister Macdonald and the officials of the Department of the Interior had taken their responsibilities seriously and had treated the Metis with consideration.<sup>4</sup> W. L. Morton, while disagreeing with Creighton on other aspects of the West’s entry into Confederation, agreed that the government had acted with all possible speed to quiet Metis’ fears and ensure that the settlement of land issues would be peaceful and orderly.<sup>5</sup> Both Creighton and Morton, following earlier studies by G. F. G. Stanley and Marcel Giraud,<sup>6</sup> blamed the rapid alienation of Metis lands on the overwhelming numbers of Ontario immigrants arriving in Manitoba after 1870 and on the “thrifless” and “improvident” character of the Metis. The villains, if any, were the speculators who took advantage of the unwitting Metis. According to Creighton, these “land sharks” were responsible for the miscarriage of the well-intentioned Manitoba land grants, and the Metis

1 Following the increasingly common practice of the Metis themselves, we write “Metis” without an accent except when quoting texts or titles where the accent is found. Donald Purich, *The Metis* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1988), p. 5. The term “Metis”, for the purposes of this paper, includes all mixed-blood communities in Red River regardless of whether they referred to themselves as *métis* or half-breeds. The term Metis is used in this generic sense because the Metis land grant was phrased in a generic way in the Manitoba Act and because the word “Metis” does not carry the pejorative connotations of the word “half-breed”. When it is necessary to differentiate between mixed-blood communities, the adjectives “French” and “English” are used to qualify “Metis”.

2 The Manitoba Act, S.C., 1870, c. 3, ss. 31, 32 (1–4), and 32 (5) respectively. On all aspects of the Metis grants, see Thomas Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991).

3 S.C., 1874, c. 20, 33 (1–2); Order-in-Council, March 23, 1876.

4 Donald G. Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 386–387.

5 W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 147–155. This was also more or less the conclusion of H. Douglas Kemp, “Land Grants under the Manitoba Act”, *Papers Read before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, Series III, no. 9 (1954), pp. 33–52.

6 G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (1936; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 245; Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, translated by George Woodcock (1945; Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), vol. 2, p. 383.

themselves squandered their land rights to follow the dwindling buffalo herds further west.

This consensus came under serious attack in the 1970s and 1980s as historians and land-claims researchers began to re-examine the alienation of Metis land grants in Manitoba. The most prominent of the revisionists was D. N. Sprague, who in a series of articles and books argued that the Metis were not the improvident and nomadic people portrayed by earlier historians. Rather, they were “persistent settlers”, strongly attached to their lands. Sprague also shifted the blame for the rapid alienation of their lands from the Metis themselves and the speculators to the federal government’s administration of the grants. Sprague accused the government of never having intended to allow the bulk of the land grants to pass into Metis hands. These grants, according to Sprague, had been structured and administered to limit eligibility, to encourage fraud and misappropriation, and to facilitate hasty sales at low prices.<sup>7</sup>

While few historians have wholeheartedly endorsed Sprague’s “conspiracy” thesis, his work has greatly changed the portrayal of Metis land grants in the historical literature. This new orthodoxy, echoed in Gerald Friesen’s *The Canadian Prairies*, leaves open the question of government dishonesty or complicity with speculators, but clearly agrees with Sprague that the Metis acquired only a fraction of the lands to which they were entitled.<sup>8</sup> A recent scholarly monograph on Metis history begins with the assumption that many Red River Metis left Manitoba because their lands had been arbitrarily confiscated.<sup>9</sup> One should also mention the work of Paul L. A. H. Chartrand, which argues that the Metis children’s land grant should have been implemented as a group settlement scheme extending over a period of generations, as was intended, rather than a once-and-for-all division of the 1.4 million acres into individual allotments.<sup>10</sup>

The revisionist approach gained acceptance before detailed empirical

7 D. N. Sprague, “Government Lawlessness in the Administration of Metis Land Claims, 1870–1887”, *Manitoba Law Journal*, 10 (1980), pp. 415–441; “Introduction”, in D. N. Sprague and R. P. Frye, eds., *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820–1900* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Books, 1983); “Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870–1885”, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 17 (1985), pp. 1–30 (with P. R. Mailhot); *Canada and the Métis, 1869–1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988); “Dispossession vs. Accommodation in Plaintiff vs. Defendant Accounts of Métis Dispersal from Manitoba, 1870–1881”, *Prairie Forum*, 16 (1991), pp. 137–155.

8 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 197–199.

9 Diane Paulette Payment, “*The Free People – Otipemisiwak*”: *Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870–1930* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, 1990), p. 23. Similar views are found in Nicole J. M. St-Onge, “The Dissolution of a Métis Community: Pointe à Grouette, 1860–1885”, *Studies in Political Economy*, 18 (1985), pp. 149–172, and “Race, Class and Marginality in an Interlake Settlement: 1850–1950”, in James Silver and Jeremy Hull, eds., *The Political Economy of Manitoba* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1990), pp. 73–87.

10 Paul L. A. H. Chartrand, *Manitoba’s Métis Settlement Scheme of 1870* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Native Law Centre, 1991).

studies had been undertaken to determine how the Metis alienated their lands or what monetary benefits they received from sales. However, recent small-scale studies by Gerhard Ens on river lots in the parishes of St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier and by Thomas Flanagan on the children's grant and heads of families' scrip have challenged the revisionist theory.<sup>11</sup> This article compiles a much larger data set, involving river lots and commutation grants as well as children's grants, for a more systematic test of the revisionist thesis.<sup>12</sup> Our findings are at considerable variance with the earlier arguments of Giraud, Stanley, and Creighton as well as the revisionism of Sprague. We find that the Metis had little difficulty receiving title to the lands promised them in the Manitoba Act, that they behaved rationally in the land market of the 1870s and 1880s, and that they received, on the whole, substantial monetary benefits when they sold these lands. These findings will not counter the essentially trans-historical position of those who believe that the Manitoba land grants should have been structured as a group settlement scheme in order to create a Metis enclave in southern Manitoba, but they at least establish a factual context for the debate about what policy should have been adopted.

### Methodology

In comparison to previous studies, the work reported here has several distinctive features. First, we include all benefits of land and scrip that the Metis received as well as treaty benefits for the minority of Metis who entered treaty. Second, we study Metis families, not just isolated individuals, in order to assess the aggregate impact of the various kinds of grants. Third, we document the behaviour of the Metis living in all of Manitoba at the time of Confederation, not just in one or two parishes. Fourth, we have a sample large enough to show results that are more than tentative.

