

The Missing Bell of Batoche

The St. Antoine de Padoue parish church was completed in 1884. The priest at the time was Father Julien Moulin. Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of the diocese of St. Albert (part of present-day Edmonton, Alberta) was in charge of buying bells for all the Roman Catholic missions in the Northwest. St. Antoine's bell was small, silver and weighed approximately 9 kilograms. It was 30 centimetres high and was produced in Spain in the early 1880s and cost \$25. The bell was baptized on September 2, 1884, by Bishop Grandin and called "Marie-Antoinette". Marie-Antoinette (1755-1793) was the wife of Louis XVI and Queen of France before she was executed during the French Revolution. Xavier Letendre dit Batoche and his sister Marie Letendre-Champagne served as its godparents because their family had founded Batoche. The bell was inscribed with the words, "Vital-Justin Grandin, Évêque de St. Albert", along with the bishop's coat of arms. During the Battle of Batoche, May 9-12, 1885, the bell was stolen by three soldiers from Millbrook, Ontario, a town about 100 kilometres northeast of Toronto. It was held at the Millbrook Legion Hall until October 1991, when it was once again stolen. The bell still has not resurfaced.

References:

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