

✓
COLLECTIONS

OF THE

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF WISCONSIN

EDITED BY

REUBEN GOLD THWAITES

Secretary and Superintendent of the Society

VOL. XVI

The French Regime in Wisconsin—I

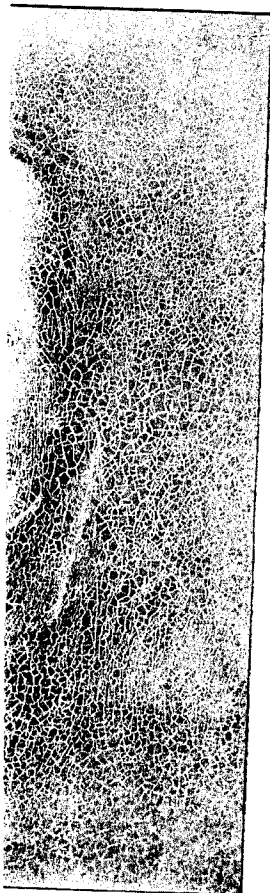
1634-1727



MADISON

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY

1902



ARQUETTE
erred in Montreal in 1897

10-21

#6

upper part of it; when this sounds, they pull in their Fish. This Fishery suffices to maintain large Villages; they also gather wild rice and acorns; accordingly the Peoples of the Bay can live in the utmost comfort.—La Potherie's *Amér. Septentrionale*, pp. 69-81.

1653-55: FIRST IROQUOIS RAID INTO WISCONSIN.

[From Nicolas Perrot's *Mémoire sur les mœurs, coutumes et religion des Sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale*: written about 1715-18,¹ published at Paris, 1864, with annotations by Rev. Jules Tallhan, S. J.]

This defeat spread terror among the Outaouas [Ottawas] and their allies, who were at Sankinon, at Thunder Bay, and at Manitouletz and Michillimakinak. They went to dwell together among the Hurons, on the island which we call Huron Island.² The Iroquois remained at peace with another vil-

¹Nicolas Perrot was one of the most noted French voyageurs in the Northwest; see accounts of his life and achievements in Tallhan's notes on his *Mémoire*, and in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, v, pp. 110-112. In regard to his taking possession of the Upper Mississippi, *Id.*, x, 359-362, and xi, 35, 36; and, on the ostensorium presented by him to the De Pere mission, *Id.*, viii, pp. 129-206, and *Jes. Relations*, lxxvi, p. 347. For locations of forts erected by him in Wisconsin, see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, x, pp. 59-63, 299-301, 328-333, 358, 364-372, 504-506.—Ed.

²Tallhan thinks (*Perrot*, p. 214) that the island here mentioned was that now known as Washington Island, at the entrance of Green Bay—later, the abode of the Pottawatomies. The only application of the name Huron Islands on early maps, however, is to the group still known by that name near the south shore of Lake Superior; they lie to the north of Marquette county, Mich. The name Sankinon is but a variant of Saginaw (the large bay in the western shore of Lake Huron), and Manitouletz of Manitoulin (the islands at the entrance to Georgian Bay). Sankinan (Sankinon) is said by Dr. E. B. O'Callaghan (*N. Y. Colon. Docs.*, ix, p. 293, note) to mean, in Algonkin, "the country of the Sakis." Cf. Nouvel's account of the "Saki country," in *Jes. Relations*, ix, pp. 219-221; apparently it was on the Tittabawassee river, in Midland and Saginaw counties, Mich. "This defeat" refers to the ruin of the Huron confederacy by the Iroquois in 1650-51; for detailed accounts thereof, see *Jes. Relations*, vols. xxxiii-xxxvi.—Ed.

lage, established at Detroit, of savages who were called "Neutral Hurons," because they did not embrace the interests of their allies, but maintained an attitude of neutrality. The Iroquois, however, compelled these people to abandon Detroit and settle in the Iroquois country. Thus they augmented their own strength, not only by the many children whom they took captive, but by the great number of Neutral Hurons whom they carried to their own country; and it was at that time that they made so many raids against the Algonkins that the latter were compelled to seek shelter among the French colonists. The Nipissings made a stand in their villages during a few years; but they were finally obliged to flee far northward to Alimibegon [Nepigon]; and the savages who had been neighbors to the Hurons fled, with those along the Outaoua River, to Three Rivers.

