

## A Chapter in the History of Huronia - at Ossossané in 1637

BY  
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### Location

Old Huronia,<sup>1</sup> the country of the Hurons, is the section of hilly land enclosed by Matchedash Bay, Nottawasaga Bay, and Lake Simcoe. Its area is about 800 square miles, within the townships of Tiny, Tay, Medonte, and Oro of Simcoe County.<sup>2</sup> The Indian name for this land was Wendake, and its people were the Wendot or Wyandottes. The French coined the name, Huron,<sup>3</sup> as a nickname. It was suggested by the manner in which the first party of the tribe that they met dressed their hair, in ridges, 'hures', which reminded them of the head of a boar. At the time of Jacques Cartier's first voyage to Canada, the Huron-Iroquois nation appears to have inhabited the valley of the Upper St. Lawrence,<sup>4</sup> but the known history of Huronia begins with the early 17th century after Fr. Le Caron, the Recollet friar,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents" in 73 vols., edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Secy. of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Burrows Bros. Co., Cleveland, O. Publishers, 1896-1901. I shall hereafter refer to this series as Rel. Clev. edit. Location of Huronia, the country of the Hurons. 1615-50, Vol. V, pp. 278-79; pp. 292-94; XVI, pp. 225-27; XXXIII, pp. 61 ff; XXXIV, p. 247. Sagard, G. T., "The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons." Intro. and notes by G. M. Wrong, Editor. Champlain Society, Toronto 1939, pp. 90-91.

Champlain, Samuel de, "The Works of...", Edited by H. P. Biggar, 6 vols. Champlain Soc., Tor. 1922-36. Vol. III, p. 46; pp. 114-68; Vol. IV, pp. 238-333.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1820 and 1828 the Government of Upper Canada made its survey and division of this land.

<sup>3</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. Vol. XVI, 229-31; Wendot, Rel. Clev. edit. Vol. II, 303.

<sup>4</sup> See Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey, "The Significance of the identity and disappearance of the Laurentian Iroquois." Proc. and Trans. Roy. Soc. Canada 3rd Series Vol. XXVII, Sec. 2, 97-107 (1933). Smithsonian Misc. Coll. Vol. 100, 1940. "Problems arising from the Historic North Eastern Position of the Iroquois." William N. Fenton, Bureau of American Ethnology, 159 ff; Rel. Clev. edit. VIII, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Joseph Le Caron Recollet, was the first missionary to set foot in the country of the Herons. He arrived in Aug., 1615, and stayed until early summer, 1616. He returned with Fr. Nicholas Viel and Bro. Gabriel Sagard

came there in 1615. He was the first white man, so far as we know, to live in Huronia.

### Communication

There are so many interesting and extraordinary facts connected with the whole history of Huronia, that it is rather difficult to isolate one or two without spoiling the symmetry of the whole glorious epic. If you study Ducreux' map of 1660,<sup>6</sup> you will be impressed by the distance of Huronia from the French headquarters at Quebec. During these years Quebec was nothing but a trading-post and fort. Louis Hébert, the first true colonist, did not arrive until 1617. And at Champlain's death 1635, Quebec numbered scarcely one hundred people. The hopes of the missionaries from the beginning centered in Huronia<sup>7</sup> because the Hurons were sedentary, their women being maize-growers; the Algonkin<sup>8</sup> and Montagnais<sup>9</sup> Indians, though nearer to Quebec, were still nomadic, living exclusively on a hunting and fishing economy. The Iroquois Confederacy<sup>10</sup> inhabited the land south of the St. Lawrence and of Lake Ontario, east of Lake Erie, and west of the Hudson valley. A fratricidal war had long been waged between the Huron and the Iroquois Confederacies; whether for economic or political reasons I am not sure.

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July, 1623; departed again June, 1624. The Fifth Report of the Ontario Bureau of Archives. Fr. A. E. Jones, S.J., Huronia, 1908, 269-281. Hereafter I shall refer to this volume as 5 R.O.B.A. Huronia, 1908.

