

# Simon Bruté

and the Western Adventure



*Portraits in Faith and Freedom*

Elizabeth Bartelme

# Simon Bruté and the Western Adventure

by Elizabeth Bartelme



Illustrated by Kenneth Stern

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# Portraits in Faith and Freedom

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## **Statement on Portraits in Faith and Freedom**

Bethlehem Books is bringing back this series of biographies originally made available in the 1950's and 60's by publishers who wished to introduce young people to a wide range of arresting and faithful Catholic lives. Slightly edited now for the modern reader, these biographies present key people and events from the past that help us reflect anew on the meaning of freedom. They depict how powerfully men and women of faith have formed and influenced the world in which they live.

## **Web Resources**

To access printable maps, a timeline, and other information, visit <http://bethlehembooks.com/simon-brute-and-western-adventure-860>

## About Usage of Outdated Terms

In republishing the books that form our *Portraits in Faith and Freedom* series, the editors considered whether it would be worthwhile to update the authors' usage of words like "Indian" and "Negro." The more current preference among many is "Native American" and "African American." The editors found, however, that changing the original terms often did not work well for the context of those times. The attitudes of respect and honesty that inspired these works—written in the 1950s and early 1960s—clearly conveyed the authors' positive meaning. In most cases, therefore, we have let the words stand.

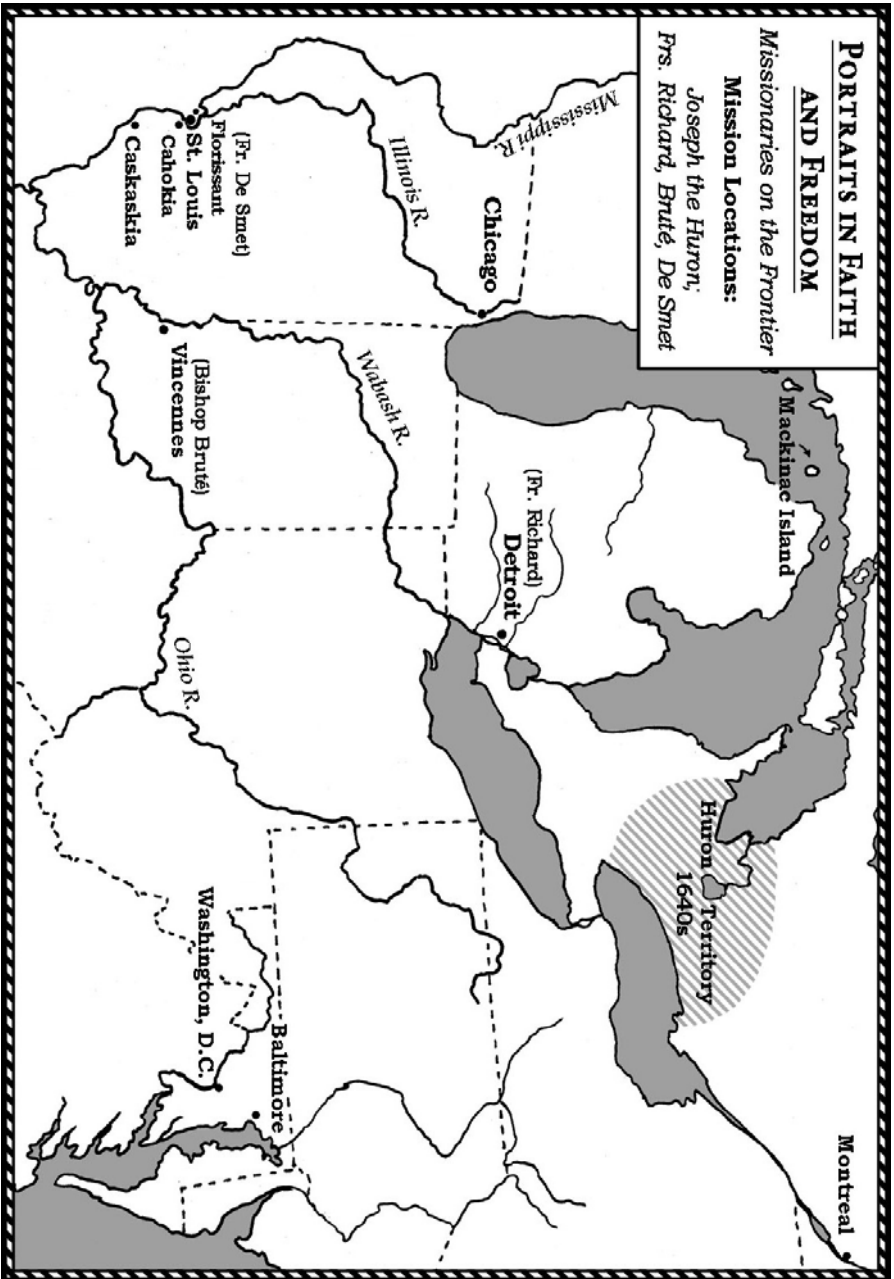
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# Maps