In order to use statistical tests of significance that assume a normal distribution of sample means, we wanted a sample of at least 100 families.<sup>13</sup> We increased the sample size to 105 to allow for the possibility that some families selected might be impossible to trace. Using a table of random numbers, we drew a simple (i.e. unstratified) random sample from

11 Gerhard Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation: Migration and Persistence of the Red River Metis, 1835-1890", *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1988), pp. 120-144; Thomas Flanagan, "The Market for Métis Lands in Manitoba: An Exploratory Study", *Prairie Forum*, 16 (1991), pp. 1-20.

12 The study was funded by the federal Department of Justice for possible use in the pending *Dumont* case. The results are published with permission. We would like to thank Dr. Keith Archer for help in designing the study and Martha Lee and Andrew Beh for assistance in coding and analyzing the data.

13 Roderick Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1979), says that a sample of 100 cases is large enough that "the fluency distribution of sample means ... will be a normal distribution" (p. 174), which is assumed in many statistical tests.

**Table 1** Distribution of Sample Families by Parish

Parish	No. Families	% Families (Sample)	% Families (Census)
St. Peter's	12	11.4	7.5
St. Clement's	8	7.6	4.8
St. Andrew's	13	12.4	14.0
St. Paul's	1	1.0	3.1
Kildonan	1	1.0	4.7
St. James	4	3.8	3.7
Headingley	2	1.9	2.8
High Bluff	3	2.9	1.3
Poplar Point	2	1.9	4.7
Portage	3	2.9	3.1
Westbourne	2	1.9	0.1
Ste. Agathe	4	3.8	1.4
St. Norbert	11	10.4	9.8
St. Vital	7	6.7	3.7
St. Boniface	7	6.7	7.5
Ste. Anne	2	1.9	3.0
St. Charles	1	1.0	3.5
St. F. Xavier	12	11.4	17.0
Baie St. Paul	4	3.8	2.9
St. Laurent	6	5.7	1.5
	<u>105</u>		

Source: Manitoba census, 1870

the list of heads of families in D. N. Sprague and R. P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Table 1), which contains all families named in Red River records prior to 1870. Families in which both heads were white or in which both had died before 1870 were discarded and replacements were drawn until the designated sample size was reached. Children's names for the families in the sample were then added by means of cross-reference to Table 4 in the same book. The final result was a sample containing 105 families, with 206 parents (four of the potential total of 210 had died before July 15, 1870) and 512 children living as of that date.

The sample did not include families in which both parents were white because their children were not eligible for land under s. 31 of the Manitoba Act. This excluded the "Selkirk Settlers" and their descendants, who lived mainly in the parishes of St. John's and Kildonan and numbered about 5 per cent of the population of Red River in 1870. However, the sample did include 14 families in which only one parent was white, whose children were eligible for land grants.

We also included families for which Sprague and Frye listed both parents as Indian. Even though the children of such families should not have been eligible for s. 31 land grants, the distinction between Metis and Indians,

particularly in St. Peter's Parish, where most of the Indians lived, was not strict.<sup>14</sup>

To assess the representativeness of our sample, we can make some broad comparisons to contemporary census data, although differences in definitions prevent these comparisons from being tested for statistical significance. According to the Dominion census taken in November 1870, the population of Manitoba was about 11,960, of whom 1,600 (13.4%) were whites, 560 (4.7%) Indians, 5,720 (47.8%) French Metis, and 4,080 (34.1%) English half-breeds.<sup>15</sup>

First 13.4 per cent of the census population was white, whereas our sample of heads of families contains 6.7 per cent whites, a plausible result, given that we excluded whites married to each other. Since we included only whites married to non-whites, our sample included no white children.

Second, *of the mixed-race population*, the census listed 58.4 per cent as French Metis, as opposed to 41.6 per cent English Metis. Our sample lacks a direct comparison for this statistic because we do not have an individually reliable indicator of ethnicity. We constructed a proxy, however, by dividing the sample into those who lived in predominantly French and predominantly English parishes. Apart from mixed marriages, there was relatively little geographical overlap between the two groups. Using this operational definition of ethnicity, the sample contains 51 per cent French and 49 per cent English families. While this may appear to overrepresent the English Metis, it must be remembered that the census figures are for individuals, whereas this breakdown is for families. The two would coincide exactly only if English and French Metis family sizes were the same, which we know not to be the case.

The proportion of children in the sample (57.8% French, 42.2% English) is an almost perfect match to the census figures because the average size of the French families in the sample is larger than that of the English families: 5.48 children per French family compared to 4.23 children per English family. This ethnic difference in family size agrees with the earlier research of Ens into the demography of St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier.<sup>16</sup>

The geographical dispersion in our sample is a reasonable reflection of residential patterns in the Red River Colony. Our sample contains cases from every parish along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers except St. John's,

14 Wemyss M. Simpson to Joseph Howe, November 3, 1871, in Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Belfords, Clarke & Co., 1880), p. 41.

15 The abstract of the census is reported in *Canada Sessional Papers* 1871, No. 20, pp. 89–95. The numbers are not precise because the two enumerators, one French and one English, did the count separately and arrived at slightly different totals. The figures reported here are from Governor Archibald's compromise estimate.

16 Gerhard J. Ens, "Kinship, Ethnicity, Class and the Red River Metis: The Parishes of St. François Xavier and St. Andrew's" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1989), pp. 172–173.

as well as from the outlying settlements of Westbourne, Saint Laurent, and Sainte Anne de Chênes. Table 1 compares the proportion of families in our sample in each parish with the corresponding census figure. The six largest parishes in the census (St. François Xavier, St. Andrew's, St. Norbert, St. Peter's, St. Boniface, and St. Clement's in that order) are also the best represented in the sample, although not in order of size. Our sample differs from the census population mainly in the exclusion of St. John's and the underrepresentation of Kildonan – both resulting from our decision not to include white families – and the overrepresentation of St. Peter's – perhaps related to our decision to include families listed by Sprague and Frye as Indian.

