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FRONT COVER PHOTO

**Group photo taken at the marriage of
Télesphore Marchand and Alexina Robitaille**
July 9th, 1895, Lafontaine, Ontario

From the Collection of Valentine (Robitaille) Laurin.

First row (from left to right):

Thomas Brunelle and
Elodia Robitaille
Télesphore Marchand and
Alexina Robitaille (the married couple in the centre)
Calixte Robitaille
Émilie Brunelle

Second row (from left to right):

Zéphirin Marchand, his Métis wife **Marguerite Dusome**, and their son Georges
Trefflé Marchand
Carrie Longpré
Joseph Robitaille
Joséphine Marchand
M. and Mrs Silas Robitaille

Third row (seated, from left to right):

Julien D'aoust
Rosa Robitaille
Mr. and Mrs. Lahaye (Lacadie Barres)
John Boots (husband of **Henriette Dusome**, absent from the photo)
Mr. and Mrs. Elzéar Gignac

Fourth row (standing from left to right):

Jean Alexandre and his Métis wife **Marie Dusome**
Albert Maurice
Victoria Marchand
Clodomir Robitaille
Rébecca Daoust
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Quesnelle and their two children (only the hat and forehead of the
second child are visible)

Fifth row (from left to right):

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Marchand
Louis Chevrette and his Métis wife **Philomène Dusome**
Louis Brunelle and his Métis wife **Jane Dusome**
Mrs. and Mr. Elric Gignac (only the shoulder and arm of Mr. Gignac are visible)

The five Métis Dusome sisters and spouses:

Henriette Dusome and John Boots
Marguerite Dusome and Zéphirin Marchand
Jane Dusome and Louis Brunelle
Marie Dusome and Jean Alexandre
Philomène Dusome and Louis Chevrette

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Foreword by Gaétan Gervais, historian
Institut franco-ontarien (Franco-Ontarian Institute)

Attracted by the fur trade and taking advantage of the convenient access to the Great Lakes afforded by the Saint-Lawrence River, during the 17th and 18th centuries, the French established a network of trading posts and forts spread out over the entire interior of the North American continent. Since the canoe constituted at that time the only practical means of transporting furs between the interior and the sea ports, the European nations taking part in the fur trade were quick to understand the importance of controlling access to the water routes. As a result of this, there followed the establishment of a number of posts and forts, all located at strategic locations that not only served to control access to the water routes of the “Upper Country” (the Great Lakes region) and the “Western Sea” (the territories beyond Lake Superior), but also to secure commercial domination over these regions.

Up until the end of the French Regime (in 1760), the French dominated the Upper Country. However, in the Hudson’s Bay area, more to the north, the English established themselves permanently and then exclusively, starting in 1713 (the Treaty of Utrecht). When the American pioneers, towards the middle of the 18th century started spreading into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, the French reacted by extending their territories to the west, towards the Rockies. Thus, the history of the French regime in Ontario can be summed up as a series of settlements, sometimes missionary, (Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons, Sault Ste. Marie, L’Assomption), sometimes military (Cataracoui, Niagara, Detroit), and sometimes commercial (Fort Rouillé, Saint-Joseph, Michillimackinac, Nipigon, lac des Bois, lac La Pluie).

In fact, the policy of the colonial authorities did nothing to encourage settlement west of Montreal Island. It is true that two seigneuries had been conceded at L’Orignal and at Fort Cataracoui (today Kingston) but, in principle, settlers were much too rare a resource to allow them to be spread thinly throughout the continent. Therefore, established posts were relegated to supporting colonial policies without ever initiating settlement activities. There was one exception to the rule, Fort Pontchartrain in the Detroit area where settlement was encouraged. Notwithstanding this rule, several posts, missions or forts gave birth to large North American cities, even though they would only become populated later after developments in agriculture, transportation, and trade.

The decline of the fur trade after 1821 and the increasing role of the lumber industry gives rise to the social issue surrounding the transformation of the fur-trading *voyageurs* into *settlers*. Generally speaking, we know little about this transition; we know even less about how the *voyageurs*, individually, underwent this metamorphosis. Micheline Marchand’s attempt to explore this question represents one of the main points of interest of this study.

The history of French Ontario begins with the arrival of the coureur des bois Étienne Brûlé, in 1610. More so than either the military personnel, the missionaries, or the merchants, the *voyageurs* constitute the first Franco-Ontarians. The prominent place of the *voyageur* social type in Canada’s popular mythology, even today, should not be forgotten. Franco-Ontarian settlement only started to progress quickly in the second half of the 19th century, when it extended first into Eastern Ontario, before reaching into the Southwest, south of Lake Saint Clair and, at the end of the century, Northeastern Ontario. However, prior to this rural settlement, the first areas where Franco-Ontarians established themselves were developed in the context of the fur trade. In Ontario, there are three notable cases in this respect: L’Assomption of Detroit (Windsor), Lapasse (on the Ottawa River), and Penetanguishene (Georgian Bay).

At L’Assomption, facing Detroit, the French settlement took on a permanent character in 1749 with the concession of the first seigniorial land grants. The parish of L’Assomption, established canonically in 1767, is the first in Ontario. The first French school opened in 1786. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 19th century, on the banks of the Detroit Strait, at L’Assomption and on the Petite-Côte, there were still but two or three thousand residents, forming

the only “Canadian” settlement in Upper Canada. This area is the only contemporary continuous Franco-Ontarian settlement originating as far back as the French regime.

However, the fur trade did continue under English rule. The Montreal fur merchants hired thousands of voyageurs to transport the furs. Most of these men devoted just a few of their younger years to this nomadic lifestyle to then take a wife and a farm in the old parishes of Lower Canada. Other voyageurs married First Nations women and established themselves in the fur trade areas. We find them scattered here and there near the trading posts, for instance Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (Toronto), J.-B. Perrault (Sault Ste. Marie), Laronde (Nipissing), de la Morandière (Killarney).

At the beginning of the 19th century, major trading was still being carried on. When the fur trade disappeared from the St. Lawrence, in 1821, some former voyageurs established themselves as a group in certain areas, for example at Lapasse, on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River, opposite Fort-Coulonge (Quebec). But the most significant group of voyageurs that an attempt was made to try and convert into farmers was the group in Penetanguishene, in 1828. What was their experience? It is this most interesting question to which Micheline Marchand’s work gives us an initial answer.

To what extent did these first settlement efforts succeed? In fact, the question of the settlement of voyageurs in Ontario has yet to be studied. Nevertheless, the Penetanguishene settlement is the only instance in Ontario where a significant number of voyageurs accepted land grants and tried collectively to form a settlement. The Penetanguishene case is all the more interesting since, during the following decades, large numbers of pioneers coming from rural regions in Quebec also came to the area, thus giving us the opportunity to compare the two groups. It would appear that the transition from the fur trade lifestyle to a rural settlement was, for the most part, a difficult one.

Thus, this study by Micheline Marchand sheds new light on the beginnings of Franco-Ontarian settlement. Although her study looks specifically at the settlement of Penetanguishene and Lafontaine by French-Canadians during the period between 1828 and 1871, we can already ask ourselves if other studies would yield analogous results if they were conducted for the L’Assomption or Lapasse areas. Was the shift from voyageur to pioneer lifestyle as difficult elsewhere?

Micheline Marchand is a young historian who has completed an interesting study dealing with the early period of Franco-Ontarian history. She has successfully endeavoured to illustrate the link between the fur trade (the voyageurs) and settlement (the settlers) by focussing on an important area. Let us hope that she will continue her work, and other young researchers will be encouraged to follow her example by working to give us a better understanding of the history of Ontario’s French-language community.

Preface

It is Huronia's unique character and rich human dimension that inspired this research. The first White and Métis inhabitants of Huronia, the voyageurs*, and their fascinating heritage remain little known despite the wealth and the diversity of their contribution to the development of this area situated in southeastern Georgian Bay. My reasons for undertaking this study of the Penetanguishene voyageurs were, in large part, to fill as much as possible the void regarding the research in this field.

Even today, as it was the case in the 19th century, the descendants of the first voyageur settlers remain, to a certain degree, neglected in Huronia's local francophone history. It is my hope that this thesis will, to some extent, help to underscore the key role played by the voyageurs and Métis in the area's history and, by the same token, acknowledge the contribution of the ancestors of the people who live in Huronia today and whose roots go back to the voyageurs, an illustrious group in their own particular way.

I wish to thank my brother, Luc Marchand, who made the maps for this document.

Professors Gaétan Gervais and Guy Gaudreau, who both supervised this thesis project, proved to be sources of encouragement through their many and judicious suggestions during the research and writing phases of this work.

* Author's note for this English version: The term "voyageur" in the context of this study, when used to refer to the settlers from Drummond Island, encompasses, as is the case with most historical documents dealing with this group, all the men, women and children that were part of it. Therefore, this group of voyageurs includes people that are: Métis, French-Canadian, First Nations, and of European origin (British or other). Although their ethnicity may vary, for the most part, they all have in common a "voyageur" lifestyle. When the word voyageur is used in this study it refers to the diverse people that make up this group, including above all the Great Lakes Métis. We have used the term Métis, with a capital m, throughout this study to designate the people of European and Aboriginal parentage of the Great Lakes region or the Western provinces and their descendants, except when spelled otherwise in direct quotations from other sources.

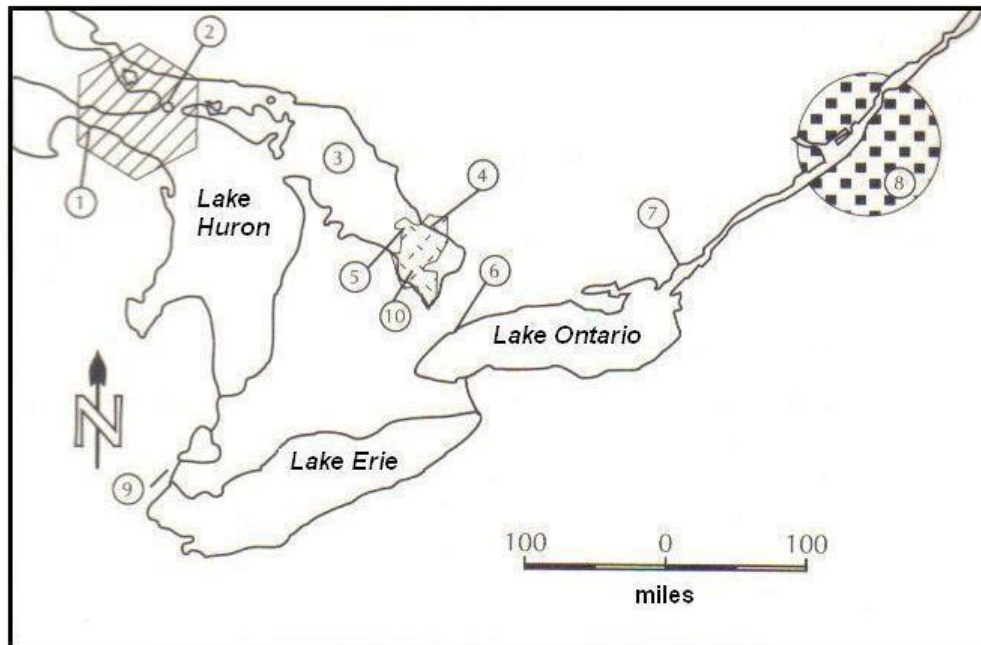
Abbreviations

AAT	Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto
BRH	<i>Bulletin des recherches historiques</i> (Historical Research Newsletter)
CGJ	Canadian Geographical Journal
CHR	Canadian Historical Review
HHPRS	Huronian Historical Parks Resource Centre
OHSPR	Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records

Introduction

It is during the first half of the 19th century that permanent settlers of European background began to establish themselves in the Penetanguishene and Lafontaine area. These two communities, located on the shores of Georgian Bay, are in the northern part of Simcoe County (which, up until 1849 was known as the Home District)¹ and 150 kilometres to the northwest of Toronto (see Map 1). In this early period, the area designated as Huronia (see Map 2) is a wooded, nearly uninhabited, virgin territory.

Map 1: Simcoe County in relation to the places of origin of the settlers



Legend

- ① Mackinac Island
- ② Drummond Island
- ③ Georgian Bay
- ④ Penetanguishene
- ⑤ Lafontaine
- ⑥ York
- ⑦ Kingston
- ⑧ Montreal
- ⑨ Detroit
- ⑩ Simcoe County

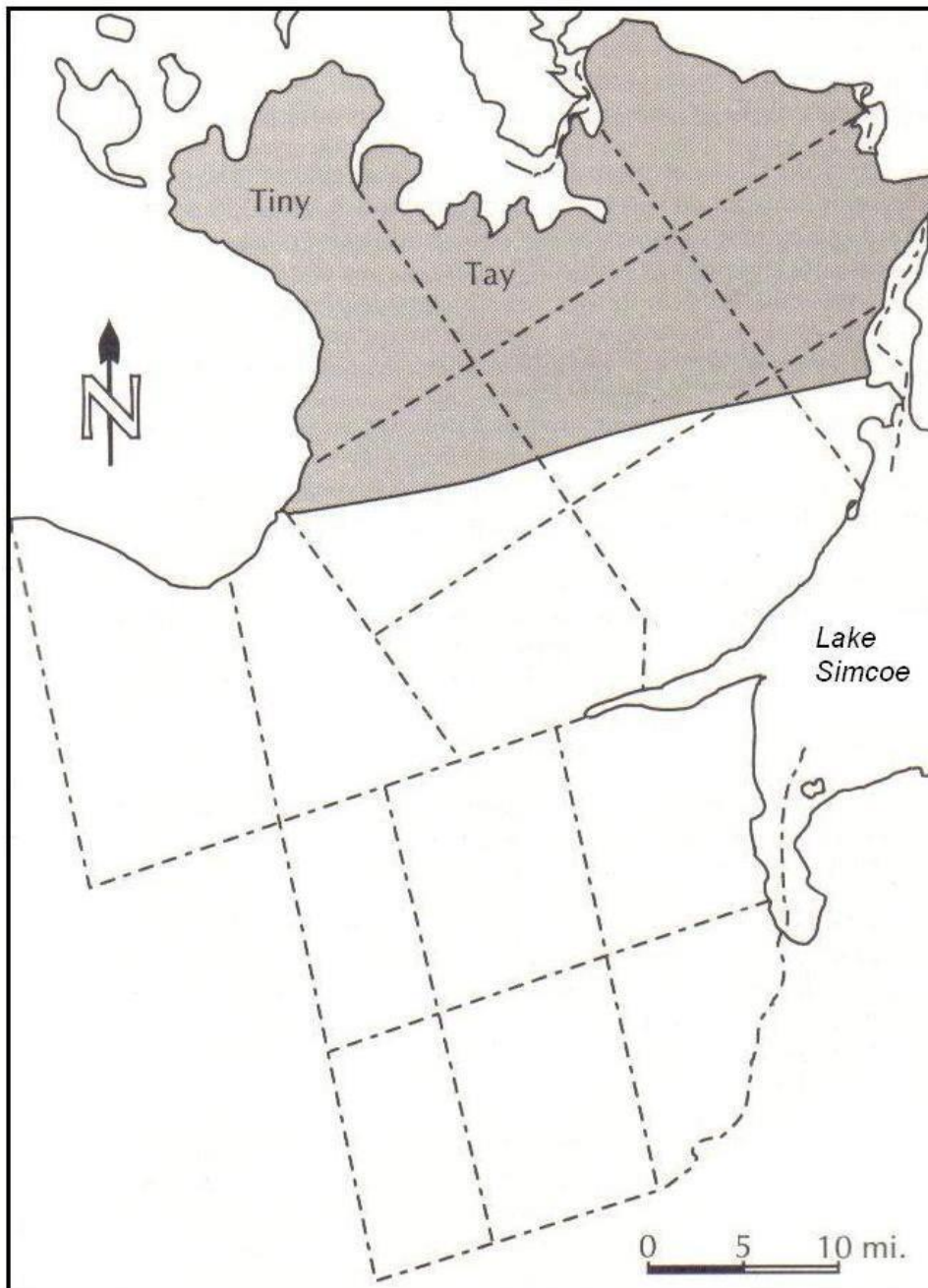
Place of origin

-  Voyageurs/Métis
-  Habitant farmers from Lower Canada

¹ Gilbert C. Paterson. "Land Settlement in Upper Canada 1783-1840", in Sixteenth Report of the Department of Archives of the Province of Ontario. Toronto, 1921, p. 39. (Simcoe County is the northern part of the old Home District, created July 15, 1792).

The French-Canadians that undertake the settlement of this area during the 19th century come from two groups: on the one hand, voyageurs that have come from northern Georgian Bay, and, on the other, emigrants from Lower Canada. Both groups are following demographic and economic trends that are typical of Canada at that time. However, the first group, the voyageurs and their families, merits particular attention because it not only evolves economically, but also culturally and socially. In fact, contrary to the group originating from Lower Canada, the voyageur group undergoes a transition, on the one hand between two types of economies, one based on the fur trade and the other on lumbering, and on the other between two societies, one largely First Nation, and the other White, (French and English), deeply influenced by the Catholic Church.

Map 2: Huronia



Thus, we will see how the voyageurs, caught between these two worlds will adapt after a fashion. With their removal to Penetanguishene, the voyageurs will progressively lose their means of subsistence, closely tied to the fur trade, that goes into a decline and then completely disappears from the Georgian Bay area.

Although in Canada the transition from furs to lumbering does not cause any serious problems at the national level, the opposite is true when it comes to the labour force and the men involved. Even though it might be said that lumbering activities are to some degree an occupation with a nomadic lifestyle similar to that of the voyageurs, the lumber industry only really begins to develop in the area in the last quarter of the 19th century. There was also farming, an occupation that the habitant farmers from Lower Canada will take up with ease even if the voyageurs, on the other hand, will only manage to make a meagre living from it.

This study will therefore review the stages of this transition period that affected the voyageurs at the beginning of the settlement of the Lafontaine-Penetanguishene area, that is from 1825 (the beginning of the immigration of the voyageurs to Huronia) up until 1871 (the date that marks the end of the arrival of the immigrants and the beginning of the commercial lumber industry in Penetanguishene). We will examine the group of voyageurs that come from northern Georgian Bay while also considering the settlers from Lower Canada that settle in Lafontaine. This study conducted in parallel will serve to better highlight the voyageur group made-up of a colourful and mixed assortment of individuals spawned by a particular period and context.

As early as 1825, the first voyageurs from Drummond Island begin moving to Penetanguishene. A few years later, starting in 1840, habitant farmers from Lower Canada begin arriving to take up lots in Sainte-Croix parish (Lafontaine).

Why did these two groups of settlers come to Huronia? We will answer this question by looking at each group's specific characteristics and the distinct reasons that encourage both groups to emigrate to an area that, at first glance, doesn't seem very welcoming. In fact, the area offers few resources to its inhabitants; transportation to and within Huronia is underdeveloped, a situation that makes the area difficult to access, thus hindering its regional economic growth.

Nevertheless, the area attracts new settlers. Two factors contribute to this: the presence of the Naval and Military Establishments that leads to the removal of the voyageurs, and the offer of arable land that entices farmers from Lower Canada. These two elements are key.

To fully grasp the dynamics of each of the two groups, one must analyze the reasons that brought them to the area as well as their behaviour once settled here. We will examine these two questions by concentrating on the following elements: the origins of the settlers, the lots they received, their occupations, the influential people in the community, the available services, the social behaviour of each group, and the way the people see themselves. Combining all of these elements will serve to make a mosaic of the settlement pattern.

Examining the origins of each group is essential to understanding the mentality of the people that are part of it, and helps to put their evolution and the reasons that attract them to Lafontaine and Penetanguishene in perspective. As well, we will present a brief history of each group and its community of origin.

Upon arriving in the area, the settlers take up lots that, through their location and quality, influence the socioeconomic life of the community. The way of life in North Simcoe, for example, is considerably different from that in the County of Joliette in Lower Canada. The location and size of the settlers' lots have a direct bearing on their quality of life.

An analysis of their occupations gives us a better understanding of their day-to-day life, since the types of occupations mirror the services offered in the community.

During this period, as it still is the case today, some people, for instance parish priests or certain community leaders, had more influence than others. In Penetanguishene, the presence of the clergy causes the voyageurs to cease the practice of "country marriages" in favour of church sanctioned catholic marriages. This sketch of its leaders enhances considerably the global picture of the community.

The adaptation of the voyageurs will also be examined, and this will allow us to trace certain characteristics of the socialization process they undergo in Penetanguishene. The Catholic Church being particularly well suited to carry out this socialization, as demonstrated in the work of René Hardy, Serge Gagnon, and Jean Roy², exerts an influence on the social behaviour of people living in peripheral areas. In Penetanguishene, where Métis voyageurs, with mostly French-Canadian and First Nations roots, start living for the first time alongside a catholic religious institution that is both present and well established, the socialization process will be difficult and, as a result, will transform the voyageurs completely, and this, to a certain extent, against their will. Over a period of fifty years, this group will be integrated into White society, especially by the Church.

As we will see, people in Huronia devote much effort to their spiritual well-being: by requesting priests, by obtaining lots to build a church, and by organizing processions for clergy dignitaries. By contrast, the absence of other services has an effect on the life of every member of the community; the poor quality of the transportation links stunts economic development in the area. Those services that are offered (for instance stores) satisfy the collective needs of the community.

In summary, through all of these elements we will get an image of the settlers who are the ancestors of the Franco-Ontarian community of both Penetanguishene and neighbouring Lafontaine.

A group's social behaviour is one of its most defining features. For this reason, the way the settlers perceive themselves and are perceived by others, will help give us a clear picture of the two groups. For example, the writings of Dédin Révol, describe and show us the people he interacted with, in the same way that the prejudices of some English-language writers vis-à-vis the Métis (those whose parents are of European and First Nations origins) reveal another aspect of the dynamics that exist between the different groups.

Lastly, it should be noted that the life of the voyageurs is better documented than that of the habitant farmers since the participation of the former in the fur trade leads them to interact more frequently with the government and the British military. As well, the numerous travels and individual stories of the voyageurs contain more subject matter than the more homogenous history of the farmers from Lower Canada, whose relative absence in the documentation can be explained by the mostly monotonous and, to a large extent, static nature of their settlement.

² Serge Gagnon and René Hardy. *L'Église et le village au Québec, 1850-1930*. Montréal, Léméac, 1979; and René Hardy and Jean Roy. "Encadrement social et mutation de la culture religieuse en Mauricie", in *Questions de culture no 5: Les régions culturelles*. Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1983.

Chapter 1: Old Huronia

For more than four centuries, Huronia's importance has outstripped its size, the reason being its special geographic position which will make it above all an essential shortcut for east-west travel into the "Canadian" interior¹.

As early as the 15th century, First Nations people recognized the area's importance. The Ouendat or Huron nation, the first encountered by Europeans, occupied the territory between 1500 and 1600. The Ouendat will develop a network of routes that the Europeans will soon start using themselves once this First Nation group is dispersed. Before studying how the settlement evolved in this area, let us first look very briefly at the First Nation society living here at the time when the French attempt their first forays into the Canadian interior.

1.1 The Ouendat Nation

The Ouendats, that the French will name "Hurons", are part of the Iroquoian linguistic group that includes the Five-Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Lake Ontario divides the two groups: with the Iroquois Confederacy occupying the lands south of Lake Ontario and the Ouendat Confederacy those to the north of the lake. The Iroquois nation is made up of five tribes: the Agniers, the Onneiouts, the Onontagués, the Goyogouins, and the Tsonnontouans². The Ouendat nation consists of four distinct tribes: the Attignaouantans, the Attigneenongnahacs, the Arendarhonons, and the Tahontaenrats³ that are spread out over a territory that stretches 56 km from east to west and 32 km from north to south between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. Between these two great confederacies lies the Neutral nation in what is southwestern Ontario today, and the Erie nation on the shores of Lake Erie (see Map 3). To the west of the Ouendats, the Pétun nation occupies the region corresponding to the Bruce Peninsula.

The Ouendats would seem, in all likelihood, to be the descendants of the First Nations people of the St. Lawrence Valley that Jacques Cartier encountered in the 16th century. However, these First Nations people had disappeared from the St. Lawrence Valley by the time Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, and had been replaced by the Algonquins and Montagnais. It is through their alliance with the former that the Ouendat will meet the French in 1609.

Following this first encounter, the Ouendat and the French will enter into a military and economic alliance. The sedentary lifestyle of Ouendat society, closely linked to the cultivation of corn, will allow the Ouendat to play a major role in the fur trade economy that develops in New France. Even if the furs produced in Huronia or Ouendake are of an inferior quality compared to those of more northern areas, the Ouendat produce enough corn to accumulate surpluses of this staple that they can then trade for furs supplied, for the most part, by tribes living to the north of them. As well, owing to its geographic position between Northern Ontario and the St. Lawrence Valley, Huronia will become a veritable transit zone for the fur trade, a vocation that will be renewed, as we will see in this chapter, two centuries later under British rule in the 19th century. Thus, at the beginning of the 17th century, the Ouendat will be supplying up to two thirds of all the furs sold each year to the French⁴.

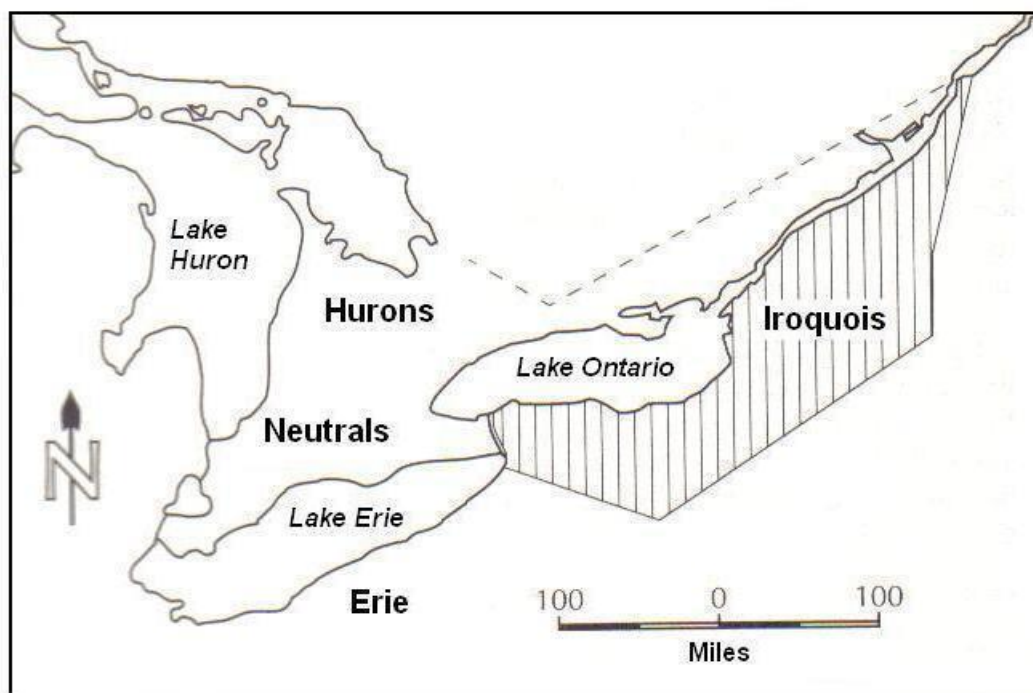
¹ Williams Wonders. "The Penetanguishene Peninsula", in *CGJ*, 38, September 1948, pp. 118-119. Hereinafter Wonders. "The Penetanguishene Peninsula".

² Douglas Leechman. *Native Tribes of Canada*. Toronto, Gage, 1956, p. 62; and Robert Choquette. *L'Ontario français historique*. Montréal, Editions Etudes Vivantes, Collection L'Ontario français, 1980, pp. 9-11.

³ Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronia*. Ontario, McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971, p. 28.

⁴ Bruce Trigger. *The Children of Aataentsic, A history of the Huron People to 1660*, volume 1. Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976, p. 337.

Map 3: First Nations territories in the southern Great Lakes region



Therefore, for the Ouendat, the trek to the St. Lawrence by way of the French River is a relatively easy one that gives them the possibility of trading with the French. The Ouendat travel mainly by canoe and open routes that link their villages to different waterways. However, this prosperous era will be short-lived since the wars against the Iroquois will force the Ouendat to leave the area and, in 1650, Huronia loses its sedentary population for 140 years. Nevertheless, First Nations people will continue to use the paths of this “transit zone” that run along the most direct and shortest routes and are well adapted to transportation since they follow the sandy or gravelly high ground of the region. These well drained paths, filled with a layer of pine needles, minimize transportation difficulties for the First Nations⁵. But they will not be the only ones to use this network of paths, since White people, in search of furs, will follow in their footsteps heralding the start of a new economic era.