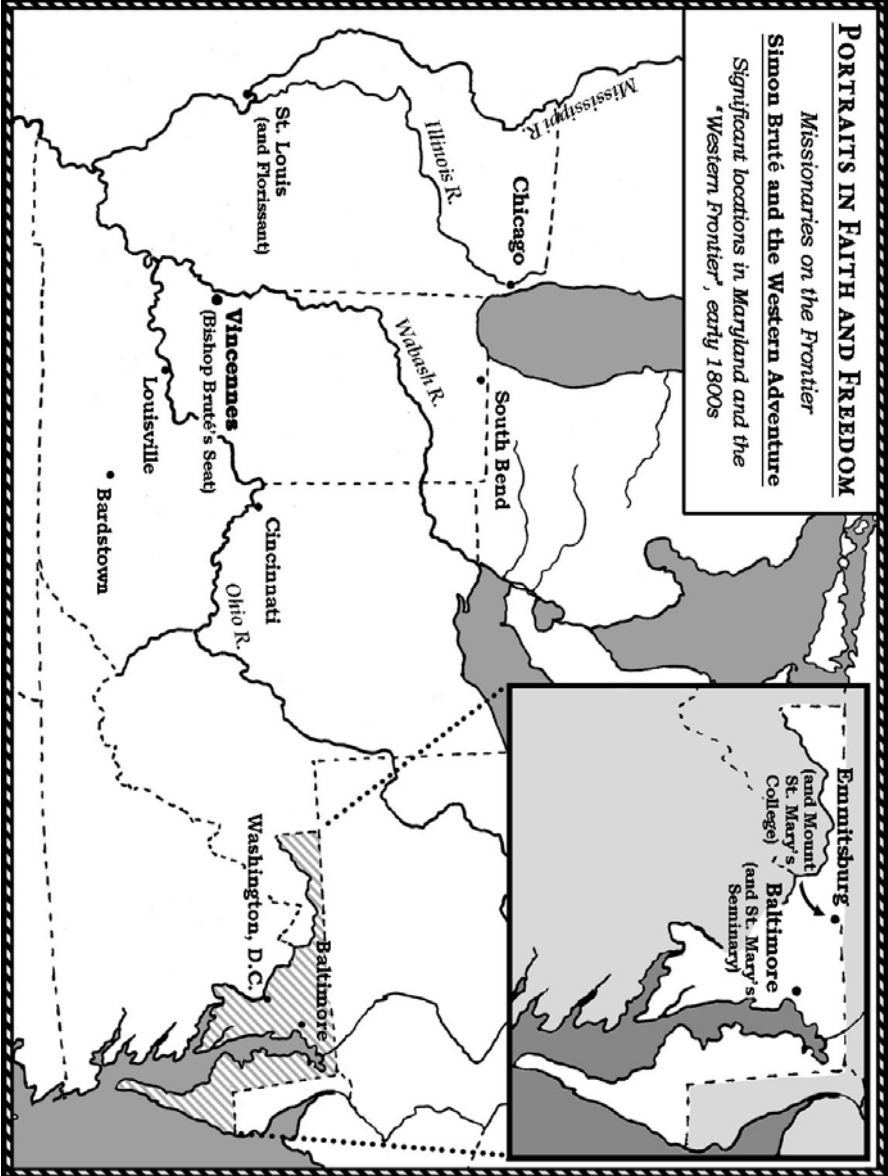


**PORTRAITS IN FAITH AND FREEDOM**

*Missionaries on the Frontier*

**Simon Bruté and the Western Adventure**

*Significant locations in Maryland and the "Western Frontier", early 1800s*



# 1. Danger in Brittany

THE SHUTTER CREAKED noisily as it swung open into the wet gray air of early morning. Although it was not yet sunup, young Simon Bruté was fully dressed as he leaned from the window to cast a hasty glance up and down the street below.