For all members of the sample, we attempted to document every benefit received: river lots, commutation grants in the outer two miles, hay scrip in lieu of commutation grants,<sup>17</sup> \$160 heads of families' scrip, 240-acre children's allotments, \$240 scrip in lieu of children's allotments,<sup>18</sup> and entry into treaty for the small minority of Manitoba Metis who made that choice. We also tried to document the sales history of every individual land grant.<sup>19</sup> Treaty rights could not be sold; scrip sales cannot be documented because the notes were liquid and no records were kept.

### River Lots and Commutation Grants

While river lots in the inner two miles and commutation grants in the outer two miles were legally distinct, we deal with them in tandem because, in most cases, the two pieces of land were sold together. To determine what the Metis families did with the lands awarded under s. 32 of the Manitoba Act, we made a detailed study of the sale and disposition of the lots belonging to our sample of 105 families. As shown in Table 2, not all families claimed river lots, while some families had multiple lots.

Of the 34 families for whom no river lot could be found, 12 came from the parish of St. Peter's, which was unsurprising because most inhabitants of that parish entered treaty. These 12 families, having taken treaty, were ineligible for individual land grants in the parish. While we have not documented the reasons why all of the other 22 families had no claim to river lots, we found that several cases had logical explanations, and we suspect that similar reasons may exist in some of the as yet unexplained instances. For example, Duncan Begg, whom *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation*

17 For details on hay scrip, see Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba*, pp. 200–224.

18 For details on this so-called “supplementary scrip”, see *ibid.*, pp. 91–93.

19 Sprague has recently suggested that sales data are so unreliable (possibly fabricated) that they cannot be used for scholarly purposes (“Dispossession vs. Accommodation”, pp. 150–151). However, he adduces no actual cases of unreliability, and he himself performs calculations with the data in the same article. In our view, it strains credibility to assume that the thousands of land records relating to Metis' sales, which are in exactly the same format as other land records, were somehow invented or forged. See Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba*, pp. 230–231.

**Table 2 Number of River Lots Received per Family**

No. of Lots Received*	No. of Families	Percentage
0	34	32.4
1	52	49.5
2	14	13.3
3	1	1.0
4	4	3.8
	<u>105</u>	<u>100.0</u>

\* Total number of river lots received = 99 =  $(34 \times 0) + (54 \times 1) + (14 \times 2) + (1 \times 3) + (4 \times 4)$ , of which 49 were accompanied by a commutation grant in the outer two miles.

Source: Parish Files, Provincial Archives of Manitoba; Abstract Books, Manitoba Land Titles Offices

lists as living with his wife and two young children between lots 2 and 5 in St. Clement's, had no claim to or ownership of any of these lots. Lot 5, however, was granted to his father, Charles Begg. Just beginning his family, Duncan Begg probably lived with his father on lot 5 in the years 1869 and 1870. John Black, married to Henrietta Ross, is listed by *Genealogy* as living between lots 25 to 28 in Kildonan. Black, however, had no claim to these or any other lots in Kildonan. He was a clergyman who had come to the Red River Settlement in 1851 to serve the Presbyterians, and, while he and his wife and five children lived on lot 26 in Kildonan in 1870, the lot legally belonged to the Presbyterian Church.

Pierre Gariépy (Gardipuis) was listed both in the census of 1870 and in *Genealogy* as a resident of St. François Xavier. Yet Gariépy, who had married Marie Grant (the daughter of Cuthbert Grant) and had 12 children by 1870, had no claim to a lot in the parish. The anomaly is only apparent because Gariépy was a hunter and trader who had been wintering in the North-West with his family for a number of years prior to 1870. It was a practice that had become increasingly common after the 1840s as the buffalo herds moved further west. In fact, after Cuthbert Grant's death, Gariépy, his wife, and others of Grant's descendants sold the family estate to Pascal Bréland.<sup>20</sup> Gariépy and his family would have come back to St. François Xavier regularly in the spring and summer to trade furs and baptize their children, but this would not have required land of their own, as they could easily have stayed with relatives. Pascal Bréland, who had bought the family lot in 1858, had, in fact, also married one of Grant's daughters. By the early 1870s, Gariépy's locus of activities was no longer the Red River Settlement, as attested by the fact that in 1871 he was one of the members of the semi-

20 This was the 18-chain lot 183 in St. François Xavier. The agreement is dated 1858. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Parish Files, Lot 183 St. François Xavier.



permanent wintering community of St. Laurent de Grandin.<sup>21</sup> Given that there were 334 families in St. François Xavier in 1870<sup>22</sup> and only 227 lots, there would have been numerous other families like the Gariépys.

While these examples do not explain all the instances of families without lots, they do show that there were reasonable explanations for such occurrences. In all, there were only 19 of 105 families (18% of the sample) for whom there was no reasonable explanation of why they did not receive title to a river lot. This evidence at the least suggests that there was no widespread misappropriation of Metis river lots.

In examining the disposition of the lots that were claimed, we traced ownership back to the first sale (we did not consider transfers within a family to be sales). Of the 99 river lots in the sample, 17 remained in the original family's hands past 1900. Nine lots were lost through foreclosure or tax sales, and 73 lots were sold prior to 1900. Because lots were sometimes subdivided, the 73 lots sold generated 92 separate sales, not counting foreclosures (because of missing data, we use  $n = 88$  sales in our statistical analysis).

As shown in the preceding section, conventional wisdom about the disposition of Metis river lots maintains that the vast majority of Metis quickly sold their lots for very low prices to unscrupulous speculators and left for the North-West. This view prevails in the original works of Stanley, Giraud, and Creighton as well as in the revisionism of Sprague and others. However, evidence from the present sample revises these views considerably. It shows that the Metis did not always sell quickly; when they did sell, they could take advantage of a competitive land market, in which they participated in a rational way. Those who sold their lots prior to 1900 received a price comparing favourably to prices paid for CPR and Hudson's Bay Company lands in the years for which comparative figures are available (see Table 3).<sup>23</sup>