1.2 The Fur-trading Merchants

The fur trade is already well organized when the British take over the country after the Conquest of 1760. To maintain the fur trade they will adopt the same techniques used by their French predecessors. For the First Nations peoples, the fact that the continent now falls under the control of a single power deprives them of the benefits derived from competition. During this transition period, the French merchants will find themselves forced out of this trade⁶. Taking advantage of its capital and the lessons learned from the French experience, the Northwest Company becomes, after 1779, one of the most powerful in this sector. Using its newly acquired

⁵ Allison Burbidge. The changing role of transportation in Simcoe County from 1800-1866. An historical geography. Master’s thesis, McMaster University of Hamilton, 1961, p. 26. Hereinafter: Burbidge. The changing role of transportation.

⁶ José Igartua. The Merchants and Negotiants of Montréal, 1750-1775: A study in socio-economic history. Ph. D. thesis, Michigan, University of Michigan, 1974, p. 255.

economic clout, it will absorb or eliminate all of its competitors, with the exception of the Hudson's Bay Company⁷.

As a result, the fur trade in Canada ends up being shared by two players: the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company. The two rivals operate very differently, with the Hudson's Bay Company hiring British employees that eventually return to Europe. It also establishes severe rules governing the conduct of its employees, even celibacy, although this latter regulation is often ignored⁸. The Northwest Company, on the other hand, operating from its headquarters in Montreal, adopts and implements the same trade methods inaugurated by the French. The domination of the French prior to the Conquest had been closely tied to their organization, experience and contacts with the First Nations people. The Northwest Company quickly came to the realization that its own commercial success would depend on these same elements. Consequently, the managers of the Company decide to conserve this way of operating⁹ and the Northwest Company continues to hire a large number of Canadians even if few of these ever manage to climb up the company ladder any higher than attaining the level of interpreter, guide, clerk or voyageur¹⁰.

These voyageurs hired by the fur companies make use of the routes developed by the First Nations people to penetrate into the interior of the continent. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the voyageurs rely on four major routes between Montreal and the Canadian Prairies, that is:

i) the Michigan route: it uses the St. Lawrence, Lakes Ontario and Erie, to travel to Detroit, Michilimackinac* and, finally, the Prairies;

ii) the Sault Ste. Marie-Michilimackinac route: from Montreal, it follows the Ottawa and Mattawa rivers, Lake Nipissing, the French River, the north shore of Lake Huron and then continues to the West;

iii) the Georgian Bay via the Nottawasaga River route: from Montreal, it goes west through Lake Ontario, the Humber River, the Nine-Mile Portage, the Nottawasaga River, and Georgian Bay;

iv) and the Georgian Bay via Lake Simcoe route: this involves going up the St. Lawrence, then Lake Ontario, Quinte Bay, followed by the Trent River, and the series of portages that link a chain of lakes, to Lake Simcoe and the Severn River¹¹.

In 1795, La Rochefoucault-Liancourt describes the route that is the most frequented, the Sault Ste. Marie route, in the following way:

One goes up the river of the Ottawas, or the great river, up to Lake Nipissin, and from there by the French River to Lake Huron. During this part of the journey alone, there are thirty six portages, in truth very short. From Lake Huron one enters Lake Michigan by the Strait of Michilimackinac, and then into the

⁷ Léo-Paul Desrosiers. *Les Engagés du Grand Portage*. Montreal, Fides, 1980. This novel, part of the literary *terroir* or "back to the land" movement at the beginning of the 1900's, is a good illustration of this competitive power struggle.

⁸ Jennifer Brown. *Strangers in Blood*. Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1980, p. 12.

⁹ Harold A. Innis. *The Fur Trade in Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973, p. 167. Hereinafter: Innis. *The Fur Trade*.

¹⁰ Jennifer Brown. "Two companies in search of traders; Personnel and promotion patterns in Canada's early British fur trade", *Proceedings of the second Congress of the Canadian Ethnology Society*, 2 (28), Ottawa, National Museum of Man, Mercury series, 1975, pp. 624 and 630.

* The spelling of Michilimackinac varies in various texts, sometimes with one "l" and sometimes with two. When not quoting a document, we have opted to use the contemporary spelling of the name, that is, with one "l". Also, after the community moved to Mackinac Island, in 1780, it was still referred to in some sources as Michilimackinac. We have added Mackinac Island in the case where the use of Michilimackinac refers to the settlement on Mackinac Island as opposed to the community that existed prior to this on the mainland.

¹¹ G. K. Mills. "The Nottawasaga River Route", in *OHSPR*, 8, 1909, pp. 40-48.

greenbay (sic) at the end of which one reaches the Crocodile River, and then by way of Rice Lake and the Saxe River, after a short portage one starts to go up the Illinois River¹² (our translation)*.

And later:

The expeditions leave Montreal in June and take around six weeks to get to the fort of the grand portage, it takes a few days less to make it to the one at Michilimackinac, they leave from Montreal in canoes, travelling in caravans of eight to ten, and they travel to their destination by following the St. Lawrence River from la Chine to the Lake of deux Montagnes, going up the Utacoha River, and by the latter to Lake Nipissin, and from there by the French River to Lake Huron and Fort Michilimackinac, and then to the one at the grand portage¹³ (our translation).

This traditional route is difficult, mainly because it offers few possibilities in the way of supply stops. Michilimackinac becomes a rest stop along the way since there, as at many other strategic points, a depot is established to supply expeditions with pemmican (dried bison or moose) prepared by First Nations people, as well as other provisions¹⁴. At the end of the 18th century, the southern routes become more important. The traders of the Northwest Company use the Lake Simcoe route instead of the Michigan route to avoid the Americans. This new route goes through York where the traders can receive goods sent from the east up until the end of October; during the winter, they send them by sleigh to Georgian Bay and from there to Sault Ste. Marie¹⁵. The rest of the year, the voyageurs must paddle up the St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario, portage to Lake Simcoe, cross it, do another portage to Georgian Bay and then continue on to Michilimackinac¹⁶. This route will be used mainly between 1797 and 1821. The Northwest Company feared the Americans enough to encourage the government to open up this interior route via Lake Simcoe¹⁷. So forceful was this encouragement that, according to the *Upper Canada Gazette* of March 9, 1799, the Company is reported to have contributed the sum of 12,000 pounds to the construction of Yonge Street¹⁸.

It is relevant to note that the voyageur is the product of the penetration of traders into First Nations territory. Allan Greer points out that the term “voyageur” used to name those people that travel to the First Nations territory to carry on the fur trade comes into usage as early as 1680. The voyageurs work in teams of three or four men under the orders of the merchants that finance them. In the 17th century, a new class in the hierarchy of the fur trade is created, that of the “engagé”, (literally, the hired one) a person who works for a merchant for a salary stipulated in a contract that

¹² LaRocheffoucault-Liancourt. “LaRocheffoucault-Liancourt's Travels in Canada” in 1795, quoted by Alexander Fraser in *Thirteenth report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario*, A. T. Wilgress Printer, 1916, p. 180.

* All quotes indicated as “our translation” are translations of the original French. All quotations from original period documents have been reproduced in this publication as they are in the original document with the errors and archaisms they contain. The frequency of the errors in relation to contemporary language standards would have made correcting these too unwieldy.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁴ S. C. Ells. “Canadian Voyageurs”, in *CGJ*, 42, 1951, p. 84; and Désirée Girouard. “Les Canadiens au Pôle Nord” in *BRH*, 4, 1898, p. 70. Hereinafter: Girouard. “Les Canadiens.”

¹⁵ Innis. *The Fur Trade*, p. 223.

¹⁶ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 28.

¹⁷ Eric Morse. “Voyageur Highway”, in *CGJ*, 1961, p. 160.

¹⁸ Daniel Marchildon. *La Huronie*. Ottawa, Le Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, Collection Pro-f-ont, 1984, p. 44. Hereinafter: Marchildon. *La Huronie*; and Eric Alcand. “Place of the White Rolling Sands”, in *The Evening Telegram*, Toronto, March 26, 1932, p. 32. Hereinafter: Alcand. “Place of the White Rolling Sands”.

often covers a few years¹⁹. At the beginning of the 18th century, most of the voyageurs and engagés come from Trois-Rivières (according to Louise Dechêne, 53% of the male adult population of the town of Trois-Rivières participates in the fur trade)²⁰.

Thus, in the beginning, the term voyageur was used to name the explorer, the fur-trader travelling to the interior, but later it came to mean only the canoe man, the motor of the transportation and communication system driving the trade between the fur country and the East. The voyageur, an extraordinarily resilient worker, paddles between fifteen to eighteen hours a day for weeks on end to reach his different destinations.

The Northwest Company has good reason to prefer these workers since their good reputation precedes them. Firstly, they know and accept the First Nations people and travel in the interior with the same ease as them. John Jacob Astor, the prince of the American fur trade, was so favourably impressed by their work that he is said to have declared that he preferred the company of one voyageur to three American canoe men²¹. This work demands, in addition to certain physical qualities, loyalty to the employer. In a letter written in 1809, G. Moffatt counsels a young George Gordon, a newcomer to the fur trade who will later set up shop in Penetanguishene with the Drummond Island voyageurs:

You have come to this country like many others, without friends, and must therefore depend upon your own exertions to procure them, be ever obedient and polite to your Employer or the person you may be appointed to obey—believe me you will not be the worse thought of for a submissive conduct; the nature of the country and the peculiarities of the Indian Trade, require some sacrifice of self-importance, which in other circumstances it would be commendable to retain—here, Mr. Gordon, you must lend a hand to everything that is going on. Mix very seldom with the Men, rather retire within yourself than make them your companions...²²

Gordon, like many others, is part of the “go west” movement. From 1640 to 1720, at least 16.4% of all the male adults work for the barons of the fur trade, and 41% of all families have more than one voyageur among them²³.

In her study, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVIII^e siècle*, Louise Dechêne, based on the analysis of a sample of 668 voyageurs between 1708 and 1717, concludes that the latter are, in decreasing order: sons of a craftsman, sons of a merchant, and sons of a farmer. The tough conditions seem to have encouraged the creation of permanent teams that contain a few members of the same family²⁴. Her research also shows that a majority of the voyageurs and engagés of the fur trade between 1708 and 1717 are aged from 19 to 30 years old²⁵. Grace Nute notes that there are 2,431 voyageur licenses registered in Montreal and Detroit in 1777²⁶. In his article “*Libéré ou exploité ! Le paysan québécois d’avant 1850*”, Fernand Ouellet states that the fur trade which, around 1720, requires the participation of 1,000 men, will employ as many as 3,000 by 1783, and he

¹⁹ Allan Greer. *Peasant, Lord and Merchant. Rural society in three Quebec Parishes. 1740-1840*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985, pp. 179-180.

²⁰ Louise Dechêne. *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVII^e siècle*. France, Plon/Montréal: Fides, 1974, p. 515. Hereinafter: Dechêne. *Habitants*.

²¹ Grace Lee Nute. *The Voyageurs*. St Paul, 1955, pp. 3, 5, 6, 13, 92 and 187. Hereinafter Nute. *The Voyageurs*; and Girouard. “Les Canadiens”, p. 67.

²² *Gordon Papers*, (9), letter from G. Moffatt of Fort William, July 25, 1809.

²³ Hubert Charbonneau and others. “Le comportement démographique des voyageurs sous le régime français”, in *Social History*, 1978, pp. 124-126.

²⁴ Dechêne. *Habitants*, pp. 223-237.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

²⁶ Nute. *The Voyageurs*, p. 7.

adds that, on the whole, this commercial system employs a labour force that is at least double the last figure²⁷.

This increasing exodus towards the fur country during the English regime can be explained by the liberalization of the fur trade, the use of larger canoes, and the growing volume of trade as well as the creation of settlements west of Montreal²⁸. Many a voyageur, seduced by this nomadic lifestyle akin to that of the First Nations people, falls in love with the country and decides to remain there. One observer, Hector de Crèvecoeur, took good note of this trend: “(...) thousands of Europeans are Indians and we have no examples of even one of those Aborigines having from choice become Europeans!²⁹” Also, a number of voyageurs develop relationships with First Nations women and take up residence in the interior country with their new families as free men.

However, by adapting to the the fur trade lifestyle and becoming free men, the voyageurs experience increasing difficulties in maintaining good relations with their families in Lower Canada. Faced with the impossibility of bringing their families (or wives) with them to the fur country, the voyageurs seek to be comforted by First Nations women. These same women help the voyageurs establish ties to their First Nation families, learn the language and customs of the Natives, and also do the domestic work essential to surviving in this “wild” country, like making mocassins or snow shoes³⁰. The voyageurs would often arrive in First Nation territory to work for a limited time but, after becoming involved with a woman and fathering children, it would become difficult for them to leave their family and return East. Bringing their “new” families with them to Lower Canada was no doubt not considered an option: First Nation women would not adapt well to life in the East and would no doubt not be accepted. For this reason, often First Nation women were forced to return to their tribe or were placed under the protection of another voyageur, a custom called *turning off*³¹.

Marriages “à la façon du pays”, or country marriages, become an increasingly frequent custom practiced by the employees of the Northwest Company. This type of union, an adaptation of the First Nation marriage ritual, confirms a couple’s vow to share a common life with both partners retaining the right to separate³². This Native custom rapidly evolves towards a White concept of marriage—a union for life. Amable Dupras, an engagé with the Northwest Company, declared in this regard that: “we [the voyageurs] regard this union as a union between husband and wife... and as a sacred union”³³ (our translation). Elizabeth Mason states that period documents prove that the bonds between First Nation women and Whites are more than superficial since the ties between families will last for several decades³⁴.

At the turn of the 19th century, the mores of fur-traders, especially those of the Hudson’s Bay Company, are in opposition to the custom of the country. These traders want to marry White women in order to rise to the upper echelons, but nevertheless take advantage of the tradition in the interior country to receive sexual favours from First Nation women. Two new phenomena, prostitution and infanticide, emerge as a result of this hypocritical practice³⁵.

²⁷ Fernand Ouellet. “Libéré ou exploité. Le paysan québécois d'avant 1850”, in Histoire sociale, 13 (26), November 1980, p. 358.

²⁸ Massicotte. “Répertoire des congés”, in Le Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec, 1921-1922.

²⁹ James Axtell. “The White Indians of Colonial America”, in William and Mary Quarterly, 32, (series 3) 1975, p. 57.

³⁰ Sylvia Van Kirk. “Women in between. Indian women in fur trade society in Western Canada”, in Canadian Historical Association Report, Fredericton, University of Toronto, 1977, p. 3.

³¹ Sylvia Van Kirk. “The custom of the country: An examination of fur trade marriage practices”, in Canadian Historical Association Report, Toronto, 1974, pp. 11 and 7. Hereinafter: Van Kirk. “The custom”.

³² Sylvia Van Kirk. “Women in the fur trade”, in Beaver, Winter 1972, p. 4. Hereinafter: Van Kirk. “Women in the fur trade.”

³³ Van Kirk. “The custom”, pp. 17-18.

³⁴ Elizabeth Mason and Adèle Rahs. “Web of Power in the Fur Trade of the Old South West, a Genealogical Approach”, in Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, June 1985, p. 4.

³⁵ Jennifer Brown. “Changing views of fur trade marriage and domesticity; James Hargrave, His colleagues, and « the sex »” in Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 6, 1976, p. 101.

The arrival of White people in the land of the First Nations makes Métis women conscious of their cultural shortcomings, especially in the areas where there are settlements and where Native skills are no longer required. The Northwest Company, for its part, discourages mixed raced marriages; in 1806 it establishes a rule forbidding its employees from marrying First Nation women (Métis women are not considered to be First Nation)³⁶. The Northwest Company's influence in this regard seems to have been limited on the voyageurs who settled in Penetanguishene, since nearly all of them will marry First Nation or Métis women.

1.3 Lieutenant Governor Simcoe and the Military

In his plans, the Lieutenant Governor of the time, John G. Simcoe, envisions establishing settlers in the Penetanguishene area by as early as the end of the 18th century. The requests of the Northwest Company mesh well with these plans that include the creation of a rapid communication link between York and Lake Huron. Simcoe plans on opening up two major roads: one that will go from Lake Ontario to the Thames River, and the other to run north-south from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe (Yonge Street)³⁷. In 1793, he will personally travel to the lake previously called "lac aux Claies" (renamed Simcoe in honour of the Lieutenant Governor's father) and then on to Georgian Bay to determine if his project is viable³⁸. The same year, Simcoe orders the surveying of the land stretching from York to Kempenfeldt Bay (Barrie)³⁹ and, in 1797, he proposes that Penetanguishene⁴⁰ become the terminus of the road between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay⁴¹. With the creation of the Home district in 1798 (of which the northern part will become Simcoe County in 1849)⁴², Simcoe believes that Penetanguishene is destined to become a major centre. In a letter to the Lords of the Privy Council dated December 20, 1794, the Lieutenant Governor expresses his hopes regarding the future of Penetanguishene:

I contemplate that Gloucester (Penetanguishene), from its situation, as bidding fair to be in a very short space of time the most considerable town in Upper Canada⁴³.

The development Simcoe foresees for Penetanguishene commences with a military establishment. On December 3, 1812, Minister Bathurst, in charge of the Navy, authorizes the construction of a blockhaus and a naval shipyard in Penetanguishene. However, the work only begins in 1814⁴⁴, and this despite the opposition of certain people to this choice of location. A note in John Belden's Atlas raises some doubts as to the wisdom of the British in locating their post in such a remote area, with the author going as far as to suggest that Penetanguishene is undoubtedly the least likely place in the province to be attacked⁴⁵. On the other hand, Sir Richard Bonnycastle defends the choice of Penetanguishene:

Penetanguishene, a small but excellent harbor on Georgian Bay or Lake Huron, capable of holding a large fleet secure in all weathers was chosen as the seat of a

³⁶ Van Kirk. "Women in the fur trade", pp. 21 and 6.

³⁷ William Cannif. History of the settlement of Upper Canada. Canadian Reprint Series # 1, Mika Publishing, 4th edition, 1971, p. 545.

³⁸ Gerald M. Craig. Upper Canada. The formative years, 1784-1841. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Canadian Centenary Series, 1963, p. 35.

³⁹ J. G. Simcoe. Governor Simcoe's Journey from Humber to Matchedash Bay in 1793. Simcoe County Archives.

⁴⁰ Wonders. "The Penetanguishene Peninsula", p. 122.

⁴¹ David Williams. The origin of the names of the post offices in Simcoe County. Toronto, 1906.

⁴² George W. Spragge. "The Districts of Upper Canada, 1788-1849", in OHSPR, 39, 1947, p.132.

⁴³ Alcand. "Place of the White Rolling Sands", p. 13.

⁴⁴ Marchildon. La Huronie, p. 45.

⁴⁵ A. C. Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene: sketches of its pioneer, naval and military days" in Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society, Pioneer Papers, Barrie, 5-6, 1912-1917, p. 87.

naval establishment in order to protect Upper Canada from invasion by the lake as the capital is approachable from that point⁴⁶.

Regardless of the divergent opinions following this decision, the government goes ahead with its plan to erect a post as a defence against the American threat, a post that will determine the fate of the future settlers of Penetanguishene.

It should be remembered that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the inhabitants in the area are few in number. In fact, following the era of the Jesuit mission of Ste. Marie, only a few fur-traders had stayed in the area. We know of the presence of George Cowan, a trader located near Matchedash Bay, and of Quetton Saint-George at the Narrows separating Lakes Couchiching and Simcoe. Cowan (also called Jean-Baptiste Constant by francophones) seems to have operated a fur-trading post with a staff of six people and his family⁴⁷. During his visit in 1793, Lieutenant Governor John G. Simcoe meets Cowan who has been living in the area for at least fifteen years⁴⁸. Cowan will die by drowning eleven years later, in 1804⁴⁹.

Another trader, Quetton Saint-George, an immigrant from France in 1798, establishes himself at the Narrows to trade with the First Nations people starting in 1802; he will return to France a rich man⁵⁰. Thus, prior to the arrival of the "Drummond Island voyageurs", most of which will move to Penetanguishene in 1828, the area's population remains very sparse.

The voyageurs living far away from White social institutions have adapted to a new society at Michilimackinac and on Drummond Island, a society where the social and religious norms are different. However, the voyageurs that follow the Drummond Island garrison that removes to Penetanguishene will undergo a second adaptation spurred by a new economic context and a new, closer contact with White society. The voyageurs move to Penetanguishene to take possession of lots granted to them by the British government. No doubt they are hoping to make a living in part from farming and also in part from the economic benefits that come from the presence of a sizeable government institution like the Naval and Military Establishments. Let us now look at how these people, unaccustomed to a sedentary lifestyle and an orderly social system, will adapt to their new life in Huronia.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁷ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁸ Fred Landon. *Lake Huron*. New York, 1944, p. 142.

⁴⁹ Adelaide Leitch. *The Visible Past*. Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1974, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Andrew Hunter. *The History of Simcoe County*. Barrie, 1948, pp. 23-24.

Chapter 2: The Voyageurs and Métis in Penetanguishene

2.1 The Origins of the Penetanguishene Voyageurs and Métis

To better understand the voyageurs and Métis that will come to live in Huronia, it is fitting to first examine the community where they originated from, that is to say Michilimackinac: the cradle of the Penetanguishene voyageurs and Métis.

Michilimackinac, or Mackinac, on the south shore of the Mackinac Straits, and Mackinac Island, which command the entrance to Lake Michigan, and thereby access to the Mississippi Valley, constitute a vital link to the West at the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century (see Map 4). Michilimackinac, initially a French possession, will be handed over to the British following the Conquest of 1760, and then Mackinac Island will be ceded to the Americans following the Treaty of Ghent in 1814¹. It should be noted that both the Straits and the Island have the same name Mackinac², derived from the ojibway word Me-zhe-ka, that means turtle³.

It is thus at Michilimackinac, and then later on Mackinac Island, that a significant number of voyageurs, former employees of the Northwest Company, and their Métis families establish a community⁴. In *Governor Simcoe, Michigan and Canadian Defense*, the Mackinac Straits area, as it is in 1791, is described in the following way:

Far to the north, the fort on Mackinac Island retained its small garrison. Clustered in the fort area were a few homes and a church for the island's white residents. A few traders lived at the Sault and along the St. Joseph River, but they added only a few hundred to Michigan's white population, placing the total at perhaps three thousand⁵.

Nevertheless, this small village is destined to become the biggest storehouse and fur-trading centre in the Northwest. Sir Alexander Henry alludes to its commercial value in the following passage:

[Michilimackinac]... the place of deposit, and point of departure, between the upper countries and the lower. Here, the outfits are prepared for the countries of Lake Michigan and the Mississippi, Lake Superior and the north-west; and here, the returns in furs, are collected, and embarked to Montreal⁶.

He also notes the economic importance of fish, maple sugar and corn in the area. LaRoche-foucault-Liancourt also underscores basically the same thing in his description of the June Rendezvous:

At this time upwards of one thousand men are frequently assembled in Michilimakkinak who either arrive from Canada to receive the peltry, or are

¹ George Laidler. "The Nottawasaga Portage, Simcoe County, Ontario", in *OHSPR*, 35, 1943, p. 41. Hereinafter: Laidler. "The Nottawasaga Portage".

² Richard Ford. "The French-Canadians in Michigan", in *Michigan History Magazine*, 27, 1943, p. 252. Hereinafter: Ford. "The French-Canadians".

³ James C. Hamilton. *The Georgian Bay*. Toronto, Carswell Co., 1893, p. 167.

⁴ Ford. "The French-Canadians", p. 251.

⁵ Alan Brown. "Governor Simcoe Michigan and Canadian Defense", in *Michigan History*, 67, March/April 1983, pp. 17-23.

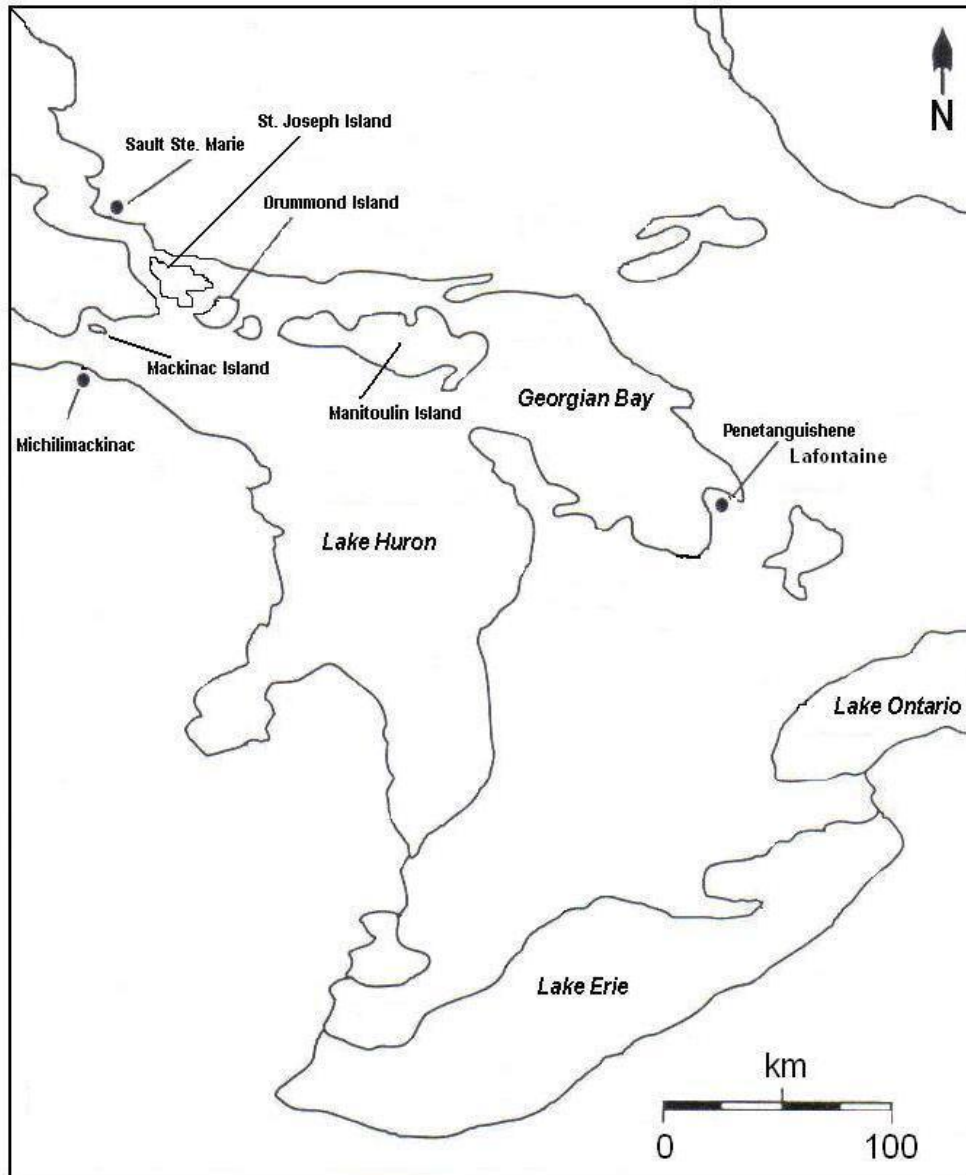
⁶ Harold Innis. *The Fur Trade in Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973, p. 167.

agents of the company and Indians, who assist the former in conveying thither the furs they have bought⁷.

Another observer of the time also describes Michilimackinac:

Here I met a large number of people, for nearly a thousand men visit this area during the summer season, although most only stay here for a few weeks. It is the place of rendezvous for traders from Lake Michigan, from Mississipi, from Lake Superior and other places, and it has fifty houses⁸ (our translation).

Map 4: Areas where the Penetanguishene voyageurs were active



⁷ LaRoche foucault-Liancourt. "LaRoche foucault-Liancourt's Travels in Canada, 1795" quoted by Alexander Fraser in Thirteenth report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario. A. T. Wilgress Printer, 1916, p. 113. Hereinafter: LaRoche foucault-Liancourt. "Travels".

⁸ Henri Têtu, Mgr. "Requête des voyageurs de Michilimackinac en 1796", in BRH, 10, March 1904, p. 74. Hereinafter: Têtu. "Requête des voyageurs".

A few documents give us some information on the religious state of the inhabitants of Michilimackinac. In fact, in the 18th century, a sedentary population resides in Michilimackinac and no doubt comprises a significant number of people since, in 1775, during the visit of the missionary priest Father Gibault, the latter mentions the celebration of a marriage and several baptisms as well as spending ten hours listening to confessions⁹. In August 1787, Father Payet visits Mackinac and writes that, in his opinion, there are: “a certain number of devout people despite the multitude of those that are impious”¹⁰ (our translation). The voyageurs enthusiasm for observing catholic religious rituals seems to be diminishing, a sign of their social adaptation to the First Nations culture to the detriment of their White social customs. However, the abandonment of the religious tradition by the voyageurs is never complete since at least some of them show an interest in maintaining their religious customs as illustrated by a request, presented eleven years after the last visit of a priest, by 25 voyageurs for the services of a pastor. Clearly, the moral dilemma that the voyageurs feel between maintaining their social and religious customs and adopting a lifestyle that draws them away from them, remains present even if the latter seems to be winning. The testimony of Father Gabriel Richard, in 1799, is most eloquent regarding the indifference of the voyageurs or their neglect in observing religious rituals:

I found a whole slew of children and I baptized 30 of them. They were all over the age of seven and, for the most part, illegitimate. It is painful to see so many poor creatures abandoned without religious instruction since there are barely any of them who can make the sign of the cross¹¹ (our translation).