Champlain, "Works" III, 25-31. Rel. Clev. edit., IV, 262; 171-73.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. François Ducreux, S.J., historian and cartographer, published *Historia Canadensis*, 1664. He included one of the most useful maps of New France of the period. It contained an insert map of Huronia. 5 R.O.B.A. Huronia, 1908, 5-6. "Contributions of the Canadian Jesuits to Geographical Knowledge of New France 1632-65." Nellis M. Crouse, 1924, 38; 48 ff

<sup>7</sup> Le Jeune's Relation of 1635: "Finally as to the Mission among the Hurons and other stationary tribes, it is of the greatest importance." Also Rel. Clev. edit. XXXIX, 49. Fr. Bressani "Brief Relation", 1653 XI, 7

<sup>8</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. I. Intro. deals with location of the Algonkin and Montagnais Indians and it also includes a brief history of the first missions among them.

<sup>9</sup> The more recent findings and conclusions are presented by Mr. W.N. Fenton in the articles referred to, Vol. 100, *Simthosonian Misc. Coll.* 1940. See especially bibliography, pp. 240-251.

<sup>10</sup> The Five (later Six) Nations Confederacy has been dealt with perhaps more completely than any other group of North American Indians. See Bibliography above (8). Rel. Clev. edit. XLV, pp. 205 ff; Champlain works, I, 141-4; II, 74-138; IV, 71-120; V, 130.

I suggest that rivalry over the fur-trade,<sup>11</sup> a rivalry that was aided and abetted by interested European powers brought this conflict to a climax during the period which concerns us. European weapons turned the tide of battle in favour of the Iroquois, who were supplied with better and more numerous weapons by the Dutch and the English. The Hurons procured their supply from the French at Quebec during their annual trading trips.<sup>12</sup>

The only lines of communication between Huronia and Quebec were by water. There was a shorter route by the Bay of Quinte, Lake Ontario, and along the St. Lawrence, a journey of approximately 200 leagues or 600 miles. The longer route was up Georgian Bay to the French River, along it and across Lake Nipissing, then by a long portage to the Mattawa River, on into the Ottawa River, down to the St. Lawrence and on to Quebec. This journey was approximately 300 leagues or from 900 to 1,000 miles. In 1615 Champlain travelled by the longer route up to Huronia, then back to Quebec.<sup>13</sup> Fr. Le Caron with 12 of Champlain's men had actually preceded the explorer by five days. Thereafter it was called the Champlain Road. The presence of roving bands of warring Iroquois made the shorter route impassable. During the French regime in Huronia, the longer route was constantly under Iroquois fire. For some years they succeeded in land-locking the country, rendering all trade and transit impossible. In travelling to and from Quebec to Huronia, therefore, fear of falling into the hands of the ferocious Iroquois was a constant peril. But there were many other hardships to be endured along that lonely journey, by "forests and bare rocks, rapids and precipices".<sup>14</sup> The white man was accompanied or abandoned by uncertain friends; pestered by mosquitoes and flies. He lacked even the simplest amenities of life in the matter of food and sleeping accommodation. Fr. Le Caron has left us an account of his 40 days' ordeal of paddling and portaging.<sup>15</sup> Brother Sagard describes the trip in more detail in his "Grand Voyage to the Country of the Hurons"<sup>16</sup> Various Jesuit Missionaries substantiate this description and contribute further experiences of their own. Fr. de Brébeuf, who has been called 'the Apostle of Huronia' because of the length

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<sup>11</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. I, note 31 ; note 33 ; VIII, 11, 59, 61; IX, 171-181 ; XXXIV, IM; XXXVI, 250; XL, chap. 7, p. 211; XLIII, 171-75; XLV, 205; LVII, 21-25. Champlain Works III, 41; 54; 227-28.

<sup>12</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. VIII, 57-65; XL, 211; 213-15; Champlain Works III 91.

<sup>13</sup> Champlain Works III, 34; 5 R.O. B.A. Huronia, 1908 270-271; Nellis M. Crouse "Contributions of the Canadian Jesuits to the Geographical Knowledge of New France 1632-1675" 37-38. Rel. Clev. edit. XXXIII 65. Fr. Ragueneau in the Relation of 1647-48 discusses in his outline of Canadian Geography these two routes.

<sup>14</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XV 151 Letter of Fr. François du Perron, April 27, 1639.

