



Mission Statement: To promote and cultivate French-language cultures through education and public programming

French Canadian Heritage Day

Today we celebrate French Canadian Heritage day in Minnesota. It is a day to reflect on the French Canadian heritage here in our state and the contributions made by early French Canadian settlers who were a big part of the early history of this area.

Early St. Paul, Minnesota

- There many stories to tell about our French Canadian Ancestors and their early contributions to Minnesota. In my short presentation here today, I am going to talk about the early French Canadian settlement in St. Paul, Minnesota.

References for Presentation

- **Acta et Dicta** (Catholic Historical Society) Issac Labissoniere obituary.
- **A Pioneer's Talk of Pioneer Days.** (Article written in the Northwestern Chronicle about Isaac Labissoniere)
- “Past and present of St. Paul, Minnesota; being a relation of the progressive history of the capital city of Minnesota from the earliest historical times down to the present day. Together with an exposition of the lives of the makers of history” (Book by William B. Hennessy)
- **Military Report of Major Dearborn** (Commander of Fort Snelling in 1842)

Issac Labissoniere and wife Theresa Theroux



- Issac Labissoniere came to Minnesota with his parents and is the main character of this story of the early French Canadian Settlement in St. Paul, Minnesota. His wife was Theresa Theroux.

Source: Acta Et Dicta, published by The St. Paul Catholic Historical Society, Vol III, July 1911.

ACTA ET DICTA

*A collection of historical data regarding
the origin and growth of
the Catholic Church in
the Northwest.*

A Pioneer's Talk of Pioneer Days.

Written for The Chronicle by Mr. Isaac Labissoniere.

HOW many horses would it require at the present condition of the market to purchase St. Anthony hill? This is the question an old man asked himself as he strolled among the mansions of St. Paul's aristocratic elevation yesterday and ruminated upon the fact that he had once driven a hard bargain with a man and palmed the unwatered hill off on the other for a good, sound horse, worth all of \$15 or \$20.

"And I felt somewhat conscience-stricken afterward, for it was a good horse, which was a much better recommendation than I could give along with

present site of the fish hatchery, then known as Pine creek.

The younger Labissoniere established a homestead of his own at Osseo, where he lived until a year ago. He is now in St. Paul, living with his son-in-law.

"I can get all the pleasure out of what years are left to me in walking around the town and comparing it with what it was when I lived here before," said Mr. Labissoniere, as he made his way down the Jackson street "trail" yesterday.

One of the bloodiest incidents in the history of St. Paul occurred under the very eyes of Labissoniere, and he figured in it as its hero, making his way in early evening through the woods that were alive with bloodthirsty Indians, and summoning troops to the rescue of twenty beleaguered families who had escaped in canoes to Raspberry island after the famous battle of July 8, 1842, between the Chippewas and the Sioux.

"There was only one other family down in the Pine creek district at that time," said Mr. Labissoniere, "and along the other side of the river the Sioux held forth. Big Thunder was their chief and there were five other villages stretched along the river.

the eight Chippewas hove in sight.

"Immediately upon discovering that the Sioux women had disregarded the mandate of the Chippewa chief, for all Sioux women married to white men to attire themselves in white, as a badge of immunity, the Chippewas swooped down on the helpless trio and pursued them toward the cabin. The wife of the settler ran screaming into her husband's arms just as her scalp was torn from her head. The boy was held up by the hair and his throat cut, and the other woman was scalped. The settler tried to drag his dying wife into the cabin, but a Sioux Indian who happened to be inside had barred the door.

"This little job only delayed the eight skirmishers a minute or two, and elated over their capture of scalps, they proceeded to lead the score of furious Sioux into the trap which had been prepared for them. The Sioux fell into it nicely, and nineteen of them fell in a narrow ravine.

"I saw the charge of the Chippewas, and this reminds me of a peculiarity of the Indians that is seldom heard of in connection with the descriptions of battles. Killing and scalping, of course, conduced to the glory of the braves, according to the number they personally conducted, but there was only one way

Sioux chief. His face was distorted with grief and rage and he aloft a long, bloody bowie knife as he screamed at my mother:

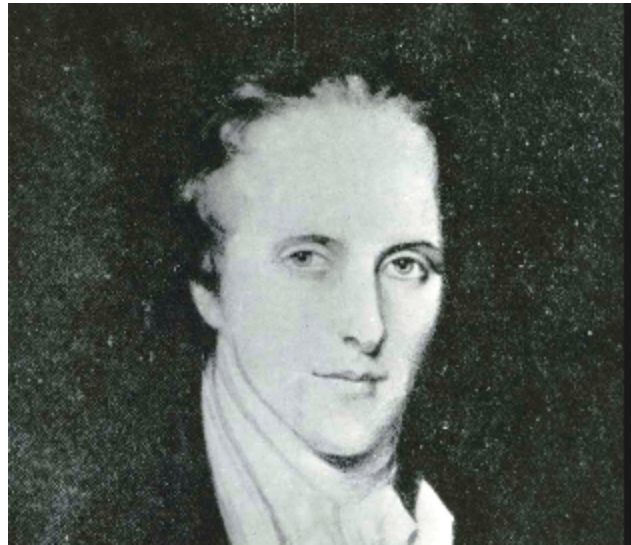
"My five sons have been killed. It is your fault. Your blood must pay. You knew your people were coming and you did not tell us. My sons are dead. You killed them. I don't know why he didn't kill her in her tracks, and I don't know why I didn't slay him. I never felt like killing a man so much in my life as I did at that moment. At any rate, he backed out of the house and went howling up the road.

