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CAPTAIN JOHN MUNRO.

His Description of the Upper St. John on the Eve of its Settlement by the Loyalists. (33.)

Throughout the Revolutionary war dispatches had been constantly carried between Halifax and Quebec by way of the river St. John. Lewis Mitchell, Michel Mercier and other carriers proved themselves very trustworthy, but they knew full well the value of their services, which were usually arduous and difficult, and they accordingly demanded—and as a rule were paid, one hundred dollars for each trip from Fort Howe to Quebec. This charge was deemed extravagant by Major Studholme and General Haldimand, but they were obliged to submit to it. Indians were not to be trusted with important dispatches and when the Acadian couriers were not available messages were generally carried by officers accompanied by Indians as guides.

At the close of the war the governors of Quebec and Nova Scotia were both anxious to establish a better means of communication than they had hitherto enjoyed. Many letters passed between them upon the subject, which have been preserved among the papers of the Haldimand Collection at Ottawa. In a letter to Governor Parr, dated at Quebec, June 22nd, 1783, General Haldimand stated that he intended to open up a road between the two provinces for more easy communication with Europe; accordingly he had employed surveyors to lay out a road from Kamouraska across the portage to lake Temiscouata and 200 men were then at work upon it. He hoped assistance would be given by the province of Nova Scotia in the completion of the undertaking, which would at least put a stop to the shameful imposition of the Acadian couriers. He proposed to establish a good man at Lake Temiscouata with canoes which would supply the means for crossing that lake and proceeding down the Madawaska and the river St. John to Aukpaque at the head of the settlements on the river. Fifteen days later General Haldimand again wrote to Governor Parr, introducing Captain John Munro, a loyalist who had abandoned his estates in the old colonies and seen considerable service in the late war. Capt. Munro was to proceed to Halifax by the Temiscouata road, and make observations in writing to its condition, difficulties, improvements wanted, etc., and submit them to Governor Parr. This he afterwards did, and his "Remarks in regard to the new road to Lake Temiscouata," as published by Douglas Brynner, in the Canadian Archives for 1791, afforded entertaining reading. He speaks of "impenetrable thickets of trees and underwood," of the necessity of "leading the road about hills and mountains to prevent great ascents and descents," and of "carrying log roads in a straight line so that carts meeting can see one another and wait at places made on purpose wide enough for two carts to pass." "The road in general was rocky and therefore the watery parts not so deep as what they call to swamp a horse or man."

As a means of crossing the River des Lous he recommends "a skow consisting of three hollowed trees like canoes, one for the horse and two for the cart wheels to go into." The lands along the route being shallow and rocky he thinks will not attract settlers, and he ventures to recommend the government to build houses and clear some land at certain distances "as no poor man can do it, and no man who has something will settle on bad lands remote from church and society." As an illustration of the benefit of the new road to settlers in the Madawaska region, he says, "I was told a bushel of salt now sells there for three dollars which at Quebec costs only two shillings, other necessities of life in proportion."

Before proceeding to quote from Captain Munro's description of the St. John river we may add a few words respecting that gentleman himself. Although he was not, judging from his style of composition, an accomplished scholar, he was a brave soldier and had seen a good deal of active service in the late war in the King's Royal American regiment of New York, a loyalist corps raised by the celebrated Sir John Johnson in the neighborhood of his home on the Hudson. This regiment was more commonly known as the "Royal Greens." Few loyalists made greater sacrifices for their king and country than did Sir John Johnson; few had such a variety of devoted followers—white men, negroes and Indians; and few were so cordially hated and so greatly feared by the Americans. His old friends and allies the Mohawks followed him to Canada led by their famous chieftain, Joseph Brant; (after whom Brantford, Ontario, was called) they fought by his side in the war and shared his exile at its close.

On March 27th, 1783, Capt. Munro and a number of privates of the Royal Greens petitioned Governor Haldimand for a tract of land near Montreal on which they desired to settle in a body, but they were informed matters were as yet in too unsettled a state to comply with their request. A statement appended to the petition shows that Capt. Munro had abandoned property in New York valued at £14,231, besides 6,000 acres of land in Vermont.

The Royal Greens with their families, numbering in all 1,782 souls, were afterwards settled west of Montreal on the St. Lawrence near Lake Ontario, where their descendants are numerous at the present day.

General Haldimand and some of his relatives, friends, and brother officers owned shares in the townships on the river St. John that had been laid out by order of the Governor of Nova Scotia in the year 1765. These townships were in general very partially settled and the unoccupied lands were now in imminent danger of being forfeited for the accommodation of the Loyalists. The chief object of Capt. Munro's journey to Halifax appears to have been to obtain information as to the state of the townships and to do what he could to preserve from forfeiture the lands claimed by Haldimand and his associates who were commonly termed "the Canada Company."

Munro's description of the St. John river was merely an incidental feature in the programme although it is that which gives to his journey the chief interest in our eyes.

