

A Familiar Scene in the Past



As common in the early days of American history as it is conspicuously absent now is this picture of an early trading post. Simple, in construction and built with a few pine boughs, these rude shelters served as the sole haven of refuge to the

goes northward to Barrie on Lake Simcoe and thence to Orillia which is eighty miles from Toronto on the narrow straits between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching, which narrows were mentioned as the place of fish weirs by Champlain in 1615. Going northwestward from Orillia on the New High way and within four miles was the site of Cahigue, principal village of the Atendaronons tribe of the Huron nation (Cahigue is the Huron village name (Champlain's Works) where in 1615 Champlain waited for the assembling of the Hurons and their allies before going to attack the Oneida fort at Nichols Pond on Yatesville Hill in the town of Fenner Madison County New York (Some think this Oneida Fort was a few miles farther west).

From Cahigue (Champlain dispatched Stephen (Etienne) Brule on that momentous journey which brought him after months of forest travel to a Seneca village somewhere within 30 miles of Rochester New York. Brule the first French visitor of record to this Rochester region is buried near Cahigue. Evidences of a possible earlier Dutch visitor to western New York of date 1614 may be found in Documents Relating to Colonial History of New York, Vol. I maps at pp. 8 and 14.

When Father Le Moyne arrived at Cahigue in 1638, the inhabitants were still talking about Champlain and were praising his self-restrained character.

Continuing to survey old Huronia we proceed through Victoria Harbour to Midland where is located the ruin of Old Fort Ste. Marie designed in 1641 by St. Isaac Jogues, and paid for by the great Cardinal Richelieu of France. Within the fort enclosure are the charred bones, in a grave, of Saint Jean de Brebeuf and Saint Gabriel Lalumiere. On the hill is the Shrine of the Martyrs overlooking the sparkling blue waters of Georgian Bay in one direction, and the valley of the Wye River in the other. Westward on the highway is Penetang Wishe which was the first landfall of Champlain 1615. Not far from Penetang Wishe is where St. Noel Chabanel was martyred, near Penetang Wishe and thence on toward the missions beyond Owen Sound passing the land reaching bays of Georgian Bay and the long lake reaching points. By going 50 miles west on the highway from Orillia we have crossed old Huronia. It might well be called the Province of Ontario's holy land.

Going back to CAHIGUA near Bass Lake and to Jesuit Relations Vol. XX p. 19 which says, "This is where the late Monsieur de Champlain stopped longest on his voyage that he made up here 22 years ago. His honorable reputation for chastity still lives among the Indians. We do not have to blush for him as we do for other recreant Frenchmen who came here."

This year having found ourselves strong enough we placed a mission there which has three villages in its department, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Joachim and Ste. Elizabeth. Of these St. Jean Baptiste has been identified as Cahigue near Bass Lake. The author visited a Huron site near Bass Lake July 5 1938. Several possible sites near Bass Lake are indicated in a letter from Mr. C. H. Hale of the Orillia Packet and Times. The other two are supposed to be on North River, outlet of Bass Lake, but (See JESUIT RELATIONS, Vol. XX, notes 1 and 2) on an unexplored forested land where there are many remains of village sites, makes identification uncertain. "Of

these missions Father Antoine Daniel (now Saint Antoine Daniel) and Father Simon Le Moyne have had the care." While the mission of St. Elizabeth is included in this group as Huron elsewhere in the Jesuit Relations it is shown to be a village of Algonquins who had taken refuge among the Hurons from the fierce attacks of the Iroquois.

The care of these three villages meant that these two missionaries must learn two Indian languages, Huron and Algonquin which are not at all alike.

These services on Sunday probably started with very early morning Mass at St. Jean near Bass Lake. Since church bells were too heavy to lug on a man's back over the more than thirty portages from Montreal resonant brass kettles were used which were hung in trees near the pole and bark chapel. These were sounded instead of bells. Promptly at the close of the service Father Le Moyne, if this was his turn to go would come hurrying out of the chapel and walk rapidly to a canoe with an Indian paddler waiting at the lake shore. In a small knapsack, he might carry some food to use in case he was delayed by storm or accident between villages. Along with the food he would need to carry some beads or small trinkets, or lumps of sugar to catch the attention of women and children. A breviary, a crucifix and other articles of worship, and a jack knife, a pistol for bears and wolves was taken on a modern Sunday trip of this kind.

A pistol, however, might cause suspicion of hostile intent when Father Le Moyne reached the villages so that if he carried a pistol he would need to conceal it.