21 Glenbow Archives, G. A. Hardisty Papers, File 637.

22 Based on a detailed reconstruction of the 1870 census for St. François Xavier.

23 For the land market in the 1870s, see A. S. Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement* (Toronto: Macmillan 1938), pp. 49–74; John L. Tyman, *By Section, Township and Range: Studies in Prairie Settlement* (Brandon: Assiniboine Historical Society, 1972), pp. 25–43, 145; Chester Martin, *"Dominion Lands" Policy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938); John Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Development of Western Canada* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., *The Letters of Charles John Brydges 1879–1882: Hudson's Bay Company Land Commissioner* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1977). In the regulations of July 9, 1879, passed in preparation for the sales of Dominion Lands around railways, the Canadian government designated a railway belt 220 miles in width and divided into zones. "Belt A" consisted of a zone ten miles wide (five on either side of the railway) to be held exclusively for sale at \$6.00 per acre. "Belt B", on either side of "Belt A" to a width of 15 miles, was to be sold for \$5.00 an acre. "Belt C" was to be sold for \$3.50 an acre, "Belt D" for \$2.00 an acre, and "Belt E" for \$1.00 an acre. With the formation of the CPR syndicate, new regulations were announced in 1882, specifically the establishment of a CPR belt of 48 miles. "Class A" land of the odd-numbered

**Table 3** Number and Prices of River Lot Sales\* and Comparative Prices by Year, 1870-1900

Year	No. of Sales	Mean Size Per Acre (acres)	Mean Price Per Acre (PPA) (\$)	PPA CPR (\$)	PPA HBC (\$)
1870	0				
1871	1	192	0.26		
1872	8	106	0.86		
1873	4	116	2.61		
1874	9	165	4.12		
1875	3	102	4.03		
1876	5	158	4.33		
1877	6	86	5.54		
1878	5	174	2.78		
1879	3	114	7.31		
1880	5	94	4.38		5.75**
1881	12	108	16.53		4.94**
1882	8	116	18.28		6.92**
1883	3	81	10.70		6.40***
1884	0				
1885	2	65	9.02		
1886	0				
1887	0				5.98**
1888	2	221	7.22		
1889	3	122	3.42		
1890	3	81	6.95	3.83	
1891	0				
1892	2	193	11.92		
1893	1	49	26.02	3.17	
1894	0			3.05	
1895	2	131	3.46	3.19	
1896	0			3.51	
1897	0			3.38	
1898	0			3.22	
1899	1	20	5.00	3.18	

\* This includes sales of both the Inner Two Miles and the Outer Two Miles but excludes foreclosures and tax sales.

\*\* Sales for year ending May 31.

\*\*\* Sales in the month of May.

Source: Land Titles Offices and sources listed in note 23.

The mean price of all river lot sales in our sample was \$7.32 per acre. When the CPR started selling land in the late 1870s, its prices for farmland

sections in this belt went directly to the CPR. Even-numbered sections in this 48-mile belt and beyond were open to homesteading, while odd-numbered sections on Dominion land within 72 miles of any other railway or south of the CPR ("Class C") were to be sold at \$2.50 per acre, and beyond this ("Class D") for \$2.00 per acre. See Martin, *"Dominion Lands" Policy*, p. 315; and Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway*, pp. 175-176.

ranged from \$2.50 to \$7.00 an acre. Land sales, however, were slow, and by 1888 the CPR had reduced its minimum price to \$2.00 an acre. For the years before 1900 in which aggregate figures exist for CPR sales, the average price never exceeded \$3.83 per acre. The Hudson's Bay Company, which always got a better price for its land than did either the CPR or the Dominion government, averaged \$6.80 per acre for farmland from 1879 to the end of 1888.<sup>24</sup> In comparison to these sale prices, the Metis did relatively well. The average of \$7.32 per acre is influenced by the exceptionally high price of several lots sold near Winnipeg during the speculative real estate boom of 1881–1882, but the median price for land sales between 1870 and 1899 of \$3.78 per acre is still respectable.

While these figures do not provide an exact market comparison, given that the CPR and HBC land sales were scattered all across the prairies while Metis river lot sales were concentrated within a 60-kilometre radius of Winnipeg, they do suggest that the Metis were not making hasty sales at low prices. The average sale price per acre for Metis river lots was higher than the upper level of land prices set by the CPR in the 1870s, and lots in close proximity to Winnipeg fetched average prices of \$34 to \$49 per acre. Prime river lots in St. Boniface were, in a few instances, sold for \$100 to \$200 per acre.

When sales are broken down by year and by parish, a clearer picture emerges of why the Metis received what they did. Table 3 shows that only those who sold in 1871 and 1872 received, on average, very low prices. The nine sales in these two years were made by six families from the outlying parishes of Baie St. Paul, Portage la Prairie, St. François Xavier, and Westbourne (see Table 4). The remote location of these lots would account at least partially for the low prices. Other reasons are the early date of sale, prior to the Dominion Lands Survey, which entailed a greater risk that the claim might not receive legal recognition, and the fact that some of the lots had more than one claimant. For example, in 1872, Richard Favel sold lots 115 and 116 in Baie St. Paul for \$50 each. Richard Bremner, another Metis, later claimed to have occupied these lots in 1870. Favel may well have sold these lots early and cheaply knowing that there was a conflicting claim.

As in Ens's earlier study of St. Andrew's and St. François Xavier, there were two peak periods for sales – 1872–1874 and 1880–1882.<sup>25</sup> The former corresponded to the first wave of Metis immigration from Red River. Those Metis who had been following the buffalo-robe trade before 1870 by wintering on the plains and returning to the Red River Settlement in spring to trade their furs and robes now began to remain permanently on the plains. In addition to these pull factors, there were also push factors not associated with the land issue in Manitoba. The soldiers from the Wolseley Expedition,

24 Bowsfield, *The Letters of Charles John Brydges*, p. 355.

25 See Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation".

**Table 4 Sales by Parish, 1871-1899**

Parish	Km from Winnipeg*	No. of River Lots in Sample	No. of Sales	Price Per Acre
St. Peter's	40	0	0	
St. Clement's	29	5	7	6.05
St. Andrew's	23	14	9	6.77
St. Paul's	15	1	1	3.85
Kildonan	0	0		
St. James	7	5	7	49.35
Headingley	21	3	1	2.14
High Bluff	73	1	1	5.31
Poplar Point	64	3	4	6.29
Portage	87	1	1	8.70
Westbourne	109	2	1	1.23
Ste. Agathe	40	4	2	4.23
St. Norbert	19	11	7	2.94
St. Vital	11	8	7	12.62
St. Boniface	1	8	5	34.44
Ste. Anne	44	3	2	3.33
St. Charles	11	4	5	12.02
St. F. Xavier	32	14	16	2.40
Baie St. Paul	44	10	11	1.87
St. Laurent	84	2	1	3.95

\* Measured from the middle of the parish to the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