In this strategic location, many voyageur families will establish themselves giving birth to a genuine family network made-up of different familial alliances between various trading families. Michilimackinac will become the hub of this network. By the middle of the 19th century, several of the community leaders are Métis who have the advantage of understanding both North American and European cultures. Charles Langlade is one of them. He occupies a choice position in the fur trade due to his family ties. Not only does he benefit from the Métis heritage of his parents, Langlade also takes advantage of the relations he has through his wife, Charlotte Ambroisine, whose half-brother, René Bourassa, is the main chief of the Potawatomis at St. Joseph Topinabee. The wife of René Bourassa, Charlotte Veronica, is also related to the important Chevalier family. Furthermore, Louise Domitilde, the daughter of Charles, marries Pierre Grignon, whose first wife was part of the Menominee tribe, which controls the Bay des Puants (Green Bay) area¹². Thus, according to Elizabeth Mason, these Métis families greatly influenced the development of the fur trade in the Southwest and they will retain their control over it when, at the end of the 18th century, these various families, related to each other in one way or another, unite to found the Michillimackinac Company¹³.

Many traders from the Northwest Company will move to Grand-Portage to escape the domination by the French and the First Nations people of the trade to the Southwest. In fact, even if the new company is financed by James McGill and Isaac Todd, it functions through the association of the old fur families of the Southwest, bearing the names Langlade, Bourassa, Jasson (Giasson), Chevalier, Bertrand...¹⁴

Nobody among this group seems to object to the fact that a Métis woman manages this company. Elizabeth (Bertrand) Mitchell, of Ojibway and French parentage, is at the head of the

⁹ Têtu. “Requête des voyageurs”.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹² Elizabeth Mason and Adèle Rahs. “Web of Power in the Fur Trade of the Old South West, a Genealogical Approach”, in Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, June 1985, pp. 8-9. Hereinafter: Mason. “Web of Power”.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Mason. “The Michillimackinac Company and its role in the war of 1812”, in Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, October 1981, pp. 2-4. Hereinafter: Mason. “The Michillimackinac Company”.

business since its foundation at the beginning of the 1780s¹⁵. Up until the War of 1812, her family ties allow her to control a vast empire that dominates the trade in the Southwest, that is to say the territory that lies in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and on the route of the Mississippi up to St. Louis. The First Nations people named this powerful woman Ozawanie (very special person) or Magigianiqua (the princess of the flowers)¹⁶, two titles she well deserved since, during many years, she coordinated the activities of a company that was responsible for two thirds of the Montreal trade and nearly monopolized the trade in the Southwest¹⁷. As illustrated in the case of Elizabeth Mitchell, some First Nations people and Métis voyageurs are no longer content to simply supply furs to the White traders, and they undertake to organize the fur trade network within their nation or families.

La Rochefoucault-Liancourt briefly summarizes the operations of the Michillimackinac Company in this way:

The post of Michillimakkinak is the rallying point of the different Canadian merchants, who do not belong to the north-west company. Their agents traffic only with such parts, as are seated west and south-west of the lakes, and where the furs are of an inferior quality. They carry on this trade in the same manner as the north-west company, but as these small companies are less opulent than the former, their agents penetrate not so far into the interior of the country as those of the north-west company¹⁸.

The American fur-traders contemplate the activities of the Michillimackinac Company with a jealous eye and, with the advent of the Jay Treaty (signed in November 1794, but only formalized in February 1796), the American garrison moves to Mackinac Island thus displacing the British who move to St. Joseph Island. The trade continues much as before until 1803, when the United States buys Louisiana and the Michillimackinac Company is then prohibited from trading on the American side of the border. In 1805, a proclamation by the Governor of Louisiana, James Wilkinson, prohibits traders who do not have an American license from trading along the Missouri River¹⁹.

The Michillimackinac Company, however, was not suffering its first setback and had already fallen on hard times. In 1786, Todd McGill wrote to his friend, John Askin:

The bad Success of the Mch-ncke Company this last year & the large quantities of Goods which will remain has brought the Interested to a determination of sending up few or many Dry Goods²⁰.

However, this time, the change in policy will have a profound effect on the company. Even if, in 1806, the Northwest Company grants it the monopoly of the trade to the Southwest, that is to say a monopoly to the south of Lake Superior starting in Sault Ste. Marie, the Michillimackinac Company will suffer further setbacks. In 1808, the Americans seize eight of the company's boats and the losses stemming from the incident will total 100,000 dollars. In 1810, McGill and Todd decide to sell their shares to two companies that, the following year, will merge with the forces of Jacob Astor and his American Fur Company²¹.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Mason. Summary of a conference presented to the Descendants of the Establishments Organization. Hereinafter: Mason. Summary of a conference.

¹⁶ Mason. "The Michillimackinac Company", pp. 1 and 3.

¹⁷ Mason. "Web of Power", p. 11.

¹⁸ LaRochefoucault-Liancourt. "Travel", p. 112.

¹⁹ Mason. "The Michillimackinac Company", p. 8.

²⁰ M. Quaipe (editor). The John Askin Papers, 1747-1895, vol. 1, Burton Historical Records, Detroit Library Commission, 1928, p. 278.

²¹ Mason. "The Michillimackinac Company", pp. 9-10.

When Washington declares war on the British colony on June 28, 1812, the traders decide to help take back Mackinac Island. Captain Charles Roberts on St. Joseph Island, 64 kilometers from Mackinac, receives an order from General Brock to take what action he feels appropriate. On July 17, 1812, Captain Roberts, acting on his own initiative, leads a group of about 150 volunteer voyageurs who surprise the Americans on Mackinac Island and force them to surrender their fort to the “British”²²: “I also learnt that we had taken Michilimackinac without firing a shot, it was said to be taken by a party of Indians.”²³ On the subject of the battle for Fort Mackinac, F. Fisher of Montreal writes in a letter he sends to George Gordon at Mackinac:

I congratulate you most sincerely on your late success against the Americans, I have no doubt but you will always shew a determinate resolution to defend the Post, should they have the temerity to renew the attack²⁴.

Despite the efforts of the inhabitants of the area west of Lake Michigan to get their lands back, with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in 1814, they will lose this territory to the Americans without any consideration being given to their opinion on the matter. To make matters worse, in 1817, the American government decides to grant licenses almost exclusively to the American Fur Company. The traders of the Michillimackinac Company (including Elizabeth Mitchell) are therefore forced to work for this American company if they want to continue trading on American soil²⁵. Some fur-traders will manage to set up shop and do business elsewhere in “Canada”. Many others will follow the British garrison to Drummond Island. This move constitutes in effect the first step in the adaptation of the voyageurs to the new rules of the game that would govern the fur trade in the Upper Great Lakes from this point on.

After having fought in the War of 1812 to drive out the Americans from the region, many voyageurs and Métis accept to establish themselves near the new British military post on *Pon-tan-ag-an-ipy* Island (renamed Drummond in 1815 in honour of the Lieutenant Governor of Canada, Sir Gordon Drummond)²⁶.

This island, 35.2 km by 19.2 km in dimension, is not a particularly suitable location for its new inhabitants; it has no pasture land for the livestock. In 1816, the troops on Drummond Island run out of meat and vegetables, and the situation deteriorates to the point where, while waiting for the arrival of new livestock and a bit of forage, 60 to 70 men fall seriously ill, and G. A. Monk declares: “but I am happy to acquaint you that but 14 have sunk under the disease”²⁷. Nevertheless, the voyageurs and Métis will eventually come to form a small community on the island:

the settlement consisted of one straight street of fifteen or more comfortable two story log houses, all white washed (...) The dwellings of the regular residents were grouped together close to a curious inlet about two hundred feet wide, which ran inland for two miles²⁸.

Among those who visit the small village, the voyageurs and Métis welcome Father Crevier, the vicar of l’Assomption parish of Sandwich (Windsor). En route to Manitoba, Mgr. Provencher makes a stopover on Drummond Island, on June 24, 1822. He meets with approximately five hundred Catholics, mostly French-Canadians joined with First Nations women. He blesses one

²² George, F. G. Stanley. *La Guerre de 1812. Les Opérations terrestres*. Montréal, éd. du Trécaré, 1984.

²³ M. Quaife (editor). *The John Askin Papers, 1796-1820*, vol. 2, Burton Historical Records, Detroit Library Commission, 1931, p. 713.

²⁴ Copy of a letter by F. Fisher from Montreal to George Gordon, Michilimackinac, September 15, 1814, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 14.

²⁵ Mason. “The Michillimackinac Company”, p. 13.

²⁶ Jan Weist. “Dummond Island: Sportsman's Gem”, in an unidentified newspaper, June 22 1978, p. 14.

²⁷ Letter by G. A. Monk to Commissary General Robinson, July 13, 1816. PAC RG 8 series C, vol. 121.

²⁸ Fred Landon. *Lake Huron*. New York, 1944, p. 197.

marriage and baptizes 24 children²⁹. Five years later, the Catholics and Protestants of the Island unite their efforts to try and obtain a school with religious instruction. The Island, however, will be ceded in 1828 before their efforts can bear fruit³⁰.

The little information we have leads us to believe that the requests for religious services are mostly initiated by Dédin Révol. The latter refers to life on Drummond Island in a letter to his friend, George Gordon, where he also alludes to his spiritual side:

Remember my friend, that I and all we Christians on Drummond Island went during five or six years without seeing a priest. I was tormented for some time, hampered by those whom I presume are still trying to implant among us their erroneous ways³¹ (our translation).

In addition to lacking a pastor, the inhabitants of Drummond Island also feel sometimes isolated. Dr. Mitchell will write: “This place affords nothing new it’s as dull as the very devil and the people living in it are getting poorer and poorer every day”³². Simpson also alluded to the same problem with regard to the “wealth” of the voyageurs: “Provisions are very high here at present and money is as plenty as ever (that is in a small way).” In the same letter, he mentions the longing that he feels for contact with the outside world: “as for news we are as barren as our Island is of Gold mines”³³. The economic condition of the voyageurs thus seems to be worsening on this island which offers them much fewer opportunities for adventure than did Mackinac Island. Nevertheless, they seem to maintain their sense of humour as indicated by E. Fournier who asks for information on the new jokes circulating on Drummond Island: “Give me a general account of the Transactions at Drummond Island for it’s a Celebrated place for farces of every kind”³⁴.

On November 14, 1828, the British, as a result of the new border established between Canada and the United States, cede Drummond Island to the Americans; the voyageurs are once again confronted by a choice: either they remain on the island and become American citizens or they move with the British garrison to Penetanguishene. The latter place, which, according to Simcoe’s predictions in 1795, was destined to replace Mackinac Island³⁵, would end up becoming the home of the former inhabitants of Mackinac Island, without ever attaining the level of prosperity that existed at the time of the Michillimackinac Company. Thus, between 1827 and 1829, about 288 people, voyageurs and their Métis families, chose to leave their place of residence in order to remain British³⁶. With the exception of a few First Nations and French-Canadian people, Drummond Island will remain deserted during the following years and its population will eke out a living from trapping and fishing³⁷. The people displaced by this exodus will be destined to form the first permanent French-speaking population of Huronia.

²⁹ Alonzo Gobeil. Gestes français en terre ontarienne—Épopée française à la baie Georgienne 1610-1956, tome 1, manuscript, 1965, pp. 155-156.

³⁰ Daniel Marchildon. La Huronie. Ottawa, Le Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, series Pro-f-ont, 1984, p. 51. Hereinafter: Marchildon. La Huronie.

³¹ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol, Chambly, to George Gordon, merchant in Penetanguishene, October 19, 1834, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 16.

³² Copy of a letter by Andrew Mitchell, Drummond Island, to George Gordon in Penetanguishene, January 11, 1828, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 5.

³³ Copy of a letter by W. Simpson, Drummond Island, January 9, 1822, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 15.

³⁴ Copy of a letter by E. Fournier, Lake Huron, to George Gordon, January 1, 1822, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 7.

³⁵ A. C. Osborne. “Old Penetanguishene: sketches of its pioneer, naval and military days”, in Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society, Pioneer Papers, vol. 5-6, Barrie, 1912-1927, p. 9. Hereinafter: Osborne, “Old Penetanguishene”.

³⁶ Marchildon. La Huronie, p. 52

³⁷ Frederick C. Hamil. “An early settlement on St. Joseph Island” in Ontario History, vol. 53, April 1961, p. 251.

2.2 The Move of the Voyageurs and Métis to Penetanguishene

The voyageurs decision to migrate from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene is not surprising. Many among them had shown a certain degree of attachment to their country and the British crown; they had already moved once in order to conserve their affiliation to their country and accept lands offered as compensation. Among this group, there are even 20 who had fought as soldiers in the War of 1812. It would therefore appear that the loyalty of these families to the British and their economic dependency on the military had reached a very high degree, to the point that they would accept starting their lives over again and leave Drummond Island and much of their possessions behind³⁸.

The voyage by water will take between 14 to 18 days. Most of those leaving Drummond Island will take advantage of the transportation offered by the British government. Eighty-one people, half of which are soldiers, travel to Penetanguishene in the fall of 1828 aboard the *Wellington*³⁹. Dr. Mitchell, William Simpson and Dédin Révol arrive on the *Wellington* at the docks of the naval depot. From there they transfer their possessions on to smaller boats in order to go to their new place of residence, since at that time there is no road along Penetanguishene Bay⁴⁰.

Also in 1828, some families attempt to travel to Penetanguishene aboard the schooner *Alice Hackett*. However, this voyage turns into Georgian Bay's first shipwreck: the *Alice Hackett* sinks due to a storm and the inebriated condition of the crew. Almost miraculously, all the passengers survive the wreck, even Mrs. Lépine and her child who spend an entire night tied to the mast. The stranded crew and passengers also manage to save 13 barrels of whiskey belonging to a Mr. Fraser, a pig, and a horse which will be abandoned on Horse Island (Fitzwilliam Island near the southern tip of Manitoulin Island). By contrast, Ezekiel Solomon will lose all of his possessions, that is two teams of horses, four cows, twelve sheep, eight pigs, one harness, and the furniture from his house⁴¹.

A number of families leave Drummond Island by their own means, by sailboat, bateau, or canoe, to settle in Penetanguishene⁴². A letter by Dédin Révol shows that some individuals were able to transport more of their possessions than others:

Since the vessel is supposed to return for a third trip to your place I'll take advantage of this to try to send you all I can salvage from your house. I'll mention it to Simson (sic) who I've hired. In one of the cases that I'm placing aboard for this trip are your three windows and a number of doors, one of which is yours. I haven't removed the others since Mitchel (sic) is still using this house and his lease has not yet expired⁴³ (our translation).

Those that traveled aboard the *Hackett*, a sailboat, or a canoe were surely not able to bring with them doors to rebuild their homes. A prosperous individual, such as Gordon, undoubtedly had greater means and influence than the poorer voyageurs.

Nevertheless, despite the considerable differences in their various situations and the means of transportation that bring them to Penetanguishene, the people in the voyageur and Métis group will all share the lot of the displaced citizen. Upon their arrival in their adopted land, they will thus be faced with the challenge of establishing a new community entirely from scratch.

³⁸ Letter by John Bell, Penetanguishene, June 12, 1832, in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto, MAC 17.02.

³⁹ Marchildon. *La Huronie*. p. 54.

⁴⁰ Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene", p. 59.

⁴¹ Alexander C. Osborne. "The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828", in *Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records* vol. 3, 1901, p. 128; and James Barry. *The Sixth Great Lake*. Canada, 1968, p. 97.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴³ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol from Drummond Island, May 23 1829, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 6.

Chapter 3: The Settlement of the Voyageurs and Métis in Penetanguishene

3.1 The Voyageurs take possession of the lands granted to them by the government

The task facing the displaced Métis and voyageurs is considerable. For them, the move to Penetanguishene signals the beginning of a new lifestyle, of a transition between an economy based on the fur trade to one based on the lumber industry. In Penetanguishene, the lumber industry will only become significant starting in the 1870s. In the meantime, the voyageurs will have to find other ways to earn a living. Life for them in Huronia becomes more sedentary and, gradually, with the arrival of more settlers who bring with them their Canadian institutions, they will have to adapt to a more structured society. Some traders, like George Gordon, continue to do business in Huronia, while other newcomers receive 20 acre lots from the government in Tiny Township, on the west side of Penetanguishene Bay, as compensation for the lands they have lost on Drummond Island. However, as early as 1815, Robert Gourlay notes that, elsewhere in Upper Canada, two fairly large groups of citizens are complaining about the land grants distribution system: on the one hand, there are the people that lost land during the War of 1812 and, on the other, the militia men who have not received land as a reward for their services as promised by the government¹. It would thus seem that the voyageurs can count themselves lucky to have received land, although their luck seems limited if one compares their 20 acre lots to the 200 acre land grants that the government was giving to ordinary settlers in 1815².

However, the opinions of historical commentators on this subject aren't unanimous. A. C. Osborne, in his article "*The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene*", describes the voyageurs' land grants as "liberal allotments of lands"³. By contrast, Father Thomas Marchildon, reacting to this comment, replies that: "[...] those that have seen with their own eyes these 'liberal allotments of lands' know that they consisted liberally of sand and rocks"⁴ (our translation).

Nevertheless, the new settlers take possession of their land and attempt to get used to farming. According to an article published in *Ancestry* the newsletter of *The Establishments Descendants Organization*, an historical society mainly interested in the genealogy of the military personnel stationed at Penetanguishene, there were 47 voyageurs landowners along the west side of Penetanguishene Bay in 1830⁵. According to Land Registry Office records, many other voyageurs will add their names to the list of landowners in 1834 and in 1835, which will give a total of 73 voyageur landowners (see Appendix A).

Although they accept the land grants that the government offers them, as early as August 31, 1830 the voyageurs are already asking themselves questions as to the nature of their title. Thus, 44 voyageurs and Métis that have settled in Penetanguishene send a request to Sir John Colborne, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, asking him to clarify what settlement duties they must perform. The voyageurs believe that these lands were given to them free of charge to compensate their losses on Drummond Island. The government however expects new landowners to build a house and clear four acres of land the first year, and then four acres per year during the three following years. As well, the authorities state that each settler must remit a payment of eight pounds before being given title to their lot. These conditions are what push the voyageurs to make four complaints:

¹ Lillian F. Gates. *Land Policies of Upper Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p.105.

² *Ibid.*, 105.

³ Alexander C. Osborne. "The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828", in *Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society, Pioneer Papers*, Barrie, (5-6), 1912-1917, p. 39. Hereinafter: Osborne. "The Migration", p. 39.

⁴ Thomas Marchildon and Oscar Racette. *Verner et Lafontaine*. Sudbury, Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario, Documents historiques # 8, 1945, p. 39.

⁵ *Ancestry*, 2 (4), November 1984. Newsletter published by the Descendants of the Establishments Organization, Penetanguishene, p. 6.

1. they refuse to pay the eight pounds per lot since they had received the assurance that their lots were free grants (furthermore they do not have the necessary funds to pay);
2. they do not want to clear so much of their land, since clearing 16 of their 20 acres would use up all of their supply of heating wood;
3. many of them, since they are forced to work elsewhere than at home, cannot fulfill the settlement duties; and
4. since much of their land is infertile, clearing it would serve no useful purpose.

The voyageurs will demand that they receive title to their lots without having to pay or clear more than a total of eight acres⁶. The government does not seem to have replied favourably to this request since, in 1832, the residents of Penetanguishene will submit another one that is essentially the same⁷.

Other complaints will follow: another request, found in the Archives of the Toronto Archdiocese and signed by 22 individuals, asks Colborne to grant them a better reward for their previous sacrifices, that is to say that the government grant them additional land since 20 acres is not sufficient to ensure the subsistence of their large families⁸. Some voyageurs in Penetanguishene will also try to obtain land grants through personal requests. It is the case of S. Rawson⁹, and also of Pierre Giroux senior¹⁰; the latter writes a letter, with the support of Mr. Mitchell, stating the value of the land he possessed on Drummond Island to request he be granted equivalent land in Penetanguishene¹¹.

These requests seem to have all been in vain since, in 1842, John Moberly mentions, in describing the lots on Penetanguishene Bay, that they consist only of 20 acres: "At present the only settlers are a few merchants and some Canadians from Drummond Island on 20 acre lots, all poor"¹². Some voyageurs visibly try to farm on their land since Frederick Ingall, in describing the west side of Penetanguishene Bay, notes that a number of them have cleared their land:

Immediately opposite to the village are settlements of French Canadian families (formerly from Drummond Island) who, in some instances, have cleared to the very summit of the high land which borders the bay¹³.

These efforts, as commendable as they are, will prove insufficient to ensure the economic survival of the voyageur families. Shortly after settling in Huronia, the voyageurs will have to turn to other sources of income besides agriculture.

3.2 The Various Occupations

As we have seen, the land grants received by the voyageurs and Métis offered them limited possibilities with respect to earning a living. This situation is certainly not new for the voyageurs who, in the past, have been called upon to ply various trades in order to survive. In Penetanguishene they will have to do the same.

Since they are the product of mixed race relationships between White and First Nations people, the Métis are fluent in a number of First Nation languages as well as French and, in many

⁶ Residents of Penetanguishene. "Petition sent to Sir John Colborne by the residents of Penetanguishene", in Records of the provincial and civil secretary's offices, Upper Canada and Canada Civil secretary's correspondence, 1791-1840. Upper Canada sundries, 1766-1840. RG 5 A1, 101 (2). August 31, 1830.

⁷ Letter by the residents of Penetanguishene in 1832, in AAT, M AC 17.04.

⁸ Request sent to Colborne by the residents of Penetanguishene, May 10, 1832, in ATT, M AC 17.03.

⁹ Request by Rawson to Colborne, February 5, 1833, in AAT, MAC 17.09.

¹⁰ Letter by Giroux to Colborne, February 7, 1833, in AAT, M AC 17.07.

¹¹ Letter by Mitchell, February 7, 1833, in AAT, M AC 17.08.

¹² Letter by John Moberly to Davidson, Commissionner for crown lands, July 28, 1842, in HHPRC.

¹³ Frederick Lennox Ingall. Copy of the Ingall Fonds. Private collection of the Ingall family, p. 5.

cases, English. They therefore will often be hired as interpreters. Let us mention first off William Solomon, an interpreter of many years who moves to Penetanguishene, and his son, Henry, who in 1836, will also work as an interpreter in dealings with a number of First Nations people. In one case, the young Solomon was called upon to help smooth out relations between a priest and some First Nations people in the area, but his translations instigate friction that pushes the latter to convert to the Methodist religion¹⁴.

The voyageurs and Métis often find work as guides, either for “foreigners” who want to do some trapping, or for surveyors or particular individuals¹⁵. Four voyageurs help surveyor Charles Rankin between May 21 and August 15, 1833 during his survey of Nottawasaga Township¹⁶; Hippolyte Brissette, Samuel Solomon and William Cowen will assist Captain Bayfield during his charting expeditions of the 30,000 islands of Georgian Bay on board the *Recovery* between 1822 and 1825.

A. C. Osborne lists several other excursions guided by voyageurs. Solomon appears to have been hired for short excursions: with Jean-Baptiste Trudeau, he accompanies Dr. Taché to Colborne Bay (today the North-West Basin, at the northern extremity of the west side of Penetanguishene Bay); he accompanies a Jesuit priest to Beausoleil Island, and for the sum of 25 dollars, he leads the Count of Northumberland along the First Nations trails from Colborne Bay to Thunder Bay Beach in a single day. He also serves as a guide on longer voyages: assisted by Aleck McKay and Métis Pierre Laronde and Joseph Laramonda, he receives 100 dollars to bring Captain West and David Mitchell to Manitoulin Island by snowshoe. He will also guide Colonel W. H. Robinson to Manitoulin Island and Sault Ste. Marie.

Louis Solomon for his part accompanies a number of people on pleasure trips: Captain Strachan for salmon fishing and duck hunting to Lake St. Clair; Alfred Thompson to the Blue Mountains for hunting. He will not be the only one to work as a guide, Michel Labatte, Francis Giroux and others will guide various clients through the lands they know so well¹⁷.

The Naval and Military Establishments hire voyageurs, especially during the post’s early years. An analysis of the names listed in the *Historical Naval and Military Original Personnel*¹⁸ reveals approximately 88 names of voyageurs that are part of the staff at one time or another.

Some voyageurs and Métis perform work for the government administration. Michael Labatte, for instance, works at clearing land for the First Nations people on the site of the village of present day Waubaushene. Labatte also plants grain and potatoes at the same place and, as part of his work for the government, he equally contributes to the building of a grist mill and some houses for the First Nations people in Coldwater¹⁹.

In his writings, John Moberly notes the abundance of fish in Lake Huron²⁰. It is thus not surprising to find that the voyageurs and Métis are fishing in the area as stated by James Barry: “The Bay fishermen at first were mainly voyageurs from Penetang and Indians”²¹. The catch of these early fishermen is either sold or consumed locally. Fishery activities occupy an important place in the local economy. In one of his letters to Bishop Macdonnell, Father Amable Charest underscores its significance:

[...] the entire loss of their catch which is their sole means of supporting their missionary, force me to ask your Grace for this small contribution which is the

¹⁴ Letter by John Esons and John Baptist Tangini from Penetanguishene, in AAT, M AC 07.08

¹⁵ Elmes Henderson. “Some notes on a visit to Penetanguishene and the Georgian Bay in 1856”, in *OHSPR*, vol. 28, 1932, p. 31. Hereinafter: Henderson. “Some notes on a visit”.

¹⁶ Daniel Marchildon. *La Huronie*. Ottawa, Le Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, Pro-f-ont. 1984, p. 58, Hereinafter: Marchildon. *La Huronie*.

¹⁷ Osborne. “The Migration”, p. 132-139.

¹⁸ Huronia Historical Parks Resource Centre. *Historical Naval and Military Original Personnel*. Midland, HHPRC, 1983.

¹⁹ Osborne. “The Migration”, p. 140.

²⁰ Letter by John Moberly to the Commissioner of crown lands, July 28, 1842, in HHPRC.

²¹ James Barry. *Georgian Bay, the Sixth Great Lake*. Toronto, 1968.

only means on which I can count on for my subsistence in this poor mission²²
(our translation).

Furthermore, in 1832, many voyageurs miss the visit of Reverend M. Bennett since: “At present, all our residents are for the most part gone fishing or are off to tend to some other occupation”²³ (our translation).

Even 40 years later, in 1871, fishing is still an important occupation among the descendants of the voyageurs included in the census data for that year. At this time, eight of them own a total of thirteen boats (of which six are used for fishing), compared to four boats owned by their neighbours from Lower Canada. The volume of fish caught by them is equally greater than that of their neighbours²⁴. In summary, if the voyageurs turn to varied occupations, this would seem to indicate that farming does not allow them to maintain an adequate level of living or to take on challenges that they consider sufficiently interesting.

example, among the 35 descendants of voyageurs identified, fourteen own a total of nineteen barns and stables compared to fifteen of the eighteen habitant farmers who, collectively, own thirty-one farm buildings. As well, with the exception of a few bushels of fruit harvested by Charles Lafrenière and Antoine Labatte, and also some beets and turnips, the crop yields for the habitant farmers is quite superior to that of the voyageur descendants. For instance there are but three voyageur descendants compared to ten habitant farmers that produce more than 100 bushels of spring wheat. The habitant farmers grow more winter wheat, barley, oats, peas, beans, turnips, carrots, and hay than their neighbours²⁵.

A few individuals of the voyageur group are successful, like George Gordon, who in Penetanguishene will continue to carry on a flourishing business. But most of them are unable to work at a new trade; the Census of 1860-1861 shows 25 voyageurs listed as common labourers or handy men.

It should also be noted that, compared to the farmers with a voyageur background, who are all under 60 years of age, among the labourers at least five men that are part of the voyageur group are over the age of 60. This may be an indication that the older voyageurs, used to working in the fur trade, are having a hard time adapting to farming. Among this latter group of voyageurs, a few nevertheless, have specialized trades: Hippolyte Brissette, for example, at age 70, declares that he is a carpenter, and James Farling, at 76 years old, a blacksmith.