The Iroquois, elated by the advantage which they had gained over their enemies in thus compelling them to take flight, and finding no other bones to gnaw, made several attacks upon the Algonkins and even upon the French, taking several captives who were afterward restored. These hostilities were succeeded by more than one treaty of peace, which proved to be of short duration. The early relations of these events describe them quite fully; accordingly I do not expatiate upon them here, but limit myself to an account of only such things as they have omitted, and which I have learned from the lips of the old men among the Outaoua tribes.

The following year [1653?], the Iroquois sent another expedition, which counted 800 men, to attack the Outaouas; but those tribes, feeling sure that the enemy had ascertained the place where they had established themselves, and would certainly make another attack against them, had taken the precaution to send out one of their scouting parties, who went as far as the former country of the Hurons, from which they had been driven. These men descried the Iroquois party who were marching against them, and hastened back to carry the news of this incursion to their own people. Those tribes, who were dwelling on Huron Island, immediately abandoned that place

and retreated to Meehingan,¹ where they constructed a fort, resolving to await there the enemy. The Iroquois came to that region, but were unable to accomplish anything for two years. They made persistent efforts to succeed, and put in the field a little army, as it were, intending to destroy the villages of that new settlement, at which a considerable extent of land had been already cleared. But the Outaouas had time enough to harvest their grain before the arrival of the enemy; for they were always careful to keep scouts on the watch, in order not to be taken by surprise, and the scouts saw the enemy in time. The Iroquois finally arrived one morning before the fort, which appeared to them impregnable. In their army were many Hurons who were the offspring of the people whom they had come to attack—men whose mothers had escaped from the ruin of their tribe when the Iroquois had invaded their former country. The enemy had at the time not much food, because they found very little game on the route which they had followed. Deliberations were held, and propositions for a treaty of peace were made. One of these was that the Hurons who were in the Iroquois army should be given up, which was granted. In order to settle upon the terms of the treaty, it was agreed that six of their chiefs should enter the fort of the Hurons, and that the latter should, in exchange, give six of their men as hostages. A treaty of peace was accordingly made and concluded between them. The Outaouas and Hurons made presents of food to the Iroquois, and also traded with them for blankets and porcelain collars.² The latter remained in camp for several days to rest their warriors, but when they entered the fort only a few at a time were admitted, and these were drawn by the Outaouas over the palisades by ropes.

The Outaouas sent word to the Iroquois army before their departure that they wished to present to each of their men a loaf of corn-bread; but they prepared a poison to mix with the bread.

¹By Meehingan (Michigan), Perrot probably means the mainland northwest of Lake Michigan.—Ed.

²"Porcelain" is simply the Canadian-French term for the shell, glass, or porcelain beads used as money and ornaments by the Indians—the "wampum" of English writers.—Ed.

When the loaves were baked, they were sent to the Iroquois; but a Huron woman who had an Iroquois husband knew the secret, and warned her son not to eat any of the bread, because it had been poisoned. The son immediately warned the Iroquois; they threw the bread to their dogs, who died after eating it. They needed no more to assure them of the conspiracy against them, and determined to go away without provisions. They concluded to divide their forces into two parties; one of these embarked from that place, and were defeated by the Sauteurs, Missisakis, and people of the Otter tribe (who are called in their own tongue *Mikikoïet*), but few of the Iroquois escaping. The main force pushed farther on, and soon found themselves among the buffaloes. If the Outaouas had been as courageous as the Hurons, and had pursued the enemy, they could without doubt have defeated them, considering their slender supply of food. But the Iroquois, when they had secured abundance of provisions, steadily advanced until they encountered a small Illinois village; they killed the women and children therein, for the men fled toward their own people, who were not very far from that place.¹ The Illinois immediately assembled their forces, and hastened after the Iroquois, who had no suspicion of an enemy; attacking them after nightfall, the Illinois gained the advantage and slew many of them. Other Illinois villages, who were hunting in that vicinity, having learned what had occurred, hastened to find their tribesmen, who undertook to deal a blow at the Iroquois. Assembling their warriors, they made a hasty march, surprised the enemy, and utterly defeated them in battle; for there were very few of the Iroquois who returned to their own villages. This was the first acquaintance of the Illinois with the Iroquois; it proved baneful to them, but they have well avenged themselves for it.—Perrot's *Mémoire*, pp. 80-83.