"Feeling sure that we would be murdered that night, I decided to come to St. Paul for help, and I sneaked into the settlement in the dark. I found the place in terror, however, as the Sioux were rushing into the houses and confiscating all the guns they could find. Then they would throw their blankets down on the ground, indicating that they were ready to fight, and yelling 'Chippewa, Chippewa,' would dash in pursuit of the enemy. I went back after my mother, and with nineteen other families, mostly women and children, went to Raspberry island in canoes. As I was the only person anywhere near a man's size I volunteered to go to Fort Snelling and notify the troops.



Selkirk Colony

- The **Red River Colony** (or **Selkirk Settlement**) was a colonization project set up by Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk in 1811 on land granted to him by the Hudson's Bay Company. Selkirk died in 1820. His colony struggled.



1837 move to Fort Snelling

- In fall of 1837, 60 persons, including persons from the Selkirk colony, and Issac's parents, Joseph Labissoniere (b.1786) and Francois Desjarlais (b.1796), Issac's brother and six sisters. (Joseph NOT in Selkirk colony) They first settled near Fort Snelling. Joseph was a clerk for Northwest Company in Grand Forks, (*Les Grandes Fourches*). Later moved to St. Boniface, Manitoba.



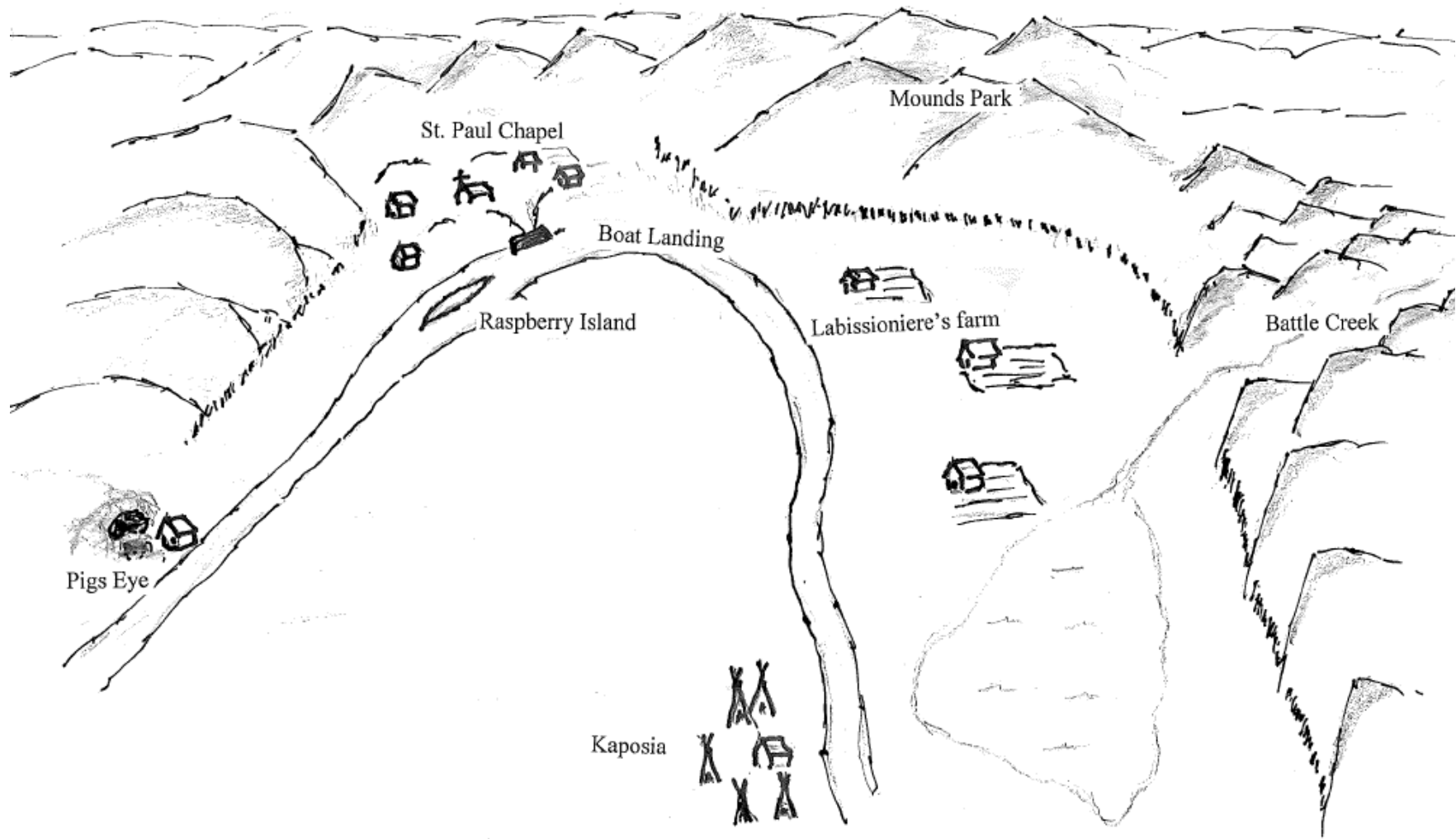
Seth Eastman painting of Fort Snelling



Fort Snelling

Fort Snelling

- The Selkirk immigrants lived near Fort Snelling until fall of 1838, when Dodge Treaty with the Chippewa Indians threw open settlement east of Mississippi. Joseph Labissoniere and his wife and family then moved to area known as “Grand Marais” (Big Swamp) which is near downtown St. Paul area. Area also known as “Pigs Eye” by some.



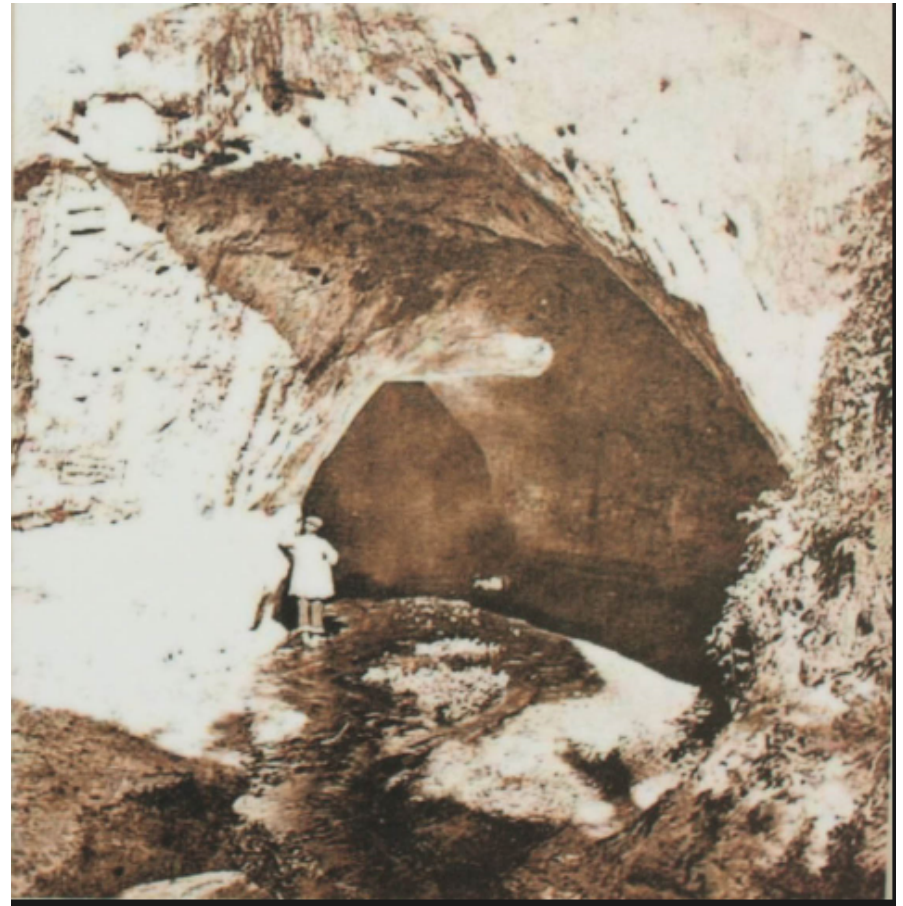


Drawn from remembrance of a physiognomist.

PIERRE PARRANT, OR "OLD PIG'S EYE."

First settler in St. Paul, in 1838.

Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant, first
settler in Saint Paul, MN



Labissonieres and other French Settlers first settled near near Point LeClaire in lowlands southeast of downtown. (Seth Eastman, Farm scene 1846) *Near cave where Pigs Eye Parrant lived.*



View of Labissoniere Hayfields

(Painting by James Desvarreaux Larpenteur (1847-1937)
titled "St. Paul from Pig's Eye.")



Site of Labissoniere Farm (Near present day Fish Hatcheries)



Labissoniere Farm site 2014





REV. LUCIAN GALTIER.

First Catholic Priest in Saint Paul, and who gave that name to our city.

Drawing of Lucien Galtier from an
1876 history of the city of St. Paul



St. Paul, 1856.

Chapel built on higher ground, not lowlands.