A few female voyageur descendants have also taken up other trades: Catherine Labatte, born on Drummond Island, is one of the four seamstresses in Penetanguishene, while two other women work outside the home, Catharine Craddock (19 years old) and Louisa Solomon (20 years old), who are employed as domestic servants (16 English speaking women and 3 men also work at this profession), while Mary Corbière is listed as a midwife.

3.3 The Services

At the same time as people adopt various occupations, a certain number of services are developed in the community of Penetanguishene. To better understand the nature of this community, let us now examine the services that exist and grow in Huronia.

3.3.1 Religious Services

²² Letter by Father Amable Charest, January 15, 1839, in AAT, M AC 16.04.

²³ Letter from Penetanguishene, November 3, 1832, in AAT, M AC 15.02.

²⁴ Canada Census, 1871.

²⁵ Canada Census, 1871.

As soon as they arrive in Penetanguishene, the Catholics (voyageurs, Métis and First Nations) make repeated requests for a church and a resident priest²⁶. In November 1829, the government gives assurances to Bishop Macdonnell that it will grant land for the construction of a church in Penetanguishene²⁷, even though, in 1831, such lands have yet to be granted since 12 Catholics present a similar request to John Colborne to obtain one acre of land for the church between the Naval Reserve and the town site²⁸. Dédin Révol, the spokesperson for the Catholics, writes to the bishop asking him to speak on their behalf to the Lieutenant Governor²⁹. In September of 1832, the government grants 200 acres to the church³⁰.

As early as 1832, the community in Penetanguishene has a chapel, a simple structure made of squared timbers, that can hold up to 200 hundred people³¹.

Even though religious activities in 1831 were limited to short visits by Fathers Collins and Bennett, in February of 1832, Father Crevier accompanies Bishop Macdonnell to Penetanguishene where the latter blesses a few marriages and holds mass in George Gordon's house³². While the community waits for a priest to be assigned to the area, the people attend prayer meetings at the church organized by Dédin Révol every Sunday³³. In 1833, when the Catholics of Penetanguishene finally welcome Father Lawrence Dempsey as their parish priest, their joy proves short-lived, since the latter dies only a few months after his arrival³⁴. On September 10, 1835, Rémi Gaulin, the coadjutor of the diocese of Kingston, opens the parish register; on that day he baptizes 31 children of various ages, ranging from 8 days to 4 years old³⁵. Father John Kegan, temporarily assigned to Penetanguishene in 1835, underscores, in a letter he writes to the diocese February 2, 1835, the poverty of his parishioners:

My arrival here was hailed with an unexpressible marks of joy and esteem. The Congregation is I am happy to find large and flourishing [...] agreeably to Your Lordship's directions I got Church wardens nominated on my arrival here. Immediately after their nomination, I told them that they represented the Catholic Congregation of Pentagshishe (sic), and In that capacity, that it was their duty to regulate and direct the temporalities of the Church, and particularly the Salary of the Incumbent. They seemed highly pleased with their newly acquired dignity, but peremptorily refused to affix their names to a formula, which I drew up, leaving thereon a blank or vacant space to mention the Sum they would volunteer to vote me. They would take no such responsibilities on themselves, said why their neighbours they said, were poor—had nothing better [?show?] Some wooden [Suggon] which they could not easily transform into money—in that case said I, resign to me the keys of the Church and every other power with which you are invested, and I will become my own paymaster, that is, I will, like the Clergy of Ireland, throw myself on the benevolence of the people to this proposition³⁶.

²⁶ Letter by William John O'Grady from York to Bishop Macdonnell, September 28, 1829, in AAT, M AB 44.09.

²⁷ Letter from York to Bishop Macdonnell, November 16, 1829, in AAT, M AB 44.12.

²⁸ Letter to Colborne from Penetanguishene, June 7, 1831, in AAT, M AC 14.10.

²⁹ Letter by Dédin Révol from Penetanguishene, February 23, 1832, in AAT, M AC 15.01.

³⁰ Letter by John Berkis to the bishop, September 11, 1832, in AAT, M AC 14.04.

³¹ Amable Charest from Penetanguishene. "A Return of the State of the Catholic Church at Penetanguishene, Upper Canada", January 31, 1839, and St. Anne's parish, brochure by the parish council, in AAT, M AC 16.05.

³² Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 89.

³³ Letter by Dédin Révol, March 5, 1833, in AAT, M AC 15.04.

³⁴ Arthur Picotte. "Laboureau, Penetang Parish had its beginning in 1827" in *The Free Press Herald*. Penetanguishene, s.d..

³⁵ St. Anne's Parish. *Along the Bay—A history of St-Ann's memorial church*. Penetanguishene, 1946, pp. 90 and 14.

³⁶ Letter by Father John Kegan, February 2, 1835, in AAT, M AB 26.01.

He nevertheless believes that he will be able to live adequately with the proceeds of the Sunday collection: “[...] this the only resource a Clergyman can have here—in case it is withdrawn there is no alternative but to leave here, nothing is derived from baptisms.” For each baptism, the priest is only paid 50 cents³⁷.

Following the latter’s departure, a new priest is assigned to the missions of Penetanguishene on October 27, 1835, that is the day that Bishop René Gaulin gives the responsibility of administering to the faithful in ten townships to Father Jean-Baptiste Proulx. This priest will manage to have a presbytery built before handing over the parish, in 1837, to Father Amable Charest who will tend to the area’s Catholics until 1854³⁸.

Amable Charest inherits a parish that is very spread out. In 1843, the Toronto diocese cautions him that: “The people that you visit must pay you; you must sense that I have not the means to have you travelling all over the District of Simcoe”³⁹ (our translation).

Moreover, Father Charest admits in a letter to Bishop de Charbonnel that it is impossible for him to carry out a census of his missions since: “To make a census of the Catholics in my mission that are so spread out, it would take me six months and more”⁴⁰ (our translation).

During the tenure of Amable Charest a brotherhood (that is not described) is formed in the mission⁴¹ as well as a church council⁴². On August 15, 1842, Bishop Power decrees that the patronal festival of the Penetanguishene mission will be held July 26th, the day of Saint Ann, and that the 3rd of December will be the festival of Saint Francis Xavier, to be celebrated in the surrounding islands⁴³.

Father Frémiot replaces Amable Charest in 1854 and begins his religious services in a church that is devoid of any furniture, and does not even contain a missal⁴⁴. He will be extremely proud of Sara Colombe when she ventures to Toronto to become “the first from Pénétangouchine to have the courage to leave her family to devote herself to God”⁴⁵ (our translation). On June 23, 1860, during a parish visit, Bishop Lynch conducts a retreat and administers the sacraments of first communion and confirmation to the parishioners. He writes that the mission is made up of:

[...] French-Canadians and Indians, Blacks, and a small number of Irish, and under the direction of the Reverend Father Canady [Kennedy] appointed by the government to serve the penitentiary located 3 miles from the village on the north side of a pretty bay [...]⁴⁶ (our translation).

There is a succession of priests: Father John P. Kennedy, in the summer of 1860, replaces Fathers Ternet, Jamot, and Lebeaudy at St. Anne’s. The new priest takes on a considerable load; in addition to his regular functions, he initiates the construction of a new church in 1861. Also, in 1860, Father Kennedy becomes the chaplain for the new reform school established in the old Naval and Military Establishments abandoned by the soldiers in 1856. The workload of the school’s chaplain steadily increases since the institution’s population goes from 60 boys, to a few hundred by 1866, the year the government opens a new stone building⁴⁷. The death of Father Kennedy in 1873 (he drowns while trying in vain to save a boy fallen from a boat)⁴⁸, pushes the government to decide that the extra work demanded of the chaplain will thereafter be paid, a decision that Premier Mowat

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 90.

³⁹ Notebook of Bishop Power, February 3, 1843, 56-57, in AAT, LB 02.065.

⁴⁰ Letter by Amable Charest to Bishop de Charbonnel, January 13, 1851, in AAT, AB 07.01.

⁴¹ Notebook of Bishop Power, August 15, 1842, p. 45, in AAT, LB 01.038.

⁴² Document about Penetanguishene in 1843, in AAT, P AB 03.01.

⁴³ Notebook of Bishop Power, August 15, 1842, p. 47, in AAT, LB 01.039.

⁴⁴ Letter by Father Frémiot, March 28, 1854, and a letter by the same priest on April 4, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.05.

⁴⁵ Part of a letter by Father Frémiot, May 15, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.11.

⁴⁶ June 23, 1860, pp. 2-4, in AAT, LB 11.

⁴⁷ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 110.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

announces to Bishop Lynch even before it is approved by his cabinet. The next chaplain receives an annual salary of 400 dollars⁴⁹. In 1904, the provincial government transforms the reform school into a psychiatric hospital which will be gradually expanded to receive up to approximately 500 patients, which it still does today.

According to the documents of the bishop, the role played by the church is nearly exclusively religious. A nascent institution in the area, it must develop little by little and, with the exception of Father Charest who spends 17 years in Huronia, the priests have a high turnover rate while the number of parishioners increases. In fact, the slow implementation of religious services reflects the state of the population which, spread out over a considerable area, grows slowly. The religious needs of this population are present, but they never seem to necessarily require the presence of priests.

3.3.2 The Methods of Transportation

If the Catholic Church finds it difficult to send priests to the Penetanguishene mission during the first half of the 19th century, it is in part due to the problems surrounding transportation in the Simcoe County area.

This Ontario county, which is located between the south shore of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, 100 kilometers to the northwest of Toronto, is not easy to access. In any newly established county, nearly all of the problems are related, at least indirectly, to transportation issues and, in this respect, Simcoe County is no exception⁵⁰.

The methods of transportation, whether they be by road, steamship or train, occupy a central place in Huronia's history. The peninsula and isthmuses of Huronia, which used to be obstacles, become corridors that the roads and railroads linking southwest and northern Ontario follow. The roads that cross the area become the catalysts of development and this development in turn leads to the creation of secondary roads. In order to make the region more accessible, the government first decides to survey all of the townships of Simcoe County (with the exception of Nottawasaga, Sunnidale and Matchedash)⁵¹.

Prior to the War of 1812, only a few surveys had been done in Upper Canada⁵². Although Samuel Wilmot had already conducted a survey of the land between Kempenfeldt Bay and Penetanguishene, the ceding of First Nations lands, on October 17, 1818, pushes the government to establish townships with an eye to settlement and, thus, from 1826 to 1835, nearly all the townships are surveyed. Some surveyors receive payment in the form of land grants, as in the case of John Goessman, who conducts the survey of Tiny Township (1821-1822), and is given 4,320 acres of land by the government⁵³.

When the voyageurs arrive in Huronia, the only roads of any importance in the County are Yonge Street and the Penetanguishene Road. At that time, the best road, the Penetanguishene Road, is but: "[...] little more than a track hacked through the forest and most suitable for travel on foot or horseback"⁵⁴. In November of 1814, opening the Penetanguishene Road, which runs a distance of 46 kilometers between Barrie and Penetanguishene, required three weeks of work by a group of soldiers and military engineers totalling 200 men⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Letter by Mowat to Bishop Lynch, July 3, 1873, in AAT, L AE 12.35.

⁵⁰ Emily Poynton Weaver. The story of the Counties of Ontario. Toronto, 1913, p. 78. Hereinafter: Weaver. The story.

⁵¹ Allison Burbidge. The changing role of transportation in Simcoe County from 1800-1866—an historical geography. Master's thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton, 1961, pp. 1, 2, 33 and 104. Hereinafter: Burbidge. The changing role of transportation.

⁵² Weaver. The story, p. 77.

⁵³ Andrew Hunter. The History of Simcoe County. Toronto, Ryerson Press, The Historical Committee of Simcoe County, 1909. pp. 39-41. Hereinafter: Hunter. The History of Simcoe County.

⁵⁴ Burbidge. The changing role of transportation, p. 34.

⁵⁵ George Laidler. "The Nottawasaga Portage, Simcoe County Ontario", in OHSPR, 35, 1943. p. 41.

A resident of Penetanguishene describes the journey from York to Penetanguishene in 1828 in the following way:

The communication to Penetanguishene consists of good land carriage from York to the Holland Landing, a distance of about 30 miles, from thence to Kempenfeldt Bay, across Lake Simcoe the water transport is about 30 miles and from thence to Penetanguishene the Land Transport is about 38 miles but not open to wheeled carriages; this road has a few settlers upon it and the nearest settler lives about 3 miles from the Post of Penetanguishene. The Roads however are easy of improvement [...] Troops now may march from York to Penetanguishene in six days but the conveyance of Baggage would be difficult⁵⁶.

It will take a bit more time before the government realizes that the success of farming and commerce in the area is contingent on the opening of good roads. Thus, on March 4, 1837, the government grants the sum of 100,000 pounds for the macadamization of Yonge Street and other roads in the Home district⁵⁷. However, in 1843, the year in which it is established, the District of Simcoe Council complains to the legislature. Even if the Municipal Act gives it the responsibility of repairing the roads and bridges within the district, the council does not have the necessary means to fulfill this role. It does not want to increase the taxes of the residents of the County who are already paying taxes above an acceptable level. In January 1850, the County council places the maintenance of local roads in the hands of the municipal councils while maintaining the responsibility for County roads. The Upper Canada Municipal Act of 1866, revives the arrangement of 1850⁵⁸, but the state of the roads improves only slightly, perhaps because the population remains too sparse to justify the high cost of road maintenance.

The Penetanguishene Road remains one of the main roadways in the area (see Map 5) and it even influences how the other roads and the larger lots are oriented. In the 8 townships in the northern part of the County (Tiny, Tay, Flos, Medonte, Vespra, Oro, Matchedash, and Orillia) (see Map 6), most of the roads follow the same northwest and southeast axis as the Penetanguishene Road. Furthermore, in these same townships, the dimensions of the lots are greater in length than they are in width in order to ensure that the part of the lot that abuts the road, and that the owner must plow in winter, is not too long. Lastly, it can be noted that the lines of the townships and the Penetanguishene Road form a right angle⁵⁹.

Because the improvement of the County roads is so slow, it will take some time before a public transportation network is established. *The Barrie Magnet* in its edition dated August 6, 1847, publishes this announcement of a new stagecoach service between Barrie and Penetanguishene:

We beg to draw the attention of the travelling community to the advertisement of Mr. J. Morrison, announcing the commencement of a new line of stages between Barrie and Penetanguishene. From the growing importance of this route, the establishment of such a line has been hitherto much required, and we trust Mr. Morrison will receive that encouragement which so useful an enterprise deserves⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ Ross Bartlett. *Garrison-community relations*. Midland, 1980. Hereinafter: Bartlett. *Garrison-community*.

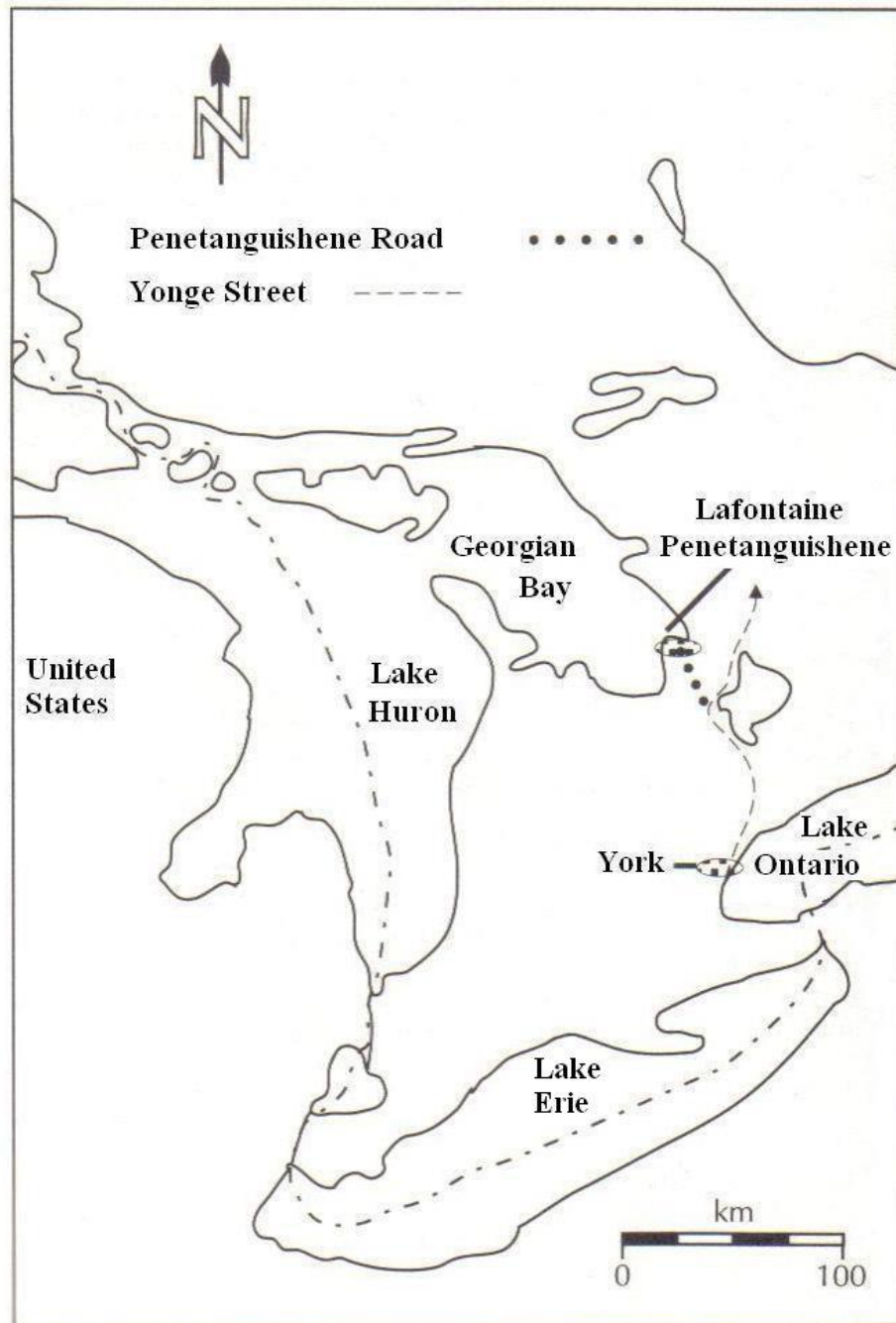
⁵⁷ Olga Bishop. *Publications of the Province of Upper Canada and of Great Britain*. Toronto, Government of Ontario, 1984, pp. 220-221.

⁵⁸ Hunter. *The history of Simcoe County*, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁹ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ Hunter. *The history of Simcoe County*, p.147.

Map 5: Major roads in 1828



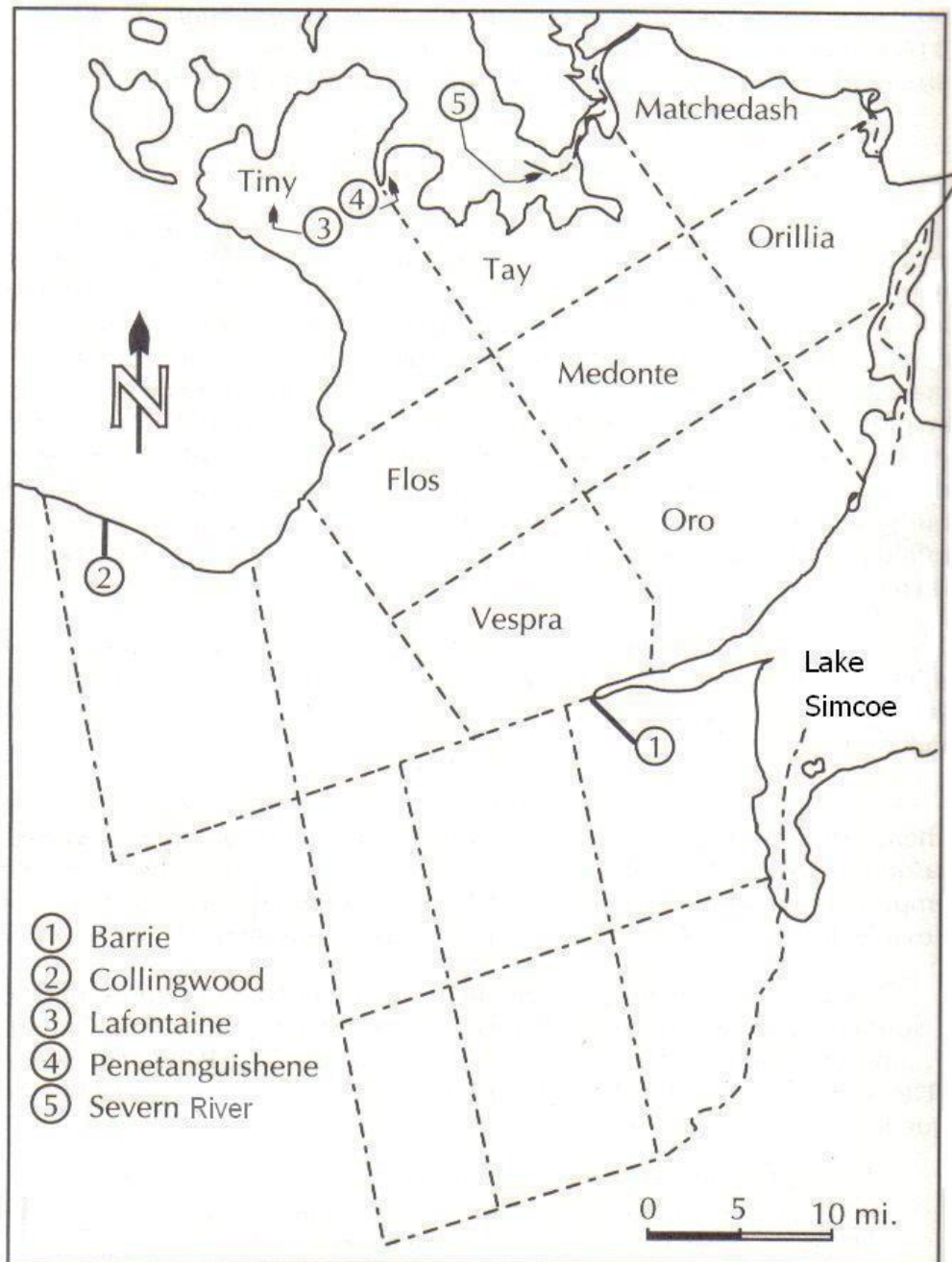
Nevertheless, this service could not claim the title of being the first of its kind in the area. There was already, in the 1830s, a regular (daily) stagecoach service between York and Holland Landing, at the southern tip of Lake Simcoe⁶¹. This road fraught with hazards nonetheless offered rest stations since, between York and Kempenfeldt Bay, there were no less than 68 licensed houses (an average of one per mile) as well as another 8 to 10 hotels without liquor licenses. According to Andrew Hunter, there were 63 taverns along this road and, at one point, up to 37 taverns along the 56 kilometers of road between Barrie and Penetanguishene⁶². It should come as

⁶¹ W. L. Smith. *The Pioneers of Old Ontario*. Toronto, 1923, p. 88. Hereinafter: Smith. *The Pioneers*, Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 54, and Hunter. *The history of Simcoe County*, p. 142.

⁶² Hunter. *The history of Simcoe County*, p. 145.

no surprise then that, a few decades later, the tavern owners would voice their opposition to the coming of the railroad.

Map 6: The Townships in northern Simcoe County



The arrival of steamships on Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay makes water transportation all the more important until the advent of the railroad. Starting in 1832, steamships begin plying the waters of Lake Simcoe three times per week⁶³.

Further north, the Coldwater Road rivals the Penetanguishene Road in terms of importance. The steamboats transport passengers to the Narrows (Orillia) where they disembark to travel by

⁶³ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 64.

land up to Coldwater, where another boat then carries them along the Coldwater River to Georgian Bay⁶⁴.

In 1832, the *Penetanguishene*, the first steamship built on Georgian Bay, in Penetanguishene by a Toronto businessman, Charles Thompson, starts to offer daily shuttle service between Penetanguishene and the village of Coldwater⁶⁵. The *Montreal Gazette* of September 23, 1834 writes that the *Penetanguishene* is:

[...] neatly built and though not entirely finished contains excellent accommodation there being eight berths in the gentlemen's and seven in the ladies' cabin, with the means of adding more if required⁶⁶.

However, this boat, poorly suited to meeting the real needs of the residents of the Georgian Bay area, doesn't do enough business to stay afloat and the *Penetanguishene* is soon removed from service⁶⁷.

In fact, boat transportation is not always reliable; the transportation of livestock, for instance, requires land transport. As well, boat service is often limited to within a specific area, like Penetanguishene. Although one can travel by small steamboat to Collingwood, service between Penetanguishene and Collingwood remains irregular. For this reason, many will prefer to make the trip by sailboat and especially by "*mackinaw*" (a small flat bottom boat), or by canoe⁶⁸. The demand for the latter type of vessel even generates a special order: using a First Nations canoe as a model, Toussaint Boucher, a tinsmith that is part of the voyageur group, builds a large canoe with sheet metal imported from Russia. This boat, 7.2 meters long, is ordered by Father Jean-Baptiste Proulx, and has enough space to seat 16 paddlers and 6 passengers⁶⁹.

Local historians deduce, no doubt correctly, that the new settlers arrived by land, since the cost of boat travel remains expensive. J. H. Coyne gives a detailed description of the passengers he meets during his trip aboard the *Chicora* in 1871. He mentions the presence of a member of the provincial legislature, a rich American who wants to buy the *Chicora*, and a Scot. He adds that:

The rest of our company consists of lawyers and merchants with their families, seeking to escape the heat of midsummer, young ladies who are no doubt supposed at home to be "off to the seaside", young gentlemen who are up here because they have nothing else to do⁷⁰.

The settlers going to Huronia have neither the time nor the means to travel in this manner.

In 1836, a group of 29 Torontonians puts up 1,500 pounds to study the feasibility of building a rail link between Penetanguishene and Toronto⁷¹. Between this time and the actual construction of a railway to service the area, 18 years will pass. However, this railway will not go to Penetanguishene but to Collingwood. What a disappointment for the residents of Penetanguishene! Even the parish priest, Father Charest, was impatiently awaiting the arrival of this new link with the outside world: "The fact that my mission in on the verge of being improved by the arrival of the railroad encourages me to stay on for a bit longer"⁷² (our translation).

⁶⁴ Bartlett. *Garrison-community*.

⁶⁵ John and Carole Gerow. *This was yesterday, a pictorial history of Penetanguishene*. Midland, 1982, p. 35. Hereinafter: Bayfield. *This was yesterday*.

⁶⁶ Hamil. "An early settlement on St. Joseph Island", p. 252 (article in the *Montreal Gazette*, September 23, 1834).

⁶⁷ James Barry. "The first Georgian Bay Steamers" in *Inland Seas*, 1967, p. 192.

⁶⁸ Henderson. "Some notes on a visit", p. 31.

⁶⁹ Osborne. "The Migration", p. 134.

⁷⁰ J. C. Hamil. "Across Georgian Bay in 1887" in *OHSPR*, 28, 1932, p. 25.

