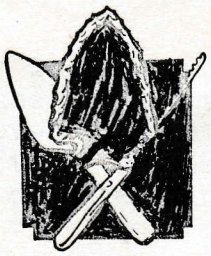
# The Ontario Archaeological Society (Inc.)



ARCH-NOTES #5-57

On Tuesday, October 22nd, 1957, The Ontario Archaeological Society will hold its regular meeting in the auditorium of St. Paul's Parish Hall, 227 Bloor St. E., Toronto, at 8 P.M.

The guest speaker on this occasion will be one of our members, MISS HELEN DEVEREUX, who will bring us up to date on the "SERPENT MOUND EXCAVATION, 1957." (Illustrated).

May we hope to have a good attendance at this our first meeting of the fall season, and the first segment of the O.A.S. résume of Ontario archaeological field work - 1957.

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The Rouge River has long been of interest to archaeologists and historians; it still is. During the course of the past few years the Ontario Archaeological Society has excavated several prehistoric sites within the confines of the Rouge Valley. Pending publication of the results of this field work, we are pleased to include in this issue of "Arch-Notes", with the kind permission of the author (an O.A.S. member), a paper presented by Mr. Russell at the February, 1957 meeting of the Ontario Archaeological Society, dealing with the early historic aspects of the Rouge Valley.

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"Dig" plans, as well as "lab" plans, will be announced as soon as they are completed.

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Members' friends welcome.

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HU.1-4604

# AN ABSTRACT OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ROUGE RIVER AND VALLEY

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As the title of this paper indicates, it is an abstract of history and not history itself, and consequently familiar names and events will have to be omitted or brushed over summarily. My purpose is to give an overall sketch of the early history of the Rouge and to show how it fitted into the larger picture of Canadian history. Where exactly is the Rouge?

In untechnical language it can be situated in the following manner. The city of Toronto lies at the foot of a flat or gently rolling stretch of land that reaches as far north as Barrie and Lake Simcoe. This whole area, bounded on the south by Lake Ontario and on the west by the Humber River, and including most of the counties of Simcoe and York, comprises what was known to the early French explorers and missionaries as le passage de toronto, or Toronto Carrying Place. Its eastern boundary was the River Rouge which is situated about twenty-three miles east of the Humber and runs through the Townships of Markham and Scarborough for most of its length, emptying into Lake Ontario at Frenchman's Bay. We have this description of it in an old history of Scarborough:

> "A little west of the Seneca village was a stream that gave kindly shelter to distressed canoes; and so by Indians of the next century and of a different race was named Katabokonk, or 'River of Easy Entrance'.. In making its way to the lake it pierced a hill of red tenacious clay which sufficiently colored its waters to justify the old French name Rivière Rouge...It is still the Rouge and the name is interesting as the sole remaining trace now, on the North-west shore, of the old Sulpician Mission of Louis XIV's domain."

Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe had made an attempt at remoulding his surroundings in as English a cast as possible, and while endeavouring to rename Toronto, York, tried to rechristen the Rouge the Nen, but familiar titles tend to remain and it is still the Rouge today.

What then of its history? To see the valley in relation to other events in Early Upper Canadian history, it will help to remember that there are two main threads in its story which cross and re-cross constantly: the works of the missionaries, and the colonial expansion and fur trading ambitions of the European nations, especially of the French and Dutch. Perhaps it will be more profitable in the long run if I consider each separately, though in fact they were happening for the most part simultaneously.

In 1650 the last struggle of the Huron nation and the final flight to Quebec took place. Charlevoix, the second Jesuit historian of New France, says:

> "...not only the Huron country, but also the whole course of the Ottawa River, which had been so thickly peopled a few years before, were almost entirely deserted, without

its being possible to say what had become of most of the people."

With the people wiped out and the land laid waste, there was little purpose in the Jesuits remaining, so they abandoned Huronia and, seeking new peoples, pushed west. Although St. Isaac Jogues had been to the Soo as early as 1641, the first permanent white establishments beyond Huronia (with the exceptions of Radisson's fur-forts, if they may be called permanent) were the missions of St. Ignace in Michigan and Sault Ste. Marie. They had apparently been suggested by the findings of the Jesuit Fr. Ménard after his explorations on Lakes Huron and Michigan in 1654.

Now while some of the Jesuits went west, in reality they divided their forces because there were still the Iroquois near home, whose hostility provided the highest kind of challenge to missionary efforts. By 1667 the last vestige of Iroquois resistance had been crushed by the French and the Jesuits took the opportunity offered, following the troops into the villages where, for the next twenty years they preached and baptized among the five tribes of the Confederacy. But the Iroquois remained surly and stubborn and, a not uncommon thing, even persecuted their own people who turned to Christianity. It is for this reason that - as the Iroquois spread out into the country north of Lake Ontario and formerly possessed by their Huron enemies (they had started this "colonizing" of their own as far back as 1665, according to Bishop Laval) - certain villages, notably Kenté or Quinte near Kingston and Ganareské near the Trent River, were occupied wholly by Christian Indians. However, when it came time for someone to look after these peoples it was not the Society of Jesus which was selected but the Compagnie or Gentlemen of St. Sulpice. It is disputed among historians whether the Jesuits did have the mission for a very short period, but the bulk of evidence seems to favour the opinion that they did not.