Saint Paul Chapel

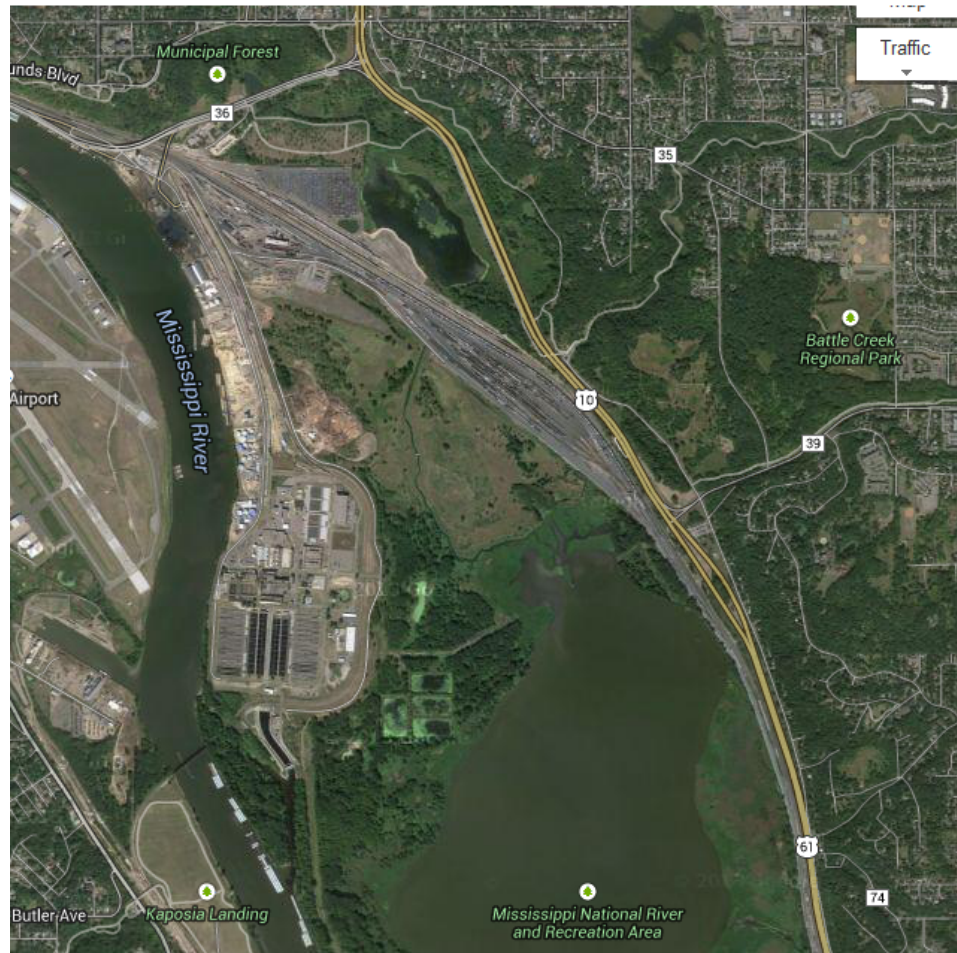
- Father Lucien Galtier appeared as mission priest in May 1840 and on Feast of All Saints day, November 1, 1841, Chapel of Saint Paul dedicated.
- Constructed on land owned by Guerin-Gervais. Joseph Labissoniere held office of general superintendent of building. Built in present day downtown. Built by “Gang of Eight” including Joseph and Issac Labissoniere.

