

The Priests of Batoche

Father Vegreville

Father Valentin Vegreville OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) was born in 1829 and died in 1903. He served as a missionary in Western Canada (first as Rupert's Land then later as the North-West Territories) for fifty years beginning in the early 1850s. He was an expert linguist in the Cree, Innu (Montagnais), and Nakota (Assiniboine) languages, and wrote several manuscripts about First Nations dialects. The Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC published some of his work. Father Vegreville wintered with the Métis at Batoche in 1881, and was a guest in the Xavier Letendre home.

Father Julien Moulin

Father Julien Moulin OMI was originally from France and came to St. Boniface, Red River (now Winnipeg, Manitoba) in 1853. He was sent to Ile-a-la-Crosse (in present-day northwestern Saskatchewan) and Lake Caribou. Father Moulin then moved to Petequaquey Reserve (the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Marcelin, Saskatchewan), where he administered the gospel from the fall of 1878 until 1880. He built a log house there, which also served as his chapel. In 1882, Father Moulin replaced Father Vegreville as Batoche's parish priest. He would be there until 1914. He had wintered with the Métis since 1862, and was known and accepted by most of the local Métis, who gave him the nickname "Father Caribou". In 1883, he personally saved funds to build a rectory and then took out a loan of \$2,000 to build a church. He eventually paid most of this money back himself. In 1884, the new

church – St. Antoine de Padoue was built. He also opened a school in the presbytery and became postmaster in January 1884. He lived alone and did not have a horse or carriage. He therefore travelled throughout his parish, approximately 31 kilometres, on foot. During the 1885 Resistance, Father Moulin opposed the Métis taking up arms because he felt that they were rebelling against legal constituted authority. This stance angered many of his Métis parishioners including Gabriel Dumont.

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