<sup>15</sup> Les Franciscains et le Canada, R.P. O.M. Jouve O.F.M. Quebec 1915. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Sagard. Journey to the Huron Country. Toronto Champlain Soc. 1939, Chap. IV, pp. 55-67; Part II, Chap. V, 244-69.

of his experience<sup>17</sup> there, and the success of his labors, made this trip five times. Out of his seasoned experience he wrote a set of instructions to guide his fellow Jesuits, who might be sent to labour among the Hurons.<sup>18</sup> If you read his letter, you will understand that the first big task, which confronted a traveller to Huronia, was to overcome the hazards of communication.

#### *Sources*

Every student of the history of Huronia finds himself indebted to the celebrated Jesuit archaeologist and historian, Fr. Arthur Edward Jones, S.J., who devoted many of the best years of his life to this subject. He placed the outcome of his labours at the disposal of the Ontario Archives. The result was the publication of the Fifth Report of the Ontario Bureau of Archives, *Huronia*, 1908. At this stage, I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the work of Mr. A. F. Hunter, which was published by the Ontario Department of Education in a series of pamphlets entitled "Notes on Sites of Huron Villages."<sup>19</sup> I am also indebted to the work of the Jesuit Indian Missionary, Fr. Julien Paquin, who compiled a careful chronological history of the Huron Missions, "The Tragedy of Old Huronia", published 1932; and to Mr. W. N. Fenton's contribution to Vol. 100 Smithsonian Misc. Coll. 1940 "Problems arising from the Historic North Eastern Position of the Iroquois."

The only original sources that have come to light on the period are the works of Champlain,<sup>20</sup> Sagard<sup>21</sup> and the annual reports and letters written by several of the Jesuit Missionaries who laboured there. The "Jesuit Relations" offer the most complete record of the whole period. A word on the composition and compilation of the Relations.

It was the duty of the missionaries to transmit to their superior at Quebec a written journal of their doings; the superior in turn composed a narration or relation of the most important events which had occurred in the several missionary districts under his charge. This report was forwarded to the Provincial of the Order in France, and, after careful scrutiny and reediting, published by him in a series of duodecimo volumes known collectively as "The Jesuit Relations". In the closing years of the last century Reuben Gold Thwaites, Secretary of the State Historical

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<sup>17</sup> Charlevoix. *Histoire*, Vols. I & II, 1744. Fr. de Brébeuf laboured 20 years in the Canadian Missions; 15 of which were spent in Huronia 1626-29; 1634-41; 1644-49.

<sup>18</sup> *Rel. Clev. edit.* X 87 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Mr. Hunter's pamphlets were published 1899; 1900; 1901; 1902; 1903; 1904; 1907 respectively.

<sup>20</sup> *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, edited by H. P. Biggar, 6 vols. Champlain Soc. Toronto, 1922-36.

<sup>21</sup> *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*. G. T. Sagard 1939. Intro. and Notes by G. M. Wrong, Editor, Champlain Soc. Toronto.

Society of Wisconsin, realized the incomparable value of these documents as source material for the early history of his country. To the actual Relations, he added many letters by different missionaries and other pertinent documents. He published the collection in 73 volumes under the title “The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents”, 1896-1901.<sup>22</sup>

### *The History of Huronia*

The known history of Huronia falls naturally into two parts, (1) 1615-29, (2) 1634-49. These are separated by the first English possession of Canada. Admiral David Kirk captured Quebec 1629. One of the conditions of the capitulation was that every Jesuit and Recollet should leave the colony. In March, 1632, Canada was ceded back to France by the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye. The Jesuit Fathers were invited to return in sole charge of the Mission, since the Recollets lacked sufficient means and men to participate. Fr. Jones, S.J., subdivides the history of the first years into two periods: (a) The period of the Recollets, 1615-25. Fr. Le Caron worked alone in the field 1615-16; he returned with Fr. Nicholas Viel and Bro. Sagard 1623; he and Bro. Sagard received orders to leave 1624 and Fr. Viel in 1625. It was nearing the end of his return journey that Fr. Viel was drowned with a Christian neophyte at Sault-au-Récollet. (b) The period of one Recollet, Fr. de la Roche de Dailon, and of the two Jesuits, Fr. Anne de Nous and Fr. Jean de Brébeuf.