Saint Paul Chapel



St. Paul Chapel

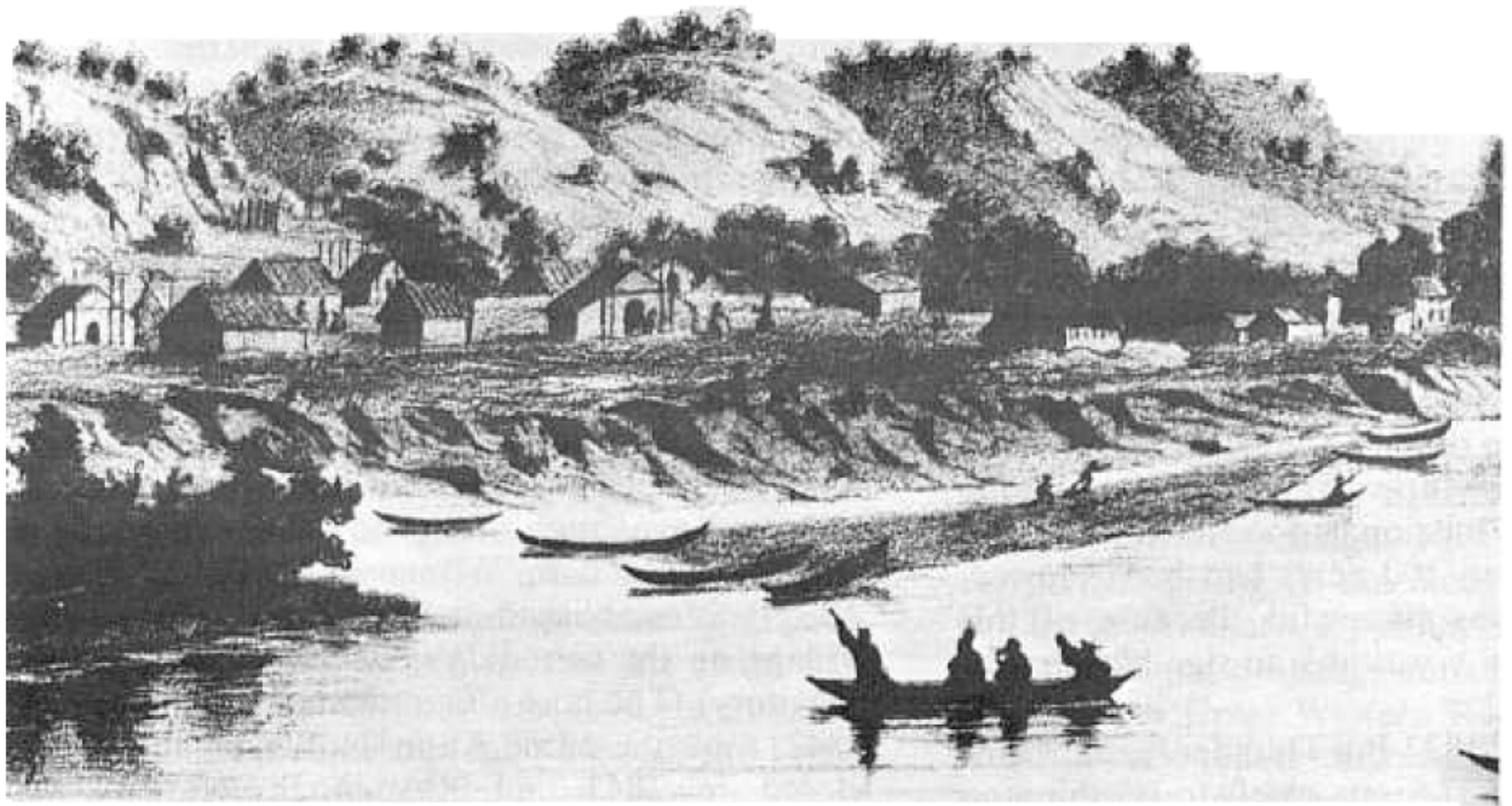
Battle of Kaposia July 8, 1842



Kaposia (Kapoja)

Seth Eastman Painting of village





Kapasia in 1848 by Henry Lewis, from a lithograph in Das illustrierte Mississippi, 56 (Minnesota Historical Society collections).

Chief Little Crow son of Big Thunder who fought at Kaposia. In 1837 Big Thunder and 37 Sioux Chiefs went to Washington for treaty that led to sale of property “East of Mississippi River”