As printed in the Canadian Archives Munro's account of the river St. John is in some parts rendered needlessly obscure by several unfortunate mistakes in punctuation. In the crown land office at Fredericton there is an old map obtained from Halifax which corresponds so exactly with his description of the river, even to the quaint spelling of some of the names, as to suggest the idea of its having been draughted by him and presented to Governor Parr with his report.

In this article we shall confine our attention to that part of the report dealing with the river above Fredericton. The site of Fredericton Munro calls St. Anne's Plains, a spot cleared by the French where there were formerly a number of houses but only three families residing there at the time of his visit. On the upland back of St. Anne's Plains as far up as the French (or Indian) chapel six miles above, there were growing in the summer of 1873 a large quantity of very fine pines fit for masts and similar purposes. A few French families lived at the sites of the present French and Indian villages where they cultivated the interval land in a desultory fashion.

Munro describes in order, ascending the main river the Nashwalk, Nashwalksis, Keswick, Mactaque, Coac and Naeawick. These names are sometimes curiously spelled but are recognizable. The islands at the mouth of the Keswick, Bear island, Coac and other islands are described. The captain's observations were not always accurate but then they were hurriedly made. "The Meduankato (Shogomoc) river," he says, "is very rapid where it enters the river St. John but higher up is navigable for a considerable distance to the south west and has good lands." Just below the mouth of the Meduankato on the old map there is marked "Gath of Medoctic," evidently meaning the Meductic Falls.

The next tributary falling into the St. John from the westward claimed special attention at the hands of the gallant captain but not on account of any old historic associations or because it was the first of the rivers flowing into the upper St. John to be honored with a name in the old French maps. His was a practical mind, and the historic Medoctic appealed to his admiration chiefly as affording a remarkably fine site for a saw mill! "This stream," he says "has excellent Falls and fine Timber for boards!" One of the results of Capt. Munro's trip to Halifax was that he secured this mill privilege for himself. Governor Parr and his council granted him 4,000 acres "at the mouth of the river or creek Maductic on account of losses sustained by him in the late rebellion and in consideration of public services performed by him in this province." The grant had a frontage of a little over a mile on the main river, extending about equal distance above and below the mouth of Eel river and running back nearly six miles. Today it would be a valuable property.

Capt. Munro mentions the fine interval at the old Meductic village about the centre of which he saw "the remains of an old breast work sufficient to contain 200 men. Only a few Indians were then on the old camp ground. He notes their migratory habits, going about from river to river, carrying in their canoes the bark with which they covered their wigwams, seldom encamping in the woods but usually upon some point of land in order to have a view of the moose, then very numerous, as these animals came to feed and drink at the river side." It appears that the Indians were alarmed at the number of disbanded troops and settlers coming upon the river and were moving northward and eastward in consequence. In the old map, previously referred to, the word *Savages* is marked at the mouth of the Beaguinec to show that Indians were then living at that place; there is also marked an Indian village in the angle just below the mouth of the Madawaska.

Munro mentions next in order the river Meduxnackic on both sides of which there is good land and the islands in the vicinity are also very good. He says "here the Indians lived formerly, their church is still standing and kept in good repair." This last statement is puzzling as it has always been supposed the Indian Chapel was at the Meductic village. There is no tradition so far as the writer is aware of the existence of a chapel near the mouth of the Meduxnackic where the first settlers arrived. The most probable explanation seems to be that Captain Munro writing hurriedly and from memory got the localities slightly mixed and should have placed the Indian chapel at Meductic village.

W. O. RAYMOND.

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Labouchere.

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Down, down, down! All are in the rock home of death. A moment's pause, a silence falls on the chattering crowd. Then, affrighted with their second's fear, they sway onward through a rocky gallery. Rock on either side of them, rock above them, here bare and arid, there slimy with oozing water and foul growths. The passage broadens out, it narrows, and ever and ever there is the black line on the roof that marks the road. Suddenly a black shadow on the left, or to the right. The eye plunges into the depths of the side roads, and recoils aglance at their mysterious gloom. The light's file on. A thin glitter seems a dark gap with a flickering, broken line of light.

"Ah!" says the guide. "Yes, a chain." Still forward, the shadows to right and left grow in size; some have a sentry silently guarding their obscurity from rash obstruction; where there is no sentry there is a chain.

A sudden check from the front breaks the continuity of the forward movement.

We move on again, and lo! the rocks on either hand contract, change colour, break out into the gruesome design of a symmetrically built wall of bones and skulls. From the level of our heads down to the level of our feet, skull rests upon skull, and leans back against the myriad bones behind. The shivering candle-light falls with unequal rays upon the grinning teeth, penetrates the mortarless craniums of the wall, and ever shows bones of many shapes and curves. Now it lights up a rent in some skull, a ghastly, jagged wound, which haunts one with the thought of foul murder. Aton it shimmers with erratic play on the trickling water that, pursuing its silent way from year to year, has crusted with a smooth gloss the skull beneath.—*The Gentlemen's Magazine.*

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