In 1634 Fr. de Brébeuf returned with Frs. Davost and Daniel to reopen the mission to the Hurons. He established the first mission centre at Ihonatiria, an important village which stood somewhere in the north-eastern part of the township of Tiny – possibly on lot F. Conc. XVII on Pinery Point.<sup>23</sup> The village

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<sup>22</sup> This is commonly referred to as “The Jesuit Relations” Cleveland edition. There is also the Quebec edition in 3 vols. compiled under the auspices of the Canadian Government 1858.

Mr. Thwaites also had access to the series brought out by Shea and O’Callaghan. Shea’s “Cramoisy Series”, 1857-66, numbers 25 little volumes. The O’Callaghan series are seven in number. He selected from Fr. F. Martin, S.J., 2 vols. of “Relations éditées de la Nouvelle France 1672-79,” Paris 1861, and from the new material published by Fr. Carayon, S.J., in “Première Mission des Jésuites au Canada” Paris 1864. He included “Le Journal des Jésuites” edited 1871 by Abbés Laverdière and Casgrain from the original manuscript in the archives of the Seminary of Quebec. His greatest source of unpublished material was the manuscript collection in the archives of St. Mary’s College, Montreal.

<sup>23</sup> The Tragedy of Old Huronia. 261.5 R.O.B.A. Huronia 1908 differs somewhat from the more generally accepted location of this site. 28-31. A.F. Hunter “Sites in the Township of Tiny” 1899.

site of Ihonatiria had to be abandoned 1638. But in the meantime the second mission centre at Ossossané had been established 1637.

*Ossossané 1637– and After*

Ossossané was the capital town<sup>24</sup> of Huronia, the place where the most important councils were held. It was a village of 40 cabins.<sup>25</sup> There were five fires to a cabin and 2 families to a fire.

Fortifications were raised around the village under the direction of the missionaries.<sup>26</sup> The location of this village was changed three times during the missionary period, but the different sites were not far removed from one another. All the references in Champlain, Sagard, and the Relations seem to indicate the same locality.<sup>27</sup> Ossossané was about four leagues from Ihonatiria,<sup>28</sup> and three from Ste. Marie.<sup>29</sup> These distances point to its location along the shore of the Georgian Bay between Point Varwood or Dault's Bay and the village of St. Patrick. This is the location on Ducreux' map. Hunter registered four important sites<sup>30</sup> in that district. Father de Brébeuf described one of the important bone pits in connection with these sites.<sup>31</sup> One site, on lot 18, concession XII, tallies perfectly with the description given of it by the first French visitors, who called it La Rochelle because of the similarity of its location to the French town of that name.<sup>32</sup> The Jesuits called it "the Residence of the Immaculate Conception."<sup>33</sup> The Indian word Ossossané according to Fr. Jones' translation meant either (a) 'where the corn-tops wave' or (h) 'where the corn-tops or corn-tassels, or corn-blades, droop into the water.'<sup>34</sup> Fr. Le Jeune tells us that when the missions were resumed in

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<sup>24</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. V, 261; VIII, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. VIII, 101; XI, 17; XV, 153. Sagard, Champlain Soc. Toronto, 70-90.

<sup>26</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. X, 53; 74.

<sup>27</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. V, 292; X, 291; XI, 17; XIX, 133-135; XX, 81, 147; XXXIV, 247, 251-53. Nellis M. Crouse "Contr. of the Canad. Jesuits to the Geographical Knowledge of New France 1632-1675", note 4, p. 51. The spot was first identified by Fr. F. Martin, S.J., 1855. Its location has never been seriously questioned since.

<sup>28</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XIII 181.

<sup>29</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XX 81.

<sup>30</sup> A. F. Hunter "Notes of sites of Huron Villages in the Township of Tiny" 1899, 34-37.

<sup>31</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. 1636 X 291.

<sup>32</sup> Fr. C. Garnie's letter to his brother Henry, April 1638.

<sup>33</sup> Brébeuf's letter to the General, Ihonatiria, May 20th, 1637, Carayon "Première Mission" 160.

<sup>34</sup> 5 R.O.B.A. Huronia, 1908 182-84.

