

LAKE ONTARIO DISCOVERED
 In 1536 Indians at the site of Montreal told Jacques Cartier, earliest navigator of the St. Lawrence River, of a great lake upstream beyond the rapids. But it was 108 years later in 1654 when Father Simon LeMoine navigated the river from Montreal to Lake Ontario and gave to the world the first written report of such a voyage. (See LeMoine in the Courier Supplement, April 30, 1939.)

Probably Etienne Brule, scout for Champlain, was the first white man to see Lake Ontario. Very likely he had opportunities to visit the lake before his famous trip to the Andastes and Senecas in 1615.

Father De La Roche Dallion (or Daillon), a Franciscan who came to the Neutral Country near Lockport in 1626 from the Huron Country north of the lake, shows that Yroquet, chief of the Iroquois Indians who lived at the east end of Lake Ontario and north of the St. Lawrence River, had come along the south shore to the Niagara region to trap beaver. (Hawley—Early Chapters of Seneca History, p. 13. Also in Le Clercq.)

Yroquet and some Huron Indians knew the way from the Niagara region to Three Rivers, Quebec. We may list him among the earliest travellers of the south shore whom we can name who traversed the south shore canoe route.

THE FIRST CRUDE MAP

Champlain, the founder of Canada, made a map in 1612 upon which the south shore of Lake Ontario is crudely portrayed. What seems to be the Genesee River appears on the map. A short distance inland the river branches, and the east branch is shown rising in a small lake. This lake might be Honoyee Lake with Hemlock Lake and Conesus Lake as second and third choices, so stated because of the known locations of Seneca villages of that period.

JESUITS BLAZE TRAIL

In 1656 the Onondaga Colony of fifty Frenchmen came from

Out of the oblivion of the remote past Alexander M. Stewart has wrested material to write for readers of the CATHOLIC COURIER Calendar. An exciting story of the previously unreported history of trade and diplomacy on Lake Ontario in the 17th and 18th centuries as viewed from the Rochester area.

It is not too much to say that what transpired on Lake Ontario and its south shore canoe route—a highway of trade and of empire—before the birth of the nation, determined the future of our country; decreed that its people would speak English instead of French; started the slow fires that burst into the flame of the American Revolution.

Great figures come out of the past at the bidding of Mr. Stewart to live again the roles destiny assigned them in a part of what is now the Diocese of Rochester—roles that laid the very foundation of the nation which grew out of the hardships they endured.

We see devout Jesuit priests, penetrating the wilderness to carry the light of Catholicity to the Indians and white pioneers— holy men who helped to mould the character of those who were here then, preparing the way to build a Christian nation.

We see diplomats assigned to this region by Old World rulers, with intrigue as their weapon and a rich continent as the prize, playing the dangerous game which had its climaxes in battles on Lake Ontario and its southern shore— "highway of empire and trade."

Again—in these columns—"The Great Joncaire" takes his place in the affairs of men. A picturesque figure, trusted by the Indians, he

Quebec and Montreal via the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario and the Oswego River to Onondaga Lake at Syracuse. Father Francois LeMercier was the superior of the Jesuits of this colony. Fathers Rene Menard and Father Pierre Joseph Marie Chaumonot were Jesuit members of the colony who entered the area of the Rochester Diocese during the Colony's existence, and Father Jacques Fremin, also a member of the Colony, came to Rochester Junction November 1, 1668.

POACHERS BLAZE EMPIRE

Despite the fact that the fur trade of Canada was farmed out to a chartered monopoly with strict laws against non-licensee fur traders, no doubt clever and adventurous young men, having once learned the way, began to come to Lake Ontario to tap its fur resources dodging the formalities of expensive trappers' licenses. These unknown soldiers of exploration were the forerunners of those official explorers who gave the world written reports.

LASALLE AT SODUS BAY

Surmises as to who may have traveled the south shore canoe with the voyage of Rev. Rene Galmer, Rene Robert Cavalier de La Salle in 1669. They came from Montreal with more than a score of white men and Indians. They camped at Sodus Bay, then cached their canoes in Irondequoit Creek.

RELEASE INDIAN PRISONERS

In 1669 Father Allouez, apostle of Lake Superior, released Seneca prisoners who had been held as captives by the upper lake tribes.

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



changes the current of swiftly moving events; sometimes as "ambassador" for the Senecas, often with duplicity, always interestingly.

With patience inspired by devoted interest Mr. Stewart searched until he discovered—in the faded print of old records, in the intimate messages of ancient letters, and from Old World castles—the facts about great human events out of which a connected story was woven.