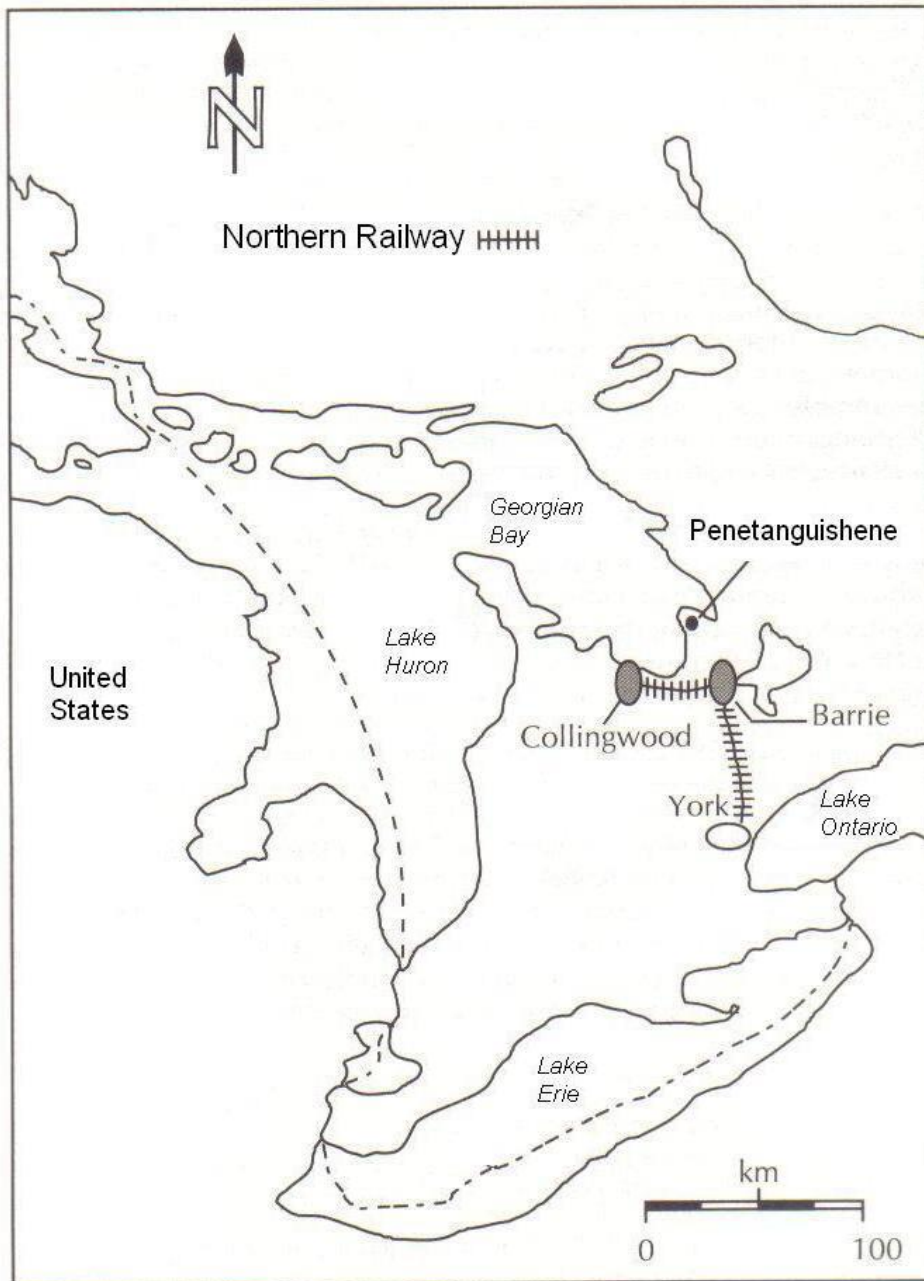
⁷¹ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 57.

⁷² Letter by Amable Charest to Bishop de Charbonnel, January 13, 1851, in AAT, AB 07.01.

As a result, Penetanguishene will only be serviced by train later, in 1879, when the *Northern Railway* is extended from Barrie to Penetanguishene.

The rail spur from Aurora to Bradford and Barrie, completed in 1853, is not extended from Barrie to Collingwood until 1855. However, *The Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway*, one of the first railroads in Upper Canada to offer passenger and freight services, is so riddled with debt that it is seized by the government in 1854, and then becomes the *Northern Railway Company* up until 1888, when it is absorbed by the Grand Trunk⁷³ (see Map 7).

Map 7: Northern Railway (1854)



The arrival of the *Northern* reduces the status of Penetanguishene to that of a simple transit station. Nevertheless, it contributes to opening up the area north of Toronto and creating a link between ports on Lakes Huron and Michigan. Up until the completion of the Canadian Pacific, the

⁷³ Hunter. *The History of Simcoe County*, pp. 169, 176 and 188.

Northern links the land and sea routes between Western and Eastern Canada, while also helping to transport local products to outside markets⁷⁴. The *Northern* also favours the opening of the American Mid-West market since the logs it transports to Collingwood are loaded on boats that sail to Chicago and then return loaded with grain⁷⁵.

People who want to travel between Toronto and Huronia must use two means of transportation in succession: the railway from Toronto to Barrie and the Penetanguishene Road from Barrie on. Elmes Henderson recounts his excursion from Toronto to Penetanguishene in 1856:

In Joe's cab we drove to the station of the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway, then on Front Street near Bay Street, and travelled by the slow 7 o'clock morning train as far as Allandale, then by bus into Barrie. After dinner at the Queen's Hotel we took our seats in an open stage waggon with a team of horses and drove along the Penetanguishene Rd, which began at first at Shanty Bay and was originally made by the Government during the War of 1812 as a military way to the naval station at Penetanguishene. It was in 1856 a much travelled road, but without any attempt at macadamizing or planking, — really just a country road, in many parts in heavy sand⁷⁶.

3.3.3 The postal service

The opening up of the roads is followed closely by the establishment of a mail service. Prior to this, mail is delivered privately by individuals. For instance, in 1814, George Gordon receives a letter and newspapers sent to him by F. Fisher, from Montreal, by way of a Mr. Johnston⁷⁷. Gordon was in the habit of writing his letters on a paper that he would then fold in the form of an envelope and seal with stamped wax and an improvised monogram, the letter then being expedited by "Indian express", that is to say through a person travelling to the intended destination of the letter, and not by way of an official letter carrier⁷⁸. This practice is discontinued when the first post office north of Newmarket opens in Penetanguishene in 1830⁷⁹. Captain James Mathew Hamilton becomes the first postmaster⁸⁰.

Prior to 1837, men travelling on foot or by horse ensure the delivery of mail for a fee of four and a half pence for a letter mailed from Toronto to Barrie⁸¹. The service seems to operate fairly efficiently: Dédin Révol (in Montreal) writes, on February 18, 1834, a reply to a letter by George Gordon (from Penetanguishene) dated January 27, 1834. This would indicate that Gordon's letter therefore took less than 23 days to arrive⁸². Such a delivery time does not seem to be unusual: Dédin Révol also receives a letter by George Gordon from Penetanguishene that arrives in Montreal in 15 days; Gordon receives in 12 days a letter sent to him from Chambly (Quebec)⁸³.

However, to send mail to Europe, it is faster to post it via the United States. On two occasions, Fulford B. Fielde of Penetanguishene advises his mother that the best way to send a letter to Penetanguishene would be, according to a post office worker in Toronto, by way of Le Havre and

⁷⁴ G. P. Glazebrook. *A history of transportation in Canada*. Toronto, 1964, pp. 158 and 170.

⁷⁵ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ Henderson. "Some notes on a visit".

⁷⁷ Copy of a letter by Fisher to Gordon, September 15, 1814, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 14.

⁷⁸ Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene", p. 45.

⁷⁹ Smith. *The Pioneers*, p. 98.

⁸⁰ Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene", p. 59.

⁸¹ Weaver. *The story*, p. 78.

⁸² Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, February 18, 1834, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 14.

⁸³ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, July 12, 1834, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 7.

New York. He specifies, regarding his postal address: “Penetanguishene—Upper Canada, the place is well known now”⁸⁴.

Up until 1856, brothers Ned and Miles McDonald ensure mail delivery each week by taking their turn to walk to Holland Landing. Francis Dusome will succeed them, but on horseback and, after 1856, mail is finally delivered by stagecoach⁸⁵. According to Frederick Lennox Ingall of the Naval and Military Establishments, the mail arrived from Toronto every Friday and outgoing mail would depart on the following Monday⁸⁶. Prior to 1850, Simcoe County had 13 post offices⁸⁷. In summary, an efficient mail service requires a regular, daily stage coach service, and, in the case of North Simcoe, such a service will only be established in 1856⁸⁸.

3.3.4 Education

In addition to transportation and postal infrastructures, educational institutions are also a key component for the development of a community. In this respect, the Penetanguishene area lags behind considerably. As early as 1831, in an article published in the *Colonial Advocate* on September 22nd of that year, William Lyon Mackenzie decries the lack of public education in the entire Home District, writing that:

[...] in the most populous country townships in the Home District there is not at this time of year more than one school of ten scholars, although the number of persons between six and sixteen is over 600!!⁸⁹

Antoine Lacourse had nevertheless established a Catholic school in Penetanguishene in 1833. The school board trustees allude to Mr. Lacourse’s teaching to 26 pupils, and trustees James Farling, Louis Corbeau, and George Gordon (all three of the voyageur group) request the government’s help for the school⁹⁰. However, it would seem that the school closed shortly afterwards since, in 1839, Father Amable Charest recognizes that educational services are largely inadequate throughout the area even though he acknowledges that the residents are too poor to pay a teacher’s salary⁹¹.

In 1835, in the town of Chambly, in Quebec, Dédin Révol tries to offer a college education to a few young boys sent to him from Penetanguishene, but these students don’t fit in well. Révol writes about this experience that:

Louis fears leaving his woods and prefers to [vegetate] all his life as an independent man. Pierre probably thought that I was going to have him sent here to live with a cane in hand, or to make his fortune, he was in error, I cannot [...]

I had thought that some of the young people from Penitenguichine and in particular Giroux junior and Louis Langlade would have been flattered to have a

⁸⁴ Letter by Fulford Fielde to his mother in Penetanguishene, July 1, 1834, and March 24, 1835. Fielde Fonds. Private collection of the Fielde family: letters number 29 and 30, in HHPRC.

⁸⁵ Richard Leroux. The Industrial Development of Penetanguishene. Research project for the Municipality of Penetanguishene, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Ingalls Fonds.

⁸⁷ W. Fieguth. The personality of North-Simcoe County, a study in historical geography. Ph. D. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, London, 1968, 19.

⁸⁸ Henderson. “Some notes on a visit”, pp. 30-34.

⁸⁹ R. D. Gidney. “Elementary education in Upper Canada: A reassessment” in Ontario History, vol. 45, September 1973, p. 179.

⁹⁰ Letter by the Penetanguishene school trustees, August 18, 1833, in AAT, M AC 16.02.

⁹¹ A return of the state of the Catholic Church at Penetanguishene, January 31, 1839, in AAT, M AC 16.05.

position in a house and, all the while earning wages, give themselves an education which is often useful for acquiring financial means⁹² (our translation).

In summary, formal education seems ill-suited to the needs of the sons of the Métis and voyageurs accustomed to a much less structured type of learning.

Thomas Hodgetts, a soldier stationed at the Establishments, notes in 1851 that Penetanguishene is not a suitable place for a couple hoping to raise a family since: “There is no school and very little society”⁹³. Four years later, William Sanders also deplors the absence of any school, French or English⁹⁴. Yet, in 1848, the Simcoe District Council offers free land for a public school (*School Section #11*) in Penetanguishene that is to serve the townships of Tay and Tiny. When this school opens, it welcomes 49 pupils, of which four are anglophones. This school will be replaced in 1874⁹⁵.

School attendance, from all appearances, seems to rise since, during the 1860-1861 Census, 5 men (two of which are Catholics) under the age of 41 declare their profession to be teacher, that is: Robert White (41 years old) born on Manitoulin Island, Louis Lebissonair (21 years old) from Canada East, and three others that come from the British Isles.

3.3.5 Businesses and other Services

In contrast to public education, businesses in the area develop much more quickly. Andrew Mitchell, the Métis son of Elizabeth Mitchell of Mackinac Island, opens the first store in Penetanguishene⁹⁶ and others emulate him soon after. In 1846, the *Smith's Canadian Gazetteer* lists four stores⁹⁷, a fact corroborated by William Sanders in 1855⁹⁸. As well, the *Gazetteer* also mentions the presence of a grist mill, two saw mills, a blacksmith, a tinsmith, two tailors, two shoemakers, and one tavern⁹⁹.

The naval and military forces contribute to the survival of these businesses and their presence attracts a bank, the only one in the County, which facilitates the circulation of money from the soldiers' payroll and the military pensioners¹⁰⁰. *The Province of Ontario—Gazetteer and Directory* mentions the existence of this same bank in 1869¹⁰¹. The presence of the military also contributes to the establishment of two local taverns, one owned by Jeffery, in the village of Penetanguishene, and the other by Wallace, on the military reserve, near the barracks¹⁰².

The local population also takes advantage of the other specialized services. The 1860-1861 Census lists a butcher, a clock and watchmaker, a coach builder, a doctor, three shoemakers, one mechanic, three millers, one pharmacist, one blacksmith, and a few coopers¹⁰³.

The isolation and the number of people living in the area account for the presence of the services mentioned in Penetanguishene. As early as 1825, Penetanguishene is considered one of the

⁹² Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, March 28, 1835, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 17.

⁹³ Letter July 18, 1851, Hodgetts Fonds.

⁹⁴ William Sanders. “A letter from Penetang in 1855” in *OHSPR*, 40, p. 9. Hereinafter: Sanders. “A letter from Penetang”.

⁹⁵ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 156.

⁹⁶ Nick Mika and Helma Mika. *Places in Ontario*. Belleville, 1983, p.188.

⁹⁷ William Smith. *Smith's Canadian Gazetteer*, Toronto, 1846, p. 144.

⁹⁸ Sanders. “A letter from Penetang”, p. 9.

⁹⁹ Barrie Magnet. “Rise and Progress of Penetanguishene” (article published January 15, 1851, and quoted by Ross Bartlett in *Garrison-community relations*).

¹⁰⁰ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 69.

¹⁰¹ H. McEvoy. *The Province of Ontario Gazetteer and directory*. Toronto: Ryerson, Robertson and Cook Publishers, 1869, p. 594.

¹⁰² R. H. Bonnycastle. *The Canadas in 1841*, vol. 1. London, 1841, (quoted by Ross Bartlett in *Garrison-community relations*), p. 290.

¹⁰³ Stella Gianetto (director). *1860-1861. Population of the Canadas for the Townships of Tay and Tiny*. County of Simcoe. Midland, 1983.

three most important centers in the County (along with Holland Landing and Kempenfeldt Bay)¹⁰⁴, mainly due to the presence of the naval forces. According to Ingall, Penetanguishene develops more slowly than other communities¹⁰⁵ even if, in 1866, the village is one of five places in the County with a population of 1,000 or more, the others being Barrie, Collingwood, Orillia, and Bradford¹⁰⁶. Penetanguishene will finally be incorporated into a town in June 1875¹⁰⁷.

3.4 Social Behaviour

To add the finishing strokes to this portrait of the physical and social environment of the Métis and voyageurs of the Penetanguishene area, let us now examine certain of the characteristics that define their personality.

If the voyageurs and Métis prove loyal to the British government it is motivated by self-interest. Control of the fur trade posts is one of the main issues of the War of 1812¹⁰⁸, and thus it comes as no surprise that the Michillimackinac Company takes an active part in the conflict. For the *Michigan Fencibles* of the Mackinac Island area, one of the militia groups raised in the fur trade region (the other is called the *Mississippi Volunteers* of Green Bay), liberating the forts, which they believe necessary to the smooth operation of the fur trade, becomes an important objective. The militias first capture Fort Mackinac, and then Detroit, and hold the forts along the south of the Great Lakes until the end of the war¹⁰⁹. Their in-depth knowledge of the territory proves quite useful to the British.

Even later when, after the War, they will see all of the territory taken from the Americans returned to the enemy, the Métis and voyageurs will exhibit no bitterness towards the British. Despite their vested interest in defending their trade, they show their loyalty to the British crown by leaving Mackinac Island; they could have remained on Mackinac Island and attempted to integrate the American market, as did, for instance, Elizabeth Bertrand-Mitchell.

Some of these voyageurs again prove their loyalty during the Rebellion of 1837. Several French-Canadians from Penetanguishene travel by foot to York to help the government troops, but arrive too late to take part in the battle. Undaunted, they then set out to chase the rebels, going around the Great Lakes via Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie, Mackinac Island, Sarnia, and York, without capturing any rebels¹¹⁰.

During this period, the parish priest, Patrick McDonough, writes to his bishop that he is unable to conduct an accurate census since, for the last four months, a squadron of his parishioners, in service to the army, has been travelling about the province¹¹¹.

The voyageur's defining feature remains his adventurous nature. Joseph-Charles Taché describes the voyageur in these terms:

[...] a man of an adventurous nature, ready for anything, and able to be either all at the same time or in succession, explorer, interpreter, lumberjack, settler, hunter, fisherman, sailor, warrior¹¹² (our translation).

Elizabeth Mason offers a similar view: “[...] with few exceptions they were unschooled and almost uncultured, absorbed by the wild conditions of the wilderness which they loved too

¹⁰⁴ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁵ Ingalls Fonds, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ Bayfield. *This was yesterday*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Grace Lee Nute. *The Voyageur*, St. Paul, 1955, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Mason. Summary of a conference.

¹¹⁰ Osborne. “The Migration”, p. 143.

¹¹¹ Letter by Patrick McDonough, April 6, 1838, in AAT, M AB 31.11.

¹¹² Joseph-Charles Taché, *Forestiers et Voyageurs*. Fides, 1981, p. 13.

much”¹¹³. It will be, in effect, their real passion for their new environment that will lead these voyageurs to adopt a lifestyle, along with another culture, to the detriment of their French culture.

No doubt they love and understand nature, and can overcome the obstacles it puts in their path. Several of them boast of exploits that are quite exceptional: Hippolyte Brissette, for example, who crosses the Rocky Mountains on foot,¹¹⁴ and Michael Labatte who, for his part, tells the tale of his adventures during his travels between Penetanguishene and Sault Ste. Marie, where he delivered the mail:

I carried the mail to the “Sault” in winter on snow-shoes. I made the trip from Penetanguishene to the “Sault” and back (three hundred miles) with a sleigh and two dogs in fifteen days—snow three feet deep. I once made the trip in fourteen days. Dig a hole in the snow with my snow-shoes, spread spruce boughs, eat piece of cold pork, smoke pipe and go to sleep. I often had *mal de raquette*. I would sharpen my flint, then split the flesh of the ankle above the instep in several places, and sometimes down the calf of the leg for a remedy¹¹⁵.

During the same interview with A. C. Osborne, Michael Labatte also recounts how, on two occasions, flooding in the Shawanaga country forced him, one time, to go four days, and another time five days, without food because his “cache” was at the mouth of the river¹¹⁶.

The voyageurs and Métis of Penetanguishene will attempt to adapt to their new environment, but farming the land is something they are not familiar with. As well, many leave the area in search of employment that offers them more freedom¹¹⁷. The 1871 Census shows that one eighth of the population of Sunnidale Township (in the southwest of Simcoe County) has voyageur roots. However, even those that move to Sunnidale Township do not remain there for long, since in 1920, none of these voyageur names are on the list of landowners in Sunnidale¹¹⁸.

Nevertheless, many are happy to remain in Penetanguishene since the 1860-1861 Census shows that, of 234 individuals listed as the head of a family, 54 are of voyageur origin.

There is a dearth of documents regarding the demographics and the behaviour of the local population. However, certain facts can be ascertained. For instance, according to *Les Premiers Canadiens français*, a document written by a parish priest in Penetanguishene, the baptism of Édouard Rousseau, the son of fur-trader Jean-Baptiste and Julie Lamorandière, is the first to be registered¹¹⁹. There were also 32 entries in the baptismal register between September 10 and 12, 1835, during the visit of Bishop Rémi Gaulin¹²⁰. We can suggest two hypotheses to explain this high number of baptisms: on the one hand, they show that there has been a long period of time since the last visit by a priest; on the other, they could point to the fact that the parents are in no hurry to have their children baptized. The age of the children baptized is not given in the register, which is unfortunate since it would have allowed further analysis of this phenomenon.

In the beginning, the Penetanguishene parish does not have a cemetery and the dead are often buried in private graves. Mrs. Sicard will be the first person buried in the cemetery of St. Anne’s church¹²¹.

On the subject of marriages, luckily, church archives contain a more abundant correspondence since the parish priests often request dispensations in order to marry their parishioners. On many occasions, voyageurs enter into marriages “à la façon du pays” or country

¹¹³ Mason. “The Michillimackinac Company”, p. 256.

¹¹⁴ Osborne. “Old Penetanguishene, p. 163.

¹¹⁵ Osborne. “The Migration”, pp. 139-140.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹¹⁷ Mason. Summary of a speech.

¹¹⁸ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ Sainte-Anne’s parish. *Premiers Canadiens français*. Penetanguishene, s.d.

¹²⁰ J. S. McGivern. “Building a church at Penetang”, in *The Catholic Register*, March 17, 1978. pp. 6-7.

¹²¹ Osborne. “The Migration”, p. 126.

marriages, and some priests refuse to accept this situation. Father Proulx writes to Bishop Michael Power regarding this issue and receives the following advice:

This Canadian was probably married in the eyes of God and the Church to the Indian woman despite the fact that they were not at that time able to go before a priest. If he took her as his wife and she was baptized, the marriage must be considered valid. Whether it was or wasn't, it is impossible to give him a dispensation to allow him to marry the niece of the departed. They must be separated: if they refuse you will admonish them to no longer take part in any ecclesiastical ceremonies, and after their death, unless they part beforehand and repair the scandal they have caused as much as they can in the time they have, you will not give to either of them a church burial¹²² (our translation).

The correspondence between the priests posted in Huronia and the diocese often touches on issues relating to marriages. This correspondence clearly illustrates the effect that adhering to new societal conventions is having on the voyageurs. Generally speaking, most of the Métis and voyageur that have previously contracted country marriages eventually have their union blessed in a religious ceremony in order to conform to the new social codes. In their eyes, this merely constitutes a blessing and not an admission of the inadequacy of their country marriages¹²³.

Even if they try to adhere to these new social conventions, there are cases where they act as they please. Louis Deschenaux and Pierre Oger, for example, are said to have swapped wives. In 1832, Deschenaux marries a woman called Lajoie, Pierre Oger's former wife, while the latter marries Josepthe Lagacée, Deschenaux's former county wife¹²⁴.

Father John Kegan reports the case of a young Canadian asking to be separated from his First Nation wife. He had legally married this First Nation woman the year before, but not only had he never lived with her, the woman, by their mutual admissions, was bearing the child of another man¹²⁵.

The priests are therefore often obliged to consult their bishop if they don't want to risk having their decisions overturned, such as in the following case where Bishop Power writes to Father Jean-Baptiste Proulx:

The marriage you have celebrated between the Métis and the Indian woman whose sister he has known [...] is invalidated and annulled: and they knew that you did not have the power to marry them by granting them their dispensation, and they have now fallen ipso facto into a state of excommunication¹²⁶ (our translation).

These letters also reveal certain prejudices. In the following excerpt, Father John P. Kennedy feels the need to indicate, regarding the Métis couple their *halfbreed* origins as if this fact explains, in part, their behaviour:

You will oblige me by directing me what satisfaction to require of a young man and young woman (both halfbreeds), who went to a place called Muskoka about 20 miles north of this place and lived together for about 10 or 12 days—the people there taking them to be man and wife—I sent the young woman back to this place

¹²² Bishop Power notebook, February 3, 1843, pp. 56-57, AAT, LB 02.065.

¹²³ Sylvia Van Kirk. "The Custom of the country: An examination of fur trade marriage practices" in Canadian Historical Association Report. Toronto, 1974.

¹²⁴ Marchildon. La Huronie, pp. 57-58.

¹²⁵ Letter by John Kegan, February 2, 1835, in AAT, M AB 26.01.

¹²⁶ Bishop Power notebook, February 3, 1843, p. 56-57, in AAT, LB 02.065.

where she is waiting to be married when I shall have obtained one of the above dispensations¹²⁷.

The priests often allow exceptions to the rules since they fear that their parishioners, if they get an unsatisfactory answer, will simply get married before a minister: “[...] they might commit a greater evil by going before a heretical preacher”¹²⁸.

On several occasions, in their letters the priests ask for dispensations, sometimes even including money to pay for them¹²⁹. In one particularly well documented case, Olive Giraud, the wife of Antoine Letard dit Saint-Onges, asks that her marriage be annulled. Since she has been living for several years with Alexis Beausoleil (a voyageur), the couple claim that they are in a valid marriage and, as a result of pressures being put on them, they have decided to request the annulment of Olive’s first marriage. They even present evidence supporting their request, as well as the testimonies of four individuals to prove that the marriage in question should be considered void. Father Frémiot, who pleads in favour of this new union, adds the testimonies in his letter to the bishop¹³⁰.

The voyageurs and Métis prefer to marry either women from other voyageur families or francophone and anglophone women from elsewhere than the Lafontaine habitant farmer community. A study of the Marriage Registry for the area, published by the *Société franco-ontarienne d’histoire et de généalogie* (Franco-Ontarian historical and genealogical Society), and beginning in 1835, shows that the children of voyageurs mix very little with the people of Lafontaine. Prior to 1870, 32 sons of voyageurs marry daughters of voyageurs, 16 choose francophones from outside of the community of Lafontaine, three others marry anglophones, and only four women from Lafontaine, despite it being one of the closest communities. This trend continues through to 1900 when, of a total of 68 voyageurs, only two marry women from Lafontaine, and four others anglophone women. Twenty-five voyageurs marry women that are voyageur descendants while 37 marriages involve voyageur descendants, with francophone women from outside the area (see Appendix B).

What stands in the way of unions between the members of the voyageur and habitant groups, who, after all, share a common language? Although it cannot be stated with certainty, the most probable cause is likely the cultural incompatibility between the habitants and the voyageurs. The former group in particular, have a tendency to keep to themselves and even to look upon each other with a lack of trust, as we will see in the next chapter when we examine the social behaviour of the habitant families of Lafontaine.

In 1863, Father John Kennedy sends a spiritual summary for the years 1860, 1861, and 1862 to Bishop Lynch¹³¹. In this report, he indicates a rise in the number of baptisms and marriages, but nearly no mortalities, a sign of a fairly young population. The children of the original voyageur and Métis settlers gradually adapt to the religious marriage conventions since, during these three years, there are no mixed marriages or requests for dispensations for marriages between closely related spouses. However, the priest does point a finger at 16 *hardened sinners* (see Appendix C).

Let us now consider another of the group’s features, its sense of community. The voyageurs have known each other for a long time, and that there should exist among them a sense of duty to help each other out, despite their individualistic nature, comes as no surprise. They come together, for instance, to lobby the government for their rights and, during a crisis, they help those in need. When, for example, Joseph Giroux becomes lost on the way to Thunder Bay Beach where he is

¹²⁷ Letter by Father Kennedy, October 15, 1867, in AAT, L AH 12.11.

¹²⁸ Letter dated August 10, 1869, in AAT, L AH 12.17.

¹²⁹ Letter by Father Kennedy, October 15, 1867, in AAT, L AH 12.11; Letter by Father Amable Charest, March 15, 1853, in AAT, AB 09.06; Letter by Father Kennedy, August 7, 1867, in AAT, L AH 12.09; and Letter by Father Kennedy, August 10, 1869, in AAT, L AH 12.17.

¹³⁰ Letter by Father Frémiot, May 15, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.11.

¹³¹ Letter by Father Kennedy, April 20, 1863, in AAT, AH 08.05.

bringing supplies to his son, Camille, in the middle of winter, several members of the community form search parties to look for him. Giroux is found three days later and will lose both his hands and feet that have to be amputated¹³².

Important events also bring them together. During his visit, Bishop Lynch is welcomed at the entrance to the church by the entire population who “had assembled there and mounted branches in an arch of triumph”¹³³ (our translation).

Seldom do anglophones mention the voyageurs after their arrival in Penetanguishene; perhaps they have less regard for them because they no longer occupy the fundamental economic place that they held in the fur trade. Some anglophones surely accept the “Métis” but others don’t hide their prejudices, including William Sanders who writes on the subject of this population:

We have the wild savage indians with rings in their ears and noses, feathers on their head and their faces painted and the half breeds—that is half french and half indian. French men have married squaws and Indians have married french women, all mixed up in glorious confusion, and speaking either french or Indian. Very seldom I hear the English language except two men on my own staff. Even the English speak french in common. I never was in such a place in my life, and if I live to get to Barrie again, hope I never shall be in such a place again¹³⁴.

The priests, despite certain prejudices, have pity on their parishioners. In their correspondence, they often mention the poverty of the members of their flock and their lack of money to pay for dispensations. These documents also reveal the fathers’ keen interest in “saving the souls” of their parishioners that they believe in danger.

Father Frémot, a typical example of the priest seeking to deliver people from their sins, worries about the salvation of a man living with a married woman. He writes about them that:

However shameful be such enquiries, they never cease to have a fatal influence on unthinking minds. Nevertheless, the devil is suffering losses, and these console us amply of our own¹³⁵ (our translation).

He speaks in favour of the annulment of Olive Giraud’s marriage since this act: “[...] would save two unfortunate souls who, otherwise, run all the risks of eternal damnation”¹³⁶ (our translation).

The poverty of the voyageurs and their descendants prevents them from supporting the Church materially. Thus, from the start in 1832, the parishioners although well intentioned are unable to pay to support a priest. The priest writes to his bishop:

To ask money of the vast majority of the inhabitants, despite all the goodwill that I know they possess, and their desire to have a priest living among them, would be utterly impossible for the reason that they have none¹³⁷ (our translation).

In 1839, Amable Charest requests a bit of financial aid from Bishop Macdonnell because of the poor economic state of his flock¹³⁸.

¹³² Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 141.

¹³³ Notebook of Bishop de Charbonnel, June 23, 1860, pp. 2-4, in AAT, LB 11.

¹³⁴ Sanders. “A letter from Penetang”, p. 9.

¹³⁵ Letter by Father Frémot, April 24, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.09.

¹³⁶ Letter by Father Frémot, May 15, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.11.

¹³⁷ Letter from Penetanguishene, November 3, 1832, in AAT, M AC 15.02.

¹³⁸ Letter by Father Amable Charest, January 15, 1839, in AAT, M AC 16.04.