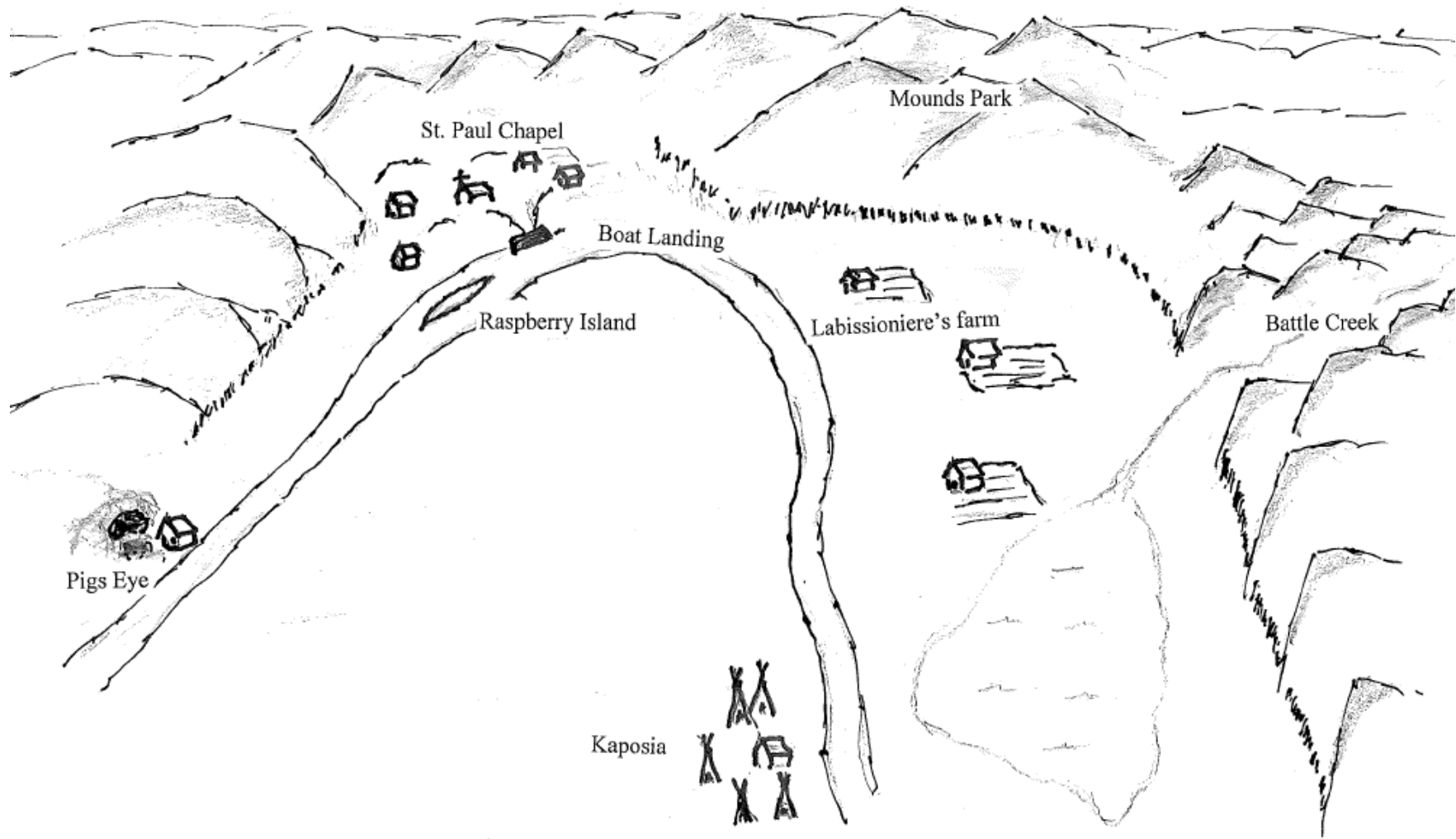


Description of Battle



- The Kaposia battle began when Ojibwe warriors came across the Grand Marais just to the south of the Labissoniere farm. They shot their guns into the Kaposia village. The Dakota then gave chase. The Ojibwe killed the wife of a French Canadian and their half breed son. They then ambushed the pursuing Dakota at Battle Creek.







