



Borinage

Early December 1878 – October 1880

Please note that this route is suited for a bike or automobile

Longing to work as an evangelist among miners, Vincent arrived in early December 1878 in the town of Pâturage in the Borinage mining district. After only a week he moved on to the village of Wasmes. In mid-January 1879, Vincent received a temporary appointment as evangelist for the Belgian Evangelical Committee. He visited the sick and wounded

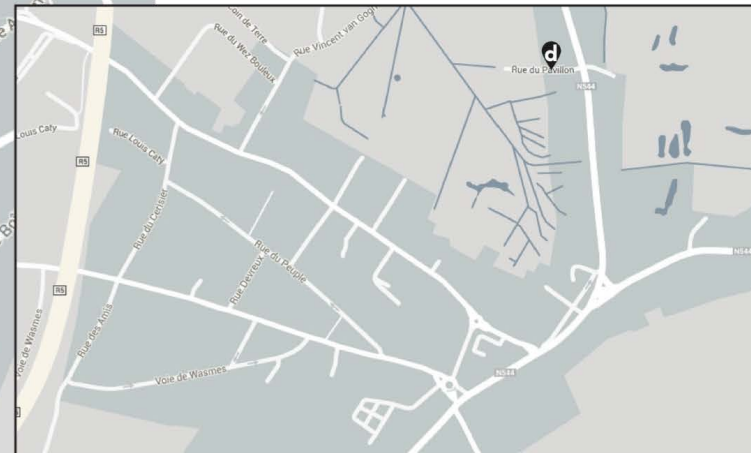
and preached at gatherings. Vincent lost himself completely in his new existence: he was no more indulging than the poor miners, living unhealthily in deep poverty. Meanwhile, he became fascinated with the people and the landscape and frequently felt a deep urge to draw. Despite his subservient attitude during his six months there as an evangelist,

his contract was not renewed. Vincent left for Cuesmes, where he indulged in drawing a few times. Finally, around August 1880, encouraged by his brother Theo, he decided to make art his profession. He left for Brussels in October in order to be trained as a painter.

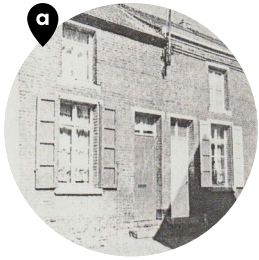


Borinage

Early December 1878 – October 1880



- a** **Salon du Bébé**
rue du Bois 257-259, Petit-Wasmes
- b** **Denis Family**
rue Wilson 221, Petit-Wasmes
- c** **Marcasse Mine**
rue de Marcasse
- d** **Edouard Joseph Francq & Decrucq Family**
rue du Pavillon 3, Cuesmes



Salon du Bébé (Le temple de Bébé)

Address rue du Bois 257-259, Petit-Wasmes

Between January and July 1879, Vincent preached numerous times in the Salon du Bébé: a small room where a branch of the Protestant church of Grand-Wasmes gathered. The congregants spoke a fast French dialect and Vincent had great difficulty understanding them and making himself understood. The quality of his sermons probably left much to be desired as the Belgian Evangelical Committee judged him to be a less than gifted speaker and incapable of leading fruitful gatherings. His contract was not renewed.



Denis Family

Address rue Wilson 221, Petit-Wasmes

In Petit-Wasmes, Vincent lived with the Denis family. The rent of 30 francs per month was low because Vincent taught the family's children in the evenings. Vincent found his boarding house too luxurious and attempted to move to a modest hut, but his hosts protested. Tradition has it that he made drawings of the Denis family that were likely torn up later. When Vincent's contract was not renewed by the Belgian Evangelical Committee, he left for Cuesmes to try his luck.



Marcasse Mine

Address rue de Marcasse

In early April of 1879, Vincent was shown around the Marcasse mines by an experienced mineworker. After a dreadful descent in a basket through the narrow mine shaft, a new world opened up for him at a depth of seven hundred metres: "This mine has 5 levels, 3 of which, the uppermost ones, are exhausted and abandoned, one no longer works in them because there's no more coal. If anyone were to try and make a painting of the *maintenages*, that would be something new and something unheard-of or rather never-before-seen." [Letter 151]



Edouard Joseph Francaq & Decrucq Family

Address rue du Pavillon 3, Cuesmes

In Cuesmes, Vincent first lived with the evangelist Edouard Joseph Francaq and later with his neighbours, the Decrucq family. He focused entirely on drawing. Sometimes he drew in his small room, other times in the garden. However, he felt that he did not have enough space to work properly: "It's tiny as it is, and there are two beds, the children's and mine." [Letter 158] In October of 1880, Vincent left Cuesmes for Brussels because he longed for space, light and other artists.