The situation remains unchanged, even ten years later, when Father Charest states that the poverty of his parishioners prevents them from sending their children to the college or the convent in Toronto, or from paying for their marriages that he celebrates for free¹³⁹.

The relative poverty of the voyageurs can no doubt be explained in large part by the economic transition that is starting to take place at the time of their settlement in Penetanguishene. They will find themselves further away from the main network of the fur trade which, on the whole, is undergoing a progressive decline. Although fur-trading stores open during the community's early years, this trade will altogether disappear, to the point where the 1871 Census mentions only one voyageur descendant selling a single bear pelt¹⁴⁰. This transformation of the economic way of life of the voyageurs occurs gradually but, as we will see in the next chapter, for them it will entail grave consequences and profound cultural changes.

¹³⁹ Letter by Father Amable Charest, January 13, 1851, in AAT, AB 07.01.

¹⁴⁰ Canada Census. 1871.

Chapter 4: The Voyageurs adapt to a changing economy

The voyageurs will undergo over the course of half a century an acculturation arising from a change in their physical environment and economic situation. However, before discussing the arrival of the sawmills and the effects that these will have on the voyageurs, let us first closely examine the process of their adaptation by looking briefly at the particular stories of certain influential people and families of this group.

4.1 Influential People and Families

It is obvious that attempting to paint the picture of the typical voyageur would be an impossible task. Each of them have their own characteristics and, even though the members of this group have some common resemblances, they remain above all unique individuals, each one as colourful as the next.

At the outset, many of the voyageurs come from Quebec and, in the long run, a good number of them manage to become part of their new environment. However, not all of these voyageurs are French-Canadians. Nevertheless, nearly all of them, including the Gordons and the Solomons adopt the First Nations and French-Canadian cultures. The fact that the French and First Nations languages are the most common languages spoken on Drummond Island shows the predominance of these two cultures in this milieu¹. Most worked for a fur-trading company and, after a certain number of years spent in the interior among the First Nations people, decided to become independent and establish a family and a home with a First Nation or Métis woman. All of them follow this trajectory despite the differences in their personal stories and adventures.

Many of the voyageurs that establish themselves in Penetanguishene are Whites that have developed relationships with women born in the fur country. Others, however, were born in the interior and have never known any other way of life. When describing the families of Michilimackinac and Mackinac Island, Elizabeth Mason states that:

[...] the families originated from Quebec, Three Rivers, Montreal and elsewhere but subsequent generations may have been born anywhere in the interior, at Detroit, at St. Joseph des Miamis, at Green Bay, at Sault Ste. Marie, at Chiquamiga, at Kaskasia².

Thus, many of the Penetanguishene voyageurs were born in the fur country. An analysis of the data compiled by A. C. Osborne and the *Descendants of the Establishments Organization* shows that, of approximately 350 voyageurs (women, men, and children) that came from Drummond Island, only six of the 64 people who give their place of birth were born in Quebec, and another 58 (including 32 women) of the same group come from the fur country. The Census does not, however, give the origins of the other voyageurs. Although in the years following 1828 many voyageurs would leave the Penetanguishene area, the 1860-1861 Census reveals that among the voyageurs or the members of their family over the age of 37 (in other words born before 1825), only 17 men were born in Quebec or Canada East compared to 24 men and 25 women born in areas further west. Therefore, at the time of this census, there were at least 49 voyageur family members still living that were born elsewhere than in Lower Canada.

Looking at the voyageurs from a family and individual point of view allows us to highlight their various occupations and incongruous personalities. It will also serve to show the contrast between their adventurous lifestyle in the open spaces associated with the fur trade, and the sedentary and routine lifestyle of the farmer, an occupation that, by and large, holds little attraction

¹ Alexander C. Osborne. "The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828", in *OHSPR*, 3, 1901, p. 138. Hereinafter: Osborne. "The Migration", p. 138.

² Letter from Elizabeth Mason, August 22, 1986.

for them. The selection of the individuals and families profiled in this section was made solely on the basis of existing historical documents about the voyageurs. Unfortunately, the people who write often have a point of view that is not necessarily the same as the vast illiterate majority. This analysis remains therefore partial and incomplete.

The first family which will be examined is the Solomon family. Originally from Germany, the Solomons managed to adapt to the First Nations and French way of life of their surroundings, and thus demonstrate with eloquence the diversity of the individuals that make up the voyageur group. After them, we will take a brief look at the Labatte family, a French-Canadian family linked to the fur trade, and then the Langlade family involved in the fur trade in the southwest since 1730.

In relation to the individuals, we will discuss the cases of George Gordon, an influential merchant who contributed to the Francophone community and, lastly, Dédin Révol, a key figure in initiating the first religious services from the Catholic Church in Penetanguishene.

4.1.1 The Solomon family

Ezekiel Solomon, a Jewish man from Berlin who arrived in Montreal, becomes one of the allophones, to work in the fur trade, as early as in the second half of the 18th century. Captured during a battle at Michilimackinac in 1763, he is freed in Montreal and then returns to the Northwest. John Askin mentions him in a letter written at Michilimackinac: “[...] My dear brother I’ve just learned from Mr. Solomon that my canoes have gone to you...”³ (our translation). According to the notes by Milo Quaife, Solomon signs the application of the residents of Michilimackinac requesting a missionary. He also sets up a general store on Mackinac Island in 1779 and, in 1784, he takes part in the creation of a committee to regulate the trade on Mackinac Island and its dependencies.

According to certain sources, he is said to have relocated at the same time as the British on St. Joseph Island when Mackinac Island was evacuated in 1796⁴. He marries a First Nations woman who gives birth to at least one son, William, who will serve the government for 56 years. This son follows the garrison when it leaves Drummond Island for Penetanguishene where he will spend the rest of his life. He marries a Métis woman and, together, they will have ten children, including Lewis⁵. For all these long years of continuous service to the government, William Solomon receives a pension of 75 cents per day. The historical documents referring to this family only mention Lewis since he acted as a guide and was also the first pilot of the *Duchess of Kallola* for a salary of \$ 4 a day, and then the pilot of the *Sailor's Bride*, the first vessel to enter Port Severn⁶.

4.1.2 The Labatte Family

At the end of the 18th century, Louis George Labatte arrives in the Northwest with the Northwest Company. He takes part in the capture of Mackinac Island, and later moves to Drummond Island with the soldiers where he lives for 11 years with his first wife, Louisa Cadotte, a Métis Chippewa woman. Labatte and his family leave Drummond Island in 1827 to travel first to Holland Landing (at the south end of Lake Simcoe) before ending up in Penetanguishene in 1831.

In December of 1834, he decides to go to Meaford to take possession of land he received from the government for his services⁷. He tries to cross Nottawasaga Bay but a storm forces him and his family to camp on Christian Island. When they try to return to Penetanguishene on foot

³ M. M. Quaife, editor. *The John Askin Papers, 1747-1795*, vol. 1. Burton Historical Records, Detroit Library Commission, 1931, p. 138. (Letter by John Askin to J.B. Barthe at Sault Ste. Marie). Hereinafter: Quaife. *The John Askin Papers*, vol. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵ M. M. Quaife, editor. *The John Askin Papers, 1796-1820*, vol. 2. Burton Historical Records, Detroit Library Commission, 1931, p. 525.

⁶ Osborne. “The Migration”, pp. 127 and 133.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 138, and 144.

over the ice, the weather is so bad that Labatte resigns himself to staying at Thunder Bay (at the northern tip of Tiny peninsula, facing Christian Island)⁸. The members of the Labatte family therefore establish themselves at Thunder Bay Beach where they will remain the only residents for twenty years, that is until Camille Giroux comes to live there as well⁹. Louis George Labatte dies in 1872, but his descendants continue to live in the Bay area until very recently.

4.1.3 The Langlade family

Jennifer Brown states that, prior to 1790, the traders living in the First Nations territories were few and far between¹⁰. Augustin Langlois is one of these rare voyageurs: he is among the first residents of Baie Verte (Green Bay) in Wisconsin¹¹, as early as the 1730's. This "father of Wisconsin", since he will later be given this title¹², becomes an important trader in the "*Second Sioux Co.*" as early as 1731. He marries Domitilde, the sister of Nissowaquet, the main chief of the Outaouais First Nation who, with his tribe, had left the Fort Michillimackinac area to establish its village at Anse Croche, some 56 kilometers to the southwest of Lake Michigan, where the tribe harvests corn¹³.

Their son, Charles Michel, is born at Michillimackinac. Charles Michel Langlade's story (his name is adapted from the surname Langlois), is easy enough to follow since he frequently deals with military and governmental administrators. He becomes a leader recognized by the western First Nations, initially on the French side, during the war between the French and the First Nations, and then on the British side during the American War of Independence¹⁴. When the British attack Montreal, in 1760, Charles assembles a force of 1,000 First Nations warriors from the interior to defend the country¹⁵ and, according to a letter written by John Askin, during the American War of Independence, Charles and his nephew, Charles Gauthier, supposedly gathered a force of 200 warriors to attack the Americans: "Messrs Langlade and Gotiez are on their way from la Bay here with above two hundred Warriors who are going down the country"¹⁶.

On November 18, 1754, Charles Michel Langlade marries Charlotte Ambroisine Bourassa¹⁷. The family ties with certain First Nations groups and the influence of Charles Langlade contribute to the monopoly that the Michillimackinac Company exerts on the fur trade in the southwest. Langlade, like all the other big fur-trading families, such as the Bertrand, Laframboise, Renaud, Pelletier, and Saint-Martin families, is an associate of the Michillimackinac Company¹⁸. Historical records give us much less information on the children of Charlotte Bourassa and Charles Langlade. According to the account of their granddaughter, Angélique, reproduced by A. C. Osborne, the couple had six children: one daughter who remained at Mackinac Island, two others who were educated in Montreal and went to live in the lac Montagne area, one son, Alixe, who became a First Nations chief in the United States, another, Napoléon, who disappeared one day and,

⁸ Thomas Marchildon and Oscar Racette. Verner et Lafontaine. Sudbury, La Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario, document historique, numéro 8, 1945, p. 39.

⁹ Osborne. "The Migration", p. 144.

¹⁰ Jennifer Brown. "A demographic transition in the fur trade country: family sizes and fertility of company officers and country wives 1750-1850" in Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, vol. 6, 1976, p. 63.

¹¹ Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty. "The Coureur de Bois", in Canada and its Provinces, p. 77.

¹² Elizabeth Mason. Summary of a conference presented to the Descendants of the Establishments Organization.

¹³ Peter Lawrence Scanlon. Prairie du Chien: French, British, American. Wisconsin, 1937, p. 26. Hereinafter: Scanlon. Prairie du Chien.

¹⁴ Quaiife. The John Askin Papers, vol. 1, p. 72.

¹⁵ Scanlon. Prairie du Chien, p. 45.

¹⁶ Quaiife. The John Askin Papers, vol. 1, p. 136. (Letter by John Askin, June 17, 1778).

¹⁷ Donna Valley Russell. Michigan Voyageurs from the Notary book of Samuel Abbott, Mackinac Island 1807-1817. Detroit, Detroit Society of Genealogical Research Inc., 1982, p. 129.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Mason. "The Michillimackinac Company and its role in the war of 1812", in Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, October 1981, p. 2.

lastly, Charles, (Angélique's father) who followed the British soldiers, first to Drummond Island and then to Penetanguishene.

Charles junior married Joséphine *Ah-quah-dah*, a Chippewa woman, and the eight children resulting from this union will be raised in Penetanguishene¹⁹. Dédin Révol befriended Charles junior and would later send him greetings and advice from Montreal on a regular basis through George Gordon, the latter's son-in-law:

Tell Charles Langlande that I embrace him with all my heart and pray him and his wife not to forget what he promised me concerning his children, that he will make of them good Christians, and that he council them, and in my name, to avoid all bad company and especially parties and bars²⁰ (our translation).

Today, there are still descendants of this big family in the area²¹.

4.1.4 George Gordon

Despite his Scottish background, George Gordon remains a francophone, first through his mother, and then because he spends most of his life living among francophones and First Nations people. He leaves Montreal in 1807 at the age of 21 to become a clerk with the Northwest Company. His contract grants him yearly supplies as well as a salary of 100 pounds spread out over a period of five years, starting with 10 pounds the first year with a raise of five pounds every year after²².

Gordon learns the ropes of the fur trade through a series of postings at *Me-te-ga-mi*, Nipigon, Fort William, Michipicoten, Sault Ste. Marie, Mackinac Island, Drummond Island and, finally, Penetanguishene. We have at least one indication of the type of trading that he was doing during his stay at Fort William, through a letter from Paul Jo Lacroix of Montreal who, on January 15, 1817, writes to Gordon:

I hope that you will cast your attention to obtaining as many furs as possible of any kind whatever, as well as pelts and hides of all kinds and even leather capotes both new and old it doesn't matter, and decorated shoes of all kinds that you can obtain since they sell well here, and also feathers. Remember that, in order to sell a lot and to unload all of ones wares, you must not sell the goods at too high a price. I remain hopeful that you will not bring me any of the latter back because you will have sold everything. And I was forgetting to tell you that leather mittens whether they be decorated or not are good articles to obtain. Also, all kinds of curiosities of the Natives. And I am otherwise resting²³ (our translation).

According to Osborne, Gordon lives on Drummond Island for three years and it is there that he becomes an independent trader²⁴. Nothing however seems to indicate the nature of his activities

¹⁹ Osborne. "The Migration", p. 147.

²⁰ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol, Montreal, to George Gordon in Penetanguishene, November 21, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 5.

²¹ There are 8 Longlad (e)'s listed in the Penetanguishene area in the local phone book.

²² Contractual agreement with the Northwest Company, April 22, 1807, in HHPRC, Gordon Papers # 8.

²³ Letter by P. Lacroix from Montreal to George Gordon at Fort William, January 15, 1817, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 9.

²⁴ Alexander C. Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene: sketches of its pioneer, naval and military days", in Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society, Pioneer Papers, Barrie (5-6), 1912-1917, p. 49. Hereinafter: Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene".

between the time he ends his contract with the Northwest Company and the moment he sets up shop as an independent²⁵.

While living on Drummond Island, Gordon marries Agnes Landry, an Ojibway Métis. With her, he leaves the island in 1824 to establish himself at Gordon's Point, in Penetanguishene, where he does some trading with his half-brother, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, who is fur-trading in the Muskoka area. On the point that bears his name, Gordon plants an apple orchard and brings the first horse to Penetanguishene²⁶.

In 1825, the trader again moves, this time to a location that will become the heart of the future village of Penetanguishene (Water Street), where he builds the town's first permanent dwelling²⁷. The other inhabitants of Drummond Island don't wait long to follow suit and, consequently, a community where George Gordon holds a prominent place takes shape in Penetanguishene.

Trading is Gordon's main activity since the letters sent to him bear the mention "storekeeper"²⁸. His occupation as a merchant doesn't prevent him from lending a hand to Dédin Révol's efforts to establish a Christian community. An article in *The Catholic Register* states that Gordon occupies the second most important rank among the lay people of Penetanguishene²⁹. Gordon seems to have greatly contributed to the Christian community in Penetanguishene and the long struggle to obtain a priest for this isolated village. Révol, in a letter where he alludes to Gordon's second marriage to Marguerite, the daughter of Charles Langlade, criticizes Gordon for his despair regarding the Catholic Church's slowness in dealing with the request from Penetanguishene:

Gordon, Gordon. I say it with sorrow, you have already by this sole fact deserved the wrath of God! Even if you were, as you claim, abandoned by the catholic clergy, even if you were rejected and cast out from the bosom of the church, would that be a reason to abandon your religion? Are you only a Christian for others? [...] if you were, for any reason whatsoever, to abandon the only real, true, sole religion, the one that the Lord sealed with his blood...³⁰ (our translation).

Following a recommendation by Révol to Bishop Macdonnell, Gordon becomes churchwarden, in charge of the construction of the church. Révol introduces his friend to the bishop in this most flattering fashion:

He speaks English, French, and the Native language with great ease. He is looked upon here in general with great esteem and confidence. He is a churchwarden. He, therefore, in my opinion, could not be replaced by any other person more capable, and I doubt that anybody else [...] inspires the friendship in general of the Catholics like him, and consequently holds as much influence over them³¹ (our translation).

²⁵ Letter by P. Lacroix from Montreal to George Gordon at Fort William, January 15, 1817, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds, # 9.

²⁶ Osborne. "Old Penetanguishene", pp. 50, 52 and 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁸ Letter by Dédin Révol, Montreal, to George Gordon, July 30, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 2.

²⁹ J. S. McGivern. "Building a church at Penetang" in *The Catholic Register*, March 27, 1978, pp. 6-7. Hereinafter: McGivern. "Building a church".

³⁰ Letter by Dédin Révol, Chambly, to George Gordon in Penetanguishene, October 19, 1834, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 16.

³¹ Letter by Dédin Révol, April 8, 1833, in AAT, M AC 15.06.

Gordon takes his role as churchwarden seriously and, for instance, sees it as his duty to inform the bishop of the scandal of the alcoholic missionary assigned to the First Nations people in Coldwater: “[...] a Teacher of the Gospel must do as much by example as by Preaching”³².

Gordon therefore held much sway in Penetanguishene until his death in 1852, at the age of 65³³.

4.1.5 Dédin Révol

The life of Dédin Révol remains obscure up until his arrival in Penetanguishene with the Drummond Island voyageurs³⁴. His correspondence with George Gordon gives us some insight mostly into the religious evolution of Penetanguishene. Révol devotes his energies to the church and paves the way for the construction of the first St. Anne’s church; on February 23, 1832, he writes to Bishop Macdonnell to request the services of a priest while promising that the “parishioners” will build a church and a residence for the priest as soon as land is made available for this. On November 3, 1832, Dédin Révol informs the bishop that the priest who will be sent to Penetanguishene will also have to serve the faithful in Coldwater and another place since those in Penetanguishene are too poor to support a priest on their own. As a sign of goodwill on the part of the parishioners, with his letter he includes a list of subscribers³⁵.

During his years in Penetanguishene, Révol becomes a religious spokesperson and lay apostle for the local residents. J. S. McGivern writes in *The Catholic Register* of May 1978 that Révol laboured among the First Nations people, the French-Canadians and the Irish:

Among the natives who were for the most part still in paganism; among the French-Canadians illiterate and ignorant of the faith of their ancestors; among the British soldiery, mostly Irish and also largely careless in the practice of their religion, we find Revol a power of strength³⁶.

Even though the author here shows an obvious prejudicial attitude with regard to the non-Catholics, it is doubtless that for people who have not practiced their religious rites for at least two generations, renewing this practice presents some difficulties. Révol, for his part, judges the faithful in Penetanguishene with less severity since he loved them in spite of their vices:

I believe that for various reasons there are many people who are happier to see me here than near them. The Natives, I believe, would be happy to see me return as likewise you and the few other Christians who can appreciate the reasons why I acted as I did, but those to whom I would so often preach to about the vices that they enjoy and who see in me a rigid critic from whom they could not hide anything, an obstacle to their gathering, who prevented a part of the inhabitants from seeing them on a regular basis, would they be happy to see me return? This cannot be [...] I loved, I love the Canadians of Penitengichine I believe that I’ve proven it to them!³⁷ (our translation).

This letter was written following the request by certain people of Penetanguishene for the return of Révol³⁸. The latter had left Penetanguishene in June of 1833³⁹ to offer his services to the

³² Letter by George Gordon, March 10, 1835, in AAT, M AC 16.03.

³³ Osborne. “Old Penetanguishene”, p. 53.

³⁴ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol, Drummond Island, to Mitchell, May 23, 1829, Gordon Fonds # 6.

³⁵ McGivern. “Building a church”, pp. 6-7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³⁷ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol in Montreal to George Gordon in Upper Canada, February 18, 1834, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 14

³⁸ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, December 27, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 13

religious community of Chambly College of which he will later become the director (as he mentions in a letter dated March 28, 1835). In this same letter, Révol asks Gordon to send him, via Toronto, some maple sugar and a barrel of whitefish or trout⁴⁰.

Although living far away, Révol maintains close ties with his friends and continues to exert relentless pressure to obtain a priest for Penetanguishene. Various letters written by Révol to Gordon detail these efforts, and his letters to the bishops of Kingston, Telmestre (the coadjutor of Montreal), and Quebec to request a priest for Penetanguishene⁴¹. In the meantime, Révol continues to encourage his friends; to a certain Mr. Lacourse he writes: “In any event, all of you should remember that salvation can be easily obtained from God without the help of a minister of the Church when we [are] deprived of one”⁴² (our translation).

Révol’s correspondence also touches on issues related to debts, since upon his leaving, he was obliged to entrust his affairs to Gordon. For example, Révol was to receive 50 dollars from a Mr. Beamen of La Cloche, and asked Gordon and Deschenaux to add this sum to those already collected by the church council, and to those raised through pew rentals after the first of January, in order to pay for finishing the installation of the church floor⁴³.

But this settling of accounts by proxy complicates things for Révol who leaves the accounting to Gordon. In a letter dated July 12, 1834, Révol describes one case that seems typical:

Lepine took out, in front of Simpson, a promissory note where he agreed to pay me back fifty dollars within three or four years, or surrender his deeds to me. The term has long since expired and Laramé having taken Lépine’s place I could claim my fifty dollars from him, but I have no intention of doing so. He must surrender his deeds to Langlade as he should.

When I purchased from Lepine his ten acres I bought them for 20 dollars, and you know that at that time paying one dollar per acre was the highest price. I paid him 10 dollars in cash supplies and regarded the other 10 as annulled since his men owed me more than they would ever pay. I only did this in order to give him the means of growing crops on the 10 that he still had and from which he could have earned a living. He did not and that is his business⁴⁴ (our translation).

In 1836, three years after leaving Penetanguishene, Révol instructs Gordon to tell his debtors that, if they don’t pay up, they will have to start paying interest. This threat, it seems, is not an idle one, as five percent interest is applied to Louis Deschenaux’s debt⁴⁵. In spite of all the financial problems that Dédin Révol endures at the hands of certain individuals in Huronia, what matters most to him is the amount of progress religion makes in this isolated community. Thus, the best news arrives in the fall of 1833, when Révol’s prayers are finally answered and Penetanguishene at last welcomes a resident priest.

However, at the same time, it is not only the religious situation that is starting to change in the area. It is from this point on that the lumber industry also begins to develop and, consequently, effect irreversible changes on the lifestyle of the voyageurs.

³⁹ Letter by Dédin Révol, March 5, 1833, in AAT, M AC 15.04.

⁴⁰ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, March 28, 1835, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 17

⁴¹ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, July 30, 1833, and a copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to Lacourse in Penetanguishene, August 1, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 11 and # 2.

⁴² Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to Lacourse, August 1, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds #11.

⁴³ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol to George Gordon, November 21, 1833, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 5.

⁴⁴ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol, July 12, 1834 and July 30, 1835 received August 11, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 3 and # 7.

⁴⁵ Copy of a letter by Dédin Révol, May 10, 1836, in HHPRC, Gordon Fonds # 8.

4.2 The Arrival of the Sawmills

In the 19th century, the lumber industry in Upper Canada undergoes considerable growth. Huronia is also part of this trend. As early as 1837, sawmills start making their mark in Huronia. But these beginnings remain very modest. It is only at the end of the 1860s that the lumber industry in Simcoe County grows to a point where it is supplying a third of all the wood produced in Canada West, and has thus become the main economic activity in the county. In fact, considerable quantities of wood pass through Georgian Bay, via Collingwood, en route to Chicago.

The forestry industry in Simcoe County is slow to develop because of inadequate transportation. For the voyageurs, the transition from an economy based on the fur trade to one centered on lumber, proves to be difficult because of the long waiting period between the end of the fur trade and the rise of the lumber industry that eventually replaces the feeble farming economy of the area. Once the railroad arrives, 45 sawmills sprout up in the County⁴⁶. In Penetanguishene itself, several sawmills are established and they attract workers who stay in the area.

For the people of the fur trade, the voyageurs, this change marks the death knoll of a particular way of life and, from then on, their intergration into White society in Huronia.

4.3 The Decline of the Voyageurs

The union between First Nations people and French-Canadians who lived and worked in the vast territories of the West fosters a group of people that are unique in Canadian history. By the 19th century, these Métis see themselves relegated to an inferior rank with an identity and a set of problems that are particular to them⁴⁷. This same phenomenon occurs, it would seem, in Penetanguishene, where even today some local residents refer to the west side of Penetanguishene Bay where many descendants of the original voyageurs still live, as the “other side of the Bay” with a slight trace of contempt.

These voyageurs put their stamp on the early history of Penetanguishene. Even the local toponymy which attested to their influence, that is to say the names of several points, La Vallée, Trudeau, Giroux, Michaud, Corbière, have been anglicized. The role played by the voyageur, generally speaking, disappeared so gradually that, according to Grace Lee Nute, nobody had a chance to bemoan it. This was also the case in Penetanguishene.

The voyageurs leave no visible collective traces and will sacrifice their identity and culture to blend into a different socioeconomic environment. These intrepid people adapt, not without difficulty, to new institutions and to the sudden replacement of the regime that had prevailed for two centuries. The industrialists will then erect mills and sawmills that become the catalysts of the economy, relegating the voyageurs to a secondary place in the local history of Huronia, a history dominated thereafter by a small local bourgeoisie that will remain prosperous up until the 1930s.

⁴⁶ Allison Burbidge. The changing role of transportation in Simcoe County from 1800-1866—an historical geography. M. A. Thesis, McMaster University of Hamilton, 1961, pp. 87 and 107.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Brown. “A demographic transition in the fur trade country: Family sizes and fertility of company officers and country wives” in Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology. vol. 6, 1976, p. 69.

Chapter 5: The French-Canadian Settlers

Less than 15 years after the voyageurs take possession of their lands, another group of settlers, also French-speaking, invade the zone in northern Tiny Township. Between this second group and the voyageur settlers there are, however, enormous differences. Looking briefly at the nature of this group of settlers from Lower Canada will help us to gain a better understanding of the particularities of the voyageur and Métis settlers. In light of this, we will be able to compare the voyageurs to the rural French-Canadian settlers while emphasizing the specific character of the first group.

It should be noted that, at the outset, the emigrants from Lower Canada who come to settle in the Lafontaine area are part of a large migratory movement which started in the 1830s-1840s. The vast majority of these emigrants go south, to the United States, but a few of them decide to try their luck elsewhere, like in Huronia¹.

5.1 The social and political context at the time of the emigration of the settlers from Lower Canada

The emigration of French-Canadians becomes systematic as of the 1830s and 1840s. Paul W. Gates attributes this exodus to the following factors²:

1. the bad land policies in effect since the 18th century which put the lots destined for settlement in the hands of a few individuals or companies who have no interest in establishing settlers on them;
2. the poor harvests of the last few years;
3. the lack of employment during the winter;
4. overpopulation in the older communities; and
5. the attractive salaries offered in the United States.

In *Le Canadien Émigrant*, a report written by a dozen missionaries, the authors also point to the lack of good communication routes as one of the causes of the exodus³. In fact, historian Fernand Ouellet believes that owing to the lack of available land in the seigneuries after 1800, the standard of living among farmers in Lower Canada declines, as do commodity prices after 1815⁴.

This growing movement of French-Canadians begins to worry the government. As well, the Legislature of the Province of Canada strikes a committee in 1857 to study the causes of this emigration and the ways to prevent it. The committee's report basically lists the same reasons for the exodus as those indicated by Gates and it determines that the emigrants come from the French-speaking Canadian farming class⁵.

Minister T. Boutillier, a doctor from Saint-Hyacinthe, has also observed the difficulties experienced by young people trying to find work that pays, or for that matter, arable lands in his province. He sums up the situation in these words:

¹ For a better understanding of the conditions surrounding rural life in Lower Canada during this time, see Fernand Ouellet's *Éléments d'histoire sociale du Bas-Canada*. Montreal, Hurtubise, Cahiers du Québec, 1972, 379 p.

² Paul Gates. "Official encouragement to immigration by the province of Canada", in *CHR*, 15, 1934, pp. 27-28.

³ Twelve missionaries. *Le Canadien Émigrant ou, Pourquoi le Canadien-Français quitte-t-il le Bas-Canada?* pp. 19 and 37.

⁴ Fernand Ouellet. "Libéré ou exploité ! Le paysan québécois d'avant 1850", in *Histoire Sociale*, 13 (26), November 1980, p. 344.

⁵ "Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Causes of Emigration from Canada to the United States of America or Elsewhere" in *Parliamentary Papers of the Province of Canada, Journals of the Legislative Assembly*, vol 5, # 3 third session, fifth parliament, 1857, Appendix # 47. Hereinafter: Report of the Select Committee.