Source: Abstract Books, Manitoba Land Titles Offices

along with incoming Ontario settlers, created a social and political climate in the new province which the Catholic French-speaking Metis found repugnant. As Governor Archibald observed in 1871, the French Metis were very excited,

not so much, I believe by the dread about their land allotment as by the persistent ill-usage of such of them as have ventured from time to time into Winnipeg from the disbanded volunteers and newcomers who fill the town. Many of them actually have been so beaten and outraged that they feel as if they were living in a state of slavery. They say that the bitter hatred of these people is a yoke so intolerable that they would gladly escape it by any sacrifice.<sup>26</sup>

The second peak in lot sales was undoubtedly related to the real-estate boom of 1880 to 1882. Prices for land near Winnipeg and near completed

26 Letter of A. G. Archibald to John A. Macdonald, October 9, 1871, reprinted in *Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 37 Vic. (1874), vol. VIII, "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territories in 1869-70", Appendix no. 6.

or projected railway lines skyrocketed. Observing events from St. Norbert, the Abbé Ritchot saw a veritable “mania for buying land” (“*fureur des achats de terres*”).<sup>27</sup> Taking advantage of these prices, many Metis sold their river lots to re-establish themselves in the North-West Territories or in other parts of Manitoba. By the early 1880s, the limitations of the narrow river lots for commercial farming were well known, and it was necessary to consolidate river-lot holdings or to sell them to get money to homestead in another area.<sup>28</sup> A smaller peak in river-lot sales in the years 1876 to 1878 was related to sales of children’s allotments in this period. Families who had stayed in Manitoba to await the allotment of their children’s land now took the opportunity to sell and move further west.

The analysis of sales by parish illustrated in Table 4 further emphasizes market forces in the sales of river lots. The parishes in which the highest prices per acre were obtained (St. James, St. Vital, St. Boniface, and St. Charles) were all within 11 kilometres of the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers (within the boundaries of the present city of Winnipeg). There was a statistically significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.30$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) between distance from Winnipeg and price – as distance from Winnipeg increased, the price of river lots decreased.<sup>29</sup> The few exceptions to this trend have logical explanations. The relatively high land prices in the parishes of High Bluff, Poplar Point, and Portage, all more than 60 kilometres from Winnipeg, can be explained to some extent by the fact that, after 1879, the CPR main line was projected to pass through these parishes. Likewise the higher land prices in the parishes of St. Clement’s and St. Andrew’s (23 and 29 km from Winnipeg) as compared to those in St. Norbert and Headingley (19 and 21 km from Winnipeg) is explained by the fact that, until 1879, the CPR main line was projected to cross the Red River at the town of Selkirk, located at the northern end of St. Clement’s parish.

While proximity to Winnipeg or railway lines played a part in most of the large profits made from river-lot sales, the Metis did not simply stumble into good fortune. Those Metis who profited most usually came from families with experience in commerce and the land market.<sup>30</sup> Robert Tait of St. James is representative of this Metis merchant-farmer class in Red

27 N. J. Ritchot to A. A. Taché, February 9, 1882, AASB, T 26296-99, quoted in Philippe Mailhot, “Ritchot’s Resistance: Abbé Noël Joseph Ritchot and the Creation and Transformation of Manitoba” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1986), pp. 244–245.

28 For a deeper analysis of this question, see Ens, “Dispossession or Adaptation”.

29 Using the 88 sales, linear regression was carried out with the variables of km from Winnipeg (independent variable) and price per acre (dependent variable). Pearson’s  $r = -0.2967$ , with  $t = 2.88$  with 86 degrees of freedom and  $p = 0.005$ .

30 These included Joseph Martel of St. Boniface (\$6,000), John Bourke of St. James (\$19,810), Daniel Carrière of St. Boniface (\$3,250), François Dubois of St. Vital (\$2,200), Robert Tait of St. James (\$7,201), and Joseph Tait of St. Andrew’s (\$2,350).

River. Born in the Red River Settlement in 1830, he began working as a blacksmith's apprentice at Lower Fort Garry in 1843 when there were few opportunities for ambitious young men in the Colony. The following year he left Red River for the growing commercial town of St. Paul, Minnesota. When he returned to Red River in 1850 after the Sayer trial had established free trade, he brought with him the Colony's first reaping machine. The next year he imported the first threshing machine. By 1869 he had purchased a number of river lots in St. James, opened a store for fur trading, and established a large farm replete with a steam grist mill. His sale of river lots in the 1870s did not represent the dispossession of a Metis family, but a real estate transaction to finance other undertakings. He retained some river-front property and bought other land near Elm Creek, Manitoba, where he built up a large cattle ranch. In 1878 he also owned and operated the ferry between Winnipeg and St. Boniface.<sup>31</sup> Tait was certainly not typical of most Metis, but his and other examples show the existence of an important entrepreneurial element.

Ethno-religious affiliation was also correlated with success in the market. On average, English Metis received almost twice as much (a mean of \$10.41 per acre as compared to \$5.38 per acre) as did French Metis. The difference was particularly marked in the years 1873 to 1875, a period identified earlier as the first wave of Metis emigration from Manitoba due to the attractions of the buffalo-robe trade and the intolerance of Protestant Ontario settlers coming into Manitoba. Given that the French Metis, particularly those living in the parishes of St. François Xavier and Baie St. Paul, were more involved in the buffalo-robe trade and were under the most stress from the new Protestant settlers, it is not surprising that they would have sold earlier and for lower prices. It is also noteworthy that 33 per cent of the English families, compared to only 12 per cent of the French families, persisted on their river lots past 1900. This fact is not reflected in the data on land prices because we did not record sales made after 1900, but it indicates different levels of attachment to the land.

A final observation is that the Metis participated in the land market not only as sellers but also as buyers. While the largest buyers were Canadian immigrants such as John Christian Schultz (five lots), Metis purchases were not insignificant. Of the 71 purchasers of the sample's 99 river lots, 16 were Red River Metis and another four were either Catholic clergy or "old settlers" of Red River.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, four Metis families from the sample

31 He was the son of William Tait and Mary Auld. In 1858 he married Jane Inkster. See *Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba: A Dictionary of Manitoba Biography from the Earliest Times to 1920* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1971), pp. 234–235; and W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg: Russell, Land, and Co., 1923), pp. 90–93.