¹Missisakis: an earlier form of Missisaguas—an Algonquian tribe resident on the north shore of Lake Huron, and later forming villages in the peninsula between that lake and Lakes Erie and Ontario. Mikikonets: probably the same as the Algonquian Nikikonets, occasionally mentioned in the *Jesuit Relations*; located near the Missisaguas. Illinois: the Illinois tribes.—Ed.

1656-62: THE OTTAWAS AND HURONS FLEE TO WISCONSIN;
HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THEM AND THE SIOUX.[From Perrot's *Mémoire*.]

The Flemish Bastard¹ carried away [from the vicinity of Montreal] several Huron prisoners; he caused their fingers to be burred, without any opposition on the part of the French, but spared their lives after he had taken them to his own village. The Hurons never forgot the way in which we abandoned them, on that occasion, to the pleasure of their enemies. They will, moreover, always remember how little effort the French made to oppose the Iroquois when the latter, in time of peace [May, 1656], carried away the Hurons who dwelt on Orleans Island, and made them pass in canoes before Quebec and Three Rivers—meanwhile compelling them to sing, in order to increase their mortification. But since then the Outaouas have, in revenge, sought every opportunity to betray the French, at the same time pretending to be their devoted friends; they treat the French thus through policy and through fear, for they do not trust any people, as the reader will learn from the circumstances narrated in this *Mémoire*.

When all the Outaouas were dispersed toward the great lakes, the Saulters and the Mississakis fled northward, and finally to Kionconan [Keweenaw], for lack of game. Then the Outaouas, fearing that they were not strong enough to repel the incursions of the Iroquois, who had gained information of the place in which the former had established themselves, sought

¹ Thus named by the French; the son of a Dutchman and a Mohawk woman; his mother's tribe chose him as one of its chiefs. He was long a prominent figure in the hostilities waged by the Iroquois against the French and Algonkins. In 1666, he came to Quebec to negotiate for peace; this was secured for the time, but was soon broken; and Tracy and Courcelles led an expedition against the Mohawks, which laid their country waste. Overwhelmed by this blow, they sent the Flemish Bastard to Quebec to sue for peace, which was then established. The Bastard, with many of his tribesmen, even removed their families and abodes to Canada, and settled near Montreal. See Perrot's *Mémoire*, pp. 111-114, 228.—*Jes. Relations*, xxxv. p. 292.

refuge in the Micissipy region, which is now called Louisiana. They ascended that river to a place about twelve leagues from the Onisconching, where they came to another river, which is named for the Ayôës savages.¹ They followed this stream to its source, and there encountered nations who received them cordially. But as they did not find, in all that region which they traversed, any place suitable for a settlement,—since the country was destitute of woods, and contained only prairies and level fields, although buffaloes and other animals were found there in abundance,—they retraced the same route by which they had come; and, having again reached the shores of the Louisiana river, they continued to ascend it. Before they had gone far, they dispersed, in various directions to pursue the chase; I will mention only one of their bands, whom the Scioux encountered, captured, and carried away to their villages. The Scioux, who had no acquaintance with the firearms and other implements which they saw among the strangers,—for they themselves use only knives and hatchets of stone,—hoped that these new nations who had come near them would share with them the commodities which they possessed; and, believing that the latter were spirits, because they were acquainted with the use of iron,—an article which was utterly unlike the stone and other things which they used,—conducted them, as I have said, to their own villages, and delivered the prisoners to their own people.