1633, Captains of this town begged the Missionaries to establish their residence among them.<sup>35</sup> Fr. de Brébeuf alludes to the moving of the village site and gives it as a reason for not immediately settling there in preference to Ihonatiria.<sup>36</sup> It was finally arranged at two Council meetings in December 1636 and then proclaimed publicly through the streets by an official crier that Ossossané would be a mission centre the coming Spring.<sup>37</sup> The residence was begun the following May under the direction of Fr. Pierre Pijart. On June 5th, 1637, he offered the first Mass therein.<sup>38</sup> The residence, to which I refer, was similar to an Indian long-house.<sup>39</sup> It was 12 brasses long.<sup>40</sup> It was divided into three compartments. The Indians were free to come and go in the first one, to receive and to give instructions or news. The second was the Chapel, and in the third the Fathers stored their small belongings. To the visiting Indians their few possessions such as a clock, weather vane, their clothes, books and writing materials, religious pictures and objects of devotion were subjects, first of interest, then of affection and presently of suspicion. The priests were lodged and fed in the manner of the savages. They owned no land; in a borrowed field, they raised enough French grain to make the Sacred Host.<sup>41</sup> They were dependent on gifts from the Savages of corn, grain and squash, for their daily sustenance. Their drink was a flagon of water. They slept entirely dressed, on a mat flat on the ground.

What was historic about this mission at Ossossané in 1637? The historic fact reduces itself to this, that seven priests – at no time during the year were there more than four together in residence at Ossossané – survived a year of hardship

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<sup>35</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. V 259.

<sup>36</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. VIII. “Besides this village there was no other save La Rochelle in which we felt any inclination to settle. And this had been our idea all along for a year past.... But taking into consideration that they (of La Rochelle) were to change place the coming spring, as they had done in the past, we did not care to build a cabin to last but the winter.”

<sup>37</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XIII 183 ff; see also letter X by Fr. de Brébeuf, Carayon 157-161.

<sup>38</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XIV 59 ff

<sup>39</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XIV 59. Fr. Pijart’s letter to his Superior, Fr. de Brébeuf “I find myself here in the midst of extraordinary confusion. . . I console myself with the thought that we are not building here a simple cabin, but a house for Our Lady, – or rather many beautiful chapels in the principal villages of the country, since it is here that we hope, with the aid of Heaven, to cast the seeds for a beautiful and plenteous harvest of souls.” Champlain Works, III 122-123 describes Indian “lodges”.

<sup>40</sup> A brasse: a linear measure, of five old French feet, or 1.82 metres, equivalent to 5.318 English feet.

<sup>41</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XV. Letter to Fr. Joseph Imbert du Peron from his brother Fr. François du Peron, April 27th, 1639, Ossossané 159 ff

and persecution, discharging their apostolic and humanitarian functions, in the heart of Huronia among some 20 to 30,000 savages,<sup>42</sup> mostly hostile, one thousand miles from any help. The answer to what makes this fact historic is conditioned by one's definition of history and by one's decision on what factors determine when a person or an event is historic. I consider man "is the cardinal fact on which all history hinges. Man's capacities remain a constant factor throughout."<sup>43</sup> I consider that the heroic is as much a part of human history as the political, economic, social, or religious. It is my contention that the fate of Catholicity in Canada, for that matter, in the northern part of North America, and not merely the lives of the seven Blackrobes, or of New France's possession of Huronia, hung in the balance throughout this year and was determined by the outcome. When the Empire of Huronia collapsed 12 or 13 years later, the Hurons dispersed, and the mission at an end, Catholicity was not liquidated. The dispersed or captive Hurons carried it with them and within four years,<sup>44</sup> the Iroquois invited the Missionnaires, Frs. Le Moyne, Dablon, Chaumonot, later Frs. Ragueneau, Le Mercier, and others, to establish mission residences in their midst. To this day there exists an unbroken tradition of our Faith among some Indian settlements as well as in Québec. That is due, in no small measure, to the Missionnaires' victory in Ossossané in 1637. The facts<sup>45</sup> speak for themselves: the attacks withstood, the persecution suffered, the gains accomplished by the following seven missionaries, Frs. de Brébeuf, Le Mercier, Carnier, Ragueneau, Chastelain, Pijart, Jogues, under the leadership and guidance of Fr. de Brébeuf.<sup>46</sup> The attacks of the Iroquois came closer and fiercer. The annual trading trip because of them was in jeopardy. Finally the canoes set out later than usual. An epidemic of small-pox grew to plague proportions by mid-summer. The entire village benefitted by the priests' physical as well as spiritual ministrations. Yet the sorcerers, or Indian medicine-men, and the natives' fear of sickness and of death kept village life in a continuous tumult. Champlain, Sagard, and the Relations repeatedly testify to (1) the important position accorded to the medicine-men in the Indian communal life; (2) to their antics, and (3) to the ill-will they bore to the missionaries and other white men. It little mattered whether their impostures were self-evident, or exposed by the Fathers, the

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<sup>42</sup> 5 R.O.B.A. Huronia 1908, 424. Population.