No one was stirring. The cobblestones below shone a little, damp from the mist that during the night had covered all of Rennes. The fog crept in at the open window of the Palace of Justice, making Simon choke a little as he frowned down at the guillotine which stood on the wide square directly beneath his room.

Shivering slightly, the boy drew back, pulling the shutter to behind him. Try as he would, he could not shut out of his mind the memory of prisoners marching through the public square, their steps echoing on the cobblestones. Many of them had been his friends—and they had gone to their death. The guillotine had claimed them, victims of the Reign of Terror that had swept France in the wake of the Revolution.

But this was no time for brooding. At that moment a light tap sounded on the door. Simon raced across the long, paneled room out into the wide corridor.

“I am ready, *mon père*,” he whispered eagerly to the taller of the two men who stood waiting for him.

“Then quickly, Simon. We have no time to delay. The guards are friendly now, and sleepy. But a few hours from now . . .” Father Pacifique threw out his hand in an expressive gesture, then let it fall on the boy’s shoulder. “And remember,” he went on, “you are not to call me ‘Father.’ The good God will protect us, but let us use our wits as well.”

Simon hung his head. “I have not forgotten what you told me,” he said, “only it is hard to name you ‘Citizen.’ But I shall be careful. You will have no cause to fear my tongue—Citizen.”

As he pronounced the new title he looked up proudly, and the priest laughed quietly. Handing Simon a small round case, he said, “Conceal it carefully.” Then with a gentle shove he pushed the boy ahead of him down the long hall.

Simon led Father Pacifique and his companion, both dressed in white baker’s smocks, toward the quarters that housed the prison-

ers. As they rounded a turn in the corridor, Madame Bruté came forward from a narrow staircase, carrying over each arm a basket of fresh-baked bread.

Handing one to each of the priests, she cautioned, "Be as quick about it as you can, *mes pères*. It is a dangerous business, this. And do not go near the fat jailer with the twisted mouth. He is sly, that one, and not to be trusted." Her eyes met Simon's and she gave him a reassuring smile. But to herself she murmured, "He is young for this adventure. Fourteen is too young to risk one's life."

Abruptly she turned back toward the staircase. "God go with you," she said, her head high. Then quickly she disappeared down the stairs.

Father Pacifique's eyes were troubled. Madame Bruté is right, he thought. Simon is too young. If we are caught, it will not only be Father Rosaire and I who face the guillotine, but Madame Bruté and her sons as well. They will be branded as traitors for concealing priests in the Palace, and even more for this errand. He shook his head. He was no longer a young man and Father Rosaire was eighty. They were ready to die. But Simon?

His young companion, however, had no such fears. Impatiently he tugged at the priest's arm. Shouldering his basket, the priest followed Simon toward the prison door. Father Rosaire, his basket swinging from his arm, brought up the rear.

At their knock they heard the rasp of a bolt being drawn back; then the heavy door swung open and a guard—the fat, twisted-mouth guard—peered out.

"Ho!" he shouted. "It's Master Bruté with the bakers."

As they filed in past him, the guard lunged roughly against Father Rosaire so that a loaf of the crusty bread fell to the floor. The old man almost lost his balance, but recovering he bent to pick up the loaf. The jailer was before him and snatched it away.

"Clumsy oaf," he jeered. "You'll never sell this. I'll feed it to the pigs." And strolling away he broke off great hunks and stuffed them into his mouth while the hungry prisoners stared fearfully after him.

"Never mind," said Father Pacifique quietly, touching his companion lightly. "Make no protest. That is not what we are here for." And the two priests, with Simon between them, moved into the crowd of prisoners who surged forward to buy bread.

Now began the dangerous part. As the “bakers” dickered with the crowd over the price of the loaves, Simon, after a guarded look around to see that he was not being watched, slipped the round case to Father Pacifique. The priest bent forward toward one of the prisoners to hand him the bread he had bought. The prisoner came close and Father Pacifique slid a little white wafer from the case and placed it on the man’s tongue. Clutching his loaf, his head slightly bowed, the man melted back into the crowd.



The case passed to Father Rosaire, who went through the same ceremony with another prisoner. Back and forth went the little round case between the two priests until their baskets of bread were almost empty.

Suddenly one of the guards turned and shouted at the prisoners to move back. Simon again found himself clutching the case, and carefully he concealed it under his coat.

“Enough,” said the guard firmly. “You’ve fed them enough for today. They’ll all be dead tomorrow anyhow, so why fatten them