The Outaouas and Hurons gave the Scioux, in turn, a friendly reception, but did not make them presents of much value. The Scioux returned to their own country, with some small articles which they had received from the Outaouas, and shared these with their allies, giving to some hatchets, and to others knives or awls. All those villages sent deputies to those of the Outaouas; as soon as they arrived there, they began, according to their custom, to weep over every person they met, in order to manifest the lively joy which they felt in meeting them; and they entreated the strangers to have pity on them,

¹ Micissipy: a variant of Mississippi. Onisconching: the Wisconsin River. Ayôës: the same as Iowas—referring to the Iowa River.—Ed.

and share with them that iron, which they regarded as a divinity. The Outaouas, seeing these people weeping over all who approached them, began to feel contempt for them, and regarded them as people far inferior to themselves, and as incapable even of waging war. They gave to the envoys a few trifles, such as knives and awls; the Scioux declared that they placed great value on these, lifting their eyes to the sky,¹ and blessing it for having guided to their country these tribes, who were able to furnish them so powerful aid in ameliorating their wretched condition. The Outaouas fired some guns which they had; and the report of these weapons so terrified the Scioux that they imagined it was the thunder and lightning, of which the Outaouas had made themselves masters in order to exterminate whomsoever they would. The Scioux, whenever they encountered the Hurons and Outaouas, loaded them with endearing terms, and showed the utmost submissiveness, in order to touch them with compassion and obtain from them some benefits; but the Outaouas had even less esteem for them when they persisted in maintaining before them this humiliating attitude.

The Outaouas finally decided to select the island called Pelée as the place of their settlement; and they spent several years there in peace, often receiving visits from the Scioux.² But on one occasion it happened that a hunting-party of Hurons encountered and slew some Scioux. The Scioux, missing their people, did not know what had become of them; but after a few days they found their corpses, from which the heads had been severed. Hastily returning to their village, to carry this sad news, they met on the way some Hurons, whom they made pris-

¹ Among most of the Indian tribes, the sky was revered, not only as the residence of a deity, but (by a sort of personification) as the deity himself, and was often invoked, especially at councils; the sun also was regarded as a deity. See *Jes. Relations*, x, pp. 159, 161-165, 195, 273; xviii, 211; xxiii, 55; xxxiii, 225; xxxix, 15; xli, 43; lxviii, 155.—Ed.

² Situated at the upper end of Lake Pepin, opposite Red Wing, Minn.; see Charlevoix's *Journal Historique*, p. 398. It was thus named, as he tells us, "because it had not a single tree," he adds: "The French of Canada have often made it the center of their trade in those Western Regions."—Ed.

oners; but when they reached home the chiefs liberated the captives and sent them back to their own people. The Hurons, so rash as to imagine that the Scioux were incapable of resisting them without iron weapons and firearms, conspired with the Outaouas to undertake a war against them, purposing to drive them from their own country in order that they themselves might thus secure a greater territory in which to seek their living. The Outaouas and Hurons accordingly united their forces and marched against the Scioux. They believed that as soon as they appeared the latter would flee, but they were greatly deceived; for the Scioux sustained their attack, and even repulsed them, and, if they had not retreated, they would have been utterly routed by the great number of men who came from other villages to the aid of their allies. The Outaouas were pursued even to their settlement, where they were obliged to erect a wretched fort; this, however, was sufficient to compel the Scioux to retire, as they did not dare to attack it.

