

CULTURAL FACTORS DUE TO FRENCH CATHOLIC INFLUENCE

IN THE REGION AROUND DETROIT, 1608 - 1812

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School, Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Master
of Arts

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
February, 1945

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	iv
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the problem	1
French motives for colonization	4
Colonizing attempts	6
Quebec, first successful colony of New France	7
Westward explorations from Quebec as a center	8
Founding of Detroit	10
Detroit under French, English, and American flags	10
CHAPTER TWO	
DETROIT UNDER CADILLAC	
Early contacts with Detroit	12
Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac	18
Reasons for settlement of Detroit	19
Establishing of the colony	22
Relations with the Indians	31
Difficulties besetting Cadillac	35
Beginnings of family life	40
Feudal conditions	44
Departure of Cadillac	46
Detroit's debt to its founder	47
CHAPTER THREE	
CULTURE OF COLONISTS DURING THE FRENCH REGIME	
Historical background	48
Attack of Sacs and Foxes	48
Visit of Father Charlevoix	51
Arrival of new colonists	52
Capture of New France by English	55
Characteristics of French habitants	57
Home and family life	63
Social life	75
Religion and its influence	85
Education and intellectual development	92
Occupations	104

CHAPTER FOUR

FRENCH COLONISTS UNDER BRITISH RULE

Reaction of the Indian to British conquest	113
French habitants and the conspiracy of Pontiac	120
Effect of British on Detroit	122
Continuance of French culture	124
Social life	126
Education and religion	128
American Revolution and its effects on colony	129

CHAPTER FIVE

FRENCH INFLUENCE DURING THE EARLY AMERICAN RULE

Reasons for slow growth of Detroit	131
French influence on Detroit	135
Hospitality toward incoming Americans	135
Loyalty to new government	136
Religion and education	137
Father Gabriel Richard	138
His contributions to Detroit	139
Lectures to non-Catholics	139
Love of music	139
Work for education	140
Delegate to Congress	146
Increase in population	149
Conclusion	150

CHAPTER SIX

Epilogue	151
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	156
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PREFACE

Interest in a subject connected with early Detroit was first aroused in an American history course at Marquette University in which Father Hamilton stressed the influence of the already established French and Spanish civilizations, rather than that of the frontier, upon the westward moving Yankees. As a native of a city founded by France, the writer desired to ascertain the extent of the influence of the early French-Catholic settlers upon modern Detroit.

This led into the romance of the city's history, of the part played by Jesuit and Recollect missionaries, the French officials, and the pioneer educators, farmers, and traders. Most of the material was secured from the Burton Historical Collection in Detroit.

The writer wishes to express her grateful appreciation to Reverend Raphael N. Hamilton, S. J., who has painstakingly directed the preparation of the thesis; to Doctors H. W. Rice and L. J. Wearing for helpful criticism; to the staff of the Burton Collection for their valuable assistance; and to Sister Ann Agatha, S. C., for her careful reading and typing of this paper.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many writers have depicted the history of Detroit. The majority of historians seem reluctant in giving credit to the cultural influence of the French, and indirectly conclude that it was only when the American influx came that there was an impetus to a lasting cultural development in the territorial area now called Detroit.

The writer questions the validity of the interpretation of Detroit's early history, and she has determined to find by research as far as possible just what contributions to our culture the early French made. Perhaps the problem may be summed up as follows: Was it the French pioneer, or the typical frontiersman from New England, who made Detroit? Did the early American and British settlers find the beginnings of a very definite culture when they arrived at the Straits? Did the early French-Catholics--the missionary, the explorer, the settler, and the educator--exert any influence on posterity?

Such earlier writers as Richard R. Elliott, Judge James V. Campbell, and Bela Hubbard seem to favor the French influence. They found opponents. Andrew C. McLaughlin, Solomon Sibley, and William Jouett are strongly opposed to crediting the French with any worthwhile contribution to our civilization. None of these writers have emphasized this particular problem in their writings. A survey of recent doctoral dissertations in history reveals that no student has treated the subject of French culture in Detroit.

In studying the cultural influence of the French-Catholic legacy, two phases will be considered, the place of the Catholic in early his-

tory and that of the French-Catholic in Detroit history.

A Catholic is not an alien on American soil, for his ancestors discovered, settled, and fought for this country. The French-Catholic, both priest and layman, contributed his share to the founding of our glorious country. Who can fail to revere the name of Champlain, of Father Marquette, of Father Isaac Jogues, of La Salle, and of hundreds of other illustrious men who helped to create and to preserve our civilization! Compared to their part in the history of America, the coming of the Mayflower is but an episode.¹

¹ Maurice Francis Egan, Preface to P. J. Mahon and J. M. Hayes, Trials and Triumphs of the Catholic Church in America, 1.

Michigan reflects particularly the influence of the French-Catholic. The French activity has left its mark on the state by the presence of French geographical names, French population, French tradition, and French land tenures in some sections. Detroit, the fourth largest city in the United States today, boasts of its French ancestry. It has publicly acknowledged its debt to French influence by placing on the massive facade of its City Hall statues of the zealous missionaries, Father Marquette and Father Gabriel Richard, and of two lay representatives of the genius and chivalry of Catholic France, La Salle and Cadillac.

The story of Detroit in its earliest period is so closely interwoven with that of New France that the two are practically one. At the period of discovery and exploration, New France covered nearly two-thirds of the whole known continent of North America. Michigan, and

the territory around the straits, was in the direct line of travel of expeditions leaving Quebec for the west, and vice versa, so that the history of Michigan became inseparably associated with the history of the Canadian region. What affected one, had important bearing upon the other. Thus we see that we are not differentiating areas when we mention the Old World, Louis XIV, or Quebec in a discussion of a problem bearing upon the early history of Detroit.

Parkman has vividly described the picture of France in the New World.

"The French dominion is a memory of the past; and when we evoke its departed shades, they rise upon us from their graves in a strange, romantic guise. Again their ghostly camp fires seem to burn, and the fitful light is cast around on lord and vassal and black-robed priest, mingled with wild forms of savage warriors, knit in close fellowship on the same stern errand. A boundless vision grows upon us: an untamed continent; vast wastes of forest verdure; mountains silent in primeval sleep; river, lake, and glimmering pool; wilderness oceans mingling with the sky. Such was the domain which France conquered for civilization. Plumed helmets gleamed in the shade of the forests, priestly vestments in its dens and fastnesses of ancient barbarism. Men steeped in antique learning, pale with the close breath of the cloister, here spent the noon and evening of their lives, ruled savage hordes with a mild parental sway, and stood serene before the direst shapes of death. Men of courtly nurture, heirs to the polish of a far-reaching ancestry, here, with dauntless hardihood, put to shame the boldest sons of toil." 2

2 Francis Parkman, Pioneers of France in the New World, 1, Introduction, xciii-xcix.

Reading the records of the past will bring to light many motives

contributing to the establishment and maintenance of New France. First, there was always the religious motive, the desire to convert the natives to Catholicism. The Church saw in America a great missionary field where souls might be harvested for Heaven. Silas Farmer, Detroit historiographer, cites the religious motive as an ambition "that knew no limit, incarnated in men who feared nothing, who went everywhere, and everywhere the Lily and the Cross marked the route they travelled." In a sermon at St. Anne's Church in 1901, commemorating the bi-centenary of the founding of the city of Detroit, Monsignor Bruchesi, Archbishop of Montreal, lauded the religious zeal of the French government.

" . . . We behold her advancing down the centuries, over seas and along shores wherever the will of Providence guided, bearing aloft in one hand the nation's flag and in the other, the cross of Christ. She wished as the eldest daughter of the Church, and as a Christian mother, to carry to the baptismal font herself, all the people that sprang from her bosom, and I do not hesitate to declare that in the long course of France's history, she has been the most apostolic nation on earth." ³

³ Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Michigan, 1:83; "Sermon of Monsignor Bruchesi," Bi-Centenary of the Founding of the City of Detroit, 62

Next to religious zeal, we may place the political motive, the desire to further the interests of "la belle France," by building up a great colonial empire to rival that of England and of Spain. In speaking of one of the leading spirits of French exploration, the Sieur de La Salle, Harold Faulkner writes that his dream went beyond either the conversion of the heathen or the erection of trading posts; "he envisaged an entire continent under the rule of France." The same

author tells us that the seventeenth century saw in France the erection of a strong central government and at the same time "a renewed effort toward empire-building."⁴ That Louis XIV began his rule "with a gen-

⁴ Harold U. Faulkner, American Political and Social History, 17.

uine display of zeal for the establishment of a colony which would . . . crowd the English off the new continent," is the contention of William Bennett Munro.⁵

⁵ William Bennett Munro, Crusaders of New France, 9.

In considering French motives, we must not overlook the economic one, namely, the fur trade. Traders in spite of the risks involved could reap great profits from fishing and fur-trading industries. Too, in common with other nations, France still hoped to find a new passage to China. The first voyageur, Jacques Cartier, was sent out on his voyage of discovery because Francis I was persuaded to turn his attention to the trading prospects of his kingdom. Even before New France had a handful of colonists, the profit-making possibilities of the fur-trade were recognized. The "traffic in furs became the center and soul of the economic system in New France."⁶

⁶ Ibid., 155.

Perhaps Reuben Gold Thwaites, the eminent authority on New France, has summed up concisely the French motives for coming to the New World.

"The king very naturally was moved by a passion for territorial expansion; the church was eager to convert the heathen savages of the New World; the fur-trade, although abounding in great risks, was at times so profitable as to stimulate the cupidity of merchants; the hope of finding deposits of precious metals was predominant in the minds of speculators; the army and the navy were ambitious for gallant exploits; and the French people in general were in that eventful period imbued with a generous yearning for adventure in strange lands. Conquest, exploration, missionary zeal, and fur-trade were, therefore, for a hundred and fifty years the controlling and often warring interests of New France." 7

7 Reuben Gold Thwaites, France in America, 17.

France at first took no active part in the explorations of North America. Her kings had been occupied with their wars in Spain and in Italy and felt no immediate need of an outlet for commerce or colonization. It was not until the Peace of Cambrai in 1529 that France gave any attention to the task of securing a foothold in the New World. In 1534, the Breton port of St. Malo became the starting point of the first voyageur. Jacques Cartier set out with the definite purpose of extending the bounds of France. He touched Newfoundland and explored a portion of the St. Lawrence. Next year he repeated his voyage, but his report of the inhospitable climate did not tend to encourage new colonizing schemes. Too, the king was again engaged in difficulties at home and abroad. Later, a third expedition was promoted and commanded by a nobleman of Picardy, Jean Francois Roberval, to whom Francis I gave the title to the lands which Cartier discovered in 1535. By this time the initial motive--to find a passage to the Orient--was supplemented by the desire to obtain gold and silver, to Christianize the natives, and to plant a

settlement on the St. Lawrence. War again prevented the government's continuing the work of Cartier, and France did not resume her activities along the St. Lawrence until after 1600. Between 1550 and 1565, attempts were made by the persecuted Huguenots to establish a colony, but their efforts failed.⁸

⁸ Curtis P. Nettels, Roots of American Civilization, 48-51, and Wm. Bennett Munro, Crusaders of New France, 15-31.