<sup>43</sup> Mortimer Adler 'How to think about War and Peace' 1943. 168. "Beneath all the variety of cultures, beneath the manifest differences in human life at different times and places, man is the cardinal fact on which all history hinges. Man's capacities remain a constant factor throughout."

<sup>44</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XL 221.

<sup>45</sup> The main facts are contained in four documents XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, Rel. Clev. edit. Vols. XIII, XIV, XV.

<sup>46</sup> 5 R.O.B.A. Huronia 1908, 302-307, Carayon "Première Mission" letter X written by Fr. de Brébeuf to his General, May 1637, p. 157.

Sorcerers blamed the priests for their waning influence and led the attack against them. No calumny was too gross, no whispering campaign too mean, no lie too ridiculous, no violence, even, too treacherous, to employ against the defenceless priests. Under the influence of their persecution-campaign the Captains of the district on three different occasions between June and the end of October, 1637, summoned a Council<sup>47</sup> to arraign the Blackrobes under the pretence of considering the cause of the disease and of their miseries. On each occasion the expulsion or death of the priests was the conclusion reached. After each decision, the execution of the sentence was stayed by Divine intervention. If you were an unbeliever in God, you would say it was stayed by the courage of the priests, more especially of their Superior, Fr. de Brébeuf, who spoke for them at the first two councils. But the priests explained their escape otherwise. Fr. de Brébeuf's defence was interrupted at the first council by a general invitation issued to the Council by an interloper, to attend a feast. The president hastily took the floor, the earlier decision was reversed, and the meeting concluded with expressions of the utmost goodwill and indebtedness to the missionaries.

Presently, four English vessels<sup>48</sup> appeared in the St. Lawrence; they came as far as the Rivière des Prairies (Ottawa). A new flurry of rumours started. Once more the Blackrobes were accused of causing all the sickness. The murder of Fr. de Brébeuf was noised abroad. On the evening of Aug. 4th the second council<sup>49</sup> was summoned. All the priests were present, including Fr. de Brébeuf, who once more spoke in the missionaries' defence. The council postponed the conclusion of the whole matter until the return of the Hurons, who had gone down to Québec.<sup>50</sup> The priests made a vow of nine masses to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. On August 16th, Joseph Chiwatenwa, Joseph "the good Christian", as he was later called, was publicly baptized. Joseph became the first great lay apostle of the mission in Huronia. His family, one by one, received the gift of faith. They were

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<sup>47</sup> For an account of the first council at Angoutinc see Rel. Clev. edit. XV 27. Sagard 'Journey to the Huron Country' gives an account of how the Hurons conducted their Councils and Warfare. Chap. XVIII 148. Champlain Works III 144-155 gives an account of (a) Sorcerers treating the sick and of how they thereby gain honour and reputation; (b) of the Councils, 157-160. Rel. Clev. edit. LXXII references.

<sup>48</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XV 31.

<sup>49</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XV 37.

<sup>50</sup> The danger to the priests can be inferred from the following account by Fr. Le Mercier XV 49, "The war Captain, who seemed most incensed at us, finding himself greatly disappointed in his expectations, did not hesitate to say that he was sorry he had not kept that one of ours, who arrived last, and put him to the torture 'to draw from him' he said 'the whole truth that his brothers conceal from us. I would doubtless have ruined him, and caught him in some words.' But what could he have gained from a man who could not yet know him nor understand what was demanded of him?"

called “the family of believers” and each in turn made a distinct contribution to the spread of Christianity, not only among the Hurons, but later among the Iroquois. Conversions multiplied and Ossossané began to earn its name of ‘the nation of Christians’.

