

St. Eustache formerly Baie St. Paul

In July of 1832 Father Belcourt selected a site for his mission along the Assiniboine River where a large number of Indians and Metis gathered in the spring. The mission was to be named under the protection of Saint Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles. Belcourt then returned in the spring of 1833 with Bishop Provencher's approval. He erected a chapel during the summer, but in September the site, sixty kilometers west of Red River was attacked by a group of Gros-Ventres Indians from the south. Bishop Provencher, concerned for the safety of the priest and the continued success of his work, had the mission re-located closer to St. Boniface.¹

The new mission, Baie St. Paul, was established in 1834 at "Prairie Fournier" (Baker's Prairie) on the left bank of the Assiniboine River, about thirty-seven kilometres from St. Boniface and about eight kilometres east of today's St. Eustache, Manitoba. The site included a tract of land with eight kilometres of river frontage three kilometres in depth, a gift from Governor George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Baie St. Paul was to be Belcourt's official residence as long as he remained under Bishop Provencher's jurisdiction.

In February of 1847, Father Belcourt prepared a petition to the Queen regarding the Metis grievances with regard to the HBC fur trade monopoly. Nine hundred and seventy-seven Metis signed it and James Sinclair took it to England. In retaliation, George Simpson and the HBC trumped up fur trading charges against Belcourt and had the Archbishop in Quebec remove him from Red River. Belcourt immediately began lobbying to return and in June of 1848, Bishop Lorus of Dubuque assigned him to Pembina. Many of his parishioners from Baie St. Paul followed him to Pembina. He eventually moved his mission and school 30 miles west to St. Josephs in 1853.

In 1882 there was extensive flooding at Baie St. Paul and part of the cemetery slid into the river and many houses were destroyed. Many of the residents became discouraged and followed their parish priest, Cyrille Saint-Pierre in a relocation to North Dakota. Later Bishop Tache sent missionary Thomas Quevillion to find a new location for the church. The new location was St. Eustache established in January of 1898. This name was chosen because St. Eustache is the Patron saint of hunters.



¹ The exact location of the first mission, known as St. Paul des Saulteaux, is difficult to pinpoint. Two reliable sources locate it on the left bank of the Assiniboine, some eighty to ninety-five kilometres from St. Boniface. If measured in river distance, the site would have been situated somewhere near St. Eustache, but if measured as-the-crow-flies, it would have been located in the vicinity of Portage la Prairie.

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