The colonization of Canada was largely the work of a French navigator, Samuel de Champlain. After taking part in an expedition under de Monts to Acadia, Champlain became convinced that this was a good area for colonization and persuaded de Monts to concentrate upon the St. Lawrence. The latter agreed and sent Champlain out in two well-equipped ships to found in July, 1608, the capital of the king's western possessions. It was a fortunate site, not only far removed from the English, but well situated for converting the Indians and securing their trade. Too, it would be a good center from which to send exploring expeditions to the interior. The eagle eye of Champlain saw in this place the key to the valley of the St. Lawrence. With the founding of Quebec, the first permanent settlement in New France had been made and the "Father of New France," Samuel de Champlain, had started his work.

From Quebec as a center, for years exploring and colonizing expeditions went westward. Champlain himself traveled among the Indians anxious to convert them. By 1615 he had reached Lake Huron by way of the Ottawa River, and went from there to Lake Ontario. One of his

lieutenants, Jean Nicolet, in 1634 pushed on further and was the first white man to pass through the Straits of Mackinac.

Jesuit missionaries, too, were in the lead. Fathers Jogues and Raymbault preached at Sault Sainte Marie in 1641. The accounts of the country carried back to Quebec by explorers and missionaries led the Canadian authorities to send Nicholas Perrot to arrange a treaty with the western tribes. The council met in May, 1671, and before the close of the year Father Marquette had established a mission at Saint Ignace. Thus we see that both missionaries and fur traders recognized the great destiny of the state.⁹

⁹ Curtis P. Nettels, op.cit., 48-51, and Edward P. Cheyney, European Background of American History, 11-22.

There were two ways by which the early explorers reached the western country. The lake route was by hauling their boats along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, around the rapids of that stream until the site of the present city of Ogdensburg was reached, and then by paddling up the river and across Lakes Ontario and Erie with the single portage at Niagara. The other, more difficult, but less dangerous, was along the Ottawa River from Montreal to the eastern end of Lake Nipissing, across this lake and then down the French and Pickering Rivers to Georgian Bay. This route was the one usually taken and this accounts for the fact that St. Ignace, Mackinac, and the northern posts were established before Detroit.

The Jesuits and Recollects had made several trips and had established mission posts at a very early day in Canada between Niagara Falls

and the Detroit River. Evidently they had made many maps of the country for one was published in Paris in 1650 showing not only Lake Erie and Lake Huron but also the connecting Detroit River. The territory of the straits was also brought to the notice of the French public by the journals and writings of two Sulpician priests, Francois Dollier de Casson and Rene de Brehant de Galinee, who wintered upon the north shore of Lake Erie. In 1679, Father Louis Hennepin with La Salle passed through the Detroit River in the Griffin, the earliest sailing vessel on the lakes. He gives a vivid description of the fertility of the soil and the luxury of the vegetation.

He sees the "Banks of the Streight" as vast meadows terminated with hills covered with vineyards. There were so many trees and groves in the latter that "one would think Nature alone could not have made, without the Help of Art, so charming a Prospect." In his book the priest exclaimed, too, at the variety of "Beasts and Birds, whose Names are unknown to us, but they are extraordinary relishing." He concludes his description of this "Noble Country" by a plea that those who reap the benefit of the efforts of the early explorers will remember them with gratitude.

10 Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), Rev. Louis Hennepin, A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America, 1:109.

The accounts and the diaries of other writers were published in France, England, and the Low Countries. Many settlers would probably have come to this territory around the straits if trouble between England and France had not as usual involved the Iroquois who controlled

the Lake Erie route and prevented entrance to this part of the world.

Gradually toward the close of the seventeenth century this Lake country which had until now been the undisputed possession of the French began to be visited by English and Dutch traders.

Because of this encroachment upon the fur trading privilege, Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac petitioned the home government to authorize him to establish a post at Detroit. After considerable delay Cadillac was successful.

In the spring of 1701 the founder of Detroit and his little caravan started out from Quebec, and after a weary trip entered the River St. Clair in the first days of July. They began the descent of that river and the Detroit looking for a suitable location for a fort and settlement. The point finally chosen was a point of land now occupied by Jefferson Avenue and Wayne Street. Two days later, July 26, a chapel was built and named in honor of the saint of the day, St. Anne.

Cadillac's difficulties with planting, building, Indians, and colonists cannot be imagined, but he was never discouraged. The proof that he was correct in his predictions as to the ultimate success and importance of the post is to be found in the fact that Detroit has continued to grow in strength and population from the day it was founded down to the present.

The city of Detroit stands unique in American history, side by side with New Orleans, for its dynastic changes and for its varied national control. Detroit was under French rule until 1760 when it passed into the hands of its conqueror, England. This, however, does not mean that Detroit was no longer French. In fact, Detroit being little influenced by its English and Scotch retained its Gallic char-

acteristics. The British did not encourage settlers to come to Michigan. Her preference seemed to be to keep the colonists close to the coast where she could the more easily dominate them, and the good will of the Indians could be retained.

11

11 Thomas McIntyre Cooley, Michigan, 72; also, E. M. Sheldon, Early History of Michigan, 360-361.

With the Treaty of Paris in 1783 the Revolutionary War was technically ended, but the British refused to surrender the posts along the Great Lakes. It was not until the Jay Treaty of 1795 that the United States really obtained Michigan. In July of that year a Catholic American soldier, Colonel John Francis Hamtramck, entered the city. Great was the joy of the people to welcome the Stars and Stripes.

The American flag waved over the territory until 1812 when General William Hull surrendered Detroit to the British. After thirteen months of British occupation, the victory of Commodore Perry on Lake Erie which made possible that of General Harrison on the Thames River restored Michigan to the United States. The American flag which was again raised has since flown over the region.

It is the early culture of this well known city of Detroit which this paper will attempt to study. Culture here will refer to the people's way of life, to their activities and institutions, considered as a whole. It will include their agriculture, industries, customs, religious beliefs, home life, and intellectual development.

CHAPTER TWO

DETROIT UNDER CADILLAC

Detroit owes much of its civilization to the zealous French missionaries who came to a savage world with no hope of earthly gain, and to the intrepid Catholic explorers and settlers whose daring enter-¹prises have colored the pages of our history.

¹ Louise Phelps Kellogg, Early Narratives of the Northwest, 3-4.

Inspired by a tranquil faith and desiring to convert the Indians to Christianity, such men as the Jesuits, Fathers Isaac Jogues, Charles Raymbault, Rene Menard, Jacques Marquette, and Claude Allouez, played major roles in the exploration and settlement of Michigan. To the martyr Father Isaac Jogues and his companion, Father Charles Raymbault, belongs the honor of planting the Cross on Michigan soil when in 1641² they began their mission to the natives gathered at Sault Ste. Marie.

² Catholic Encyclopedia, 6:758.

Despite their work, detractors of the early French missionaries are to be found. Andrew Mc Laughlin in his Lewis Cass asserts that

"The Indian could not be charmed by chanted vespers, nor softened by Catholic influence. The priest endured tortures and prayed without ceasing and without avail. Had he been successful the Indians of western New York and northern Ontario would have been won over to the purposes of French statecraft."³

³ Andrew Mc Laughlin, Lewis Cass, 5.

But R. R. Elliot answers this charge which he calls "historical fiction, so stale and so shallow that it is unbecoming an American writer," by asserting that the work of the French Jesuits in North America was as thorough as that of the Spanish Jesuits in Paraguay. In both countries a pagan people had been converted to Christianity, and semi-civilization had succeeded barbarism. In the case of Sault Ste. Marie, the seed had been sown by the two early Fathers, and when later the Christian Hurons demanded another missionary, the Father Superior of the Jesuits in Quebec sent a priest to them. Such was the origin of the Catholic mission, "purely Christian in its inception, the political power having refused to sanction the project." Before John Eliot, early English minister, had begun to preach to the unfortunate Massachusetts tribes at Nonatum, the savage in Michigan was⁴ being cared for. In 1660 Father Rene Menard went among these savage

⁴ The above is developed at length in Richard R. Elliott, "The Jesuits of L'Ancien Regime Who Labored on Michigan Soil--Their Detractors," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1903, 28:90-114; Richard R. Elliott, "The Romance of the Country of the Lakes," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1893, 18:78-101.

tribes and was put to death by them a year later. Nothing daunted by his fate, Fathers Marquette and Allouez followed in his footsteps. To the former is owing the discovery of the tidal rise and fall of Lake Michigan, and the discovery and exploration of the upper Mississippi.⁵

⁵ Reuben G. Thwaites, France in America, 56-57.

Although much of Father Claude Allouez's mission life was concerned

with the history of Wisconsin, he visited the tribes along the Great Lakes on the shores of Michigan, and has left us glowing descriptions of the Indians and of the locality. Louise P. Kellogg compares him to the great Apostle of the Indies.

"A second St. Francis Xavier, Allouez is said during the twenty-four years of service to have instructed a hundred thousand Western savages and baptized at least ten thousand." ⁶

⁶ Louise P. Kellogg, (editor), Early Narratives of the Northwest, 97, 109-137; Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 55:109-113.

These early missionaries had taken the upper route to the north and west. The first recorded passage through the lower route was that of Galinee and Dollier. These two men were Sulpicians anxious to secure converts to the faith. In 1669 they obtained the opportunity. Father Francois Dollier de Casson, a Breton of noble family, was the leader of the expedition. Father Rene de Brehant de Galinee, his partner in the enterprise, was an expert mathematician and map-maker. To him we are indebted for a graphic description of an early voyage from the lower Great Lakes to the upper ones. During their journey the two priests and their companions skirted the shores of Lake Ontario, heard with awe the roar of Niagara, and portaged down the Grand River to Lake Erie. From there they crossed the strait of Detroit, passed through Lakes St. Clair and Huron, and reached Sault Ste. Marie where they were hospitably received by the Jesuit, Father Jacques Marquette. By June they were again in Montreal where as Father Galinee relates they "were looked upon rather as persons risen from the dead than as common men."

The circuit of the lakes was complete.

Of interest to Detroit history in Father Galinee's manuscript is his description of their destruction of a stone idol on the shore of the Detroit River. About "six leagues above Lake Erie" they found a stone idol which was deeply venerated by the Indians. Feeling perhaps the power of the devil to whom they attributed the destruction of their Mass kit, they revenged themselves upon him by breaking the idol. In relating the story, the priest writes that the Indians "say that they owe their good luck in sailing on Lake Erie" to this idol, and that "they propitiate it by sacrifices, presents of skins, provisions, or ornaments when they wish to embark upon the Lake." The priests consecrated one of their axes to break this painted stone god, and then carried the largest pieces to the middle of the river and threw them in. In place of the idol the missionaries erected a cross, at whose feet they placed the coat of arms of France with an inscription certifying that "two missionaries from the seminary of Montreal . . . have wintered on this lake, of which they have taken possession in the name of their King." ⁷

⁷ Louise P. Kellogg, Ibid., 163-209; Marie C. Hamlin, Legends of Le Detroit, 5; "Proclamation of France on Taking Formal Possession of the West," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 33:36.

