

Rochester's Famous Gorge



World travelers pronounce the lower gorge of the Genesee River as beautiful as many more famed European scenes. Winding between rock walls more than 200 feet high, the river here nears the end of its journey in a final burst of beauty.

Genesee River SOME ANCIENT MAPS

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PLANS FOR WAREHOUSES

The late Robert Burns, writer for the Times-Union, used to spend some vacations in the ancient city of Quebec where he enjoyed exercising his scholarly qualities in browsing for historical manuscripts. He found a letter written in 1678 advising the authorities in Quebec that a warehouse be built on Irondequoit Bay at the point where the trail takes out to go to the head of the rapids on the Genesee River, and that a road be constructed for transportation to canoe navigation on the Genesee above the falls and rapids. Also the letter recommended that a warehouse be constructed on the Genesee River as part of a trade route to the Ohio and Mississippi.

The writer of the letter was LaSalle who at the time was commandant at Fort Frontenac near modern Kingston on Lake Ontario. LaSalle was then building the first sailing vessel on Lake Ontario preparatory to building the Griffon above Niagara Falls to sail the upper lakes. And the Genesee River trade route was forgotten for the larger enterprise.

This road proposed by LaSalle would follow the old trail. Beginning at Indian Landing in Ellison Park, it would pass through the grounds of Mercy High School to Cobb's Hill Park near the refectory, thence to Mount Hope at the lower gate, and thence to the nearest point on the river. A letter dated September 29, 1690 attributed to LaSalle in Chesnel's *LaSalle* (page 32, pub. Putnam, Inc., N. Y., 1932): "This Baudrane River (the Ohio) rises near Onnecout (the country of the Oneidas southeast of Oneida Lake) and after flowing in a westerly direction for a distance of about four hundred and fifty leagues, even wider than the Seine is opposite Rouen, and always of greater depth discharges into the Colbert River (Mississippi), twenty-five leagues south of the Illinois River. A boat may ascend this stream a long distance toward Tsamontuan (Seneca village of Totlakton, where LaSalle stayed in August, 1669) to a spot (Olean on the Alleghany) which is about twenty or twenty-five leagues from the southern shore of Lake Ontario."

LaSalle begins correctly describing the source and flow of the east branch of the Susquehanna River; then he jumps across country to the Alleghany near Olean, omitting the Chemung and Genesee Rivers, and yet gives a fairly correct distance from Lake Ontario and a nearly correct location of the Ohio River entrance into the Mississippi. The conclusion is that LaSalle never navigated the Genesee River through to the Alleghany River.

SOME ANCIENT MAPS

At the writer's hand is a photostat of a map made by the Reverend Rene Gallinee in 1670. On the map at Totlakton Father Gallinee has written *village du R. P. Fremin*; also where the cattle were pasturing is written *excellent terra—good soil*. The name Gaskencheakons Sault is at the lower falls of the Genesee River. The middle syllables *seneca* suggest Genesee. On the map the lower falls on the site of Rochester are reported as the place of large fish.

Charlevoix and explorers after Gallinee spelled the name of the Genesee River *Cas-con-chi-a-gon*. The ponds west of the mouth of the Genesee are noted as "several little lakes near which sable or black otter are hunted and where the Senecas go to catch fish. Gallinee denotes the Genesee River on his map by two parallel lines going south from Lake Ontario and then bending to the southwest ending about ten miles from the Lake, which indicates that he explored the river as far as the new University of Rochester River Campus and Mount Hope, where the flow of the river is northeast and east.

Father Rene Gallinee, member of the Sulpitian order of priests, exemplifies in refined character, classical learning, and in scientific investigation of facts those qualities which make it fortunate that it was he who was the first known white man to visit the new site of our University.

Disappointed with the failure to obtain guides among the Senecas, LaSalle, Gallinee, and DeCasson went to the west end of Lake Ontario, climbed the ridge west of Hamilton, Canada. A map from information given by Father Raffet, who was with the Senecas 1673-1680, a photostat copy of which is at hand, shows the Genesee River with Hemlock and Honeoye Lakes draining into it through Honeoye Creek. Honeoye Creek enters the Genesee River at the southern boundary of the 1400 acre farm of the State Agricultural and Industry. The River is named on this map *Tsinnon-non-chion-agen*. "Tsinnon-ton" is the word for Seneca and "chion" with French pronunciation is like "shen" or "gen"; *gen-she*; or *Gen-she*.

On Father Raffet's map and several others of this period the Genesee River is merely the western boundary of the *Pays des Iroquois* (Country of the Iroquois). No villages are on it and there is a blank space west of the Niagara River.

See Map and Special Notes on Page 38

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