

Winding Through A STORIED PAST

A Stream of Destiny Crosses Many Paths

route leaves the river and passes on toward Oil Creek and the Allegheny River. LaSalle heard of this in 1668 the Genesee to the land of the Erie the Genesee to the land of the Erie on the site of Salamanca in 1654 and a connection with the Mississippi River. Major Charles Williamson, agent for the Putney estate, 1801, mentioned it in letters about the waterways of the Genesee country. (Doc. Hist. of N. Y., Vol. II, p. 1169-1188. Four volume edition.)

On this route is the famous Indian oil spring, Canadea, which was passed coming up the river. It is the site of the capitol of the Senecas, in 1768, which was 100 years after the council house at Totiakon on Honeoye Creek.

Today, there is a magnificent piece of engineering in the form of a great water power control dam on Canadea Creek. Pushing through Black Creek, Oil Creek is reached, and later the city of Olean on the Allegheny River. A total of 20 miles carrying to surmount the portages of the Genesee River brought canoeists to a point where they could float downstream to trading posts at Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and New Orleans. There they could obtain better prices for furs than at Fort Niagara or Quebec.

EARLY CANOE ROUTES

About 20 miles further up the Genesee from Belfast, near Wellsville, Dyke Creek flows in from the east from its source near the village of Canesota. When the water is at normal level, canoes can navigate it. Almost at the source of Dyke Creek is the Canisota River, which flows southeasterly and, with other rivers, forms the Chemung. The Chemung passes through Corning and Elmira and joins with the east branch of the Susquehanna at Sayre and Athens, Pennsylvania, at Tioga Point. From this point the fur trader of 1730 who was disgruntled over the low prices for fur offered at Fort Niagara and Fort Oswego could proceed easily downstream to Baltimore or upstream northeasterly toward Albany. Going northeasterly he would pass the sites of the present cities of Binghamton, Oneonta, and Cooperstown on Otsego Lake. From Otsego Lake some carrying and some poking through small creeks would bring him to the broad Mohawk River which flows into the Hudson above Albany.

By means of canoe routes connecting with the Genesee River, the Senecas and their allies stood off both France and England for more than 150 years and exerted an influence which helped to divide North America into Canada and the United States.

REFUGEES OF 1570

"The Voyage I pretend is to lade negroes in Genoya and to sell them in the West Indies in troke for golde, perrels and esmeraldes."

So wrote Sir John Hawkins to the King of England in 1567 when some objected that his intended (pretended) "voyage" might bring him into a fight with the "Spaniards" with whom the English were supposed to be at peace. (See "A Sea Dog or Devour" by R. A. J. Walling, N. Y., 1907, John Lane Company). Among the six ships with which he left Plymouth in England to load "negers" in Africa were the *Jesus of Lubek*, Hawkins' flag ship; another was *The Angel* and *The Grace of God* joined him later.

Captain Francis Drake, afterwards Sir Francis Drake, son of an English Protestant minister, and a world-famous navigator, was captain of the *Judith* of 50 tons.

Those seem to have been the days of a pious front and a tough conscience. At this point in the history the "poor navigers" had been sold in the West Indies and Mexico. Hawkins' fleet was passing the Bahama Islands off the coast of Florida when a storm chased him back a thousand miles into the arbor of what is now

Historian



ALEXANDER M. STEWART has done much through research and field work to make more complete and detailed the early history of Central and Western New York. To his profound knowledge of pre-Colonial history he adds an enthusiasm for his subject which could scarcely have been surpassed by the zeal of the missionaries about whose activities he so skillfully writes. The Catholic people of this locality may esteem the work of this historian for the light it has shed upon the noble pioneering by the Jesuits and others of the faith.