Strange as it may seem the French government paid little heed to securing firmly the vast stretch of territory visited by her explorers and missionaries. But when the English began to show activity around the lower lakes, Count Frontenac, vice-regent for Louis XIV, fearful for the results on the fur trade, established a fort near the present

city of Kingston, Ontario. This first stronghold on the lakes was given to his protégé, Sieur de La Salle. From this as a base, La Salle explored the region of the Great Lakes. Desiring to strengthen France's claim to the "Father of Waters," La Salle went to France to secure the desired permission. Successful, he returned accompanied by the Recollects, Fathers Hennepin, Ribourde, and Membre. Bearing a patent to build forts in the wonderful far-western country, La Salle, his lieutenant, Henri de Tonty, the Recollects and crew accomplished the first part of their journey by passing through the strait of Detroit in August, 1679 in the little Griffin, the first sailing vessel on the Great Lakes.⁸

⁸ Reuben G. Thwaites, France in America, 57-62.

Although this vessel was lost soon afterwards, it proved that larger ships could navigate the inland seas.

The strange disappearance of the Griffin has been the theme of much Michigan marine lore. Superstitious sailors on the lakes tell wierd stories of sighting its hazy outlines along the southern shore of the Upper Peninsula.⁹

⁹ Michigan, A Guide to the Wolverine State, 56, 121.

Science has destroyed the Indian tradition of the angry Manitous of the water surrounding the ill-fated ship and carrying her into unknown realms from where on moonlight nights are heard the singing of manly voices. A close examination has revealed that the voices are no

myths. They are caused by the beating of the waves on the limestone cliffs of certain islands in Lake Superior. When the wind blows from the northeast, the waves dash the fragments of stone against one another, causing them to give forth peculiar sounds. It is not strange that to the Indian mind these were the voices of the sailors being punished by the Manitou for daring to disturb the calm waters of the lakes with "their winged bird vomiting forth fire, smoke, and thunder."¹⁰ The Griffin will remain no doubt among the other unsolved dis-

¹⁰ Marie C. Hamlin, Legends of Le Detroit, 14-16.

appearances of the Great Lakes.

Besides such explorers as LaSalle and Joliet, and missionaries like Fathers Galinee, Dollier, and Nembre, the strait was no doubt visited by the coureurs de bois, a class of individuals peculiar to New France alone. They fraternized with the Indians and were largely instrumental in fostering the friendship which existed between the Frenchman and the Indian. An Indian chief long after the French regime expressed his regret for the change of policy used by the English and the Americans.

"When the French arrived they came and kissed us. They called us children and we found fathers. We lived like brethren in the same lodge and we always had wherewithal to clothe us. They never mocked at our ceremonies and they never molested the places of our dead. Seven generations of men have passed away and we have not forgotten them. Just, very just they were toward us." ¹¹

¹¹ Michigan, A Guide to the Wolverine State, 34

The Indian with true child-like simplicity was able to recognize a friend in the early Frenchman. How different might have been the future of the first American if the French instead of the English had been the conquerors of North America!

The Michigan Indian had been visited and partly civilized by the various groups we have mentioned. It remained, however, for a far-seeing Gascon to make the real beginnings of settlement in lower Michigan--a settlement in which the Indian was to be civilized and educated. Antoine de LaMothe Cadillac was born March 5, 1658, at St. Nicholas de la Grave in the Department of Tarn and Garonne, France. Of his early life we have no very definite information, but that he received a more than ordinary education seems true from the style of his numerous letters and memoirs. Almost without exception his papers evince a statesmanship born of love for France and loyalty to the king. He aimed to provide for all contingencies and in their business details many of his letters exhibit rare commercial foresight. He thought for his work and planned like a general. Our history of him in America begins with his marriage in Quebec on June 25, 1687, to Marie Therese Guyon. This marriage was a most happy one. Shortly after it he went to Port Royal in Acadia. From then on he was successively commander of a vessel, ambassador to France for Count Frontenac, and commandant at Michilimackinac. Frontenac in making the last appointment stated:

"We have thought that we could not make a better choice than to appoint Lieutenant de LaMothe Cadillac, captain of the troops of the detachment of the Marine, whose valor, wisdom, experience, and good conduct have been manifested on several occasions." 12

12 Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Wayne County, 1:326-330.

John Gilmary Shea, eminent Catholic historian, had an entirely different opinion of Cadillac:

"Chimerical, grasping, overbearing, regarding religion only as an element to be used for purposes of government, he displayed qualities that subsequently made his administration in higher position so stormy and unprofitable." ¹³

¹³ John Gilmary Shea, The Catholic Church in Colonial Days, 620.

Perhaps both men were partly right. Cadillac certainly possessed both physical and mental force and had the foresight to suggest the establishment of a colony at the proper location. He was apparently honest in his dealings in the fur trade and he lived a happy domestic life. But he possessed the defects of aggressive natures in provoking antagonisms and he could endure no crossing of his will. Men of positive natures invariably make enemies.

While Cadillac was on duty at Michilimackinac, his wife and children lived in Quebec. On his visits to them and from the reports of Fathers Dollier and Gelineau and later Sulpician missionaries of the beauties and advantages of the region along the Detroit River he came to a realization of the importance of an establishment in that part of the country. Something must be done to stop the encroachments of the English on French fur trade and here was the place close to the source effectually to block their efforts. Cadillac's plan was to undertake to draw to the region of the strait all of the Indian tribes around Lake Michigan, to teach them agriculture, the French language, and all things necessary to make them good and useful citizens. This may have

been "visionary but it speaks well for his philanthropy."¹⁴

¹⁴ Henry M. Utley, op. cit., 1:18; Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:77, 83.

Cadillac was so impressed with the importance of the Detroit River that he wrote to Count Frontenac stating his views. He recalled to the minister's mind the voyages and reports of the missionaries in which they had referred to the river as "richly set with islands as a queen's necklace with jewels." From these various reports he affirmed that Le Detroit was the real center of the lake country—the gateway to the West. From there the English could easily be kept in check. It would seem perhaps that the scheme had been delayed too long for the English had already fortified themselves "on a river which discovers itself into Lake Huron, and will extend themselves toward Lake Erie." Another advantage which Cadillac could see in the new settlement was the proximity of the French to their ancient enemies, the Iroquois. He reasoned that the strength of the tribes lay in the present remoteness of the French. With soldiers in the neighborhood "they will be kept in awe and forced to maintain the peace." If only a garrison is kept there, "it would be liable to revolution which usually takes place in frontier posts," and would therefore make no impression on the Iroquois. A colony seemed to Cadillac's mind the only solution to the problem. His plans for colonization were very definite.

He would go there himself with a hundred men to make an establishment. If all went well, in the following year the king would be asked to allow a number of families to settle there, along with two hundred

picked men of "different trades and rather young." The religious and educational life of the natives was to be cared for. Cadillac desired missionaries of different orders to teach the young savages the French language "that being the only means to civilize and humanize them." After the settlement was well founded, nuns were to be sent to establish a hospital for sick or infirm savages, "for there is nothing more urgent for gaining their friendship than care taken of them in illness." The mercenary motive was not wanting in his plan for he aimed to provide a warehouse where the savages might be supplied with needed goods in exchange for their furs. Cadillac concludes his long letter with the statement that "it will be necessary to allow the soldiers and Canadians to marry the savage maidens" and adds further that "such¹⁵ marriages will strengthen the friendship between the two races."

15 "Letter from Cadillac to Governor Frontenac, October 18, 1700," Cadillac Papers, 1:10-13.

Governor Frontenac was inclined to favor Cadillac's scheme, but he died before anything was accomplished. His successor, Chevalier de Callieres, refused to aid the project. Still interested in his cherished plan, Cadillac went to France and laid the whole matter before Louis XIV. The latter received him warmly and sent him back to America with the desired permission, the commission being signed by Count Pontchartrain. By it Sieur Cadillac was appointed commandant at Detroit, authorized to build there a fort at an advantageous point, and given about three hundred dollars in our money to carry on the work. Besides this grant he was the recipient of a small subsistence for himself, his

wife, two children and two servants. The king likewise allowed him feudal authority and grants of a portion of the land he was to take possession of in the king's name. One hundred soldiers and the same number of artisans were to be provided. However, it was all very well

¹⁶ Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:84; Paul Leake, History of Detroit, 1:6.

for Louis XIV to offer many men and much money. It was quite another thing to raise these essentials in New France. Many doubted that Cadillac's scheme would work for men had to be kept to guard the colony against the Iroquois, and de Caillieres, the governor, had no love for Cadillac.¹⁷ Because of these many reasons, the expedition set out with

¹⁷ Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, 22.

only half the number promised. Nothing daunted, Cadillac of "the iron hand and indomitable will,"¹⁸ leaving "Montreal on the 2nd of June, 1701,

¹⁸ Paul Leake, loc. cit.

with 100 men and three months' provisions . . . arrived at Detroit on the 24th of July."¹⁹

¹⁹ "Letter of Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:95.

His departure from Montreal has been graphically described by

Mary Catherine Crowley:

"There in the sunshine were the soldiers in their blue coats with white facings; the artisans in their blouses; the coureurs de bois with leathern jerkins brightly embroidered with porcupine quills, red caps set jauntily on their dark heads, and upon their swift feet gaudy Indian moccasins; the black robed Jesuit and the gray-frocked Recollect missionaries, holding aloft the cross beside the banner of St. Louis; the officers resplendent in their gorgeous uniforms and white plumed cavalier hats." 20

20 Mary Catherine Crowley, A Daughter of New France, 166.

The journey to Detroit was quite uneventful and Cadillac himself tells us of the beautiful scenery along the way. Finally they saw before them the broad river of their search, its blue waters stretching as far away as their eyes could reach. On either side of the straits were plains

"which were fringed with long and broad avenues of fruit trees which have never felt the careful hand of the watchful gardener . . . trees, which droop under the weight and multitude of their fruit. . . . There the hand of the pitiless mower has never shorn the juicy grass on which bisons of enormous height and size fatten. It is there that the careful turkey hen calls back her numerous brood, and leads them to gather the grapes. The golden pheasant, the quail, the partridge, the woodcock, the teeming turtle-dove swarm in the woods and cover the open country." 21

21 "Letter of Cadillac to de Cailliers and de Champigny, October 5, 1701," Cadillac Papers, 1:3-5.

Of the water fowl, Cadillac was no less enthusiastic. He reports to

his superiors in New France that the swans are present among the rushes in such large numbers that they might be taken for lilies. To emphasize the fact that there was much game he repeats the tale of the Indians that "there is so much that it only moves aside . . . to allow
 22
 the boat to pass."