To the young man who is utterly destitute of ready money, or the father of a family whose means are exhausted, such conditions are absolutely prohibitory. It is not difficult to imagine that to the father of four or five children, which he wishes to settle in the townships, the immediate erection of four or five houses of eighteen feet by twenty-six, the annual clearing of twenty or twenty-five acres of land, and the payment of the annual instalments on his land are conditions far beyond his ability to fulfil, unless he chances to possess considerable property⁶.

In her study, *L'émigration des Québécois aux États-Unis de 1840 à 1930*, Yolande Lavoie equally confirms this reality:

[...] it has been proven both positively and indisputably that those taking part in the emigration are in general the sons of farmers who, because of their working habits, their vigour, their youth, and their courage constitute society's most useful class of people⁷ (our translation).

This same study explains that two thirds of the emigrants come from the farming-working class, while the other third come from the working class.⁸

Contrary to the voyageurs, the settlers from Lower Canada arriving in Huronia do not receive their land free of charge from the government (with the exception of the 8 pounds paid by the voyageurs) as a reward for services rendered during the war. They must adhere to a set of particular land distribution policies.

Up until 1826, the old rules laid down by Lieutenant Governor Simcoe continue to form the basis of land policy in Upper Canada. At the end of the 1820s, new regulations are established forbidding free land grants. One must however be cautious in analyzing the evolution of these policies. Are they actually applied or simply ignored? With regard to the present case, Lillian Gates believes that the practical application of these regulations is done in another manner. She thus states that, during the time when there is a policy in place allowing free land grants, lands are nevertheless sold in due form, while, once it becomes illegal to grant free lands, a number of these grants, which are not even subjected to registry fees, will be made. This observation is confirmed by the facts, since, between 1826 and 1838, the Crown distributes 40 times more land by grants than by sale⁹.

In the spring of 1840, the government rescinds the titles of half of the land grants that have yet to be registered and have remained unoccupied, unimproved and unclaimed¹⁰. In 1841, a new law reaffirms the declaration contained in the law of 1838: “[...] no free grants shall be made of any of the Public Lands of this Province to any person or persons whomsoever”, but this contradicts in actual fact section 27 which gives the Governor in Council the power to grant free land to British men¹¹. This law remains in effect until 1853, while the price of land drops¹².

During the 1850s, however, the Canadian economy experiences a period of prosperity that is the result of a boom most notably in railway construction. Prices, like those for land, are on the rise. The population also increases¹³. By the 1860s, the arable lands, one of the most important

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Yolande Lavoie. *L'émigration des Québécois aux États-Unis de 1840 à 1930*. Québec, 1979, p. 14. Hereinafter: Lavoie. *L'émigration des Québécois*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7

⁹ Lillian Gates. *Land Policies of Upper Canada*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 304. Hereinafter: Gates. *Land Policies*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

¹¹ Hugh Mackenzie Morrison. “The principle of free grants in the land Act of 1841” in *CHR*, 14, 1933, p. 392.

¹² Gates. *Land Policies*, p. 285.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

natural resources of Upper Canada, are all occupied¹⁴, including without doubt, those in the Lafontaine area.

Local oral history has always underlined the fact that the first French-Canadian settlers of the area had received their lots from the government. However, land registry records indicate the opposite of this belief since free grants to settlers are very few in number: the newly arrived inhabitants had to pay for their land. For example, the Honourable John Macaubay sold 100 acres of northern lot 14 in the 16th concession to Constant Marchildon, one of the pioneers in this group, March 17, 1846 for the sum of 37.10 pounds. Or also, on January 13, 1855, François Labissonière sold 100 acres of west lot 19 in the 16th concession to Casimir Brunelle (another pioneer) for the sum of 50 pounds¹⁵.

Even if the presence of habitant farmers from Lower Canada is noted in Lafontaine as early as the 1840s¹⁶, their names are, generally speaking, not found in the land registry records until later, that is in the 1870s. We can no doubt surmise that they only paid off their lands several years after moving to the area, which was a common practice at the time. Unfortunately, written records don't offer a sure explanation for this.

Even before the emigrants from Lower Canada start to clear land in the north part of the Tiny peninsula, a few voyageurs are already occupying land there. Louis Deschenaux built the first house in 1830, on lot 16 of the 16th concession; Joseph Messier the second, on the next lot, and after them a few other voyageurs follow suit, including Jean Lacroix, Cyril Pombert, and Jean Thibault. But most of these first settlers later left their lands to go and live elsewhere¹⁷. As noted by Michel Labatte:

There was no house at Lafontaine when I first saw it. It was first called Ste-Croix. The nearest house was my father's at Thunder Bay [which will become part of the Sainte-Croix parish], about seven miles distant Louis Desheneau built the first house there¹⁸.

Towards the end of the 1840s, the voyageurs still living in this part of the Township find themselves surrounded by a great number of Lower Canada emigrants.

5.2 The Move from Quebec

The new francophone inhabitants of Huronia immigrate to the area starting in 1841 in three separate successive waves: that is one from the Batiscan area, one from Joliette, and the other from the Vaudreuil-Soulanges area (see Map 8). Once in Lafontaine, they reproduce the same way of life that they have previously lived in Lower Canada. Farming remains the economic base, and certain cultural and social traits (sedentary lifestyle, prominent place of the catholic religion) are maintained.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁵ Simcoe County Land Registry. LB 28, 16th conc., Tiny Township.

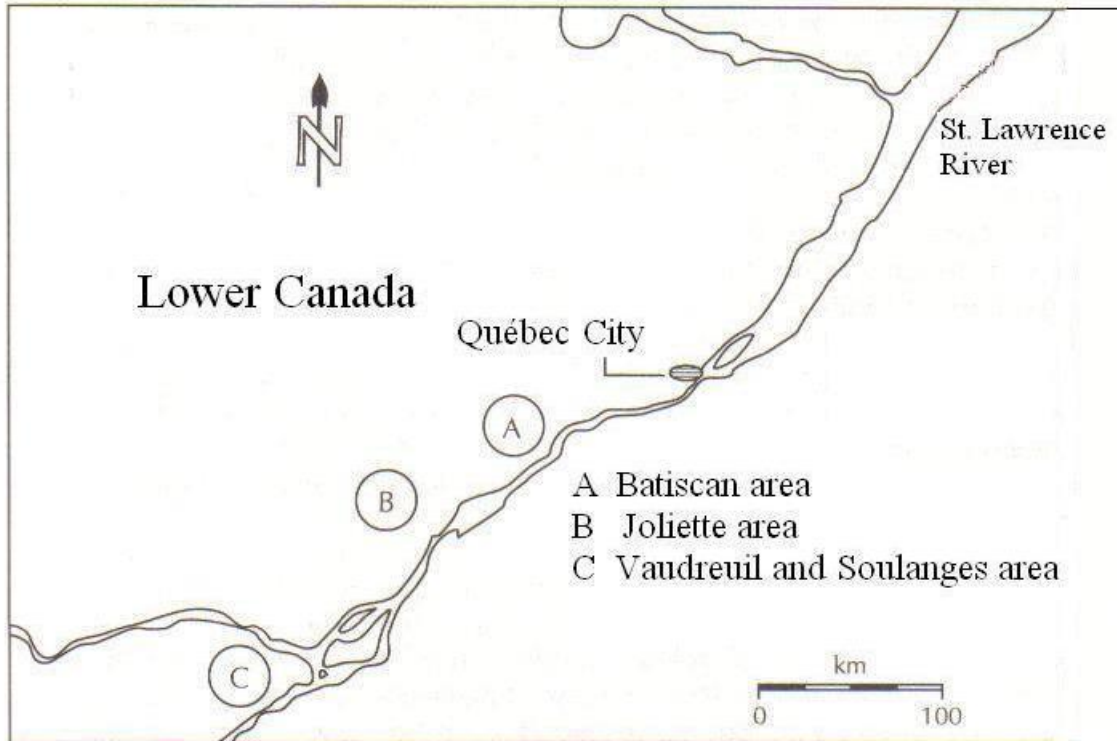
¹⁶ Henri Brunet. Notes historiques sur la paroisse Sainte-Croix de Lafontaine, unpublished manuscript, 1924-1936, p. 37. Hereinafter: Brunet. Notes.

¹⁷ Alonzo Gobeil. Gestes français en terre ontarienne—Épopée française à la baie Georgienne 1610-1956, volume 1, typewritten manuscript, held at the Centre for research on French-Canadian Culture at the University of Ottawa, 1956, pp. 172-174. Hereinafter: Gobeil. Gestes français en terre ontarienne and Thomas Marchildon and Oscar Racette. Verner et Lafontaine. Sudbury, La Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario, document historique # 8, 1945, pp. 38-39. Hereinafter: Marchildon. Verner et Lafontaine.

¹⁸ A. C. Osborne. "The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828" in OHSPR, vol. 3, 1901, p. 139.

Canadians from the County of Batiscan lead off this French-Canadian rush to Simcoe County. They get to choose the best lots¹⁹. Among them, there are the Brunelle, Marchand, Marchildon, Maurice families²⁰. The lack of available land remained a chronic problem in the parishes of the Mauricie area since, during the presentation of the report of the special committee studying the causes of the emigration movement from Canada to the United States, Robert Trudel, representing Sainte-Geneviève-de-Batiscan, states that in his area the lack of land remains a serious problem and that 64 men over the age of 18 are unable to find any²¹. Yolande Lavoie also refers to Sainte-Geneviève-de-Batiscan as an example of a parish where seasonal migrations are continuing in the 1850 – 1860 period²².

Map 8: Areas where the Lafontaine settlers originated from



The second wave of settlers comes from Joliette. This group is dominated by the Beausoleil's, Desroches', Laurin's, and Marion's²³ who are forced to settle for less fertile lots, further to the north and west of the Tiny peninsula, in the 18th and the 19th concessions²⁴.

The third wave of immigrants originates from Coteau Station, Vaudreuil, and Saint-Polycarpe; it includes people with the surnames André dit St-Amand, Asselin, Beauchamp, Dault, Dubeau, Quesnelle, Vallée²⁵. They are for the most part shanty men who, at the end of the 19th century, will find work in the sawmills of Penetanguishene²⁶.

Of course other settlers from Quebec and elsewhere will come to populate the Lafontaine area, but the above mentioned three groups make up the core of the first large waves of settlers.

¹⁹ Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine, L'Église de Ste-Croix 1855-1955*. Lafontaine, 1955, p. 14. Hereinafter: Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine*.

²⁰ Marchildon. *Verner et Lafontaine*, p. 38.

²¹ "Report of the special committee".

²² Lavoie. *L'émigration des Québécois*, Introduction.

²³ Marchildon. *Verner et Lafontaine*, p. 38.

²⁴ Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine*, p. 14, and Alonzo Gobeil. *Gestes français en terre ontarienne*, p. 402.

²⁵ Saint-Patrick's Parish. *The Lord is Good*, History of the Parish and the Village of Perkinsfield. Midland, 1984, p. 45.

²⁶ Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine*, p.14.

These new inhabitants are above all looking for arable land. In the province of Quebec, the high birthrate has led to a population increase that has surpassed the amount of available lands and, in order to preserve their traditional agricultural way of life, French-Canadians in certain areas of Lower Canada prefer to settle in places like Lafontaine rather than head off to the United States.

The presence of parish priest Amable Charest, originally from Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, explains to a certain extent the emigration of francophones from the Batiscan region to the Sainte-Croix area. Amable Charest, who in 1837 has already become the parish priest in Penetanguishene, maintains close ties with the community where he was born on May 7, 1807²⁷. Through his duties as a clergyman he has the occasion to familiarize himself with the good farming lots of his vast parish, and he thus encourages people from his native area, who are precisely in search of new land, to come and establish themselves in Huronia. Father Amable Charest will be stationed in Penetanguishene-Lafontaine for 17 years and, during this time, he will contribute to the settlement of northern Tiny Township²⁸.

Ironically, the settlement wave ends around 1854, at the same time as the railway reaches Barrie (1853). Prior to the opening of this rail line there are no indications of how the settlers reached Huronia. Nevertheless, it seems most likely that they would venture first to York, either by boat, by train or on foot, and from there would complete their trek on foot or in wagons drawn by oxen. For them, travelling by steamship must have been an unaffordable luxury.

An analysis of the evolution of the population of Tiny Township (where the newcomers settle) reveals that, in 1825, there were but 10 people, and that the number of settlers rose gradually to 227 in 1837, and 3,214 in 1871²⁹ (see Appendices D and E).

According to the Canadian Census data for the years 1851, 1861, and 1871, lot sizes vary between 10 and 100 acres. In 1861, only four landowners have more than 200 acres, but, by 1871, there are seven³⁰ (see Appendix F). Yet, the census data for 1871 only shows two habitant farmers that possess more than 200 acres of land, and they are Hector Marchildon (47 years old) with 555 acres, and Constant Marchildon (52 years old) with 285. According to the same source, only two other people from this group own more than 100 acres, Xavier Desroches, senior (age 59), who owns 250 acres, and Henri Brunelle (age 49) who has 183 acres³¹. The Simcoe County enumerators recognize that there are errors and omissions. In fact, certain names that are on the land registry records are not found in the census data. We can nevertheless conclude that the larger landowners are, in general, older than the others, no doubt since they have had more time to accumulate wealth.

Church registers and written documents, whether they be secondary or primary sources, show that the Lafontaine area was first settled and inhabited by francophones. However, the statistics compiled from data contained in the land registry records for Simcoe County illustrate that, from the 14th concession right up to the 21st concession of Tiny, the vast majority of the lots are owned by anglophones: in 1831, only 4.19% of the landowners are francophones (1 out of 24), while in 1871, 44 francophones own a lot, making up 21.4% of the total of 205 landowners. No doubt, the francophones occupy more lots in Lafontaine than these registry records would lead us to believe. These settlers, lacking money at the time they take up their lots in Lafontaine, probably live on them for several years until they are able to actually purchase them and register their title.

In Penetanguishene, the situation seems less contradictory. According to the registry records, in 1841 the majority of the landowners are francophones (38 out of 68, or 55.8%) but later

²⁷ Arthur Picotte. "Tragic fate of two early priests of Penetang" in *The Free Press Herald*. Penetanguishene, s.d.

²⁸ Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine*, p. 14, and Marchildon. *Verner et Lafontaine*, p.41, and Daniel Marchildon. *La Huronie*. Ottawa, Le Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, Pro-f-ont series, 1984, pp. 66-67. Hereinafter: Marchildon. *La Huronie*.

²⁹ Allison Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation in Simcoe County from 1800-1866—an historical geography*. Master's Thesis, McMaster University of Hamilton, 1961, p. 81. Hereinafter: Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*.

³⁰ *Census of Canada*. 1851, 1861, and 1871.

³¹ *Nominal Census of Canada*. 1871.

on this percentage falls considerably, to the point where, by 1871, there are only 46 francophone landowners out of a total of 166 (27.7%) (see Appendix G).

Forty-six people who had received land grants from the Crown and are mentioned in the registry records (that is 21.6% of the total), can be considered as part of the voyageur group since their names are on the list of voyageurs compiled by Alexander C. Osborne. The same source shows us that 42 landowners (19.2% of the total) come from the Penetanguishene area, and that 56 (25.6%) come from elsewhere in the province, 40 (18.3%) from Toronto; for another 74 landowners (33.9%) no place of origin is given (see Appendix H). There are a greater number of lots registered to people with a French surname in Penetanguishene, no doubt because the voyageurs receive their lots free from the Crown, as long as they meet certain requirements with regard to clearing the land and paying the sum of 8 pounds. In contrast, for the most part, the settlers of Lafontaine have to pay for their lots.

The Canadian Census data gives us the ethnic origins of the residents of Tiny. The majority are francophones, a fact corroborated by Church documents. In 1851, the population of Tiny includes 411 francophones out of a total of 748, that is 54.9% of the total population; in 1861, in the townships of Tiny and Tay (united for the 1861 Census) there are 750 francophones out of a total population of 1,901, accounting for 39.4% of the population, and in 1871 there are 1,807 francophones out of a total population of 3,214, thus making up 56.2% of Tiny Township's population (see Appendix I). In summary, throughout this period, even if the francophone population drops off slightly, it remains significant.

5.3 Occupations

The settlers are first and foremost preoccupied with clearing their lots and accomplishing the work necessary to ensure their survival. Usually, they cut the trees in the fall. In winter, they pile the brush and, a year later, after it has dried, they burn it. This process is repeated several times³². The lots in the Lafontaine area contain stands of hard wood, mainly maple and beech trees. Although this type of wood is harder to use, it can serve as building material for houses and furniture. In 1851-1852, 100 out of 116 houses in Tiny are built of logs, and by 1860-1861, 235 of the 243 houses enumerated are made of the same material³³. As well, the maple trees supply sap and syrup — the only easily available source of sugar at the time³⁴, a resource that, in 1871, yielded a total output of 2,787 kilograms (6,145 pounds) of maple sugar made by 18 producers.

Patricia Lutman states that the area a farmer can clear is between two to four hectares per year, depending on his personal resources and the help he receives. This work, in her opinion, takes up most of the pioneer's energy from year to year³⁵. However, once the lot has been cleared and the house built, the settlers face further difficulties: the lack of equipment, limited financial resources, and natural problems like bad weather or the flies.

A few settlers fish, or, starting at the end of the 1860s, work in the lumber industry, but most of them, once their lots have been cleared, live from farming as their forefathers did. C. Todd described the chronology of the farming activities of the area: after the maple sugar season, in March, comes potato planting from the first of May to the 20th, and then the cucumbers and melons are planted at the end of May as well as the wheat, oat, and barley crops. At the end of June, the peas are ready to be harvested and the corn begins to rise, while in July and August, the other crops are harvested³⁶. The farmers in Lafontaine have better crop yields than the descendants of the voyageurs, and this should come as no surprise. In 1871, the agricultural census shows that the

³² William Cannif. History of the settlement of Upper Canada. Mika Publishing Company, Canadiana Reprint Series #1, 4th edition, 1971, pp.187-188.

³³ Canada Census, 1851 and 1861

³⁴ Burbidge. The changing role of transportation, p. 41

³⁵ Patricia Fletcher Lutman. An historical approach to the physical and cultural geography of the Tiny-Tay (Penetanguishene) Peninsula. Thesis, Michigan University, 1982, p. 169.

³⁶ C. Todd. "General remarks on the climate of Penetang" in Sir John Franklin, 1786-1847. Appendix # 2, p. cvii.

habitant farmers harvested 1,594 bushels of potatoes on 18 acres of land, that is, 88.5 bushels per acre, while the voyageurs only produce 1,368 bushels on 35 acres, in other words 39 bushels per acre. Habitant farmer crop yields are nearly always superior when compared to those of the voyageurs. For example, a lone voyageur descendant harvests 200 bushels of turnips compared to 11 habitant farmers who produce 4,840 bushels; 15 habitant farmers produce 1,268 bushels of peas, 2.72 times more than the 465 bushels of the 15 voyageur descendants; 16 habitant farmers produce 4,391 bushels of oats, 2.31 times more than the 1,895 bushels harvested by the 15 voyageur descendants; 15 habitant farmers harvest 1,681 bushels of spring wheat, 1.99 times more than the 842 bushels produced by voyageur descendants. The habitant farmers also have more cattle, sheep, and milking cows. Xavier Desroches alone owns a herd of 50 milking cows. The Lafontaine farmers also produce more butter (2,107 pounds by 18 habitant farmers compared to 823 pounds by 11 voyageur descendants) and they produce more wool than the voyageur descendants³⁷. These differences are so sizeable that they cannot be solely attributable to a variation in soil quality or the interest in this type of agricultural work.

In 1850, the average size of a farm in Tiny Township is 66 acres, with an annual crop yield of 106 bushels. Root crops account for 25% of total production and grain crops the other 75%. However, farmers cannot mill their grain easily since the nearest mill is in Midhurst (near Barrie)³⁸.

Therefore, owing to the numerous difficulties, the lack of transportation that would allow the rapid export of agricultural produce, and the limited resources of the farmers (size of cleared lots, manpower, tools), this production serves only to meet local needs. Secondary roads are thus adequate for supporting this subsistence agriculture economy which can function even though it is cut off from the outside. The nature of the subsistence economy implies an inherent lack of cash money. Nevertheless, the main occupation of people in Simcoe County between 1820 and 1866 remains working the land³⁹. The residents of Lafontaine, in addition to their precarious situation, live in a very isolated fashion. Notwithstanding this, a few individuals show signs of relative prosperity. For example, in the 1871 census, Constant Marchildon is listed as the owner of: 285 acres of land, the only two sleighs or cutters in Lafontaine, four stables and barns, four cars or wagons, farm machinery, and a boat; he also employs three men who fish for him⁴⁰.

In contrast to the situation among the voyageurs, no one person in the community of Lafontaine takes on, in any visible manner, the role of community leader. If there are any people in the community who wielded more power or influence than the others, they are not mentioned in local annals.

The agricultural way of life, reinforced by isolation and the poor means of transportation of the time, naturally foster a family-centered society.

5.4 The Services

The Church has always been at the centre of parish life in Lafontaine. This explains why the community's history is, above all, a parish history.

The elements that form the basis of the legend of the Lafontaine wolf (*Le Loup de Lafontaine*), penned by Father Thomas Marchildon, bring to light the deep internal divisions that exist in this parish made-up of clans corresponding to the various groups of settlers each originating from a particular area of the province of Quebec. Nevertheless, the fact remains that religion plays a central role in the settlement of Lafontaine.

At first, the residents must travel to Penetanguishene to obtain religious services. However, starting in 1850, Amable Charest occasionally says mass in the house of a settler in Lafontaine⁴¹. Father Frémiot will carry on this practice, noting on April 4, 1854 that: "I will spend this week in

³⁷ Canada Census, 1871.

³⁸ Marchildon. La Huronie, p. 71.

³⁹ Burbidge. The changing role of transportation, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁰ Canada Census, 1871.

⁴¹ Marchildon. La Huronie, p. 91.

the concessions”⁴² (our translation). Father Amable Charest establishes the parish of Sainte-Croix in 1850 and, in 1856, a church 30 by 40 feet in dimension is constructed. The land for the church is donated by Charles Vallée and Antoine Lafrenière who both offer three quarters of an acre for the building of this chapel⁴³.

Finally, in 1857, Father Claude Ternet becomes the parish priest and opens the church register, which is poorly kept since the priest notes all of the records in a disorderly manner⁴⁴. The same year, 1857, Father Claude Ternet leaves Lafontaine, and the bishop appoints Father Lebeaudy to the church in Penetanguishene; Sainte-Croix becomes once again a mission of the church in Penetanguishene up until 1861, when Father Louis Étienne-Marie Gibra arrives.

The new priest reopens the register, closed for the last four years, expands the church by nine meters, and adds a sacristy where he resides. He also has a chapel built on Christian Island and in another neighbouring community (which will later become Perkinsfield)⁴⁵. Despite these improvements, the clergyman’s day-to-day life remains hand-to-mouth. Nevertheless, Father Gibra writes to Bishop Lynch that he is doing well in spite of a bad financial year:

Still I will have enough for me, since I have no house keeper to pay because I have no house of mine, and above all because Mr Deschenaux keeps me gratis [...] As my Church is not much warmer than an open barn, it is no longer possible for me to celebrate mass in it on weekdays⁴⁶.

Father Gibra remains in Sainte-Croix until 1871 and, following the arrival of his successor, Father Joseph Michel, Lafontaine will undergo a period of considerable building.

Walking remains the only efficient method of transportation in Lafontaine due to the primitive condition of the roads. The first trail linking Penetanguishene to the north of Tiny Township is opened up in 1833⁴⁷. The actual building of roads suitable to horse-drawn carriages will only come later. In the meantime, the railway reaches the county and offers local producers a way to access outside markets. However, the arrival of this new method of transportation has little impact on the farmers in the north of the county who continue to sell their produce to the local villages⁴⁸.

In 1856, a post office is opened in Lafontaine⁴⁹. Around 1856, Toussaint Moreau attempts to establish a school in Lafontaine but, despite his efforts: “Many were never able to read nor write. They lived too far from the school, were scared of the bears and the wolves lurking in the woods, or had too many stumps to pull out...”⁵⁰ (our translation).

No doubt they would have been able to benefit from a public education if they had not had so much work to do. Education is not a priority for the community even if few of the residents are able to sign their name, as pointed out by Father Henri Brunet who writes that, in Lafontaine “[...] few people are sufficiently literate to sign the Sainte-Croix church registry prior to 1897”⁵¹. Starting in 1868, on two occasions during a five year period, Charles Picotte, originally from Saint-Polycarpe, Quebec, holds classes for the children of Lafontaine who are able to attend⁵².

No document mentions any other services available in Lafontaine at that time. When the farmers are in need of specialized services they no doubt travel to Penetanguishene.

⁴² Letter from Father Frémiot, April 4, 1854, in AAT, AB 10.06.

⁴³ Marchildon. *Verner et Lafontaine*, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁴ Letter to Father Ternet, August 21, 1856, in AAT, AB 12.54.

⁴⁵ Sainte-Croix Parish. *Lafontaine*, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Letter from Louis Gibra, December 28, 1861, in AAT, AH 06.04.

⁴⁷ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 58.

⁴⁸ Burbidge. *The changing role of transportation*, p. 107.

⁴⁹ Nick Mika et Helma Mika. *Places in Ontario*. Belleville, 1983. Hereinafter: Mika. *Places in Ontario*.

⁵⁰ Henri Brunet. *Notes historiques sur la paroisse Sainte-Croix de Lafontaine*, unpublished manuscript, 1924-1936, p. 68. Hereinafter: Brunet. *Notes*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵² Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 157.

5.5 Social Behaviour

The inhabitants of Lafontaine settle and live peacefully on their land, reproducing the society they left behind. Contrary to the voyageurs, they have little contact with people from the outside. To begin with, even if an individual has the desire to travel outside the community, the length of the trip required acts as a disincentive. A simple trip to Penetanguishene, a distance of approximately 15 kilometres (more for some people), along rough roads often impassable, especially in winter, requires a few hours.

Nevertheless, before religious services are held in Lafontaine itself, people must travel to Penetanguishene to attend mass, and a few of them, forced to arrive on Saturday, sleep over at the homes of relatives⁵³. Thus, the trips “into town” are basically reserved for obtaining supplies. As well, their work as farmers, which requires a daily presence, a sedentary lifestyle, does not encourage the area’s residents to move about, condemning them to a life withdrawn into themselves, isolated from the outside world.

The residents of Lafontaine continue to cherish their religious beliefs and their baptism, marriage, and funeral customs. The observance of the sacraments rises gradually with the population since, in 1867, for example, there are 52 baptisms and, in 1871, 75⁵⁴ (see Appendix J).

However, Father Thomas Marchildon writes that: “One could not easily go from one group to the other”⁵⁵ (our translation). Thus, marriages between individuals from the different groups of settlers from Quebec, established a few kilometres one from the other, remain isolated events and this phenomenon encourages people to be withdrawn. On the other hand, seen from the outside, Sainte-Croix parish offers the picture of an extremely cohesive community, no doubt due to its homogeneous francophone nature. In 1860, the parishioners come together to welcome the bishop who describes the event in the following way:

[...] this population all of which are French and Catholic, with just a few exceptions, [...] of 300 inhabitants, in keeping with the customs of Lower Canada, gave us a magnificent reception, a long avenue of trees had been planted with an arch of triumph of greenery decorated with ribbons and [samièse?], a throne had been erected for us on the left side of the altar, the entire population drawn in two rows, with the reverend Father Canady [Kennedy] at the front, was waiting for us⁵⁶ (our translation).

Nevertheless, some internal divisions come to the surface. For instance, around 1870, the choice of a location for the new church inspires both some hope and some anger, since speculation surrounding the site that will eventually be chosen leads to a rise in the property values of the nearby lots. Some hope to see the new temple built on the old site, while others suggest that the church be moved to Randolph (the highest point of land in the area, situated two kilometers south and to the east of the village). It seems that part of a lot in Randolph was even partially cleared for this purpose. Misunderstandings on the matter continue until the archbishop settles the question and chooses the site⁵⁷ where the church still stands today.

During the 1920s, parish priest Henri Brunet comments on the differences that he still perceives in the “attitude and manners” of the people in his parish. He characterizes the group living in the village itself (the descendants of those that were part of the first wave of settlers), as confident; those living in Laurin (the descendants of the second wave of settlers), as endowed with simple manners and customs; and those in Randolph (the descendants of the third wave of settlers),

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵⁴ Brunet. *Notes*, p. 49.

⁵⁵ Thomas Marchildon. *Le loup de Lafontaine*. Sudbury: La Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario, # 29, 1945, p. 4.

Hereinafter: Marchildon. *Le loup*.

⁵⁶ Notebook of Bishop de Charbonnel, June 23, 1860, pp. 2-4, in AAT, LB 11.

⁵⁷ Marchildon. *La Huronie*, p. 72.

as being more open to the world of business⁵⁸. The considerable distances between the farms acts as an obstacle to the unity of the parish.