32 Due to joint purchases, other researchers might arrive at a slightly different count of purchasers. "Old settlers" were the descendants of the Selkirk Settlers or former servants of the Hudson's Bay Company.

who sold their river lots prior to 1900 bought river lots from other families in our sample.<sup>33</sup> The Metis were not simply victims in transactions involving the sale of river lots. They did not dominate the market, but they participated as both buyers and sellers.

### **Children's Allotments**

The 512 children in our sample can be divided into those who received 240 acres of land, those who received \$240 scrip after the Metis children's reserves were exhausted, those who entered treaty and remained in it, those who took treaty and afterwards left it and received \$240 scrip, and those for whom no record of benefit can be found. The aggregate distribution is shown in Table 5.

There is a striking correlation between the benefits the children received (and indeed whether they received any benefits at all) and the land ownership of the parents. It will be recalled that 34 families received no river lot, whereas 71 got one or more. Table 6 shows that fully 90 per cent of those children whose parents received at least one river lot shared in the allotment of the 1.4 million acres, against only 31 per cent of the children whose parents had no land. Of the children whose parents were landless, 23 per cent went into treaty with their parents, 18 per cent got supplementary scrip (note the overlap between the benefits because of voluntary exit from treaty), and 31 per cent received no benefit that we could discover. Two quite different subgroups are included in this group of landless people. One group, consisting of 14 English Metis families living mainly in St. Peter's, decided to become legal Indians. Other landless families, both English and French Metis living in different parishes around the colony, tended to be out on the prairies hunting buffalo and often decided to leave Red River at an early date. Thus they and their children were less likely to appear before the Machar/Ryan commission, which enumerated the Metis claimants in 1875, and their children often ended up with scrip rather than land, or even with no detectable benefit.

The mean sale price for children's allotments in this sample was \$292.42.<sup>34</sup> This leads to an estimate of \$292.42 plus or minus \$44.84 at the 5-per-cent level of confidence for the mean of all sales in the entire population. The sample median, in contrast, is only \$200. The reason for the discrepancy between the two would be indicated in a graph of the frequency distribution, which would show a long tail to the right; these outlying values have a great impact on the arithmetic mean (there were 43 cases in which the sale price was equal to or greater than \$480, or \$2.00 per acre, of which 15 had prices of \$1,000 or more, the highest being \$3,600).

33 Daniel Carrière, François Lefort, George Hodgson (Hodges), and John Taylor.

34 Sprague reports a mean of \$310 for a separate sample of 471 cases, but he does not give a confidence interval ("Dispossession vs. Accommodation", p. 149).

**Table 5 Distribution of Children's Benefits**

Type of Benefit	Number	Percentage
Land	366	71
Scrip only	35	7
Treaty only	36	7
Treaty plus scrip	8	2
No record of benefit	67	14
Totals	512	100

Source: National Archives of Canada, Land, Scrip and Treaty Registers

**Table 6\* Children's Benefits by Parents' Land Ownership**

Children's Benefits	Land Ownership of Parents			
	No River Lots		One or More River Lots	
Land	49	(31%)	318	(90%)
Scrip	23	(14%)	12	(3%)
Treaty	30	(19%)	6	(2%)
Treaty and scrip	7	(4%)	1	(0%)
None found	50	(31%)	16	(5%)
Totals	159	(100%)	353	(100%)

\* For a simplified table in which we avoid small cells by collapsing the three categories of scrip, treaty, and treaty plus scrip into one category of "treaty and/or scrip", *chi-square* = 219.3; *df* = 2; *p* < 0.0001.

Source: National Archives of Canada, Land, Scrip and Treaty Registers

These findings differ somewhat from those of Flanagan's earlier study. On the basis of 49 documented sales, Flanagan estimated the population mean as \$193 plus or minus \$31 at the 5-per-cent level of confidence.<sup>35</sup> However, the median of that smaller sample, not reported at the time, was \$200, the same as in this study. The sample of the earlier study contained only two high-priced sales, one for \$480 and the other for \$500.

Why did the sample of the first study contain only 4 per cent (two out of 49) of sales at or above \$2.00 an acre, whereas this sample contains 14.7 per cent (43 out of 292) of such sales? The answer appears to lie in the different sampling designs of the two projects. The first study used a simple random sample of Metis *children*, whereas this study used a simple random sample of Metis *families*. With respect to children, then, this study is really a cluster sample, containing 105 various-sized clusters of children. Such a design may cause the sample to be skewed for any variable that is systematically related to some behavioural characteristic of families – and high-

35 Flanagan, "The Market for Metis Lands in Manitoba", p. 6.



**Table 7 Chronology of Sales of Children's Allotments and River Lots**

Year	Frequency	Mean (\$)	Median (\$)	Mean PPA*(\$)	Mean PPA*(\$) (river lot)
1877	20	98.13	100	0.41	5.54
1878	34	175.30	120	0.73	2.78
1879	38	178.84	200	0.75	7.31
1880	68	207.72	200	0.86	4.38
1881	40	442.63	240	1.84	16.53
1882	25	628.00	400	2.62	18.28
1883	6	535.00	300	2.23	10.70
1884	8	608.13	275	2.53	
1885	9	309.56	200	1.29	9.02
1886	13	201.92	200	0.84	
1887	11	204.09	100	0.85	
1888	8	323.75	240	1.35	7.22
1890- 1902	7	395.71	320	1.65	8.93

\* PPA is price per acre.

Source: Manitoba Land Titles Offices, Abstract Books

priced sales did in fact "run in the family". Seven families in our sample achieved more than one such sale; indeed, two families, those of John Black and James Bourke, had five each. Because it happened to select a handful of unusually successful families and then included all their children, our sampling design unintentionally magnified their statistical significance. It seems, therefore, that the mean price of \$200, which was the same in both studies, is a safer estimate of the general run of prices than is the much higher mean of this sample, while the mean is a better indicator of aggregate economic impact.

The temporal pattern of the sales summarized in Table 7 shows the similarities and differences between the market for children's lots and the market for river lots. The number of allotment sales rose sharply in 1880, the first year of the Manitoba land boom, and prices shot up in 1881 and 1882, the peak years. The years of the boom witnessed 133 out of 292, or 46 per cent, of the sales in the sample, followed by a sharp drop in sales activity thereafter (only 23 sales in the next three years) as well as in price. The price per acre for both allotments and river lots peaked in 1882. Furthermore, the price per acre for river lots was always much higher than that for children's allotments, ranging in round numbers from five to ten times as high. Some river lots were in the rapidly urbanizing area close to Winnipeg, and most were farms with buildings, fences, and ploughed fields. Children's allotments, in contrast, were raw land, often far from any settlement, road, or rail line.