22 Ibid., 1:6.

In the foremost boat was Cadillac, jubilant at the first sight of his precious inheritance. Very carefully he surveyed both shores, looking for the best site for a military post. Detroit was to be a combined stronghold and place of settlement. Matters of defense, clearness of fields, water supply, palisades and food must be considered. Cadillac must choose a spot where French cannon could protect the gateway of the West from all enemies of France. Several situations were discussed, including Grosse Isle where they spent the night. Next morning the canoes retraced their voyage along the northwestern shore and finally reached the high terraces on the north side of the river about two and a half miles below the present Belle Isle. Here was a somewhat higher bank, and behind it a small stream which would afford protection on the wilderness side. The spot, too, was narrow, free from islands, and would make it easy to defend and to control water travel. Cadillac turned his boat toward the shore and the long voyage
 23
 was over.

23 Robert B. Ross and George Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 2-4; Calvin Goodrich, The First Michigan Frontier, 28; Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, 24.

On the crest of the green bank all the men fell upon their knees while Fathers Vaillant and de L'Halle planted the cross, and Cadillac holding aloft the symbol of the Bourbons claimed the land in the name of France. The men were charmed with the view of nature. They marvelled at the magnificent trees "straight as an arrow and almost without branches except near the top." They noted with pleasure the "white and red grapes, thin-skinned, and full of good juice"; the large quantities of hazelnuts and filberts; and rejoiced at the absence of mountains which tend to separate a people. It seemed in truth the "paradise of America."²⁴

²⁴ "Letter of Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:86-89; "Letter of Cadillac to de Caillieres and de Champigny, October 5, 1701," Cadillac Papers, 1:4-5.

A rude altar was hastily set up and Father Constantine de L'Halle offered the first Mass on the soil of Detroit. The little band attending begged God's blessing on their prospective community. Catholic Detroit, destined to increase and multiply down the ages, had begun.²⁵

²⁵ Mary Catherine Crowley, "Social Life of Early Detroit," Bi-Centenary of the Founding of the City of Detroit, 98.

Having offered their first fruits to their Creator, these practical minded men now set about the building of a fort to protect them from the Indians. This consisted of a stockade of wooden pickets enclosing about one acre of land. A document found in the Paris archives and thought to have been written by Tonty, describes this fort as "one

arpent square without the bastions, very advantageously situated on an eminence, separated from the River by a gentle slope of about forty paces." It was located at the narrowest part of the "River, which is one gunshot across." The document continues prophetically": . . . if the post is hereafter inhabited, the ground is very good for building
 26
 eventually a large town." To construct the fort, trunks of small trees

26 "Document 44, Description of Detroit," Cadillac Papers, 1:139.

six to eight inches in diameter were driven into the ground to a depth of three feet. They stood close together, the interstices chinked with clay and their points, sharpened to make climbing uncomfortable, reached to about a height of twelve feet. This fort was named Pontchartrain in honor of Cadillac's patron.

Inside the enclosure small wooden huts were built. The first of these to be finished was the church which was named St. Anne in honor of the saint of the day.

Compare the cold bleak meeting house of the Pilgrim Fathers and their co-religionists to the evidently well-equipped St. Anne's. How could one doubt the presence of true Old World culture in early Detroit when the Church, the preserver of that culture, was present in that tiny settlement in all its color and ceremony. In the inventory of Cadillac's property we read the following description of the church:

"Thirty-five feet long, twenty-four and a half feet wide, ten feet high; boarded entirely above, with oak joists in a good ridge, and below of beams with square joists, with its door window and shutters, and sash-frames between of twenty squares each; the whole closing with a key; . . . a chalice with its

paten of silver gilt inside; 1 iron for making bread for the altar; 2 missals, one large and one small; 1 bag for holding the communion cloths; 6 amices half-worn out; 2 small hand bells; 10 large candle-sticks of painted wood; 1 confessional, and many other articles of devotional use."²⁷

²⁷ "Cadillac Papers," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 33: 519-521.

On its rude altar were silver vessels which Cadillac had bought in Paris.²⁸ The commandant must have had very much at heart the religious

²⁸ Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, 24.

welfare of his colonists to have spent money for his future church at a time when he was not blessed with an abundance of wealth. But St. Anne's has repaid any sacrifice her first commandant and early parishioners may have made for her. She has stood the test of time and is today considered the mother church of the Northwest. Her records have come down in an unbroken series from early times and are today considered an authentic source for the study of early Detroit.

²⁹ John Gilmary Shea, The Catholic Church in Colonial Days, 621-623.

St. Anne's in early times was probably used also for gatherings of the people. The surrounding buildings in comparison were therefore quite small. Most of the other dwellings were all alike, and built of upright timber, roofed with bark and made livable by the methods usu-

ally followed in frontier life. It is unlikely that any of the houses had windows except that of the wealthiest. Glass must have been very expensive and there seems no record of its having been used in the very early days except perhaps in the case of St. Anne's. In the description already quoted there is mention of a window with twenty squares. These squares may refer to the small panes of glass sometimes seen in church windows. The doors of the buildings were simply set in place, without hinges or with such hinges and fastenings as could be devised by the owner. Often the door was a "Dutch" door, of which the upper half could be kept open for light and ventilation in fair weather. Wooden floors were found in only a few of the dwellings for in most cases the floor was simply beaten earth or hard-packed clay.

³⁰ Clarence M. Burton, The Building of Detroit, 7-9; Clarence M. Burton, Cadillac's Village, 12-13; George B. Catlin, Story of Detroit, 10.

A study of the inventory of Cadillac's property would indicate that gradually other buildings were erected. Among these were a warehouse, "37 feet long and 22 feet wide," containing "a press . . . , a counter, three shelves for books, lined with boards for one-fourth of the height"; four houses, one of them "closing with a key"; a shed for cattle, a barn, a dove-cot, and an ice house.

³¹ "Cadillac Papers," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 33: 519-521.

All in all, Fort Pontchartrain occupied but one acre of land. To modern Detroiters proud of their magnificent buildings and miles of

built-up city, this may seem very small and childish. But at the time Detroit was the strongest and best located post in the West. The English had nothing to offer in competition to it, and the Indians were amazed at the wonders created by the white man with saw and nails. The beginnings of any city is important to its later development and the auspicious beginning of Detroit in 1701, creating a stir in the world and gratifying its builders, was really a foreshadowing of the Detroit of the future.

32

32 Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, 25.

Building, necessary as it was, did not take all the time of the colonists. Cultivation of food is always a problem in a new community and Detroit was no exception to this rule. In a letter to his friend and patron, Count Pontchartrain, Cadillac gave an account of what had been accomplished in Detroit, including some details of the agricultural labors. According to this report, after the fort and dwellings had been built, the land was cleared and some French wheat sown on the seventh of October. Although it had been sown very hastily it came up well and was cut on the twenty-first of the following July. In the spring more wheat was sown, but this time in the Canadian manner. This crop did not turn out as well as the previous planting. This, Cadillac felt, showed that the French tillage was the better for the soil. Later, twelve arpents of land were sown with Indian corn which proved an abundant crop.

33

33 Cadillac Papers, 1:95-96.

Each of the fifty soldiers had a garden plot of half an acre for his own cultivation while the civilians farmed larger tracts of land. In the winter of 1702, there were sixty arpents of wheat besides the gardens. Another aid to the colonists was the rich supply of wild fruit, berries, and nuts, which grew in abundance. These the people gathered to preserve for the coming year. Cadillac also transplanted some vines and fruit trees in the hope of improving them. In Cadillac's writings we have an enthusiastic view of the country. The first real estate promoter waxes poetic over the scene:

"The banks are so many vast meadows where the freshness of these beautiful streams keeps the grass always green. . . . In this soil so fertile, the ambitious vine . . . forms a thick roof with its broad leaves and its heavy clusters. . . . Under these vast avenues you may see assembling in hundreds the shy stag and the timid hind with the bounding reebuck, to pick up eagerly the apples and plums with which the ground is paved. . . . Can it be thought that a land in which nature has distributed everything in so complete a manner could refuse to the hand of the careful husbandman, who breaks into its fertile depths, the return which is expected of it?" ³⁴

³⁴ "Letter of Cadillac to de Caillieres and de Champigny, October 5, 1701," Cadillac Papers, 1:3-5.

Despite this poetic picture the matter-of-fact Gascon remarks:

"All this is no easy task, especially as everything has to be carried on the shoulders, for we have no oxen or horses yet to draw . . . nor to plough; and to accomplish it, it is necessary to be very active." ³⁵

³⁵ "Letter of Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:96.

Without suitable tools and with no oxen or horses for teams it may well be imagined that the preparing of the soil was an arduous task. For the first few years until oxen came by scows up Lakes Ontario and Erie, men had to be harnessed to plows to break the soft meadow soil. The ground itself had its drawbacks for the cold clay required much draining and airing before being ready for crops. Malaria and mosquitoes, too, added to the drudgery of planting. However, the overcoming of such difficulties molded well the men who formed early Detroit. They refuted by their industry the testimony of the average unthinking writer who asserts dogmatically that the average Frenchman was too lazy for agriculture.

36

³⁶ Henry M. Utley, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State, 1:137; Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, 28; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:332.

Up to this point little mention has been made of the Indian for whom Cadillac had laid such extensive plans. What was the success of the commandant with him? When Cadillac arrived there were few Indians to dispute the territory with him. Because of their fear of the Iroquois, most of the tribes had abandoned the lower peninsula except for hunting. Their living quarters were elsewhere. On the sixth of December of the first year, Cadillac had marked out a place for the Hurons at a good distance to the right of the fort. In giving them the place where he wished them to build their fort and village, Cadillac felt that "he had set all the tribes on the track of asking me for lands, and for permission to settle there." Having shown the others the way, the Hurons cleared in less than a year about two hundred ar-

37

pents of land. In the early part of 1702 the commandant called a coun-

37 "Letter of Cadillac to Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:97.

cil of the Indians. Many of the braves arrived arrayed in savage finery, and there was much giving of gifts as the talk progressed. The Indians were invited to leave their homes in the north and to settle at Detroit where the climate was mild, the soil was fertile, and the trade assured. So silver-tongued an orator was Cadillac that many of the Hurons, Ottawas, Miamis, and Pottawotomies abandoned their homes
38
and came to the vicinity of Fort Pontchartrain. Before the next sum-

38 Richard R. Elliott, "French Regime in Michigan," Bi-Centenary of the Founding of the City of Detroit, 120-121.

mer the little colony, far from the center of civilization had a population of about six thousand, most of whom were Indians. The "paradise
39
of America" was fast becoming the metropolis of America.

39 "Letter of Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:98-100; Robert B. Reas and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 58.