The Sulpicians then, in 1668 took over the Kenté Mission which comprised the two Seneca villages just mentioned and the village of Ganetsekwyagon, situated on the eastern bank of the Rouge. Their occupation of Ganetsekwyagon is the first recorded residence of white men in the neighbourhood of Toronto.

Just why the Sulpicians were chosen is plain from a letter of Frontenac to the Minister under date of November 2, 1672. Quite frankly he did not like the Jesuits. It was felt that a new policy must be adopted with the Indians. The Jesuits had made no effort to turn them into Frenchmen, or even to teach them the French language. It was hoped that the Sulpicians would render them more useful allies of the French. So the Sulpicians were chosen, and capably took up their work. The first men to arrive at Ganetsekwyagon on the Rouge were L'Abbé François Salagnac de la Motte Fenelon and L'Abbé François Saturnin Lascaris d'Urfé. The Abbé Fenelon, for those who are interested in literary connections, was the half-brother of the fiery Bishop of Cambrai, France, whose play Telemaque is a classic of French literature. They chose Ganetsekwyagon, which Mr. J.N.B. Hewitt of the Smithsonian translates as "among the birch trees", because that village was situated at the entrance of the then passage de toronto and, as will be seen later, was literally a crossroads for traders, Indians, explorers and soldiers. The Sulpicians' first winter in the area, that of 1669-70, has been commemmorated by the name

Frenchman's Bay which the mouth of the Rouge is called to this day. It must have been a difficult winter. The missionaries were constantly called upon to undertake errands of mercy to Indians beyond the pale of the village, and on one occasion Abbé d'Urfé lost his way and sheltered in a wolf-trap, eating tree-fungus until the Iroquois found him. The mission made headway for five years or so, but then back in Quebec began a prolonged discussion on the advisability of closing it or of transferring it, due to the difficulties of men and money, to the Jesuits. The question was finally settled and the Sulpicians withdrew in 1680, after twelve years work. However it was to the Recollets, the first missionaries ever to come to Canada, that the mission was then assigned, probably at the suggestion of Frontenac since it was his policy to put either Sulpicians or Recollets wherever he could to 'balance' the influence of the Jesuits.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to seek further highlights of the Sulpicians' stay in their own records or in those of the Recollets. But, what has been said is sufficient to show the outline of the missionary activity on the Rouge.

## Part II

Now it remains to consider the second point, namely how the Rouge stood in relation to the European schemes for colonial expansion and the fur trade.

I have already mentioned that the Jesuits, after abandoning Huronia, went west practically on the heels of Pierre Radisson. I did so, not because their efforts had any direct bearing on the Rouge, but to point out the special route which the French usually followed in their journeys from Quebec into the interior, that is, up the Ottawa, through Lake Nipissing and down the French River to Georgian Bay. For you must remember that, until 1665, there were no French on Lake Ontario or even at the headwaters of the St. Lawrence. At this time they began to explore this hitherto unknown area and to lay plans for recapturing from the Iroquois the fur trade which the Five Nations had now directed to the English on the Delaware, the Dutch at New Amsterdam, and the Swedes in New Jersey. As Previously indicated the Iroquois had been on the north shore of the lake for some years, hunting the beaver whose numbers had become thinned practically to extinction in what is now New York State, and it was galling for the French to see the goods which they thought to be rightly theirs taken for the profits of their enemies. A similar situation had existed earlier between the Iroquois and the Hurons over this very business of the fur trade, and the Iroquois for their part, hated the sight of the Hurons getting rich while their own stocks became rapidly depleted. At any rate, when the French arrived on the lake they found the Dutch in possession of the trade, and one authority estimates that between 1650 and 1773 these men must have frequented Ganetsekwyagon, Teiaiagon on the Humber, (located on Baby's Point, south of Dundas Street), and all the shore in between. With the explorations of Joliet, LaSalle and others into the Niagara Peninsula, Detroit and ever farther west and south-west, even to the Mississipi, French dreams naturally grew into the ambitions of empire. As these plans bore fruit the importance of the north shore grew. It became the junction for the constant stream of supplies and men going both west and south, providing a short overland passage by which those going to Machilimachinac could get into Georgian

Bay without using the more arduous northern route up the Ottawa.

