

Father Jean-Baptiste Genin Prays for Water for the Métis

In 1937, Joseph Lafromboise¹ (b. 1859) [sic]of Neche, North Dakota tells the following story about Father Jean-Baptiste Genin (b. 1839) and how he miraculously helped the Métis:

In the year of 1862 the buffalo all went across the Missouri River. It had all dried out on the east side of the river. The Halfbreeds and Indians had a hard time getting food in 1862 after the buffalo had crossed the river. When the Halfbreeds and Indians went out for the hunt they just took enough food to last them till they got to the hunting grounds, and when they got there in 1862 and found all the buffalo gone they started back east. They had 100 Red River Carts with oxen and ponies. They had to kill the oxen coming back and some of the ponies for food. They also found that the lakes had gone dry since they were there in 1862 so they suffered a lot from thirst. They then started for Devils Lake; they knew that there was water there.

A Catholic Priest by the name of Father Jennin? (sic) was with the Halfbreeds and before they got to Devils Lake they stopped to have lunch, they had no water so they cooked there meat at little fires that they made by hanging a piece of meat on a stick and letting it cook. When the Halfbreeds told Father Jennin? that they had no water he told them to go to a little lake and that they could get water there, but several of the Halfbreeds had already been over to the lake and it was all dried up, and they told Father Jennin. Then Father Jennin had them recite the rosary. When they were through he told them to get their kettles together and go back again and they did and when the got to the lake again water was coming up through cracks in the bottom of the lake and they got all the water they needed. When they arrived back with the water from the lake, Father Jennin told them to pack all the goods and move over to the lake and make camp. When they got over to the lake Father Jennin had them recite the rosary and celebrated Mass. Then he named the lake St. Mary's Lake.

(Interviewed by Frank O'Leary, Pembina County Pioneers Project, 1937)



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¹ This is likely Joseph Laframboise born April 11, 1856, the son of Narcisse Laframboise and Josephte Cantara. He was the grandson of Joseph Leblanc Laframboise and Cecile Dumont. These were all Pembina bison-hunting families.