Nevertheless the persecution was once more resumed. On October 3rd the missionaries’ cabin caught fire. The fleet returned from Québec. The traders verified Fr. de Brébeuf’s explanation of why the priests had come to Huronia and why they visited the sick. The sorcerers were incensed. A third council<sup>51</sup> was summoned in the absence of Fr. de Brébeuf and without a hearing the death sentence was passed upon the priests. Fr. de Brébeuf returned. He set out at once to greet the principal men of the village. They merely bowed their heads, indicating in this way that it was all over with the fathers. Fr. de Brébeuf then drew up a form of testament to leave in the hands of some faithful Christians; the five priests, Frs. de Brébeuf, Le Mercier, Chastelain, Garner, Ragueneau, made a vow of nine masses to St. Joseph, that if it were God’s will, the mission might continue. Fr. de Brébeuf next invited the village to attend their farewell feast, given, in Indian fashion, when men were nearing death. That night the priests spent, kneeling around the altar, awaiting the death stroke. It was never delivered. By the end of their Novena, Nov. 6th, the persecution had ceased. The mission at Ossossané entered on a period of incredible peace... So many converts were made that it was necessary to consider building a separate parish church. On February 1st, 1638, a council was summoned which decided to acknowledge Fr. de Brébeuf as one of the Captains of the Village. He was to be Captain of Religious Affairs. This gave him the privilege of summoning the Council like any other Captain, at any and all times he saw fit. The Hurons at Ossossané hereby publicly recognized Catholicism as the religion of its people. In June, 1638, the new chapel was begun.<sup>52</sup> On December 12th, 1638, the Sunday within the octave of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the first Mass was offered therein. Within the year the Church spread so far and so fast throughout Huronia that the new superior, Fr. Jerome Lalemant, deemed a change in the administration of the Church in Huronia wise. A central residence for the

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<sup>51</sup> For an account of the third council and of what followed Oct. 28, 1637 see Rel. Clev. edit. XV 61 ff.

<sup>52</sup> This Church was the first wooden church to be erected in Ontario. It was 20 ft. long, 16 ft. wide, and 24 ft. high. Rel. Clev. edit. XV 139. Fr. Le Mercier: “If God grant us the favor to see this work finished, it will not be one of the largest, but one of the prettiest which has yet appeared in New France.” Fr. F. du Peron to his brother, from Ossossané. (Dec. 12, 1638) “I had the good fortune to say the first Mass in the Chapel built among the Hurons and erected in honour of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. The Chapel is very neatly built of timber work...almost similar in style and size to our Chapel of St. Julian.” Rel. Clev. ed. XV 175.

priests was erected in 1639 at Fort Ste Marie, from which the priests went in pairs on their various missions.

Such in brief is the story of what happened at Ossossané in 1637 and the immediate results. I have found no evidence in the records of Huronia to suggest that at any later date the Hurons themselves ever considered the question of closing the missions, eschewing Catholicity or denying their allegiance to the French. Rather I infer that from the end of 1637, Catholicity was established as an integral part of the native Canadian compound of national life. After the explorations of Cartier and others, it is the oldest European ingredient, and for Catholics at least, the most glorious.<sup>53</sup>

As I analyse this victory, won by the seven Missionaries, under the leadership of Fr. de Brébeuf in 1637, I conclude that the essence of it was spiritual. And that is as it should be, for the business or purpose of the Missionaries was apostolic. They came to Huronia to reclaim lost children of God for the greater glory of God. In the performance of their mission they fulfilled the historic rôle of Christianity, which is the same in 1945 as in 1637, the same as 2,000 years ago, its rôle is to challenge the sway of brute force in human society. They refined the brutal and ignorant way of life of the savages by their example, by their services, by Christ's teaching. They themselves were men of the highest culture of the age; they were scholars, but above and beyond this, they were deeply spiritual men. For were they not sons of St. Ignatius, members of the Company of Jesus, the shock troops of the Church, at the service of the Pope?<sup>54</sup> They went where he wished them to go; they did the work he wished them to do. Their only weapons were the offensive ones of Faith and Charity, the defensive ones of hope and purity of heart. Unrealistic weapons perhaps? Unrealistic men, if you will. But they demonstrated to the Indians a better way of life, which many Indians voluntarily embraced. I consider that this is a more progressive and more democratic contribution to the history of (Canadian) civilization than the rapid expansion of the frontier economy of the fur-trade in the first half of the 17th century, which was accelerated and attended by the pressure of European imperialistic aggression.