BATTLE CREEK REGIONAL PARK
TRAILS AND PICNIC AREA
RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPT.



- 19 Dakota killed, including sons of Big Thunder
- 10 Ojibwe killed.
- Dakota wife and her child killed.
- Battle Creek Park named after battle.

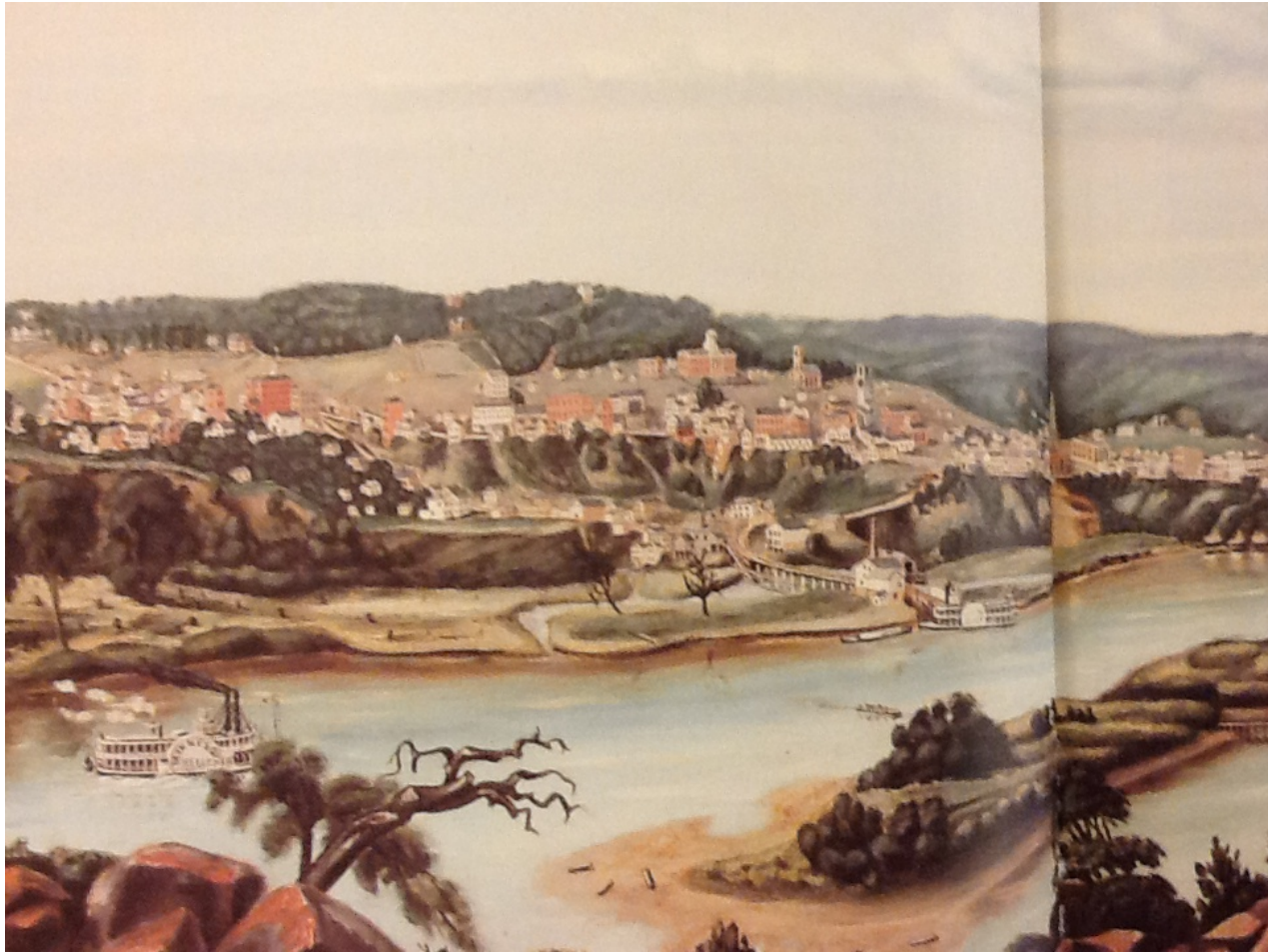
Joseph married to Francois Desjarlais, daughter of
Okimaskew, Ojibwe.