Unfortunately these Indians did not always agree. The French kept the peace as best they could among such racially hostile and transplanted people, but misunderstandings were bound to occur. It was not, however, until 1705 that any real difficulty with the Indians arose. Due

to complaints made against him, Cadillac had been summoned to Quebec to answer for his apparently high-handed actions. In his absence -
Sieur de Bourgemont was sent to Detroit to assume command. The new official was an unfortunate choice. Trouble arose almost at once with the Indians and Bourgemont was not a tactful man. There had been a quarrel between the Ottawas and the Miamis which Cadillac had promised to arbitrate. His sudden departure preventing this, the Indians asked for satisfaction from the new commandant. Bourgemont, not understanding the Indians' character, answered them roughly and refused to consider the matter. Feeling certain from this latest evidence that the French favored the Miami and intended to exterminate the Ottawa, the latter excited by their young warriors decided to strike first. As Milo Quaife states, the immediate cause of any war is usually a trivial one. The opponents have been worked up to a fever and a small spark is sufficient to start the conflagration. But to "Bourgemont belongs the unique distinction of starting a war over an affront to the feelings of a dog." It seems that before actually going to war the Ottawas decided to make one last appeal to the commandant. In the course of the visit it happened that one of the warriors was bitten by Bourgemont's dog. The man immediately retaliated by striking the dog. The angered master quite forgot himself and administered such a severe beating that the warrior died.

The next day the battle was on. Many Ottawas were slain by the Miami. Finally, the latter sought the protection of the fort. Meanwhile, Father Constantine de L'Halle was working in his little garden which was located outside the fort. He was seized by the Ottawas but was shortly released and told to go to the fort and explain that the

Ottawa tribe was not warring upon the French. Anxious to prevent further bloodshed and to save his people needless alarm, the priest hastened toward the enclosure, but was shot by a treacherous Indian. Thus the soil of Detroit was sanctified by the blood of its first martyr.

⁴⁰ Milo M. Quaife, "Detroit Biographies: The Sieur de Bourgemont," Burton Historical Collection Leaflet, 6:50-53.

Father Constantine's death plunged the little settlement in grief. He had won the respect of all by his simple manners, the uniform sweetness of his disposition, and his austere life. Having early known sorrow, he had been able to sympathize with the unfortunate and to ease their bruised hearts. Little children recognized in the good priest a friend and were drawn naturally to him. To honor the memory of this kind chaplain the people constructed a crude little shrine on the banks of the Savoyard River just beyond the pickets of the fort. Here there was a stately oak. Within its hollow trunk some pious hand placed an image of the Blessed Mother to mark the place where the saintly priest had died to save his people. "The pines chanted his requiem, the tears of his flock were his epitaph, and the innocent hands of children strew his grave with the wild flowers of the woods."

⁴¹ Marie C. Hamlin, Legends of Le Detroit, 43-44, 48, 108.

Upon his return to Detroit, Cadillac summoned the offenders to deliver up to him the chief, Le Pezant, who had shot the Recollect. The aged chief was brought and lodged in the guard house. Fearful of arous-

ing the hostility of the Indians if the chief were put to death, and yet anxious to placate the French and the Miami tribe, Cadillac scolded Pezant roundly for his deed. During the night the chief who was very fat and over seventy years of age waddled out of his prison and clambered over the palisades without being seen by the guards. Cadillac has been accused of conniving at his escape but the commandant might truthfully have said that he did not know but that Pezant had been bribed by his enemies, and that, too, he had to keep the friendship of the Lakes Indians to defend Detroit from envious tribes. Be that as it may, matters with the Indians became peaceful again.

42

⁴² Robert B. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 81; Agnes Laut, Cadillac, Knight Errant of the Wilderness, 166.

Cadillac's policy with the Indians led him into trouble with the Jesuits and most of his reports to the home government were colored by his hatred of the northern missionaries. In his early days the Sieur had not been in favor of the intermingling of whites and Indians. He seemed satisfied to leave the savage in his little village.

"It is a life to which he has been accustomed since Adam. Do they wish to build palaces and ornament them with beautiful furniture? He would not exchange his wigwam and the mat on which he camps like a monkey for the Louvre. An attempt to overthrow the present state of affairs in this country would only result in the ruin of commerce and the destruction of the colony." ⁴³

⁴³ Ibid., 79-80.

Later on in his anxiety to build up his fort at the straits his

ideas underwent a decided change. As has been said his plan was to establish around his colony at Detroit a permanent settlement of Indians. Now, most of these tribes were to be gathered from the lakes and islands which had already been placed under the spiritual care of the Jesuits, operating from Michilimackinac, one of the oldest missionary settlements in the Northwest. The success of the plan would mean the breakup of a matured missionary system which had taken years to build up. Moreover, it was feared that placing Indians under the command of a man who had not been friendly to them in the past would eventually lead the Christian families to relapse into paganism and debauchery, because experience had taught the Jesuits that the near presence of a superior race to any community of Indians demoralizes the latter. Under these circumstances opposition of the Jesuits to
44
the displacement and removal of the Lakes tribes is clear.

44 Richard R. Elliott, "The French Regime in Detroit," Bi-Centenary of the Founding of the City of Detroit, 125, 145.

In the case of Cadillac's colony the question of selling rum to the Indians was another problem which caused conflict. The Jesuits were opposed to this sale of spirits and appealed to Louis XIV in 1694 while Cadillac was still at Michilimackinac. The Sorbonne decided against Cadillac, and the Northwest had its first prohibition law. The commandant was not very zealous in carrying out the law, and he became the bitter enemy of the priests who were attempting to protect the red man. He tried to show that the climate demanded a little liquor as an essential to good health. "A drink of brandy after the repast seems neces-

sary to cook the bilious meats and the crudities which they leave in the stomach." But, there was no denying the fact that the savage had a great appetite for "fire-water" and that supplied with it he became a dangerous neighbor and ruined himself. It was a difficult question for Cadillac to solve as he felt that if he did not supply the savages with the liquor which they craved, they would go to the British who had no scruples about supplying them with rum and selling them cheap goods. ⁴⁵ Too, his answer to the missionaries who alleged that the sale

⁴⁵ Charles Moore, Northwest under Three Flags, 47-48.

of eau de vie was injurious to the morals of the savages was that if the Indians were forced to go to the English to obtain rum, they might be converted to Protestantism and thus lose their souls. "Wasn't it better to be occasionally drunk on French brandy and his soul saved than to be drunk on English rum and eternally lost?" ⁴⁶ Was it really the soul of the

⁴⁶ Clarence M. Burton, Cadillac's Village, 24.

Indian or was it the wealth from the fur trade in which Cadillac was more interested?

In the sale of liquor at Detroit, Cadillac chose a middle course. In his restrictions he appeared both honest and sincere. The savages were permitted to obtain brandy only at the storehouse and then could secure only a small quantity at a time, usually the twenty-fourth of a quart. Also, the price was placed high, and each one had to wait his turn, so theoretically at least, there was not much of a chance of the

savages becoming intoxicated. While these regulations prevailed a
⁴⁷
 drunken Indian was seldom seen. However, if the success of this enter-

⁴⁷ Charles Moore, op. cit., 49.

prise was likely to break up the missions in the Upper Lakes region, the Jesuits in the light of Christianity cannot be blamed for looking unfavorably upon the project.

Another group which had none of the humanitarian interest of the Jesuits opposed Cadillac's scheme, also. The Company of Canada had a sordid motive. It had obtained a strangle-hold upon Canadian trade. Its privileges were so great "that not a pound of castors could be sold within certain defined districts in Canada except to its factors at a
⁴⁸
 fixed price."

⁴⁸ Richard R. Elliott, "The French Regime in Detroit," Bi-Centenary of the Founding of the City of Detroit, 126.

If the colony of Cadillac succeeded it would seriously interfere with the monopoly of the company, so the latter decided to crush the founder and to starve out the colony. By various means they secured the cession of the post and were granted exclusive control of the fur trade. The company was to support the commandant and one other officer, while the garrison was to be maintained at the king's expense. There was nothing unusual about this plan as it was the system on which French colonial enterprise was based at that time. The mother country impoverished by European wars could not support such an undertaking so

granted trade privileges to companies who were to pay a considerable part of the expense. In the case of Detroit where the commandant had offered to be responsible for the undertaking it seemed rather doubtful that the king, always friendly to Cadillac, had really given his official sanction to the claim of the Company. The commandant returned to Quebec with the convoy, and by the aid of his friends succeeded somewhat in modifying the strict bonds of his personal powers. He was pledged not to trade with the savages, was given charge of the books of the Company, and was treasurer of its surplus funds. To a man of Cadillac's temperament this was a bitter disappointment. From the proud seignior of a rising colony he had become simply the agent of the Company. Nevertheless, he attempted to carry on under difficulties and this finally brought him into trouble with the company. In 1703 he discovered that one of the agents was guilty of mismanagement of the funds. A report was sent to the Company and to Governor Vaudreuil. A commission friendly to the accused was sent to Detroit and their report blamed the commandant. Cadillac was ordered to report to Quebec to answer to the charges. It was during his absence that the incident already related which led to the death of Father de L'Halle took place. Cadillac was acquitted of all charges by Pontchartrain who read between the lines. The Company of Canada was deprived of all its powers and the trading privileges at the fort were again vested in Cadillac. Thus⁴⁹ full vindication and restoration to power was accorded him.

⁴⁹ Robert M. Ross and George B. Catlin, op. cit., 58-76.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest helps to Cadillac during these try-

ing times was the presence of Madame Cadillac. She and Tonty's wife, the first white women of the west, had set out on the tenth of September, 1701, to join their husbands. Everyone admired the two women who had the courage to undertake so laborious a journey without fearing either the "great difficulties or fatigue or other inconveniences which must be endured by roads so long and so rough for persons of their sex." Many tried to dissuade Madame Cadillac, pointing out not only the dangers but also the dullness of an uncultivated place. Cadillac's wife proved herself the true spouse of the Detroit commandant by stoutly replying that a "woman who loves her husband as she ought . . . has no attraction more powerful than his society, in whatever place it may be."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ "Letter from Father Germain, S. J. to Cadillac, August 25, 1701," Cadillac Papers, 1:28-31.

Too much cannot be said in praise of these brave white women who made the journey of a thousand miles in an open boat, their only companions being Indians and rough canoe men. Their courage and devotion appealed particularly to the Iroquois who were greatly astonished to see them. They declared that white women had never before come willingly to their country and that therefore the peace made with the Indians by Chevalier de Calliere must indeed be a sincere one.⁵¹

⁵¹ Daniel L. Crossman, "Early French Occupation of Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 14:663; "Letter of Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, September 25, 1702," Cadillac Papers, 1:99-100.

Many writers and artists have depicted Madame Cadillac's arrival. The picture oral or written could scarcely be overdrawn. No doubt the sentry had scarcely given the alarm that memorable day of arrival than every citizen in the little town was upon the river bank. As the flotilla of canoes approached closely enough to make out the golden fleur-de-lis of France, a glad shout came from the spectators and a salute of welcome was fired from the fort. The Indian allies, too, pressed down to the water's edge for to them the coming of the white women was a happy omen. It evidenced the goodwill of the French nation toward them, and assured them that Cadillac had really settled in earnest at Detroit, and intended to make it a real habitation. Madame Cadillac, "handsome and graciously dignified as becomes the wife of the Sieur,"⁵² is seen with her six year old son Jacques leaning against her. Know-

⁵² Mary Catherine Crowley, A Daughter of New France, 180.

ing how pomp and display impressed the Indians it requires little imagination to see the soldiers with their blue coats with white lacings, the officers dressed in all the gold lace of their office with sword at heel, and soldiers drawn up to fire a fusillade of royal welcome. Too, one can visualize the children "garbed in white ruffles to their ears." Not to be outdone the Indians came in fine "white and brown buckskin decorated in stained porcupine quills" to join the settlers in their cries of welcome. Even the stern commandant's face lighted up with joy at the sight of his wife and boy, and his pleasure and pride at showing them the accomplishments of the colonists can easily be imagined. The rest of the day was spent in rejoicing as only the French can. Huge

barbecues of whole deer, venison, bear, and black iron kettles of savory Indian stew were served and presents of glass beads and gee-gaws of ribbons and tin mirrors were distributed. With innocent serenades, dancing, and games the evening wore on. Then came the bugle call. The "flag came down, the Fathers blessed their little flock, gates were locked, and Detroit closed its eyes in sleep on its first happy festivity."

