

## **Lambert – River Lot 33 (1835)**

Perhaps no other lot in St Andrews captures the spirit of the Hudson Bay Boatman during the fur trade era like Lot 33. It belonged to the foremost voyageur of the Red River, Michel Lambert.

Lambert was a French-Canadian tripman for the HBC. Rowing, portaging 40 kilogram (90 lb) bundles around the waterfalls, navigating the lakes and rivers, he laughed at danger and conquered all perils. Lambert became one of the best-known boatmen on the Red River brigade from Lower Fort Garry - collectively referred to as "Les Taureaux" - the Bison Bulls.

At Norway House, the brigades from western Saskatchewan (les Blaireaux – the badgers) and York Factory (les Poissons Blancs – the white fish) and Red River (les Taureaux – the bison bulls) met to exchange their cargoes. Furs, passengers and mail from the south and west went on their voyage to York Factory with “les poissons blancs”. Manufactured goods and personnel from Britain intended for the far-flung HBC trading posts were stowed aboard the boats of the “les blaireaux” and “les taureaux”.

At this crossroads, after the work had been done, competitions in skill and strength would be held between the rival brigades of tripmen. The foremost challenge was in a boxing ring where the honour of each brigade was defended by a champion. For the Taureaux of Red River, that hero for many years was Michel Lambert.

After such contests, the wilderness reverberated with the tripmen reciting details of the matches and the esteem in which they held the champion. Lambert bore the traits to which all tripmen aspired: bravery, steadfastness, strength, agility and endurance.

Michel Lambert's family maintained his river lot farm while he was away from May to October. His sons also worked for the HBC and acquired two adjoining lots, numbers 31 and 32. For many years, that bend in the Red River became known as Lambert Point.

For more information on the Lamberts, please go to: [redriverancestry.ca](http://redriverancestry.ca), or the Memorable Manitobans section of the Manitoba Historical Society website: [MHS.mb.ca](http://MHS.mb.ca) or the “Beyond the Gates of Lower Fort Garry (1981) or “Echoes of the Red” by J J Gunn available at the Gaynor Family Regional Library.