One of the richest documents dealing with the people of Lafontaine remains without a doubt the legend, *Le Loup de Lafontaine* (The Wolf of Lafontaine), written in 1955. The story, which takes place at the very beginning of the 20th century, shows the old internal divisions within the parish. The community finally rallies together when confronted by its fear of the common enemy that is terrorizing it, the wolf. The story uses the real life names of some of the people that were actually participants in this historical drama.

One anecdote contained in the legend is most revealing about the differences between the settlers from the province of Quebec and those descended from the voyageur and Métis group. It presents a scene where there is a confrontation between Colbert Tessier, an habitant farmer, and François Labatte, a Métis. During the previous night, the wolf has massacred 40 of Tessier's sheep, and the tracks near the scene of this carnage lead the farmers to believe that one of François's dogs is the culprit. Colbert and Philéas Beupré therefore go to Thunder Bay Beach to confront François, the grandson of one of the first inhabitants of the area. Here is the dialogue that ensues:

“My dogs stayed tied up all night”, argued François.

“That's what you say”, replied Colbert.

“Do you take me for a liar?” asked François.

“A fisherman or a liar, they are one and the same thing”, spat back Colbert.

François rose to his feet, threatening:

“Habitant farmers that spend their whole day wading around in muck and dung dare to insult me on my own land!”⁵⁹ (our translation).

This excerpt clearly shows the lack of understanding, even the prejudices that exist between the sons of the habitant and the descendants of the voyageurs and Métis who, as illustrated in the last reply, have a certain contempt for farm work.

At another level, anglophones are quick to point out the fact that the people of Lafontaine don't speak English. This, at any rate, is the comment that crops up the most often in their various written works⁶⁰. Even in the 20th century, the francophone character of Lafontaine still continues to surprise anglophone writers. In *Georgian Bay*, James Barry writes, in 1968:

Here old people and children speak no English and others speak it only when they do business with outsiders. The village is the centre of a French farming area and the location of the parish church. Some of the older houses are true HABITANT cabins, made of squared logs which formerly were white washed every spring to preserve them⁶¹.

The same comment appears again in 1981 in *Places in Ontario*: “Lafontaine survived into the twentieth century as the only settlement of any size where English was not spoken”⁶².

The arrival in 1871 of Father Joseph Michel, “the builder” heralds an era of religious construction projects: a new church, presbytery, and chapel in Perkinsfield.

However, the agricultural and forest industry economy of the area develop slowly, even if at least one man, Frederick Ingall, foresees early on the region's tourism potential. Ingall presents his vision, when, in the middle of the 19th century, he writes that one day, the lands will be:

⁵⁸ Brunet. *Notes*, p. 54.

⁵⁹ Marchildon. *Le loup*, pp.11-12.

⁶⁰ Elmes Henderson. “Some notes on a visit to Penetanguishene and the Georgian Bay in 1856”, in *OHSPR* vol. 28, 1932, p. 31.

⁶¹ James Barry. *Georgian Bay, the Sixth Lake*. Toronto, 1968.

⁶² Mika. *Places in Ontario*.

[...] sought after as a desirable “locale” for the residence of families of small independant property wishing to enjoy the most saluticious (sic) air, purest water and decidedly most beautiful scenery in Upper Canada, particularly should greater facilities be afforded of communicating with Toronto⁶³.

This transition will take nearly another whole century to become a reality; and when it does occur, beginning in the second half of the 19th century it will irrevocably transform the local economy.

⁶³ Ingall Fonds, p. 11.

Conclusion

As we have seen in the previous pages, the French-Canadian settlement of Huronia contains some most interesting characteristics. Two very different groups accomplished this settlement: the group of voyageurs and Métis who are forced into exile, first from Mackinac Island when it is given back to the Americans, and then later from Drummond Island, to begin settling in Penetanguishene after 1825; and the group of Canadian farmers in search of fertile land who start coming to the area in the 1840s. The first group retained the greater part of our attention. From a way of life characterized by frequent travels and a dependency on the fur trade, its members went to a sedentary lifestyle, progressively influenced by a White society and an active clergy in an area where the significance of the fur-trading economy quickly declined.

Thus, during the first half of the 19th century, the area has little to offer the settlers almost as if, ultimately, it was waiting for the boom that the lumber industry would create. This brings us back to our initial question: why did the voyageurs and Métis come to settle in this isolated and changing area, and how do they behave once they are here, and this in light of the experience of the Lower Canadian settlers who come after them in the 1840s.

Isolation weighs heavily on the economic situation of Huronia, which finds itself on the periphery of populated centres. Transportation by boat is practically undeveloped and the state of the roads is poor. Traveling to Huronia remains a difficult exercise, as is getting about in the immediate area itself; both types of trips demand considerable time. The lack of means of transportation and the geographic situation are such that farming and any other activities that require access to markets outside the area remain wrought with great difficulties.

In addition to the area's isolation, few services that could eventually help attract settlers are offered since, prior to their arrival, Huronia is for all practical purposes, a virgin, nearly uninhabited land.

By examining the main characteristics of the voyageur group and the way its members settle in the area, we have been able to see how this group adapts to a changing economic context as well as the problems that arise from its socialization. Applying the same analytical criteria to the other francophone group that settles in the Penetanguishene area at about the same time, that is the settlers from Lower Canada, has allowed us to make a comparison that highlights the particular nature of the voyageur group and its reaction to the new social and economic climate that develops around it.

In the case of both groups, coming to settle in the area involves being separated from their respective cultural homelands. The farmers from Lower Canada leave their villages to come and live in an anglophone environment, far from the institutions and the way of life they have known previously. For their part, the voyageurs, when they accept to come to Penetanguishene, cut themselves off from their former way of life closely linked to the fur trade. Upon their arrival in the area, these new settlers must content themselves with lots that are insufficient in both size and quality. Thus the voyageurs accept 20 acre lots in an area that is not very fertile, even though many other settlers elsewhere in the province had received land grants as big as 200 acres¹.

The inhabitants of Lafontaine also encounter their share of difficulties: the first to arrive stake out the best lands, and the others have to settle for lots in less fertile areas. The lack of available lands, a problem triggered by a population explosion and the farming practices in Lower Canada, encourage them to move and leave their extended families behind. But do they achieve their goals? The answer is yes, but only partly, because as early as the 1870s, a number of people living in Lafontaine move to the Canadian prairies and the United States once again because fertile lands have become rare, but this time in Lafontaine². A generation later, they therefore find themselves faced with the same problem that pushed them to move from Lower Canada.

¹ Lillian Gates. Land Policies of Upper Canada. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 105.

² Henri Brunet. Notes historiques sur la Paroisse Sainte-Croix de Lafontaine. Unpublished manuscript, 1924-1936, p. 37.

It is relevant to note that the main motivation for the settlers to come to Huronia is a lack of alternatives. The choice of the voyageurs rests mostly with a governmental decision: if they turn down the lots offered to them by the Crown, they will end up with nothing. The habitant farmers of Lafontaine, encouraged to some extent by Father Charest, move here in order to find new farming land. It is possible to think that they may have been ill informed as to the actual situation in Huronia or that they believed, at least in part, in a type of prosperous future mythology. In the 19th century, the clergy of Quebec was preaching a certain message that sought to promote the duty of pioneering and the prosperity the latter would entail. The influence that this discourse could have had on these people cannot be ignored.

The new settlers take up lands in Tiny Township, between the 14th and 21st concessions, while the voyageurs and Métis have already occupied lots on the east side of the Tiny Peninsula.

In Lafontaine, the economy is supported by agriculture, and its products are not exported outside the immediate area because of limited output, isolation, and a poor transportation network. Agriculture has remained the economic pillar of the Lafontaine area up until recently. In contrast, Penetanguishene will adapt to a lumber based economy, beginning as early as in the second half of the 19th century, to ultimately enter into a more industrial economic era in the 20th century. But in the meantime, its economy depends on a few small businesses and, even more, on the presence of the Naval and Military Establishments.

The rudimentary nature of Huronia's economy during the first half of the 19th century must, of course, be considered in relation to the subsistence type of agriculture practiced by the farmers of Lafontaine. In the case of the voyageurs and Métis in Penetanguishene, these agents of the fur trade lose their main bread-winning occupation. The trade in furs in Huronia, as is the case elsewhere, is no longer of the same magnitude as it was further north at the beginning of the 19th century.

The voyageurs and habitant farmers who come to reside in the north part of the Tiny Peninsula live next to each other but do not mix. Both groups share a common territory and language; both will spawn numerous French-speaking descendants. Nevertheless, they will remain quite different in their culture and behaviour. Originating from two different societies, they come to form, in their land of adoption, two distinct societies that react differently to their new environment.

The origins and social nature of the inhabitants of Lafontaine on the one hand, and of the voyageurs, on the other, attract the members of each group towards different occupations. The occupations of the voyageurs (hunters, guides...) give them the opportunity to retain a nomadic lifestyle. The habitant farmers, limited by the constraints of farming life, are accustomed to a stable existence with a set routine. The voyageurs, who nevertheless try to farm their lands, don't succeed as well as the settlers from Lower Canada. This shortcoming cannot be solely attributable to their inexperience.

The citizens of Penetanguishene have at their disposal a range of services rendered necessary by the presence of the Naval and Military Base. As well, the transportation networks favour Penetanguishene when compared to those that link Lafontaine with the rest of the world which are not as well developed. The people of Lafontaine can travel to Penetanguishene to take advantage of these services, but this entails, as we have seen, a number of difficulties.

The priests working in Lafontaine report less "religious" problems than those in Penetanguishene. The Lafontaine priests very rarely seek advice or dispensations from the bishop. The numerous requests relating to St. Anne's parishioners point to a much lower degree of social conformity among the voyageurs and Métis who accept or adapt more or less to the new rules imposed on them by the clergy, a moral code that the habitant farmers are, moreover, already accustomed to adhering to.

The mentality of the people varies considerably between the two groups. The voyageurs and Métis, accustomed to a life with frequent travels, develop the taste for adventure as opposed to a sedentary life. They are people with a broader knowledge of the world, no doubt the result of their contact with inhabitants of different areas of North America, a contact which gives them a better appreciation of human relations. They participate in the War of 1812, in large part to defend

the fur trade, in other words their way of life. And they develop a view of things that is more open than that of their neighbours in Lafontaine whose existence, deeply rooted in their environment, rarely depends on outside situations or contacts. Also, the fact that the habitant farmers speak mostly French limits their potential contacts with the “outside” world.

Lastly, the voyageur and Métis are the product of the fusion of two civilizations, of First Nations people on the one hand, and of people of European extraction on the other, while the habitant farmers of Lafontaine adopt a traditional agrarian lifestyle of European origin.

In summary, the francophones descended from the Métis and voyageurs can be proud of an illustrious past. Unfortunately, the inescapable conclusion is that, up until now, they have, from an historical perspective, been neglected by the local French fact. Considered with contempt by both their Anglo-Saxon masters and their French-Canadian neighbours, they have never been given the place they deserve in our history. Even today, the Historical Naval and Military Establishments are still making no effort to present the intimate relation that existed between the military and their only neighbours—and often employees—the voyageurs.*

Whether people are aware of the historical, economic and cultural contribution of these two groups or not, it remains that their coming to Huronia has given Simcoe County a particular colour. The habitant farmers of Lafontaine and the francophone Métis and voyageurs will settle in the area in a parallel manner, without ever coming together. The Lafontaine area, for its part, bears the stamp of its ancestors; francophones in Lafontaine were able to resist assimilation for a longer time due to their isolation which persisted up until as recently as the 1950s.

Among the voyageurs, the situation is different, since in their case there is a high degree of adaptation. Much in the same way as the parents of European ancestry of the Penetanguishene Métis voyageurs underwent adaptation to life in the fur country and the First Nations lifestyle, the voyageurs in Huronia will become integrated into the anglophone environment that surrounds them, an environment that is essential to their economic survival. Their capacity to adapt allowed the voyageurs to survive and become socially integrated. But it also contributed to their acculturation. Thus, in Penetanguishene, in the 19th century, they convert to the “orthodox” religion and, in the 20th century, many adopt English as their main language (to the detriment of the French and First Nation languages) in order to better ensure their social integration.

* Author’s note: this was certainly the case in 1989. In 2006, it can be said that this historical site, now called Discovery Harbour, is showing more interest in this regard. In collaboration with local Métis association partners, it held its first ever Métis Day on August 12, 2006.

Appendix A**The first lots officially registered by voyageurs included in A. C. Osborne's list of voyageurs**

lot	registration date (month, day, year)	type of grant	name of owner
-14 2nd range (Tiny) res. Penetang	02 27 1834	full fees	Jacques Adam
-1/2 16 & 17 conc. 15 (Tiny) res. Penetang	02 28 1835	military/ militia	Cuthbert Amiotte
-park lot 24 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Pierre Blett
-park lot 26 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Louis Blett
-16 2nd range res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Goderoi Boyer
-park lot 27 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Joseph Carron
-park lot 28 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Joseph Carron jr.
-1/2 north 99 (Tiny)	11 21 1822	-----	Louis Corbier
-1/2 south 99 (Tiny)	11 21 1822	-----	Louis Corbier
-1/2 south 99 res. Nottawasaga	07 27 1820	military/ militia	Louis Corbière
-1/2 north 99	07 28 1820	reg. 1/1/1820	Louis Corbière
-1/2 west, 9 conc. 18 (Tiny)	05 04 1871	sale	Charles Cotte
-21, conc. 1 res. Penetang	03 14 1839	full fees	J-B Croteau
-10 1st range res. Penetang	02 27 1834	full fees	Louis Descheneau

...Appendice A continues

lot	registration date (month/day/year)	type of grant	name of owner
-1/2 south, 16 conc. 16 (Tiny)	04 09 1834	sale	Louis Descheneau
-park lot 23 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Joseph Desjardin
-1/4 n-e, lot 8 conc.14 (Tiny) res. Penetang	11 21 1833	military/ militia	Louis Desognier
-1/4 n-e, lot 8 conc. 14 (Tiny)	10 20 1835	military/	Louis Desognier
-1/2 south & 1/4 n-e lot 13, conc. 15 (Tiny) res. Penetang	02 28 1835	military/ militia	Louis Desognier
-1/2 south & 1/4 n-e lot 13, conc. 15 (Tiny) res. Penetang	10 20 1835	military	Louis Desognier
-park lot 17 res. Penetang	08 26 1811	full fees	Étienne Fréchette
-21 south Water res. Penetang	06 11 1849	full fees	Joseph Friesmith
-3, conc 2	02 21 1839	full fees	Pierre Gerroux jr.
-1/2 north, 16 conc. 18 (Tiny)	12 16 1865	rental	Abrois Labatt
-5, conc. 1 res. Penetang	04 29 1835	full fees	Lewis Labatte
-1/2 south, 16 conc. 17 (Tiny)	03 19 1836	military/ militia	Louis G. Labatte
-1/2 north, 16 conc. 16 (Tiny)	09 30 1839	sale	John LaCroix
-1/2 south, 16 conc. 18 (Tiny)	01 22 1866	rental	John Lacroix

-1/2 south, 16 conc. 18 (Tiny)	06 19 1867	sale	John Lacroix
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...Appendice A continues

lot	registration date (month/day/year)	type of grant	name of owner
-Tiny, Park and Town lot res. Penetang	03 10 1834	full fees	Pierre Lacroix
-Tiny, Park lot 35, west bay res. Penetang	02 27 1834	full fees	Charles Langlade senior
-33 Park lot res. Penetang	03 05 1835	full fees	Charles Langlade jr.
-1/2 north, 12 conc. 16 (Tiny)	07 20 1837	sale/clergy	Jacques Laramé
-park lot 20 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Louis Lasert
-Tiny Park, lot 5 res. King	04 10 1834	full fees	Denis Lavallé
-park lot 32 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Prisque La Gris
-11 1st range res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Prisque LeGris
-Tiny Park, lot 36, west bay res. Tiny	02 27 1834	full fees	Pierre Lepin
-13 2nd range res. Penetang	11 27 1834	full fees	Louis Lépine
-1/2 north, 16 conc. 16 (Tiny)	04 07 1834	sale	Joseph Mecier
-1/2 north, lot 12 conc. 14 (Tiny)	04 24 1851	clergy	Joseph Minsier
-1/2 east, 9 conc. 18 (Tiny)	04 -- 1867	rental	J. Missier

-21, conc. 15 (Tiny)	01 -- 1864	rental	David Mitchell
-1/2 south, 13 conc. 17 (Tiny)	11 25 1836	military/ militia	Jacques Parisian

...Appendice A continues

lot	registration date (month/day/year)	type of grant	name of owner
-Tiny 09 1st range res. Penetang	02 27 1834	full fees	Louis Payette
-Tiny 14 1st range res. Penetang	05 09 1834	full fees	Joseph Peltier
-12 Park lot res. Penetang	03 05 1835	full fees	Cyril Pombird
-9 2nd range res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Augustin Pricour
-park lot 39 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Joseph Recolle
-park lot 39 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Joseph Recolle
-18 1st range res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Dédin Révol
-park lot 22 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Pierre Rolland
-1 park lot res. Penetang	03 05 1835	full fees	Joseph Roy
-6, conc. 1 res. Penetang	02 28 1835	full fees	Joseph Roy
-park lot 41 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Francis Secord
-park lot 6 res. Penetang	06 30 1834	full fees	Charles Vasseur
-1/2 north, lot 18 conc. 15 (Tiny) res. Tiny	12 12 1839	military/ militia	Lori Vasseur

-1/2 north, 79W 08 29 1831
(Tiny)
Penetang Rd

military/
militia

J-B Vasseur

Source: Archives of Ontario, Ontario Land Records Index – Tiny Township and municipality of Penetanguishene (microfiches # 062 and 051)

N.B. A. C. Osborne seems to have omitted a few voyageur names, such as George Gordon, David Mitchell, and William Simpson, probably because the latter are either partly or completely of British ancestry.

Appendix B

The Origins of the wives of the voyageurs in Penetanguishene prior to 1870 and after 1870

Sons of voyageurs who marry:	Before 1870	After 1870	TOTAL
Daughters of voyageurs	32	25	57
Women from Lafontaine	4	2	6
Francophone women with other origins	16	37	53
Anglophone women	3	4	7

Source: figures compiled from the *Répertoire de mariages* (Marriage registry) published by the *Société franco-ontarienne d'histoire et de généalogie* (Franco-Ontarian Historical and Genealogical Society) and from data taken from the 1860-1861 Census.

Appendix C

The “spiritual” statistics for the Penetanguishene Parish, as presented by Father John P. Kennedy, in 1863

11	Attached to the Church of Ste Anne at Penetanguishene there are 600 souls. In the Reformatory 34. Total, adults & children 634.	
21	Baptisms performed by me	1860 26 1861 27 1862 44
31	Confirmations 1 Episcopal visitation	40
41	Marriages	1860 1 1861 3 1862 2
51	Deaths	1860 1 1861 5 1862 8
61	Dispensations of Consanguinity	none
71	Mixed Marriages	none
81	Easter Communions, —about 240 yearly	
91	Hardened Sinners—about 16	
101	Conversions to the faith—3	

Source: Document AH 08.05, Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

Appendix D

The population of Tiny and Tay Townships from 1831 to 1838

year	men over 16		women over 16		men under 16		women under 16		Total	
1831	105		71		71		82		329	
1832	105		82		80		94		361	
1833	85		63		74		70		292	
1834	90		96		106		109		401	
1835	117		123		133		136		509	
1836	196		186		186		179		765	
	Tiny Tay		Tiny Tay		Tiny Tay		Tiny Tay		Tiny Tay	
1837	49	109	55	120	68	131	50	211	222	460
1838	77	13	69	19	86	25	61	19	293	81

Source: Population counts published in the Journals of the Upper Canada House of Assembly, 1831 to 1838.

Appendix E

The population of Tiny and Tay Townships and of Penetanguishene from 1851 to 1891

Year	Men			Women			TOTAL		
	Tiny	Tay	Penetang	Tiny	Tay	Penetang	Tiny	Tay	Penetang
1851	379	333		369	267			748	
1861*	1,631			1,255				2,886	
1871	1,636	867		1,578	762		3,214	1,629	
1881	1,970	1,577	537	1,766	1,416	552	3,736	2,993	1,089
1891	2,445	2,488	1,074	2,339	2,226	1,036	4,784	4,714	2,110

*Tiny and Tay were enumerated together in 1861.

Source: Canada Census, 1851, 1861 and 1871.

Appendix F

Lots in Tiny Township by size in 1851, 1861, and 1871

	1851	1861	1871
TOTAL	135	126	408
10 acres and less	30 (22.2%)	2 (1.5%)	47 (11.5%)
10 – 20 acres	20 (14.8%)	3 (2.3%)	168 (41.1%)
20 – 50 acres	29 (21.4%)	53 (42%)	
50 – 100 acres	39 (28.8%)	57 (45.2%)	143 (35%)
100 – 200 acres	17 (12.5%)	7 (5.5%)	43 (10.5%)
More than 200 acres	--	4 (3.1%)	7 (1.7%)

Source: Canada Census, 1851, 1861, and 1871.

Appendix G

The number of land owners of French origin and English origin in Tiny Township (14th to 21st concessions), and in the municipality of Penetanguishene between 1831 and 1871

Year	Tiny (Lafontaine) 14th to 21st concessions			Penetanguishene			TOTAL
	English	French	Total	English	French	Total	
1831	23	1	24	--	--	--	24
1841	96	8	104	30	38	68	172
1851	122	15	137	47	37	84	221
1861	135	16	151	104	36	140	291
1871	161	44	205	120	46	166	371

Source: Figures compiled from data contained in the Archives of Ontario, Ontario Land Records Index, Tiny Township and the municipality of Penetanguishene, microfiches # 062 and 051.

Appendix H

Place of origin of the first land owners of lots in Tiny Township (14th to 21st concessions) and in the municipality of Penetanguishene

Location	Voyageurs	Penetang area	Toronto	elsewhere	not indicated	TOTAL
Penetanguishene	46	42	40	16	74	218
Tiny (14th to 21st concessions)	21	8	6	77	84	196

Source: Figures compiled from data contained in the Archives of Ontario, Ontario Land Records Index, Tiny Township and the municipality of Penetanguishene, microfiches # 062 and 051.

Appendix I

Francophone Population in the Township of Tiny in 1851, 1861, and 1871

Year	Place	Total no. of francophones	Population
1851-1852	Tiny	411	748
1861	Tiny-Tay	750	1,901
1870-1871	Tiny	1,807	3,214

Source: Figures compiled from data contained in the Census for the years 1851, 1861, and 1871.

Notes regarding the source material

Primary sources used in our research can be divided into three categories: firstly, the Canada Census, secondly, the land registry records for Simcoe County, held at the Land Registry Office in Barrie, as well as the Land Registry Index for the Township of Tiny and Penetanguishene that are kept in the Ontario Archives, and thirdly, there is the period correspondence of people of the time which can be found at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto, the Public Archives of Canada, and at the Huronia Historical Parks Resource Centre*. Each one of these sources contains information relating to the voyageur group or the habitant group, but the fact that they also lack important information has to be taken into consideration.

The Canada Census records that are relevant to our study (1825 - 1871) are those for the years 1851, 1861, and 1871. Population statistics for the years prior to these dates can only be obtained from the population counts published in the Journals of the Upper Canada House of Assembly, since, with the exception of the general results for 1842, there is no census of the Township of Tiny prior to 1851¹.

The figures contained in the nominal Census of 1871 allow us to assess the situation of the two groups at the end of their respective settlement periods. The index of the 1871 Census contains certain surnames of both groups, even though the authors of this compilation, done for Simcoe County by the Ontario Genealogical Society, recognize that there were many transcription errors made by the enumerators at the time in relation to francophone and First Nations names; this may explain why many relevant names seem to have been omitted from this source.

The Simcoe County land registry and the Ontario Archives land registry index for their part, give us the names of the first land owners, their origin, the date the lot was registered, the size of the lot, and the type of grant. This data served to determine the nature and period of the settlement of the two groups. Regarding this source, it should be pointed out that the land registry contains an anomaly. Prior to the incorporation of Penetanguishene as a town in 1875, the lots occupied by the voyageurs on the west side of Penetanguishene Bay are in Tiny Township. However, following the incorporation of the municipality, these lots fall within the boundaries of Penetanguishene. We therefore had to search in the land registry records filed under Penetanguishene to find information about these lots, even though the census data for the inhabitants of these same lots on the west side of Penetanguishene Bay are found under Tiny Township.

The third category, period correspondence, includes letters and petitions written by individuals that lived in the area in the 19th century. These documents include the letters of various priests who resided in Penetanguishene and Lafontaine, held at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto. The other documents in this category are taken from the collections of the Huronia Historical Parks Resource Centre. However, generally speaking, francophones at this time, often illiterate, wrote very little. For this reason, the details gleaned from this source are written by outside observers and not members of the two groups studied. Notwithstanding this, there is the case of George Gordon, a voyageur from Drummond Island, whose correspondence contains many letters with a religious bias written to him by his friend, Dédin Révol. The other period documents, written mostly by clergymen or by anglophones, also demonstrate a particular bias that one must take into account. We should also note that all of the documents in this category are written by men. Thus, both among the voyageurs and the habitant farmers, the point of view of the women living at this time is totally lacking.

There are very few documents pertaining to the habitant farmers of Lafontaine. Most of the sources consulted thus relate to the voyageur group, which is in contact with a larger number of people: government officials, military personnel, and merchants.

* This Centre no longer exists, and its collections are now held in the Bayfield Room of the Penetanguishene Public Library.

¹ Thomas A. Hillman, compiler. Catalogue of Census returns on microfilm 1666-1891. Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1987, p. 251.

Owing to the lack of primary sources, it was necessary to consult a number of secondary source documents that nevertheless contained much useful information. Firstly, it should be pointed out that there are very few books that deal specifically with this area. *La Huronie*, a textbook written by Daniel Marchildon, is the only book that presents the history of the local francophone population. The rigorous nature of this work gives it credibility.

Gestes français en terre ontarienne, Épopée française à la baie Georgienne, 1610-1956, by Father Alonzo Gobeil, is a most interesting document. This unpublished manuscript has a definite religious bias and, unfortunately, sometimes lacks accuracy. It is therefore to be used with caution.

Father Thomas Marchildon has written a short, partial history of Lafontaine, that is part of a publication entitled *Verner et Lafontaine*. He also penned *Le Loup de Lafontaine*, a legend based on an historical event, which presents the attitudes that were prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century. In both these publications, despite the clarity of his writing, Father Marchildon sometimes allows himself to be influenced by his religious point of view.

The Migration of Voyageurs from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene in 1828, published in the Ontario Historical Society, Papers and Records, necessarily constitutes the major source for any research on the voyageurs of the area. In this lengthy article, A. C. Osborne transcribes a number of narratives of voyageurs from Drummond Island and, despite a few errors in the names given, he remains the only author to have attempted to compile a complete list of the voyageurs. This list is not totally objective and the author, who omits certain voyageurs, notably George Gordon, perhaps because he doesn't wish to associate the names of White anglophones with Métis, First Nations, and francophone voyageurs, shows that he has some biases.

The marriage registries compiled by the *Société franco-ontarienne d'histoire et de généalogie*, (Franco-Ontarian historical and genealogical society) for their part, also give us useful information such as the names of the couples' parents and the marriage dates. However, one must take into account that this source contains only those individuals who were married by the Catholic Church in Huronia.

The registry of baptisms for the parishes of Sainte-Croix, St. Anne and Saint-Patrick, compiled by the *Société généalogique de la Huronie* (Huronie Genealogical Society), would normally have allowed us to calculate the birth rate for these parishes at different periods. However, this source seems to contain significant errors, so it could not be used. While comparing the figures compiled from this registry with those of Father John P. Kennedy for the same years, we discovered a very significant discrepancy between the two. For example, in 1863, Father Kennedy in Penetanguishene informs his bishop that he baptized 26 people in 1860, 27 in 1861, and 44 in 1862, while the number of baptisms that are listed in the registry is only 16 for 1860, 15 for 1861, and 12 for 1862. Nevertheless, in Lafontaine, the discrepancy in the figures is not as large: for 1867, Father Henri Brunet lists 52 baptisms, 66 the next year, and 71 for 1869. The numbers we calculated using those supplied in the registry give us: 50 in 1867, 60 in 1868, and 65 in 1869. The discrepancy in the first example raises questions as to the accuracy of the registry since Father John Kennedy must surely have known the exact number of baptisms he performed.

In summary, despite the incomplete nature of the data contained in the primary sources and the numerous biases noted, these sources nevertheless supplied us with enough firsthand information to carry out the study of the two groups. This material, combined with that obtained from secondary sources, have allowed us to paint a most interesting picture of the identity of the people who lived in the north part of Simcoe County between 1825 and 1871.

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