53

53 Agnes Laut, Cadillac, Knight-Errant of the Wilderness, 147-149.

This was the beginning of family life in Detroit. The wives of the commandant and captain having led the way, other settlers began sending for their wives and sweethearts, and gradually there came to be a number of homes at Detroit. It was not difficult to obtain permission to return to Lower Canada to secure a bride and many young Frenchmen availed themselves of the opportunity. As more of these marriages took place, the colony grew gradually more civilized and the inhabitants became more contented. Despite Cadillac's desire for his men to take dusky brides, the Frenchman's heart usually turned to the "girl he left behind him." Father Dennison, who has done a great deal of research in Detroit genealogy, wrote Mr. Burton that "no bride suits the French heart as well as the frank, modest, polite, charming French maiden, who has the desirable faculty to grace her home as queen and bring happiness to her surroundings." The coming of the white women had given the fort the stability it needed. Henceforth it was to be not a military post with a few resident traders and artisans but a real colony. The French home with its contentedness can truly be said to

have made the maintenance of Fort Pontchartrain possible. Detroit owes much to the French mothers of the eighteenth century.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "Father Christian Denisson's letter to Clarence M. Burton," Cadillac's Village, 37-38.

In the ensuing years under Cadillac's rule the colony, small though it was, began to take on some of the features of European civilization. Human power was aided by the building of a windmill and the importation of horses.⁵⁵ A family of bovines and eight chickens were

⁵⁵ George N. Fuller, (editor), Michigan, a Centennial History, 1:44.

sent from Montreal. They soon multiplied, and the lowing of cows and the cackling of hens helped to make the wilderness seem a home.⁵⁶ In

⁵⁶ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:338.

1708, D'Aigremont, biased as he was toward Cadillac, was forced to admit in his report that three hundred and fifty acres were improved and that twenty-nine of the inhabitants had farms outside the village. Too, numerous tracts were cultivated for gardens where enough wheat, Indian corn, and vegetables were grown to supply the needs of the garrison and the villagers.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ George N. Fuller, op. cit., 1:47.

Conditions must have been quite similar to those described by Munro. He asserts that the Frenchman was never badly off in regard to his daily fare, even in years when the harvest was poor. He had food that was more nourishing and more abundant than the French peasant had⁵⁸ at home. Fish was plentiful, game was easily obtained, and berries,

⁵⁸ William Bennett Munro, Crusaders of New France, 214.

fruits, and nuts must have been gathered and preserved by the thrifty French house-wife. Although the early colonists lacked much in the line of material satisfactions, undoubtedly the necessities of life⁵⁹ were provided. Charlevoix in after years says that the settlement

⁵⁹ George N. Fuller, op. cit., 1:48.

was "tolerably well begun some fifteen years ago."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ P. F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., Journal of a Voyage to North America, 1:7.

These were happy days for Cadillac. His children loved the free, happy life with "all the culture and comfort of a St. Lawrence seignior." As commandant he strode through the village streets, sword at his side, receiving the respect due the seignior. Detroit, like old France in those days, was under feudal tenure. Cadillac had full authority to make grants of land, to try offenders for serious crime, and, in short, to consider himself sole owner of the whole fort in the

same manner that a French castle belonged to its lord. Although his rights were modified to fit primitive conditions, still he could demand six days of enforced labor annually, could take one fish out of every eleven, could collect taxes, charge for the use of the grist mill, and demand a fee from the carpenter, the blacksmith, and even the farmer. Cadillac boldly asserted his power.

"As to my powers, they are very ample, being to punish according to circumstances, by censures, by reprimands, by arrests, by imprisonments, or by deprivation of civil rights; and in case of distinct disobedience, to run my sword through anyone who has so offended me." 61

61 Clarence M. Burton, Cadillac's Village, 16; Robert B. Ross and George B. Catlin, op. cit., 91-92; Calvin Goodrich, First Michigan Frontier, 52-54.

On May Day those who had accepted fiefs from the seignior appeared at his door to offer him homage. Falling on his knees with head uncovered, the vassal rendered fealty to his lord.

"Monsieur du Detroit, Monsieur du Detroit, Monsieur du Detroit, I bring you faith and homage which I am bound to pay you on account of my fief, which I hold as a man of faith, of your Seigniorship of Detroit, declaring that I offer to pay my seigniorial and feudal dues in their season, and demanding of you to accept me in faith and homage as aforesaid."

This ceremony was followed by the planting of the May pole in the front of the seignior's house. After the priest had offered a prayer that the festivities might go without accident, the pole impelled by strong, sinewy arms rose while the voyageurs sang their favorite boat songs. Then the pole was blackened and left standing for several

months in order to bring luck to the community. This ceremony was followed by feasting and dancing on the green. The officers were gay in their bright uniforms, the habitants and voyageurs picturesque in their blue tunics, elk-skin trousers, and scarlet sashes, while the ladies "resembled birds of paradise as they swayed in the dance."⁶²

⁶² Marie C. Hamlin, op. cit., 30-35.

In such a happy atmosphere the colony seemed headed for success but in 1710 came the bolt from the blue. Cadillac was informed in a notice from Quebec that he had been transferred to Louisiana as governor. This was to be a promotion, a reward for his faithful services in Detroit. Cadillac felt enmity behind the change and went to Quebec to arrange his affairs. Although his friends came to his assistance, the Company of Canada seemed more powerful and the transfer was carried out. In June, 1713, he and his family landed at Louisiana. He did much for the young colony there but he chafed under restrictions and in 1717 he returned to France. For years he tried to secure some compensation for his work in Detroit, but it was in vain. Nothing was obtained until after the American Revolution when the state of Massachusetts gave to his granddaughter, Madame Gregoire, his old land grant at Bar Harbor.⁶³

⁶³ C. M. Burton, Early Detroit, 8; Robert B. Ross and George B. Catlin, op. cit., 124.

Was Cadillac then a failure? Did he bequeath nothing to modern

Detroit? If recognition and reward during one's lifetime is considered success, then indeed he was a failure. He died far from the scene of his labors, without a cent of the fortune which he had struggled to obtain. No title was placed before his name, nor had he any assurance that his children would be great seigniors in their turn. But on the other hand, may not the marvelous growth of Detroit have some connection with the heroism of its founder? Bold, impetuous, stubborn, bitter and sometimes unscrupulous toward any one who opposed him, still he earnestly desired the success of the colony, and gave his all--health, time, and resources to its development. Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, he foresaw the possibilities of the future. Who can say that the development of modern Detroit does not justify the judgment of its French-Catholic founder, Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac?

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURE OF COLONISTS DURING THE FRENCH REGIME

If the enemies of the colony had planned its ruin and abandonment as a result of Cadillac's departure to Louisiana, they were doomed to disappointment. The well-being of the French Catholic men and women who were destined to plant firmly their faith upon the shores of the beautiful strait was being cared for by Divine Providence.¹ For many

¹ Michigan Catholic Bicentenary Supplement, August 22, 1901, 3.

years, however, after Cadillac left the settlement Detroit was forced to fight for its very existence. Many of Cadillac's friends returned to Montreal and Quebec; the new men in charge of the colony were not in sympathy with the plans of the former commandant; and there was great despondency over this state of affairs among those who remained. But the brave Frenchmen lived through the crisis and in due time their colony rallied and showed new vigor in its revival.²

² George E. Catlin, The Story of Detroit, 12-13; Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State, 1: 145.

Perhaps the worst disaster came from the Indians. Diplomatically and with difficulty the whites had been able to keep on friendly terms with the neighboring tribes, but the Sacs and Foxes who inhabited the Saginaw Valley looked with hatred upon the invasion of the French and determined to destroy them. Under various pretenses they had collected

in great numbers about the fort in May, 1712, secretly planning to attack. Dubuisson, the commandant, was a good officer but he had only thirty soldiers. His friends, the Hurons, the Ottawas, and the Pottawattomies were absent. An Indian convert disclosed the plot and Dubuisson took immediate measures for protection. In his official report he wrote that he had ordered the destruction of the church, the storehouse, and several other buildings outside the stockade, to prevent the enemy's using them as a base to attack the fort proper. Meanwhile, word arrived that six hundred Hurons were coming. The gates were closed, men were posted, ammunition was ready, and "our reverend father . . . busied himself, holding himself ready to give general absolution in case of need."³ On their arrival the friendly Indians

³ "Report of Sieur Dubuisson to M. de Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 33:537-540.

told Dubuisson that because of the previous kindness of the French to them they were willing to die, if necessary, to save the fort. On the nineteenth day of the siege, seeing that they had no opportunity to defeat the foe, the Foxes and Sacs stole away but were followed and annihilated by the allied Indians. Detroit was saved. In thanksgiving Father Cherubin "celebrated a high Mass to give thanks to God for having preserved us from this enemy."⁴

⁴ Ibid., 33:551-552.

Modern writers would seem to make light of Dubuisson's deed and

to consider him responsible for the near disaster to the fort.⁵ In his

⁵ Arthur Pound, Detroit, Dynamic City, 44-46.

own report he does not indulge in self-praise, but attributes the victory to the allied Indians whose support was his because of the wise French policy toward the red man.⁶ Utley asserts that if the commander

⁶ Sieur Dubuisson, op. cit., 33:541.

had been a coward the ultimate fate of Detroit might have been decided then and there.⁷ Charlevoix characterizes the commandant as a "good

⁷ Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, op. cit., 1:187.

officer and a worthy man." Later, speaking of Dubuisson, he testifies that the commandant acquired great honor by his firmness and by his disinterested course which led him to strip himself of everything in favor of his allies.⁸ From these statements from recognized authorities,

⁸ P. F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., History and General Description of New France, 5:257, 264.

and from the lack of interest in improvement which the British showed when they finally obtained the coveted fort, we may conclude that Detroiters are really indebted to that early French commandant for his successful struggle against odds to save Detroit for posterity.

In 1717 a party of Foxes again threatened the fort but they were

put to flight. These defeats seemed a salutary lesson, for there is no record of another attack until 1746 when northern Indians besieged the town but were conquered with the help of Pontiac and his tribe.⁹

⁹ Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan, 1:231.

