EARLY DAYS OF WOODSTOCK.

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No. 1.

Nearly twelve years ago—or to be more exact—on the 26th September, 1894, there appeared in the columns of this paper the first of a series of articles on the early history of Woodstock and its vicinity. The articles were continued from time to time until they attained the number of one hundred. Public interest in our early history was found to be greater than had been anticipated, and the writer was encouraged by words of kindly appreciation and letters from far and near to continue his researches and eventually to write a "History of the St. John River," covering the period from its discovery by de Monts and Champlain, in 1604, down to the time of the formation of the Province of New Brunswick in 1784. [The "History of the St. John River," a volume of 375 pages, with upwards of 30 illustrations, may be obtained of Barnes & Co., St. John, N. B., price $1.50.]

The present series of articles is intended to supplement the former and, incidentally, to correct some mistakes due to lack of knowledge at the time of writing. The attention of those who may have preserved the earlier series is especially directed to the correction of these errors.

The country bordering on the River St. John was only sparsley peopled by the Indians at the time of the coming of the whites. The Jesuit Missionary Biard, in 1611, described the Indians as so few in number, that they might be said to roam over rather than to possess the country. They were scattered over wide spaces, as was natural for those who lived by hunting and fishing. There are probably as many Indians in the maritime provinces today as there were in the days of Champlain. But, though the Indians were never very numerous, they seem always to have possessed a wonderful knowledge of the country and its natural features. They were naturally keen observers, and their nomadic habits made them familiar with every nook and corner of their hunting grounds. That the Maliseets have for centuries inhabited the valley of the River St. John is indicated by the fact that the Indian names of rivers, lakes, islands and mountains—many of which have been retained by the whites—are nearly all of Maliseet origin.

The universal testimony of early writers is that the Indians have always been a restless race, wandering from place to place as necessity or caprice compelled them. At one time attracted to the seaside, where clams, fish and sea-fowl abounded, at another preferring the charms of the inland waters. They had camping grounds on many of the islands and at the mouths of nearly all the rivers flowing into the St. John. At the proper season they resorted to one or another of these places for salmon fishing with torch and spear. Anon they tilled their cornfields on the intervals and islands. When game was scarce, necessity compelled them to seek new hunting grounds. Sometimes the mere love of change led them to forsake a camping place and remove to some other favorite spot. Occasionally the outbreak of some pestilence broke up their encampment and scattered them in various directions. In time of peace they moved leisurely enough, but in time of war their bark canoes skimmed swiftly over the lakes and rivers, bearing the dusky warriors against the enemies of their race.

Long before the arrival of Europeans in this country the Indian village of Medoctec had come into existence. It was the principal village on the St. John, and was well known to all the tribes of of Acadia and New England. The site of this ancient Maliseet town lies on the west side of the river a few miles below the present town of Woodstock. It is sufficiently well known locally to render further description unnecessary. The situation, which is an admirable one, was probably selected quite as much for its strategic importance as for its local advantages. Bearing in mind that the rivers were nature's highways to the aborigines, a glance at the map will show that Medoctec was the junction point of two great routes of travel. The River St. John supplied one of these routes. The Indians called it Woolastook, the name signifying "good river" or "main river." By its waters there was ready communication southward to the sea and northward to the valley of the St. Lawrence. Westward there was an equally well known and much travelled route, by the way of Eel River (which the Indians called Madawamkeetook) and the lakes, to Mattawamkeag and the Penobscot region.

But Medoctec was more than a junction point or convenient way station for the Indian voyageurs. The village was the headquarters of the Chief of the river. It had its council chamber and its pallisaded defences. It was considered by the natives of John Gyles' day as "a great Town and Fort." The situation had many local advantages. Remote from the warpaths of the fiercer tribes of Canada and the Iroquois country, the Maliseets lived for the most part in security, not, however, unmixed with unreasoning fear of the Mohawks. The hunting was excellent, the intervales and islands in the vicinity were admirably adapted to the growth of Indian corn, and the rivers swarmed with fish. The inhabitants of the village frequently visited the site of the town of Woodstock. They had a camping ground at the mouth of the creek that still retains the name of Meduxnakik, which they gave it. Here the Indians often came in the salmon season, for the Meduxnakik was a fine salmon river in its day. Below the mouth of the creek there was a fine intervale, which once included the island now called "Bull's Island," for the channel between the island and the shore is evidently of comparatively recent origin, though it antedates the coming of English settlers. About twenty years ago there died at Woodstock an old Indian, familiarly known as "Doctor Tomer," who was born at Medoctec in 1789 and lived to the age of nearly one hundred years. Tomer claimed when a boy to have heard his grandfather, old Governor Thoma, say he could remember the time when the island was joined to the shore.

The first recorded visit of an English speaking person to this locality is that of John Gyles in the autumn of the year 1689. Gyles was then a boy of about twelve years of age. He had been captured by the Indians at Pemaquid, on the coast of Maine, and was brought by his Indian master to Medoctec, as related in one of the articles in the former series in THE DISPATCH.

The French were already familiar with the Indians in this region. Gyles frequently speaks of their presence at Medoctec, and states that on one occasion he escaped the persecutions and tortures, of which his fellow captives were the victims, by taking refuge at the hut of a Frenchman who lived about a mile from the village and had married an Indian woman. It is not improbable that the few French people living in the vicinity of Medoctec were retainers of Rene d'Amours, Sieur de Clignancourt. This gentleman was a son of Mathieu d'Amours, a member of the Supreme Council at Quebec, over which Count Frontenac presided as Governor General. On the 20th September, 1684, there was granted to Rene d'Amours, a seigniory extending from Medoctec to the Grand Falls (a distance of eighty miles), two leagues in depth on both sides of the river. As this grant included the whole river front on both sides in the counties of Carleton and Victoria, it was truly a magnificent estate. The Sieur de Clignancourt, however, seems to have made little or no attempt to fulfil the conditions necessary to retain possession of his vast seignioral monor. To his mind the charms of hunting and trading surpassed those of tilling the soil. He made periodical visits to the Indian villages and was well known at Medoctec. John Gyles says that when the Indians returned from their hunting, "they would be drunk and fight for several days and nights together, till they had spent most of their skins in wine and brandy, which was brought to their village by a Frenchman called Monsieur Sigenioncor (Clignancourt). About the year 1690 Rene d'Amours married Charlotte le Gardeur, of Quebec, and made his residence on the island called "Cleoncore," near the mouth of the Keswick, a few miles above Fredericton. The census of 1695 shows that he was a farmer on a very insignificant scale. He possessed 3 horned cattle, 12 hogs and 60 fowls, and raised 80 bushels of corn, 16 minots of peas and 3 of beans. The census further states that he had two male servants and one female servant, and that he had three guns and a sword. A census, taken three years later, gives the names of four children, Rene, aged 7 years; Joseph, aged 5; Marie Judith, aged 2, and Marie Angelique, an infant.

In the month of May, 1786, the Bishop of Quebec (St. Vallier) visited Acadia. He descended the River St. John in a bark canoe, arriving at the Grand Falls on the 17th and slept at Medoctec the night of the 18th. He calls Medoctec "the first Fort of Acadia." Here he found a hundred Indians, who were greatly pleased to learn that the Bishop had come with the intention of establishing a mission for their benefit. St. Vallier seems not to have entertained a high opinion of the French traders and adventurers he encountered in his journey, for he observes: "It is to be wished that the French who have their habitations along this route, were so exemplary in their habits as to lead the poor Indians by their examples to become Christians, but we must hope that in time the reformation of the former may lead to the conversion of the latter."

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RIBBONS.

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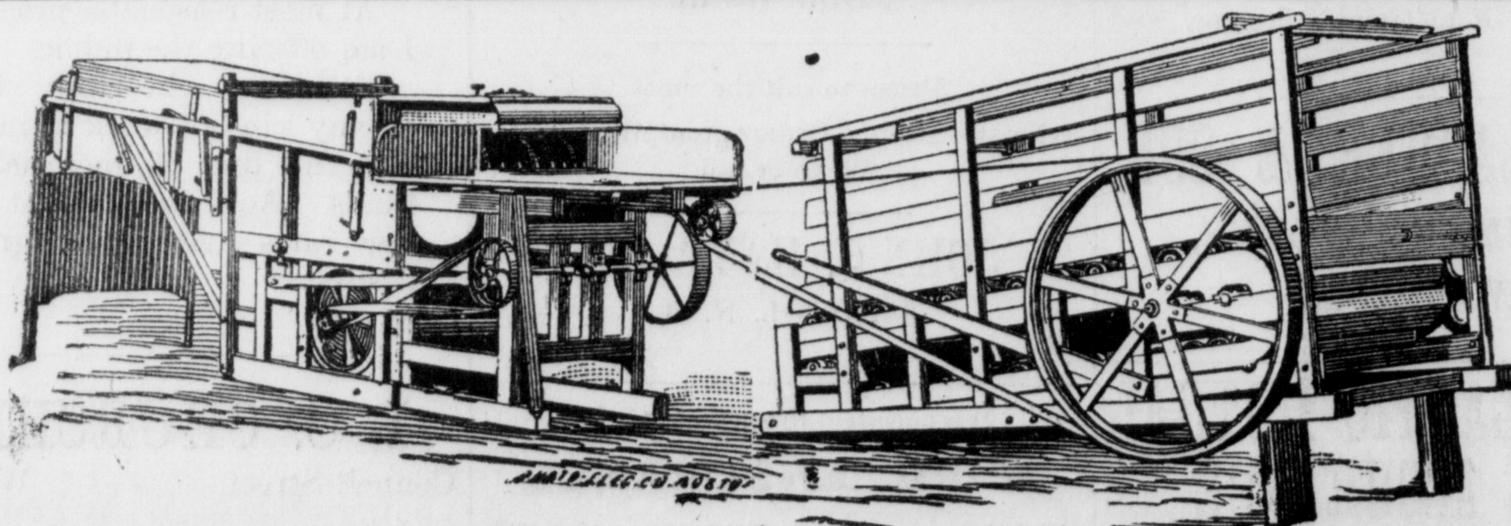
The New York Evening Post says that the rage for ribbons amount almost to a craze, and no wonder, for they are charming. Tissue ribbons and spiderweb weaves are late additions. The tissues come in pastel shades, with narrow or wide satin edges very heavy in contrast to the filmy centres. Sometimes there are pompadour or Dresden effects—on shadowy gold or silver grounds, or again Chinese-like hieroglyphics in black and colors on pale purple or green background. The cobweb ribbons make exquisite girdles, but are so frail that they require no end of wiring and boning. They are aptly named, for the weave does resemble a cob web, and as there is always a gold or silver thread intermixed with the smoke greys, dingy blues and dull browns and greens, in which alone these ribbons are to be had, the simulation is more perfect, the dazzling thread serving to conceal the connection of the other strands. Especially on silky mulls, batistes, and thin silks, of one color, these ribbons are used as girdles, sashes, and are in great demand when interlacings or manylooped effects are desired. They also lend themselves most adaptably to fancy work of various descriptions, handkerchief - bags, bookmarks, work-bags, and cross-stitched together form book and magazine covers. Many of them are already furnished with a draw string, ready for frilling. The tissue and cobweb ribbons both come in various widths, and in the narrower ones are often used on the Rajah, tussore, and similar silks in the form of large floral designs, the ribbon being crushed to make the stems and shape the leaves.



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