On several of the early maps of this period the Ganetsekwyagon portage is indicated but the Teiaiagon path is not. The French seem to have chosen the former because it was nearer the eastern end of the lake, which meant for canoe-travellers a saving of twenty-three miles to a better anchorage at the Humber. The Rouge seems to be indicated, but not specifically, on Sansom's map and that of Du Creux in 1651. Before LaSalle's time the maps indicate the eastern trail from Ganetsekwyagon as the one generally followed. LaSalle's choice of the new trail from Teiaiagon must have been deliberate, and may have been due to the fact that it provided a better anchorage for larger ships. Experience most likely proved it to be a better path as well, and LaSalle had the experience; two of his trips were over the Carrying Place. The Raffeux map of 1668 shows the Humber route to be considerably shorter, but, for whatever reasons, the eastern portage was gradually replaced and by 1775 Mitchell's map shows both Teiaiagon and Ganeraské, but entirely omits the Rouge..

In 1669 Peré and Joliet camped for a time at Ganetsekwyagon before crossing overland to Lake Simcoe and the Severn River to search for the vast deposit of copper supposed to exist in the area. Although Brûlé on his expedition to the Andastes in 1615 was the first white man in this region, Peré seems to have been here in 1668 (the year before LaSalle), and that would make him the first French trader on the Lake. But let us not forget the enterprising Dutch. From the map of 1674 (Joliet's?) and the marginal notes scribbled on it, it seems plain that Fort Frontenac was founded as a rival to the trade at Ganetsekwyagon. The English and Dutch eventually had to retreat to the Humber and make it their primary outpost.

This fort had first been proposed in a general way by the Intendant Jean Talon in 1671, and the Governor, de Courcelles, on a visit to Lake Ontario, thought that the best way of preventing trade between the Dutch and Iroquois would be a fort near the entrance of Lake Ontario. He was quick to notice that the Iroquois, as we have already mentioned several times, did all their hunting on the north side of the lake. Two years later Frontenac wrote to Colbert, in November, 1673:

> "You will remember, my lord, that several years ago you were informed that the English and Dutch were doing all they could to prevent the Ottawas, the tribe from which we draw all our peltries, from bringing them to us, and that they wanted them to come to Ganacheskiagon, on the shores of Lake Ontario where they offered to bring to them all the goods that they needed."

And the next year, to the very month, he wrote again to Colbert:

> "They have given their word not to continue the trade, which as I informed you last year they had commenced to establish at Gandaskekiagon (Frontenac seems unable to spell the same word twice the same way) with the Ottawas which would have absolutely ruined ours by the transfer of the furs to the Dutch."

From these two observations it takes little imagination to picture the varied kind of activity that was going on in and around the Rouge. The missionaries coming and going; the traffic up and down the river; the French newcomers and well-established Dutch traders vying with one another like two merchants in a price-war, with the Indians enjoying the benefits.

Almost a century later there are references to other groups touching upon the Rouge. In 1749, Joseph-Gaspard de Léry (the younger), the son of a famous military engineer, working under de Galissonière's instructions, journeyed from Montreal to Detroit, making astonomical observations along the way. The party was under the command of Captain de Sabrevois who was on his way to take command at Detroit, and consisted of traders and families intending to settle there. They encamped briefly at the mouth of the Rouge on the evening of June 29th.

A few years later there is record of the Régiment de Béarn sighting the great bluffs and the mouth of the Rouge, but the defense of Niagara was pressing, and their ship, the Marquise de Vaudreil did not heave to.

Military moves on this scale were indications of the approaching crisis for Canada's dominion, and during these years when they were carried out the Rouge and the eastern Carrying Place fade more and more from sight. 1759 saw the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. For the approaching attack the French drained the Lake Ontario shores of their men. The trading post at Fort Rouillé was abandoned and the works fell into disuse, and the next thirty-seven years saw, for the most part, only itinerant Indians and trappers. The next real influx into the region was with Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe and the early settlers of York and Scarborough, and with them the frontier era passes into the pioneer stage.

From the same pioneer history quoted earlier there is an interesting passage with which we might draw this paper to a close:

> "The Rouge yields many evidences that its banks were of olden times frequented by the red man, Algonkin as well as Huron and Iroquois. Perhaps the earliest printed reference to this fact is to be found in a small volume by one William Brown printed in Leeds, England, in 1849. Some of the men employed in his saw-mill discovered a quantity of human bones on the bank of the stream, and from time to time stone and bone relics have been found at intervals along both sides of the river."

This quotation, I believe, sums up the most important point of this paper. A little over a century ago the ground seemed to ooze artifacts. If we reflect on the comings and goings that the Rouge Valley has seen in historic times there is no cause for wonder. The variety of Indian tribes, the three trading powers, the different missionary congregations, together, will make any archaeological investigation a really fruitful and enlightening undertaking.

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