

Joseph King Beaulieu, I. (1836-1916)

By Jeanette Mandeville

Joseph was the son of François (Old Man) Beaulieu and his wife Catherine St. Germain. He was married to Marie Anne Flamand. Their children were Sophie King, Joseph King Jr., Elise Madeleine King and Rose Marie King. Joseph King Beaulieu I established Fort Smith in 1874.

After the death of his father “Old Man” Beaulieu, who established the Salt River post, Joseph King Beaulieu built a new post south-east of Salt River along the Slave River. Bishop Clut makes note of this in a letter he wrote in September of 1874: “Joseph (King) Beaulieu son of Old Man Beaulieu has built a trading post at the foot of the last rapid.” The Fort Resolution Post journal states: “In connection with the introduction of steam boat to transport supplies and fur, Fort Smith was built (and replaced the post at Salt River) in 1874 on the left bank of the Slave River at the foot of the rapids.” In a letter written to the District Manager of the Hudson’s Bay Company from Fort Smith on March 25, 1876 Joseph (King) Beaulieu notes his progress:

Almost all the people have paid with their fur their debts from last fall. I have in my ice house 1,500 lbs of fresh meat and in the warehouse I have 1,000 lbs more of fresh meat, 500 lbs of dried meat and 400 lbs of pounded meat. I have squared all of the logs needed for 4 houses; a store 24’x18’; a house for the hired men 32’x18’; a kitchen 17’x23’; a house for the priest 20’x18’. Although I am not certain to sign a new contract with the H.B.C., I will stay to build my Fort and I do hope that it will have a better appearance than Mr. Moberley’s Fort.

Subsequent to this construction, the Catholic mission from Salt River moved to Fort Smith. Fort Smith was a stopping place on the transportation system of the north when it was customary to portage around the great fifteen-mile long rapids on the Slave River. Settlements grew up on both ends of this portage – Fort Fitzgerald, Alberta on the southern end and Fort Smith on the downstream side of the Noyé rapids. Right up until World War II, most residents of this Metis community were employed in river transportation.

Around 1880 Joseph King Beaulieu was sent to Fond du Lac (Eastern Arm of Great Slave Lake) to open a trading post that was known as “King Post.” This later became the community of Snowdrift. Years later Joseph King Beaulieu was sent to Fort Vermillion to establish another trading post and he died there in 1916.

(Contributed by Jeanette Mandeville, the great granddaughter of Joseph King Beaulieu.)



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