The continual incursions made by the Scioux forced the Outaouas to flee. They had become acquainted with a river, which is called Black; they entered its waters and, ascending to its source, the Hurons found there a place suitable for fortifying themselves and establishing their village. The Outaouas pushed farther on, and proceeded as far as Lake Superior, where they fixed their abode at Chagouanikon [Chequamegon]. The Scioux, seeing that their enemies had departed, remained quietly, without pursuing them farther; but the Hurons were not willing to keep the peace, and sent out several hostile bands against the Scioux. These expeditions had very little success; and, moreover, drew upon them frequent raids from the Scioux, which compelled them to abandon their fort, with great loss of their men, and go to join the Outaouas at Chagouanikon. As soon as they arrived there, they planned to form a war-party of a hundred men, to march against the Scioux and avenge themselves. It is to be observed that the country where they roam is nothing but lakes and marshes, full of wild rice; these are separated from one another by narrow tongues of land, which extend from one lake to another not more than thirty or forty paces, and sometimes no more than five or six. These lakes and

marshes form a tract more than fifty leagues square, and are traversed by no river save that of Louisiana [the Mississippi]; its course lies through the midst of them, and part of their waters discharge into it. Other waters fall into the Ste. Croix River, which is situated northeast of them, at no great distance. Still other marshes and lakes are situated to the west of the St. Peter River, into which their waters flow. Consequently, the Sioux are inaccessible in so swampy a country, and cannot be destroyed by enemies who have not canoes, as they have, with which to pursue them. Moreover, in those quarters only five or six families live together as one body, forming a small village; and all the others are removed from one another at certain distances, in order that they may be able to lend a helping hand at the first alarm. If any one of these little villages be attacked, the enemy can inflict very little damage upon it, for all its neighbors promptly assemble, and give prompt aid wherever it is needed. Their method of navigation in lakes of this kind is, to push through the wild rice with their canoes, and, carrying these from lake to lake, compel the fleeing enemy to turn about, and thus bewilder him; they, meanwhile, pass from one lake to another until they thread those mazes and reach the firm ground.

The hundred Hurons became involved among these swamps, and without canoes; they were discovered by some Sioux, who hastened to spread the alarm everywhere. That was a populous nation, scattered along the circumference of the marshes, in which they gathered abundance of wild rice; this grain is the food of those people, and tastes better than does rice. More than 3,000 Sioux came together from every side, and besieged the Hurons. The loud noise, the clamor, and the yells with which the air resounded showed them that they were surrounded on all sides, and that their only resource was to make head against the Sioux (who were eagerly striving to discover their location), unless they could find some place by which they could retreat. In this straitened condition, they concluded that they could not do better than to hide among the wild rice, where the water and mud reached almost to their chins. Accordingly, they dispersed in various directions, taking great pains to avoid noise in their progress. The Sioux, who were sharply search-

ing for them, and desired only to meet them in battle, found very few of them, and were fully persuaded that the Hurons were hidden in the wild rice; but they were greatly astonished at seeing only the trail made in entering the lake, and no trace of the Hurons' departure. They bethought them of this device: they stretched across the narrow strips of land between the lakes the nets used in capturing beavers; and to these they attached small bells, which they had obtained from the Outaouas and their allies in the visits which they had made to those tribes, as above related. They divided their forces into numerous detachments, in order to guard all the passages, and watched by day and night, supposing that the Hurons would take the first opportunity to escape from the danger which threatened them. This scheme indeed succeeded; for the Hurons slipped out under cover of the darkness, creeping on all fours, not suspecting this sort of ambuscade; they struck their heads against the nets, which they could not escape, and thus set the bells to ringing.¹ The Sioux, lying in ambush, made prisoners of them as soon as they stepped on land. Thus from all that band but one man escaped; he was called in his own language Le Froid ["he who is cold"]. This same man died not a long time ago.

