

Sixty Carts at Red River in 1869

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Introduction

In Canadian history books, the story of "Wandering Willie" McDougall's failed attempt to enter Red River as the new Lt-Governor is told with few details, except that he travelled with sixty carts.

Methods

It was by searching informal and amateur websites that I first found any mention at all of the contents of these sixty carts. To learn what was in those carts and what precipitated the Red River Provisional Government, I needed the perspective of Metis people. Oral traditions have been joined by articles published by community groups and historical societies.

Results

What was in those carts? A cart or two of personal goods for his family. A dozen carts of office furniture. Thirty-five carts of brand-new repeating rifles and ammunition.

ARTICLES.	NUMBER.
Spencer Carbines Complete	100
Peabody Rifles Complete with Bayonets	250
Spencer Ball Ammunition	10000
Total	10250

Received at *Winnipeg* this *16th* day of *July* 1869

To the Superintendent of Stores,
Militia Store Branch,
OTTAWA,
P. C. O.

(No. 228.)

The Militia and Defense requisition form for 100 Spencer carbines, 250 Peabody rifles with bayonets and 10,000 rounds of Spencer ball ammunition.

He wasn't smuggling. He requisitioned 100 Spencer carbines and 250 Peabody rifles with bayonets from Canada's Defense Department, and 10,000 rounds of ammunition. Here's the invoice.

Conclusions

While this information has been common knowledge in Metis oral history, it is accessible to casual and amateur history students through only websites of Metis and historical societies.

Literature cited

Barkwell, Lawrence. "Governor McDougall Launches an Attack on Riel's Provisional Government." The Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture. Gabriel Dumont Institute. n.d. Retrieved May 16, 2020.
<http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/11682>.

Acknowledgments

Some uncomfortable facts are not in history books.
And only one site I've found has the invoice.

Further information

<http://www.paulajohanson.blogspot.com>