Many events which occurred between 1710 and 1760 are shrouded in mystery as the commandants who succeeded Cadillac were not as energetic as he in making reports to the governor-general. Nevertheless, it is known that there was comparative calm at the settlement. The pioneer struggled with all the difficulties incident to a remote position. There was the ever present fear of an Indian attack. Some of the commandants were selfish and were not inclined to advance other interests than the fur trade which for them was very lucrative. But there was real contentment in the slowly growing colony. Withdrawn from worldly affairs the French people worked and played after their own fashion, went faithfully to church, and patiently strengthened their hold on their water-side lands.¹⁰

¹⁰ Arthur Pound, op. cit., 47; Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:97; Michigan Catholic Centenary Edition, August 22, 1901, 3.

The first visitor of importance was Father Charlevoix, the Jesuit historian, who came to Detroit in 1721. He remained for several days and gave high praise to the country.¹¹ While in Detroit Father Charlevoix

¹¹ Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., Journal of a Voyage to North America, 2:6.

became quite interested in the condition of the Hurons who were without a missionary, and it was largely through his efforts that in 1728 the Jesuits sent Father Armand de la Richardie to Detroit. The latter established a mission on the present site of Assumption College at Sandwich, Ontario. Here the Hurons could trade without being tempted by strong liquors or cheated by unscrupulous traders. In 1755 Father Richardie returned to upper Canada leaving his assistant, Father Peter Potier, in charge of the mission. Father Potier remained faithfully
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at his post until his death in 1781.

12 George B. Catlin, The Story of Detroit, 18-21.

For some years the home government had shown little interest in Detroit, but in 1737 there was a change in attitude. Hocquart, the Intendant, wrote that no permanent post could be established until
13
more settlers could be induced to move there and cultivate the land.

13 Clarence M. Burton, Early Detroit, 15.

In 1749 France sent several hundred immigrants to the strait. This group was composed mainly of farmers, well-provided with the necessary pioneer supplies--canvas for tents, hoes, axes, sickles, guns, powder, and meat, all of which was to be paid for when a certain area of land had been cleared. The proclamation of Comte de la Gallissoniere, governor-general of Canada at this time, shows that the French government was very much interested in agriculture in the colony. The proclamation accomplished its purpose and a group of really worth-while

colonists was added to the little settlement. They were mainly from Normandy, frugal, industrious men who brought their good qualities with them to the advantage of the colony.

¹⁴ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 232; Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 148.

The Cicotte Ledger, a valuable gift of the Cicotte family to the Burton Historical Collection which lists the crown subsidy to the French settlers of 1749, shows well the honesty and industry of the group. The name of each habitant occupies a separate page and under his name is written "the rations and utensils which were gifts, and the animals and grain which were loans to be repaid in kind." The vast majority of the settlers honestly lived up to this agreement as is evidenced by page after page of such examples as the following:

"15 minots of bread wheat	Returned
1 minot of peas	Returned
3 minots of corn	Returned
1 cow	Returned"

Besides these things which were to be returned, the home government provided generously for its colony.

"Frederick Cousin dit Comptois
He received as a donation one ration from
August 1, 1749, to February 1, 1751.

1 axe	4 pounds of powder
1 spade	8 pounds of lead
1 scythe	1 pint of brandy
1 sickle	1 sow
2 augers	1 fowl" 15
80 nails	

¹⁵ French Settlers in Detroit, 16. This is the official title of the document which is familiarly known as the Cicotte Ledger.

In 1755 the banished Acadians left many of their number on the shores of the Detroit. Among the men who joined the colony at an early date was Robert Navarre. In his veins was the proudest blood of France. He was well-educated and shortly after his arrival was appointed sub-delegate and royal notary. Although he was undoubtedly subject to the commandant, Navarre was the authority on all matters. His name is affixed to every public document written between 1734 and 16 1760. He was so well-informed and so exact in the performance of his

¹⁶ Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:703; The John Askin Papers, 1:37.

duties that when the British conquered the fort they found it desirable to continue him in the office of notary. His good services to the British soldiers are noted in a letter written from the commandant at Detroit, Captain Donald Campbell, to his superior, Colonel Henry Bouquet:

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 "I hope to be able to support the Detach
 tolerably well this winter by Mr. Navarre's
 assistance, who does all in his power to
 serve us." ¹⁷

¹⁷ "Letter of Captain Donald Campbell to Colonel Henry Bouquet, December, 1760," Bouquet Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 19:49.

The signatures on the early records of St. Anne's indicate that most of the officers and early inhabitants were well-educated for that time.

The population was slowly but steadily increasing, conditions were

improving, and all seemed to promise happiness under the paternal rule of France. But gradually echoes of the far-distant struggle between England and France penetrated to the peaceful colony on the Straits. Upon the walls of Quebec the fate of this country was decided and in 1760 Major Robert Rogers took possession of Detroit for the British. While the puzzled Indians looked on and the habitants stood wondering about their fate, the fleur de lis of France was pulled down, and the flag of Great Britain waved over Detroit.¹⁸

¹⁸ Francis Parkman, Conspiracy of Pontiac, 1:168, 176-177.

What of the culture of the habitant during the French period of Detroit history? Culture here is applied to a people's way of life, to all their activities and institutions considered as a whole. It is not to be taken as referring only to the writing of books or the composition of music or of poetry, but it suggests such enlightenment as is best in civilized life, namely intellectual development, preservation of home life, high standards of morality, refinement of manners and of taste, and social and industrial development.

For sixty years now the Frenchman had lived at the Straits. Had he brought with him and established old world French culture and civilization, or had he reverted to savagery and awaited the British or American settler to bring him to their social level? This study will consider the culture of the early French settler--his characteristics, his home, social, and economic life.

It is to be regretted that much that we know of the French habitants has been obtained from English records. The latter coming

as conquerors had little respect for their traditional enemies, and considered that "little good could come out of Nazareth" particularly since that Nazareth was far removed from the usual haunts of civilization.¹⁹ Too, English and sometimes American historians noticing the

¹⁹ Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:70. Marie Caroline Watson Hamlin is a direct descendant of the French royal family of Navarre, and thus well qualified to write truthfully and sympathetically of the customs and manners of the early French in Detroit. Most of her material has been obtained from the lips of ancestors whose memories extended back into the past century. She writes that she has "tried to be strictly accurate" and is indebted to Charlevoix, La Montan, Parkman, and the Pontiac Manuscript for her historical background. Her effort has been to preserve the quaint customs and beautiful traditions which her French ancestors brought over from Normandy. Since one of these ancestors came to Detroit with Cadillac and his descendants remained in Detroit, the family was well-imbued with French customs which were handed down from generation to generation as sacred trusts.

willing subjection of the Frenchman to his home government, and his sympathy with the Indian tribes, compare this, unfavorably for the Frenchman, with the energy and individual independence which brought the New England emigrants to our shores.²⁰

²⁰ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 110. The Detroit Free Press of June 14, 1896 pays tribute to Bela Hubbard: "For a great deal of what is accurately known today of the early history of Detroit, we are indebted to his clear recollections, combined with much study and patient research." Hubbard came to Detroit in 1835, having graduated the previous year from Hamilton College, Hamilton, New York. He remained here for the remainder of his life. He was interested in the artistic development and historical background of his adopted city, both of which he showed by having placed on the outside of the City Hall four artistic statues of men who have given much to Detroit: Fathers Marquette and Richard, and the French laymen, LaSalle and Cadillac. He does not mention specific references in his writings but his works would indicate considerable research and observation. He lived in Detroit while the French still predominated and hence was enabled to learn much from his neighbors'

lives. Too, he listened intelligently to their tales of life in an earlier period. Dr. Quaife believes that Hubbard was enough of a scholar to be able to discern the true from the false in the tales of the older people. Surrounded by French culture, and realizing that the French are inclined to be conservative and thus keep to things as they were, he was able to construct the Detroit of the past.

Keeping in mind this bias of historians an attempt will be made to show that a study of the early French colonists proves them to be a cultured, refined race, whose influence has determined in no small degree the conservative city of modern Detroit.

Perhaps more than any other quality the indolence of the Detroit settlers has been stressed by historians. We read that "the old inhabitants are a very indolent set of people, the lower class of which depends almost wholly upon hunting for a living." On the other hand,

²¹ Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 38:485.

there is mention of "unwearied perseverance of sturdy pioneers."

²² Honorable C. C. Trowbridge, "First Saw-Mill in Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:410.

Cooley pays tribute to the industry of the women. "Everywhere the spinning-wheel was in use, and madam with just pride in her deftness made the clothing for the family." Had the French been extremely

²³ Thomas M. Cooley, Michigan: A History of Governments, 234.

indolent, they would have been in a sad state of poverty. Farmer states that "the first settlers were very poor, but for many years pauperism was unknown. Not until the Yankees came, did beggars come to town." The pluck which inspired their coming to a wilderness and the vigilance which such a residence necessitated prevented that laziness which leads to poverty. One who realizes the dangers and hard-

²⁴ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:644.

ships which are incident to pioneer life, the laborious effort with the soil, the eternal vigilance for fear of Indian attacks, and the struggle against malaria, will truly appreciate the courage and fortitude of the early settlers and will hesitate to apply to them the term indolent. Finally, this apparent lack of ambition, in the opinion of

²⁵ George H. Fuller, Social and Economic Beginnings of Michigan, 47-48.

Judge Woodward, an early inhabitant of Detroit, was owing largely to the paternalistic regime under which the French lived so long. For years they and their ancestors had been accustomed to look to the government for everything and to wait for authority to speak before attempting anything themselves. They had no longing for what they had

²⁶ Ibid., 112.

never known. Therefore it would seem that the habitants' satisfaction with things as they were was not a species of laziness or indifference

but simply a phase of French conservatism. Their highest ambition was to preserve the remembrance and follow in the habits of "la belle France as la belle France was in the sixteenth century. This was their beau ideal of social perfection!" What would such a people have to do with new inventions or political discussions? They were happy and sat-

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27 "Letter from Honorable Judge William Woodbridge to A. Felch, December 27, 1849," Woodbridge Papers, 1849. Woodbridge was well acquainted with French ideas, having spent many years among these people in Michigan.

isfied with conditions as they always had existed. With Andrew McLaughlin one can agree that the Frenchman "was poor without realizing his poverty; well-to-do without boasting of his wealth."

28

28 Andrew McLaughlin, Lewis Cass, 20.

One probable reason for the severe criticism meted out by some historians to the French habitant is their failure to distinguish between the social classes of the people. Evidently in their descriptions they have kept in view the lowest stratum of society. It is almost impossible to describe the typical Detroiter of today for so many types have entered into the building up of the city. So it was in the past. All were French, it is true, but the grades of society ran from the highest to the lowest. Many of the people boasted of aristocratic ancestry and these formed an intelligent society into which the better class of other nations was proud to be admitted. At the bottom of the scale were the coureurs de bois and the voyageurs, while in between

were the honest farmers and the prosperous business men.²⁹ Considering

²⁹ Thomas M. Cooley, op. cit., 232.

the wild, reckless coursur de bois as a typical example of a colonist of Louis XIV is anything but fair to the early settler. Hubbard testifies that no convicts were sent here and "there were no drones." All were accustomed to seek, and few failed to find a living for themselves.³⁰ Thus the majority must have belonged to the industrious, con-

³⁰ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half Century, 113.

servative middle-class.