Big Thunder angry at her.

Seth Eastman painting Ojibwe woman.



Raspberry Island



Mendota (formerly St. Peter's)

Painting by Seth Eastman



Issac went to Henry Sibley's House Major Dearborn came with troops July 9, 1842



Henry Hastings Sibley lived in present day Mendota and was a partner in American Fur Company. His first wife was granddaughter of Mdewakanton Dakota Chief. The official report of Major Dearborn, First Infantry, U. S. A., then in command of Fort Snelling, supplies essential facts of the battle of Kaposia. Sibley became first Governor of State of Minnesota in 1858.

Fort Snelling

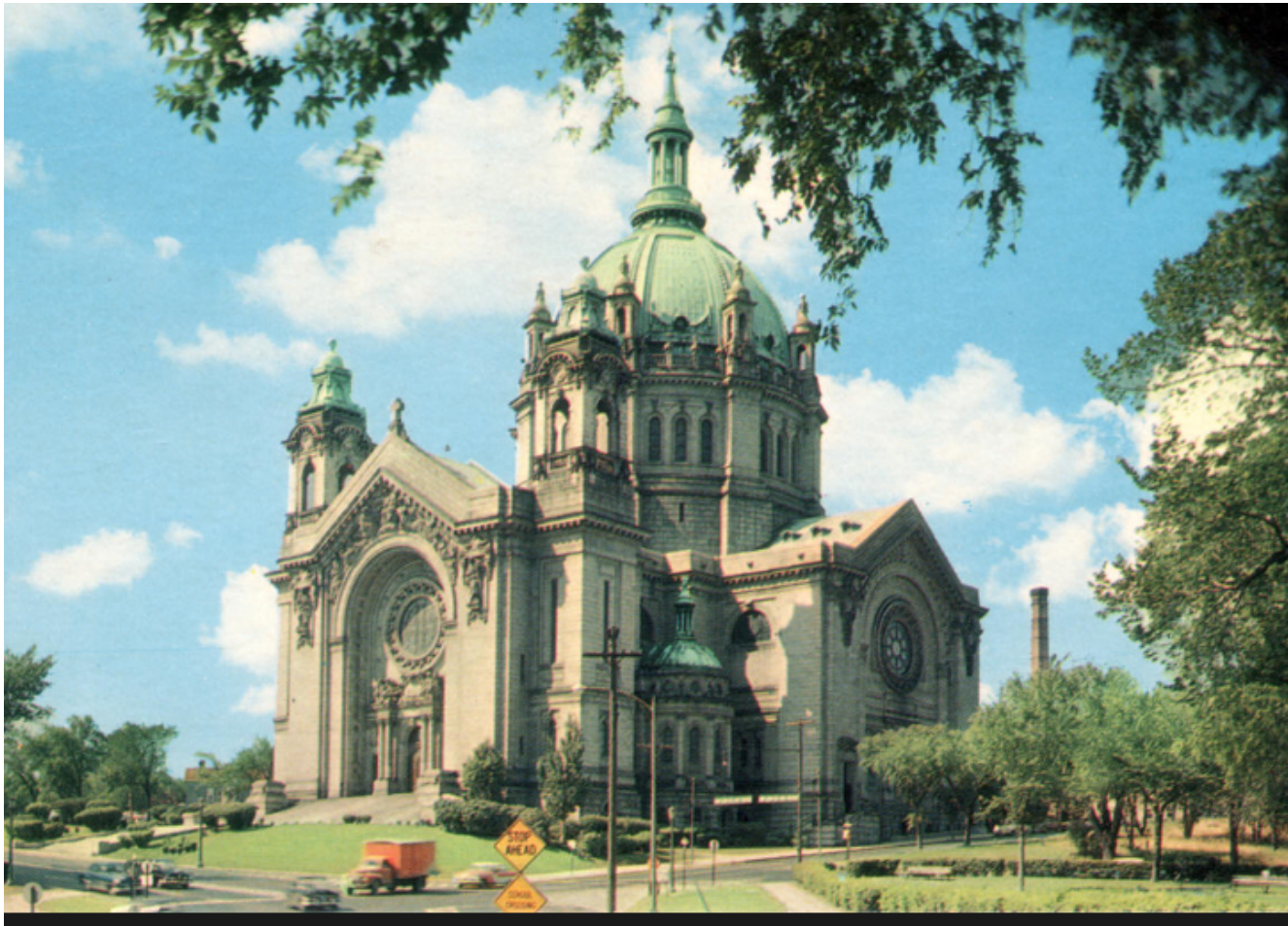


Conclusion

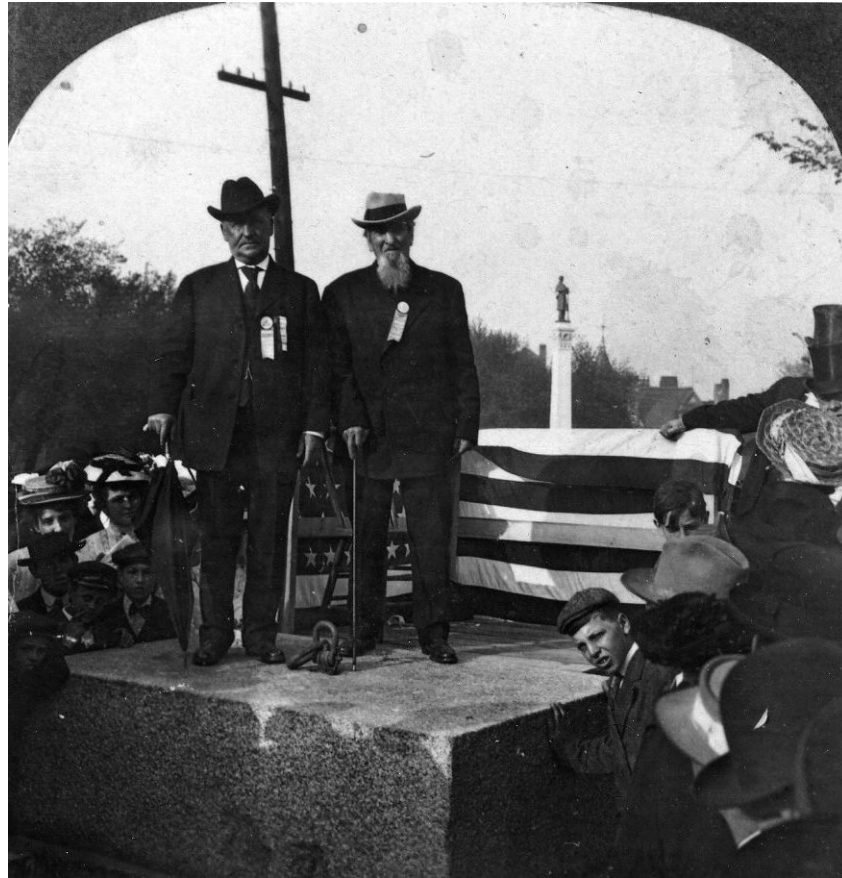
- French-Canadian settlement of Grand Marais with little chapel called St. Paul became present day St. Paul, Minnesota.

- St. Paul Chapel which ministered to the early French-Canadian settlers became St. Paul Cathedral when Father Joseph Cretin was installed as the first Bishop of St. Paul on July 2, 1851.
- Third Cathedral commissioned well-known French Beaux-Arts architect Emmanuel Masqueray, who was also the chief architect of the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri.

St. Paul Cathedral III



On June 2, 1907, cornerstone laid for for present day cathedral. Issac Labissoniere present since he was one of builders of first cathedral.



- Many of early French-Canadian settlers ended up migrating to area today called Little Canada or to northwest around Dayton, and Osseo, Minnesota. Isaac one of original settlers and founders of Osseo (formerly called Bottineau Prairie). Worked as a guide for Sibley during Sioux uprising of 1862.

Osseo



The International Hotel and Bar was located at 2nd and Central. In the picture those that are identified are: Meinke Bros., bar owners, Joe Blonigan, Harry Richey, Joe Paul, Isaac LaBissonniere, and others.

Issac & Theresa in 1903-04



Picture, front row, left to right: Issac Labissoniere, Lawrence Labine and Theresa Theroux. Top row: Julia Labine, granddaughter, and Julia Verboncoeur. daughter of Issac and Theresa (married David Verboncoeur).