Male and female children did about equally well in the market; there was not a significant difference in the mean sale prices achieved by the two

groups. This is consistent with the social fact that almost all decisions about the sale of females' allotments would have been made by husbands or fathers pursuing their own interests along with those of their wives or daughters. There is thus no reason to expect different results. In contrast, there was a marked difference between English and French parishes. The 117 sales of allotments to children living in English parishes yielded a mean price of \$363.17 and a median of \$200. The mean price of the 175 sales of allotments to children in French parishes was significantly smaller at \$245.13 ( $t = 2.55$  with pooled variance estimate;  $p = 0.01$ ), while the median of the French sales was the same as that of the English sales, \$200.<sup>36</sup> This is consistent with our earlier observation that the English Metis obtained higher prices for river lots than did the French.

A deeper analysis was desirable for two reasons: first, a few very large observations can swamp the calculation of the mean; secondly, families with one white parent were not separated from families with two Metis parents. To probe the effect of ethnicity, we divided the sample into three groups of families: those with one white parent, "pure" English Metis, and "pure" French Metis. Calculating the average sale price of all allotments per family, we then employed a statistical model known as the "Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance", which uses rank orders rather than dollar values.<sup>37</sup> The use of family averages and rank orders has the effect of reducing the impact of unusually large values. In the analysis, families with one white parent achieved a median value of \$370, English Metis \$220, and French Metis \$186. These differences were statistically significant (Kruskal-Wallis  $H = 10.36$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $0.01 > p > 0.001$ ).

Although ethnicity was important, it was not solely determinative, for there were very large differences among families with ethnic categories. Four children of the well-to-do English Metis Robert Tait, for instance, sold their allotments for an impressive average of \$1,900, while the four children of another English Metis, Nicholas Spence, received an average of only \$86.25. Similar ranges exist in the other ethnic categories. All three groups included families that did very well on average (above \$300) and families that did very poorly (below \$100). The differences in economic behaviour between ethnic groups were statistical, not categorical. There may have been proportionally more success stories among families with one white parent, and more among English Metis than among French Metis families, but there

36 Sprague reports almost the opposite results in "Dispossession vs. Accommodation", p. 149: an average price of \$374 for French sellers ( $n = 276$ ) and \$242 for English sellers ( $n = 195$ ). After reading Sprague's article, we rechecked our data but found no error. We wonder if Sprague might have reversed the French and English labels in his calculation. His result makes no sense in light of all that is known about the behaviour of the French and English Metis.

37 Sidney Siegel, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 184-192.

were families in all three groups that were able to take advantage of the land market to make large amounts of money through sale of allotments.

It would appear *prima facie* that ability to do well in the sale of children's allotments would be related to success in the sale of river lots, and a few obvious cases seem to confirm this impression. For example, the family of Robert Tait, who sold their allotments for an average price of \$1,900, sold four river lots for \$7,873; likewise the family of John Burke, averaging \$731.66 per children's allotment, obtained \$19,970 for four river lots. The statistical relationship is only marginally significant, however. The Spearman's rank order correlation between average family price per allotment and total revenue derived from river lots is 0.22,  $0.10 > p > 0.05$ .<sup>38</sup> Further research would be required to explore the relationship between the market for river lots and the market for children's allotments.

Other factors were involved with these ethnic and family differences. The English allotments were concentrated in an area northwest of Winnipeg that was valuable because of railway construction, thus giving English families an advantage in the market. On the other hand, the allotments tended to be made earlier in the English parishes than in the French parishes. Paradoxically, this delay allowed more French allottees to sell in the boom market of 1880 to 1882. Fully 59 per cent of sales by French allottees took place in these three years, as compared to only 26 per cent of sales by English allottees (*chi square* = 31.2; *df* = 1;  $p < 0.001$ ). Although the French had more sales in the boom years, however, the English did better than the French in nine out of the ten years from 1877 through 1886. As a result, there was more variance among the English children than among the French (English standard error = \$47.79; French standard error = \$20.28). The English had more of the early low-priced sales but also more of the very high-priced sales, probably due to some combination of locational factors and business acumen.

Another factor bearing on price was whether the sale took place before or after the legal description of the allotment was known. Metis children who had appeared before the Machar/Ryan Commission in 1875 could generally expect to receive 240 acres each (unless the application was disallowed), but they could not know the location of their allotments until the lottery took place. As the lotteries for the various parishes were completed, the results were announced in the form of posters prominently displayed in Winnipeg and in the parishes, allowing both buyers and sellers to know the locations. Most children waited until the posters were up before concluding sales, but 11 per cent of the sample sold their rights in advance. Not unexpectedly, this subgroup received markedly lower prices for their lands.

38 We used total revenue derived from river lots rather than price per acre because we felt that an indicator of acumen in this area should include the earlier acquisition of land that was, in effect, there for the taking.

**Table 8 Sale Price by Age of Seller**

Child's Age	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median
Under 18	61	21	\$197.62	\$200
18 to 20	113	40	\$327.40	\$240
21 and over	112	39	\$310.21	\$200

$F = 2.37; p < 0.10$

Source: Abstract Books, Manitoba Land Titles Offices; Children's Allotment Registers, National Archives of Canada

The median of their sales was \$145 and the mean was \$152.11, in contrast to the median of \$200 and the mean of \$309.70 ( $t = -2.16$  with pooled variance estimate;  $p = 0.03$ ) received by the 89 per cent of sellers who waited to learn the location of their land before making a deal.

Still another relevant variable was the legal status of the child at the time of sale. There were three possibilities:

- 1) for children 21 years of age or older, no restriction was placed upon sales except that a married woman required her husband's consent;
- 2) children between 18 and 20 years of age required parental consent to sell;
- 3) for children younger than 18, sale required an order in equity from the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench.

Table 8 summarizes the lot prices received by the three groups ( $n = 286$  because the child's age could not be determined in six cases).