Bronze religious finger rings, such as are frequently found on Iroquois mission sites, did not come into use until 1660. And since the Hurons were driven from their country in 1649 before Jesuit rings came into use, they are not found in the Huron country.

After the canoe ride there was a long walk on the stoney floor through the immense forest. After miles of walking an odor of life and death was wafted through the forest. This odor of an Indian village was offensive almost sickening to Father Le Moyne when first he had to endure it, but as time went on the odor became so blended with memories of the poignant drama and tragedy of the Huron mission, that when far away, even a faint trace of such an odor brought longing to his heart and thoughts which lay too deep for tears, just as to war veterans some odors are always transfigured into the throbbing picture of the love and death of comrades.

After officiating at a service in the second village some hospitable Indian might offer Father Le Moyne a meal of fish, sometimes fresh caught, sometimes rancid. Rancid fish was a flavor which the Indians esteemed just as we esteem decayed dried milk in some forms of cheese. Disgust in some things is largely a matter of custom. Squashes, blue berries, and raspberries, and pounded corn might be had in season. Doubtless, a missionary with such a strenuous Sabbath day's work might break his fast at this time. Moose meat, venison, beaver, also rabbits and squirrels "and such small deer" would be available in season. Again would come another long walk through the forest, with streams to cross on fallen trees or to be waded. Ten, twenty or even as much as thirty miles journey would be necessary for the day's work. Such endurance of severe travel won the

hearts of the Indians who of necessity had learned to esteem hardship as the chief manly virtue. An old Canadian missionary of a later time whom the writer knew used to walk fifty miles with four or five services between Friday afternoon and Monday morning the ancient Huronia was part of his parish. Father Le Moyne had no fear of those diseases which are the bane of a sedentary academic life.

Chapter VI
LA CONCEPTION
AIDED

About this time Father Le Moyne was called upon to help in a fourth village called La Conception, the Huron name of this village was OSSOSSANE. * JESUIT RELATIONS INDEX, Vol. LXXIII p. 26.

"It is in this village that the Reverend Father Lalumiere has been occupied this winter (1640-1641) with Father Le Moyne." It is very likely that this La Conception among the Hurons was the forerunner of the La Conception (1668-1683) of the Senecas at Rochester Junction. This may be true because when the Senecas and other Iroquois wrecked Huronia, they brought many captives whom they enslaved to their villages. One Seneca princess had "more than 20 slaves." Some of these slaves were loyal Christians and held the hope of heaven which Father Le Moyne and his colleagues had taught them to be their chief treasure in life. St. Michael, the village on Mud Creek two miles east of Holcomb in the town of East Bloomfield, Ontario County New York, is definitely known to be such a name imported from Huronia by Huron Christian captives. La Conception of the Senecas may very well have contained some Christian Hurons who in childhood had been converted by Father Le Moyne in connection with La Conception. We imagine these spiritual children of Father Le Moyne waiting in lonely exile here, clinging to the name La Conception. They were among the first Christians in Western New York. The story of the Huron Mission is necessary to a logical understanding of Jesuit missions within the present area of the Diocese of Rochester. It also is a necessary approach to New York State history.

There was hardship in the long walks between the Indian village parishes of Father Le Moyne especially in winter when no canoes could be used on the lakes. "We walked in the deep snow on the lake," wrote one of these hardy missionaries. The snow was so deep that there was water on top of the ice of the lake under the blanket of snow, despite the violent wind and bitter cold. A little while before an Indian crossing this same lake lost his life in the wind and cold. The noble heroism of a young Huron man is told in the records of Huronia. He and his sister were caught in a bitter cold winter storm, a long way from home. He was clad in a large bear-skin. His sister was less than half clad in a beaver skin. He exchanged clothing with his sister. She reached camp alive. Her brother perished. He was not a Christian. The missionaries imply by this story that there was inborn nobility of character in these Hurons, and that the effort to convert them was

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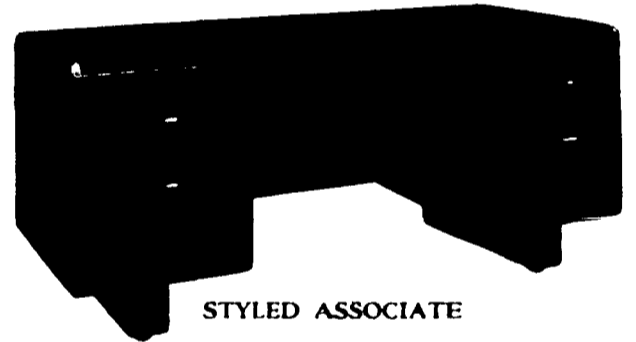
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