*Sept. 26th – The Feast of the Jesuit Martyr Saints of North America*

Since to-day the Catholic Church in Canada celebrates the feast of the Jesuit Martyr Saints of North America,<sup>55</sup> it seems proper that in conclusion, I should lead

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<sup>53</sup> See Charlevoix *Histoire*, Vol. I, 288-289 for statement of Champlain's motives in attempting to establish a colony in the Country of the Hurons.

<sup>54</sup> *The Jesuits in History*, Fr. M. P. Harvey, S.J., 1941, p. 107, 74; 220 ff

<sup>55</sup> The eight Jesuit Martyr Saints of North America, who were canonized on June 29, 1930, are St. Jean de Brébeuf, S.J., martyred at St. Ignace II, March 16, 1649; St. Isaac Jogues, S.J., martyred at Ossernenon, Oct. 18, 1646; St. Gabriel Lalemant S.J., martyred at St. Ignace II, March 16-17, 1649; St. Antoine Daniel, S.J., martyred at St. Joseph II, July 4, 1648; St. Charles Gamier, S.J.,

you from the hard won victory of Ossossané, 1637, to the glory and the shame of St. Ignace, March 16-17, 1649. Both events are a piece of the same pattern, the pattern woven by Christianity in the tapestry of human history, the story of the Church fulfilling its historic rôle. Fathers de Brébeuf, Carnier, Ragueneau, Chastelain, Le Mercier, kneeling all night at the foot of the altar in their little chapel at Ossossané, October 28-29, 1637; Frs. de Brébeuf and Lalemant tortured and burned to death, bound to their stakes on the Field of St. Ignace, March 16.17, 1649; our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, speaking out calmly, wisely, fearlessly, from Vatican City, 1945; all offer the same challenge to the sway of brute force in human society. The world has grown old and wise in her ways. The Prince of Darkness has profited by the experience of the ages. Yet Christ successfully drove him from the Mountain top and Christ rose in triumph after Calvary's shame. Sin in all its ugliness mocked at Brébeuf as he suffered his indescribable torments but the eyes of the savages quailed beneath his unflinching gaze. And they gouged out the eyes of the gentle Lalemant because he rolled them heavenwards. Then they cut out their hearts to eat and drank of their blood hoping to gain a similar strength.<sup>56</sup>

To what end? It is true that with the destruction of St. Louis and St. Ignace, with the defeat of the Hurons, and with the martyrdom of Frs. de Brébeuf and Lalemant, the colony of the Hurons collapsed. The mission ended; the Hurons dispersed; Fort Ste Marie fired by the missionaries themselves; all of New France – Montreal, Three Rivers, Québec – was in mortal peril. The enemies of Christ liquidated the bodies of His Saints, of Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lalemant, Isaac Jogues, Noël Chabanel, René Goupil, Antoine Daniel, Charles Carnier, and Jean de la Lande but they did not liquidate the Church of Christ. In this new age of anarchy and tyranny unabashed, when we, the people of the world, are crying in our darkness for some new light, need we, in Canada, seek it in fields afar? Is our hope and our inspiration elsewhere? Has the holocaust of St. Ignace; of Ossemenon; of St. Joseph's; of Etharita; of some lonely spot on the banks of the Nottawasaga,<sup>57</sup> no meaning to-day? As fellow Catholics, interested in Catholic contributions to the history of our country, I leave these questions with you, to answer at your will.

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martyred at Etharita, Dec. 7, 1649; St. Noël Chabanel, S.J., martyred somewhere on the bank of the Nottawasaga, Dec. 8, 1649; St. René Goupil, S.J., in a Mohawk village, Sept. 29, 1642; St. Jean de la Lande, martyred at Ossemenon, Oct. 19, 1646.

<sup>56</sup> Rel. Clev. edit. XXXIV 147.

<sup>57</sup> For an approximate location of these sites, made holy because of the Martyrdoms that took place thereon see Rel. Clev. edit. Vol. XXXIV 249 ff Fr. A. E. Jones, S.J. – “Theoretical Reconstruction of the Map of Huronia”. For location of sites in Mohawk Valley consult Fr. F Talbot, S.J., “Saint among Savages”.