It is interesting that the most successful sales in Table 8 were achieved by the 18 to 20 age group, in which the father probably made the deal but the child was old enough to have a say. Even though the father also made the deal in judicial sales for children under 18, the prices achieved were much less favourable, perhaps because of the cumbersome nature of the judicial process required for this age group (even today, judicial sales are often the domain of bargain hunters). Chronology is also a hidden factor in this table because judicial sales, which began in December 1878, were discontinued in October 1881.<sup>39</sup> There were no judicial sales in late 1881 and 1882, the period when prices were highest.<sup>40</sup>

The analysis thus far has dealt with characteristics of the sellers, but it is also possible to say something about the buyers. We were able to record the names of the buyers in 298 transactions. We found that 180 individuals,

<sup>39</sup> Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba*, p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> Judicial sales are overrepresented at 21% of the sample. We know from other sources that judicial sales made up only about 10% of all transactions (*ibid.*, p. 115). Perhaps one reason why judicial sales are overrepresented in this sample is that they were well documented and thus sure to be picked up in our search of the land records.

**Table 9 List of Principal Buyers**

Name of Buyer	Number of Purchases	Average Price
Peter George	10	\$240.00
A. G. B. Bannatyne	9	206.11
John C. Schultz	9	127.22
A. W. Ross	7	390.00
Donald A. Ross	6	269.17
Peter R. Young	5	128.00
A. M. Nanton	5	256.25
John S. Morrison	5	216.25
William N. Kennedy	5	144.00
Alexander McArthur	5	118.00
Napoléon Bonneau	5	193.00
	71	\$211.58*

\*Unweighted average

Source: Abstract Books, Manitoba Land Titles Offices

partnerships, or corporations bought at least one of the allotments in our sample and none bought more than 10. The 11 biggest buyers are listed in Table 9 together with the number of purchases and average price paid. Note that these 11 biggest buyers accounted for only 71 purchases, or 24 per cent of the total. Most of these seem to have been bargain hunters, for the average price they paid, \$211.58, was only 73 per cent of the sample mean. It is not surprising, however, that those who speculated in real estate on a larger scale should have got better deals.

These data portray a competitive market with many small buyers, none of whom could enforce a "take it or leave it" price. There was, however, somewhat more concentration than is apparent in this picture. Some of the buyers on our list were related to each other or sometimes engaged in business collaboration. For example, A. W. Ross and Donald Ross were brothers, and Napoléon Bonneau was a "claim runner" working for Winnipeg lawyers and bankers, particularly the Ross brothers. Other buyers may have had informal partnerships or working agreements that do not appear in the sales records. The market did not incarnate "perfect competition"; few real-world markets come close to this theoretical ideal. Even allowing for some degree of concentration, however, the market was not monopolistic. A seller looking for a good price had the option of trying to make deals with multiple buyers who were competing against each other, and vice versa.

Location is an important aspect of any real-estate market. Nineteen of the 43 allotments that sold for \$2.00 an acre or more were located northwest of Winnipeg between the Assiniboine and the Red Rivers, less than 30 miles (48 km) from the centre of Winnipeg. Four railways were constructed in this area in the 1880s, including the main line of the Canadian Pacific, so it is not surprising that speculators would have been willing to pay high prices for allotments. It is also significant that the Metis reserves in this area were

allocated to English Metis children, further interweaving ethnicity with the pattern of economic development in the province.

A general spatial analysis of sale prices of all allotments confirms the relatively high land values in this area northwest of Winnipeg. We computed the mean sale price for all allotments by range and again by township. The only ranges with an average price above \$400 were Ranges 1W, 1E, and 2E; the only townships above \$400 were Townships 13 and 14. The intersection of these ranges and townships is precisely the area discussed above.

More broadly, the general pattern is, as one would expect, that average prices decreased the further one moved from the Winnipeg area. Average sale prices were below \$200 in the columns of R7E and R8E to the east, as well as in R2W, R3W, R4W, and R6W to the west of Winnipeg (higher prices in R7W and R9W apparently reflected proximity to the main line of the CPR). Similarly, the average price was below \$200 in the rows of T15, T16, and T17 to the north of Winnipeg as well as in T3, far to the south.

However, it is important not to attribute too much significance to location. Each of the high-priced sales was surrounded by many other allotments sharing the same general location and yet selling for much lower prices. A seller had to recognize the value of location and wait for the right moment in order to capitalize on its advantages.

### **Conclusions**

The Dominion government did indeed provide the benefits promised to the Metis by the Manitoba Act and related legislation. Our research found records of benefits issued to very large majorities of eligible recipients for river lots, commutation grants, hay scrip, half-breed scrip, children's allotments, supplementary scrip, and treaty. In the various categories, there were residual groups in the range of 10 per cent for whom issuance of benefits could not be documented, but many of these negative cases are almost certainly to be explained by difficulties with names. There may have been a few instances of individuals not getting benefits to which they were entitled, but these cannot have been numerous – surely less than 5 per cent of the eligible population. Individuals or families who left Manitoba in the early 1870s would have found it hard to apply in the normal way for their entitlements. Moreover, the benefits issued were highly significant in terms of the contemporary value of money. The typical Metis family received hundreds of dollars of scrip and over a thousand acres of land, most of which was sold to generate thousands of dollars in revenue for the family.

The Metis chose to realize the value of their benefits by selling them. The market in which they sold was competitive, with numerous buyers bidding against one another. Competition to buy was particularly vigorous during the boom years of 1880 to 1882, which was the peak time for sales of both river lots and children's allotments.

Our analysis has identified four variables correlated with ability to obtain high prices in the land market:

- 1) ethnicity (whites were more successful than English half-breeds, who in turn received higher prices than French Metis;
- 2) location (proximity to Winnipeg, other town sites, or rail lines);
- 3) timing (selling during the boom);
- 4) family acumen.

It is apparent that these variables were interwoven. For example, the English were lucky in getting children's allotments in the valuable area northwest of Winnipeg, but the French were lucky in getting theirs closer in time to the boom. Waiting for a good moment to sell was not a purely independent factor; it was related to the business acumen of the family. In view of these interconnections, it would be unjustified to seize upon any one variable as the sole cause of success in the market. It is advisable to view these causes as an interdependent matrix of factors, which together account for market success.

Finally, our study uncovered no evidence in favour of the revisionist thesis that difficulty in getting title to land drove the Metis to emigrate from Manitoba. In fact, all indications are to the contrary. Records show very few cases of disputed lands. The Metis were able to sell river lots and children's allotments without difficulty either before or after receiving patents for them. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the causes of Metis emigration, but it is clear that, if they chose to leave Manitoba, it was not because they were deprived of land.