To Andrew McLaughlin, the French in Detroit had in general "the characteristics of the better class of Canadian farmers."³¹ Their phi-

³¹ Andrew McLaughlin, op. cit., 20.

losophy was to make the best of everything. When in the early days they had only crude implements for farming they used them without complaining; when new implements were brought by settlers from the larger eastern posts, they were speedy to adopt the improved methods.³²

³² Bela Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:353.

The French were intensely religious. Morally they were above re-

proach. Perhaps the lawless coursur de bois did drink to excess as has been the reputation of soldiers of fortune of all ages, but the father of the family upon his little farm could not be charged with any such disregard for the moral code.³³ The priest, the center of the flock,

³³ Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, op. cit., 1:313.

was devoted to his spiritual duties. He was the friend and the confidant of all his parishioners. The Frenchman had been taught to accept the will of God in the events of life, and it was this resignation³⁴ which made his life happy and peaceful.

³⁴ George M. Wrong, Canada and the American Revolution, 29.

Great respect was shown toward parents and those in authority. On New Year's Day settlers, even when married, hurried home to kneel to receive their parents' blessing. Children seeing the deference and respect shown by their parents to their elders soon acquired that courtesy and consideration which seem truly a part of the Frenchman.³⁵ Farmer

³⁵ Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 3:71.

mentions that as many of the early inhabitants were of a gentle lineage³⁶ they had brought with them the little graces of an older civilization.

³⁶ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:338.

The Frenchman was loyal to his native France. He had not come to a new country (as the Englishman had) to escape the dictates of a king. The average Frenchman had been satisfied in his own land, and as has been shown, the rulers were forced to resort to giving bounties in order to induce immigration. To the Frenchman, Louis XIV was supreme. Under the successive governments under which he lived the habitant was likewise loyal. During the trying days of the American Revolution, Hamilton writes to Haldimand that "the most considerable of the French in this settlement have shown a very good example."³⁷ Later, Bela Hub-

³⁷ "Letter from Governor Henry Hamilton to General Haldiman, Detroit, September 22, 1778," Haldiman Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 9:478.

bard remarks that so loyal was the Frenchman to the United States after that government had come into power that "to be known as a Frenchman was to be considered a patriot."³⁸

³⁸ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 143.

Whether rich or poor, educated or ignorant, the French were always polite, light-hearted, gay, and buoyant.³⁹ They were honest, hospitable

³⁹ Thomas M. Cooley, op. cit., 236.

to a fault, and possessed of a simplicity which sought no more than the necessities of life. Their isolated condition and consequent dependence upon one another made them sociable and friendly. This hospitality is

frequently commented upon by visitors who entered the little town toward the beginning of the British and American regimes. One writer⁴⁰ says, "The society of Detroit is kind, hospitable, and excellent."

⁴⁰ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:339.

So many tributes have been made to this spirit in Detroit that the hospitality of the French-Canadian has become proverbial.

In viewing the characteristics of the early French at Detroit we have been studying the lives of the better element of French settlers in the Northwest. Since the earliest days of the life of any people must always have some influence on the future, it surely is not far-fetched if one seems to feel even today after two centuries the spirit of the French character in many institutions of the city, particularly the strength of the Catholic faith, the hold on the population of amateur sports, and the hospitality and loyalty of the people.

The notion of any pioneer people is also influenced by the type of home in which they live. The stream-hunting French habitant has⁴¹ been unfavorably compared to the muskrat. It is true that the average

⁴¹ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 118.

habitant did build his home near the water but it does not follow that he thereby deserves a contemptuous epithet. Partly for protection and partly for companionship the farms of the early settlers were of narrow frontage on the river and extended far back into the wilderness.

The houses were only about a quarter of a mile apart.⁴² The farms were

⁴² Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:339.

so narrow and the houses were so close to one another that in time of danger one could easily signal to his neighbor, or pass a message from house to house.⁴³ This site on the shore was also chosen because of the

⁴³ Clarence M. Burton, Early Detroit, 16.

constant danger of Indian attacks. Each household thus had access to the waters of the strait as a fishery and as a thorough-fare. In the summer the father took his family to church or to visit friends in his boat; in the winter, he followed the same route with his sleigh. The⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Richard R. Elliott, "The Romance of the Country of the Lakes," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1893, 18:92.

memories of these narrow farms are still retained in the names of many Detroit streets, running north and south, "the honored heritage of our founding French fathers."⁴⁵ Riding out on East Jefferson Avenue near

⁴⁵ George W. Stark, Detroit, City of Destiny, 35.

town one easily recognizes the old pioneer in the street names, especially Chene, Joseph Campau, Dequindre, Riopelle, and Beaubien.

These early homes were not ordinarily tiny cabins on "pipe-stem"

farms. The dwellings of the better class of habitants were quite substantially built of logs, squared and covered with clapboards, the roofs being shingled with cedar. Usually they were one full story with an upper half-story under a high roof lighted by dormer windows. ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Bela Hubbard, "The Early Colonization of Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:357.

The economy of space pointed to more thought than the British frontiersmen gave to their own log cabins. Many of these homes were prob- ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Calvin Goodrich, The First Michigan Frontier, 24.

ably of cedar but there was also a sawmill in the pine region before 1742, and the mill and lumber are mentioned in a public report of the resources of the colony in 1749. Quarries were worked before 1749. During the siege of Detroit some stone buildings which must have been of very old date were demolished for the sake of the stone. It would seem therefore that the houses of the early French were not only well ⁴⁸ but also handsomely built.

⁴⁸ George N. Fuller, (editor), Historic Michigan, 1:80.

As an example of the early fine type of architecture the Cass house is often mentioned. This house was said by Cass himself to be "anterior to the Pontiac war, there being on it now the marks of the bullets which were shot into it then." An old French tradition had it

that this was the home built by Cadillac for the Huron chief, who in 1703 had demanded an abode similar to that of the whites. The location of the building and the description of it when it was torn down would seem to show that the story was correct. If the building demolished in 1882 was the same, it was a standing memorial to the work of the French carpenters. In an article in the Detroit Evening News

49

49 Thomas McKenney, A Tour of the Lakes, 114.

it is stated that "the great roughhewn beams are of oak and remain as sound as when placed in the structure by the old French carpenters." It was constructed on what is known as the block-house plan, that is of logs closely fitted together and fashioned at the corners into grooved upright posts. From the center of the roof rose a short stone chimney. The window sash with its tiny panes of glass and the high peaked roof with its dormer windows had already gone.

50

50 "Letter from Cadillac to Count Pontchartrain, August 31, 1703," Cadillac Papers, 1:166; "The Old Cass House," Detroit Evening News, August 30, 1882, quoted in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:95-96.

Parts of the old Moran house built about 1734 were still standing in 1883 on Woodbridge Street between St. Antoine and Hastings. The Lafferty House, another old landmark, was on the river between what is now Twelfth and Vermont Streets. The main portion of this building was erected in 1747. At the time of its destruction in 1861 it was excellently preserved. The timbers were heavy and solid, and the

stone chimney with its large cheery fire-place recalled a time of hospitality and happiness.⁵¹

⁵¹ Bela Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:358.

The furnishings of the homes evidenced the industry and frugality of the habitants. Festoons of dried fruits, mounds of pumpkins, bags of herbs and bunches of onions and garlic hung in the garret. The onions and garlic were considered helpful in times of pestilence. In the center of the house and about the size of a room was the chimney. The Yule-log, laid on its andirons, was kept, half-burned, from Christmas to Christmas; fragments of it were thrown on the fire during a severe storm.⁵²

⁵² Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 1:73.

The ground floor of the home was usually divided into four parts: La Grande Chambre (parlor), LaSalle a Manger (dining room), Le Cabinet (sleeping-room), and kitchen.

One entered the parlor by means of the front door. Here toward the end of the French period glass was used but the panes were very small and of poor material. Green shutters offered an added protection.

On the parlor floor were several mats dyed by the Indian maid. Chairs of whitewood or of oak with seats of rushes and uncomfortably straight backs, a square box sofa and a table in the center of the room usually constituted the furnishings of this room. A few favored

families had been able to have this best room papered, but ordinarily this was not the case.⁵³

⁵³ Ibid., 4:73-74.

In the dining-room was a large square table, and a stove "en mu-railer," that is, half in the dining-room and half in the parlor, the door being in the dining-room so that no ashes could disfigure the best room.

The bedroom of later days of the French regime contained a four-poster bedstead on stilts, with a deep valance of dimity, an immense feather bed reposing on a network of rope, large square pillows, the whole covered by a huge patchwork quilt. There was no fire in the bedroom as this was considered unhealthy.

The dining-room and kitchen were always scrupulously clean. Adjoining the kitchen was the bake-house containing the oven, built of brick, and in the center of the floor, a wooden trough in which the bread was kneaded. Much of the kitchen ware was made by the Indians. Spoons, ladles, bowls, and pudding sticks were whittled and scraped out of tough wood. Large bowls were made from pepperage and other roots which could be scraped thin without danger of splitting.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ C. W. Hamlin, loc. cit.; Campbell Papers, 10.

The furniture used in these French homes was quite simple but it answered every requirement. Expert carpenters and cabinet makers among the habitants prided themselves on their fine handiwork in

cherry and black walnut. Ordinary tables and chairs, the work of joiners, were usually of stout ash or hickory, the chairs having seats of
 55
 rush or splints of twisted bark.

55 Campbell Papers, loc. cit.,

Since the population of the hamlet included artisans who by their thrift and industry were striving to establish themselves and their families in comfort, and since the thrifty French housewife was determined to use the simple materials which were at hand, there is reason to believe that there was comfort and even an approach to elegance in
 56
 and around the stockade.

56 Andrew McLaughlin, Lewis Cass, 16.

Was the dweller in these homes content to feed his family upon poor Indian fare? Instead, it would appear that his table was bountifully laden with a great variety of good things. Besides the abundant game of all kinds, the woods were full of small fruits, and the gardens and orchards were unrivalled. A little garden protected by pickets, located usually in front of the house, supplied the family with onions, lettuce, cucumbers, and artichokes. Under the side windows, and at the back of the house grew dainty pinks, bachelor buttons, and gay hollyhocks. The orchard, the pride of the French farmer, was in the rear. Here he grew the famous plums, cherries, apples, and pears praised by visitors to Detroit. Some of the species were supposed to have originated here and were of excellent size and flavor. The Detroit red

and black apples, the poenne neige, or snow apple, and the poenne grise,
 57
 a small but delicious russet, were prime favorites.

57 Campbell Papers, 7; Henry Utley and Byron Gutcheon, op. cit., 1:311-312; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:21.

The resourceful French housewife found many palatable ways of incorporating Indian corn into the family's daily fare. Wheat flour was used for Christmas and other festivals only, as wheat was one of the few sources of revenue. Sweet cakes were plentiful among the habitants under such French names as galletts, crepes, and croquecignales. Another sweet on the menu was maple sugar. