



“If We Had a Hospital Here”

By James S. McGivern, S.J.

AS THE Superior of the Canadian Missions in 1634 signed his name, the place, the date, “Paul Le Jeune, Notre-Dame-des-Anges en la Nouvelle-France ce 7 d’aoust 1634”, to the *Relation* of that year, he must have breathed a happy sigh of relief. It had taken him a long time to finish it. Many, many hours, always subject to the interruptions and calls of duty, had he spent, pen in hand, at the table, which served as his desk, in his little room in the Jesuits’ Residence. How weary his hand must have been, how tired his mind after hours of writing! But now his task is finished and as

the ships for the Mother Country are in the harbor waiting, he can send this report to the Father Provincial in France. He knew that it would be read and read again in the family circles of devout people, in convents and the houses of the religious. He hoped that this report of the missionary activities of the Canadian Jesuits would arouse the interest and the zeal of its readers so that material aid and spiritual helps would be gained for this mission. But, I scarcely think that Father Paul Le Jeune, as he laid down his pen, realized just how great an effect this report would have. Above all, he surely never dreamed of the discussions, the resolutions, the hopes and desires that would be caused by one sentence in this report, “If we had a hospital here, all the sick people of the country and all the old people would be there.”

It was only in July of the following year that he would learn of the stir he had created in the cloisters of France. What must have been his astonishment when Father Pierre Pijart, arriving at Quebec on July 10, handed him a more than usually thick packet of letters? When Father François Le Mercier arrived some ten days later with still more letters, his wonderment knew no bounds.

“But what surprised me” writes Father Le Jeune, in the *Relation* of 1635, “is that many young nuns, consecrated to Our Lord, wish to

Life in Old Huronia 300 Years Ago

Letter from Father Joseph Marie Chaumonot to the Very Reverend Father Mutius Vitelleschi, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. (Translated from the Italian original in the Jesuit Archives.)

From the Huron Country, May 24, 1640
My Very Reverend Father
Pax Christi

I arrived in the Huron country, in New France, on the 10th of September, 1639, after a very painful and dangerous voyage of three months, which was followed by a journey of another month upon rivers and lakes and through forests.

There are thirteen of our Fathers here, all French, together with some young men who have devoted themselves to us for our temporal needs. They take the place of laybrothers. Our life here may seem strange and full of hardship to those in Europe, but to us it is quite easy and agreeable. We have no salt, oil, fruits,

nor wine, (except what we need for Mass). Our whole diet consists of some sort of soup made of Indian corn that has been ground between two stones or pounded in a mortar, and the whole seasoned with smoked fish. This is served in a large wooden dish.

Our bed is the ground, covered with a piece of bark, or at most, with a mat.

Our mission, this year’s has some thirty-two hamlets or villages, in which there is no cabin where the Gospel has not been proclaimed. Many savages have received baptism. Most of these, having been victims of an epidemic which has ravaged the whole country, are now in heaven. This is our hope. This malady has been the occasion for many calumnies and persecutions, excited against us under the pretext that we were the authors of the scourge. None of us have as yet perished in this tempest, although some have been beaten and others have seen the hatchet raised over them, just above their heads.

We all need your prayers, hence we recommend ourselves humbly to your holy Sacrifices.

I am
Your Paternity’s
Unworthy servant and son in
Our Lord
Joseph Marie Chaumonot.

FATHER PAUL LE JEUNE, S. J.

Province of France

Born 15 June, 1592, Vitry-le-François —
diocese of Chalons-sur-Marne

Entered the Society of Jesus 22 September,
1613, Paris

Arrived at Quebec 5 July, 1632

Returned to France 31 October, 1649

Died 7 August, 1664

FATHER PIERRE JOSEPH MARIE CHAUMONOT, S. J.

Province of Rome

Born 9 March, 1611, Châtillon-sur-Seine,
Côte-d’Or

Entered the Order 18 May, 1632, Rome

Arrived at Quebec 1 August, 1639

Died at Quebec 21 February, 1693



Above: Fragmentary reconstruction of the village of St. Ignace where Sts. John de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were martyred. The site is about eight miles from the Shrine Church.

Consecrated Places

WITHIN THE BORDERS OF OLD HURONIA



Above, Centre: Monument at the site of the martyrdom of Father Daniel. The village of St. Joseph was about 14 miles from the present Shrine.

Left: Father MacKinnon talking to Indians in front of Fort Ste. Marie II on Christian Island whither the missionaries and the Hurons fled after the destruction of the first Fort Ste. Marie. Christian Island is about 25 miles from old Fort Ste. Marie.



SITE OF TEANAOSTAYE
MISSION OF ST. JOSEPH
1638 - 1648
ON JULY 4TH 1648
ST. ANTHONY DANIEL
JESUIT MISSIONARY AND
MARTYR WAS SLAIN HERE
BY THE IROQUOIS WITH SEVEN
HUNDRED CHRISTIAN HURONS
AND HIS BODY WAS THROWN
INTO HIS BURNING CHAPEL
THE REMAINDER OF THE
TWO THOUSAND INHABITANTS
FLED TO FORT SAINTE MARIE
NOW
MARTYRS SHRINE

Below: Father Lally and Father McCarthy with modern Indians. This picture is taken near the present Church of the Martyrs.



Above: Unveiling of a cairn on the site of St. Louis where Sts. John de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were captured.