The captives were conducted to the nearest village, where the people from all the others were assembled in order to share among them the prey. It must be observed that the Sioux, although they are not as warlike or as crafty as the other tribes, are not, like them, cannibals. They eat neither dogs nor human flesh; they are not even as cruel as the other savages, for they do not put to death the captives whom they take from their enemies, except when their own people are burned by the enemy. They were naturally indulgent, and are so now, for they send home the greater number of those whom they have captured. The usual torture which they inflict upon those whom they have doomed to death is, to fasten them to trees or stakes, and let the boys shoot arrows at them; neither the warriors, nor any men,

¹ Cf. Radisson's device for the protection of himself and Grosseilliers at Chequamegon—"a long cord tied with some small bells, with wearers sentries [sentries];" see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xi, p. 73.—Ed.

nor the women, took part in this. But, as soon as they saw their own people burned, they resolved to do the same by way of reprisal; even in this, however, they do not behave with as much cruelty as do their enemies—either because some motive of pity or compassion will not permit them to behold such suffering, or because they believe that only despair can make the captives sing during their torments with so much fortitude and bravery, if it may be so called. On this account they speedily break the enemies' heads, in time of war.

The Seicoux, having shared the prisoners, sent back part of them, and made the others objects for their sport—delivering them, as I said, to their boys to be shot to death with arrows; their bodies were then cast upon the dung-heap. Those whose lives they spared were condemned to see their comrades die, and were then sent home. Having arrived there, they gave a faithful account of all that had occurred, and said that having seen the numbers of the Seicoux, they believed it impossible to destroy them. The Outaouas listened very attentively to the relations of their recently-arrived comrades, but, as they were not very brave warriors, they were not willing to make any hostile attempt; and the Hurons, recognizing the smallness of their numbers, made up their minds to meditate revenge no longer, but to live peaceably at Chagouamikon, which they did during several years. In all that time they were not molested by the Seicoux, who gave all their attention to waging war against the Kiristinons [Crees], the Assiniboules, and all the nations of the north; they ruined those tribes, and have been in turn ruined by them. * * * The Outaouas, having settled at Chagouamikon, there applied themselves to the cultivation of Indian corn and squashes, on which, with the fish they could catch, they subsisted. They searched along the lake to find whether other tribes were there, and encountered the Saulteurs who had fled northwards, and with them some Frenchmen, who had followed them to Chagouamikon in order to settle there. Part of the savages went towards Kionconan [Keweenaw], and reported that they had seen many tribes; that beavers were abundant there; that they did not all return together because they had left their people at the north; that the latter intended to dwell

there, but without a fixed residence, purposing to roam in all directions; and that the Népissings and Amikoues¹ were at Alimibegon.

At these tidings, the Outaouas went away toward the north, and sought to carry on trade with those tribes [1662], who gave them all their beaver robes for old knives, blunted awls, wrecked nets, and kettles used until they were past service. For these they were most humbly thanked; and those people declared that they were under great obligations to the Outaouas for having had compassion upon them and having shared with them the merchandise which they had obtained from the French. In acknowledgment of this, they presented to them many packages of peltries, hoping that their visitors would not fail to come to them every year, and to supply them with the like wares. They assured the Outaouas, at parting, that they would go on a hunting expedition to make ready for their coming; that they would be present, without fail, at the rendezvous agreed upon; and that they would surely wait for them there.—Perrot's *Mémoire*, pp. 84-93.

1658-61: RADISSON AND GROSEILLIERS IN WISCONSIN.

[Such part of Radisson's *Voyages* as relates to the stay in Wisconsin of Grosseilliers and himself, is given in Wis. Hist. Colls., xi, pp. 64-96.]

1660-61: FIRST JESUIT MISSION AMONG THE OTTAWAS.

[Letter of Father René Ménard, June 2, 1661, to his superior at Quebec, Jerome Lallemant.]

[Synopsis: This letter is written from the Bay of Ste. Thérèse (Keweenaw Bay), Lake Superior, where Ménard has labored among the Ottawas whom he accompanied thither the preceding year. He has gained six converts in that time, whose pious fervor and pure lives console him in his life of privations

¹ These were Algonquian tribes of Western Canada, from Lake Nipissing and Georgian Bay respectively, who had fled from Iroquois ferocity to Lake Népigon, north of Lake Superior.—Ed.