Here in this article is a newly blazed trail. Sources new to the Rochester region are brought out for the first time. Especially is the period after Denonville's expedition in 1687 to the fall of Fort Niagara almost entirely unreported by local histories of the Rochester region.

Although Niagara for this period is well treated in Severance's "The Old Frontier of France" and Toronto has Robinson's "Toronto During the French Regime," what took place in this area had remained hidden from the knowledge of men.

Just as earlier articles by Mr. Stewart in the COURIER Calendar series showed that events which transpired during the forgotten years changed the whole course of the history of our country, so does this dramatic story throw a revealing light on historic international happenings.

A tremendous drama—the preliminaries toward the making of a nation—was staged on Lake Ontario and its south shore line canoe route and in the places where a great industrial area has now become a part of the territory.

rior General Vitelleschi who sent Father Bysant from Italy to the Huron country.

"At hand, while this is being written, is a letter from Mons. de La Mothe-Dreuzy, Chateau de la Turpinere par Sennelay, France. The letter is addressed to Governor Lehman of New York who, early in the summer of 1939, participated in the dedication of the statue to Saint Isaac Jogues, the missionary martyr who died in Autenville in the Mohawk country in 1646.

"The family of Monsieur de La Mothe-Dreuzy are close descendant relatives of Isaac Jogues, and they own the house in Orleans in which he was born in 1607. Saint Isaac Jogues belongs to the Huron country and Eastern New York State. He was not a voyager of Lake Ontario, but he belongs with that group of French pioneers whose relatives are now open to a friendly exchange of historical items.

"The name of de La Mothe belongs not only to the relatives of Saint Isaac Jogues but also to De La Mothe Cadillac, founder of Detroit. Nearer at hand than Europe are Montreal and Quebec, and just as Hagerstown, Maryland, is part of Rochester history on account of the early residence of Nathaniel Rochester, so also are these two cities because they were the early homes of many voyagers to our Rochester region who came in an earlier century.

art searched for it as he calls attention to the fact that it is still possible to find in one French chateau, at least, "letters written As Mr. Stewart points out, "the names of some of these early voy-

Even at this late date, 1669, six years after the founding of Quebec, most of the travel to the upper Great Lakes was going by the Ottawa River and into the northeast corner of Lake Huron and thence to Mackinac. Delay in developing the south shore route occurred when the Mohawk Country was opened up for safe travel to Frenchmen from Canada by the peace which was made between the French and the Mohawks in 1666.

Travelers starting from Montreal found it a much more attractive prospect for a journey to the Iroquois Country to paddle up the gentle flowing Richelieu River to Lake Champlain and Lake George and then walk westward through the Mohawk country on the Central Trail than it was to begin at once a long carry around the power and fury of the majestic LaChute Rapids on the St. Lawrence River.

There was also tact and diplomacy involved in placating the vanity of the Mohawks by missionaries and other travelers making a point of passing through their country and by leaving gifts to guides, and baggage carriers and by recognizing the importance of the Mohawk chiefs as keepers of the Eastern Door of the Long House of the Iroquois family.

PLACATE INDIANS WITH GIFTS

A distinguished foreign visitor remaining overnight in the house of a chief exalted that chief's importance in the eyes of his colleagues. So missionaries and other French travelers went through the Mohawk Country between 1666 and 1681. Their approximate line of travel is minutely described in the chapter on the Central Trail in Lewis H. Morgan's League of the Iroquois. The south shore of Lake Ontario and Irondequoit Bay were not the way of approach to the Seneca Country for missionaries during this period.

The building of Fort Frontenac in 1673 gave La Salle and the French a strategic base for fur

agers are still preserved in the genealogies of noble French families, and their descendant relatives may have come to sit beside you when you attended the opera in Paris.

"Relatives of such voyagers of Lake Ontario's shore line as Vaillant de Guellis or Eugene de Carheil may be found today in France, and such persons as Cadillac, Joncaire, Bonnecamp, and LaSalle—to name a few of them—belong both to well known places in France and to our Lake Ontario region also."

Through research for material in such sources as these—including the present Old World homes of early American pioneers—Mr. Stewart has added to the resources of local history and to national and international history, to which it is closely related.

In this article he takes the readers back to the dim past when a rumor that there was "a big lake" in this vicinity was substantiated with discovery of Lake Ontario, then reports the first traveler on its waters.

He guides them through the wilderness as the south shore canoe route becomes a reality, then on through the years as Jesuits and other pioneers along its course are followed by others to take their place in the tremendous drama that is unfolded.

The result is that another great chapter is captured from the buried past to add to the CATHOLIC COURIER Calendar series of articles on early events in this region which, beginning in 1933, has made a rich contribution to historical knowledge.