Vera Cruz, Mexico. The Spanish Governor of the port delayed Hawkins there for several days with friendly dickerings. Then an expected Spanish fleet appeared. Imagine now Hawkins standing on his ship with a large mug of ale in his hand when a shot from the Spanish fort knocked the mug out of his hand. A terrific eight-hour battle followed and Hawkins and 200 men on one 50-ton ship (not much bigger than a large freight car) managed to fight their way out of the harbor. One Spanish vessel with 100 men had blown up. 100 English and 300 Spanish were killed. 200 men on a little vessel could not cross the Atlantic. Some of them asked to be put ashore. 100 were then chosen to disembark.

The point of this story is that the region of Vera Cruz, Mexico is a long way from the Genesee River. Not all of the hundred left behind survived the hardships of the climate or the treatment given them by the Spaniards as prisoners of war. In the British Museum is a document telling the story of some of these refugee sailors who were rescued by a French fishing vessel at Cape Breton and taken home to England.

From near Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico, east of Mexico City to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada, on the Atlantic Ocean 700 miles north-east of Boston, is the way these refugees went—more than 3000 miles. This long journey in 1570 across hundreds of miles of an unexplored continent seems impossible.

Careful thought makes belief reasonable. These sailors started out with some idea of where they were going. By 1569 the fisheries between Cape Breton and Newfoundland had become known in all the ports of western Europe. Annual voyages from Europe to the St. Lawrence River were begun as early as 1550.

Now these refugees were sailors. They knew something about going across the earth's surface to a given point. If not, how did they arrive at the only place on the North American continent where they knew they would find ships to take them home? The JOURNAL OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF OHIO (Vol. VII, p. 21, 1899, pub. Columbus, Ohio) includes these refugees as possible early visitors in Ohio. Obsidian or volcanic glass knives found in Seneca Indian graves in the Rochester region point to Indian trade with

Mexico at very early times, as very little obsidian occurs outside of Mexico. Indians knew the way from tribe to tribe across the continent.

The refugees would be passed from one tribe to another. The long north and northeastern stretches of the Mississippi, Ohio and Allegheny would attract them. Going northeast from the Allegheny Valley and walking toward reported big water ahead, would bring them toward Lake Ontario and the Genesee River. Then skirting the southern shores of the Lake and of the St. Lawrence River they arrived at Cape Breton where they met cod fishermen from France who took them home to England.

WAR PARTY MOVEMENTS

The story of Etienne Brule, a white scout who led a war party across the Genesee for Champlain, the founder of Canada, in 1615 has been mentioned in earlier CATHOLIC COURIER "CALENDAR" editions.

When Brule was returning from Caratouan, the capital of the Andastes, near the site of Waverly, N. Y. in the spring of 1616, he was captured and taken to a Seneca village, either in Mud Creek Valley near Holcomb, or in Honeoye Creek Valley south of Lima. When he set out from either of these locations to go toward Niagara, he again crossed the Genesee River. With much probability he travelled on the Great Trail through Avon, Caledonia, LeRoy and Batavia.

The Ottawa River-Lake Huron Canoe route which Brule and also Champlain used involved a 500 mile detour. A carry trail or portage which they used in going into Lake Nipissing may be seen crossing the great provincial motor highway two miles north of Callander, Ontario,—now famous as the home of the Dime monument. A bridge, a flagpole, a monument, and a series of cabins mark the spot. (See works of Samuel re Champlain III-213 and Etienne Brule in Roch. Hist. Soc. Vol. IV p. 219 by George B. Selden, Jr.)

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Illustrations

NO LESS INTERESTING THAN THE STORY WHICH MR. STEWART HAS SET DOWN HERE ARE THE ILLUSTRATIONS. THE AUTHOR HIMSELF ACCOMPANIED THE CATHOLIC COURIER PHOTOGRAPHER TO MAKE THE UNUSUAL VIEWS SHOWN ON PAGES 33, 34, 35, AND 36. THE UNIQUE PICTURE OF THE SOURCE OF THE GENESSEE, PAGE 32, IS FROM THE FILES OF THE ROCHESTER JOURNAL. THE MAP, PAGE 38, IS FROM CANADIAN GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES.

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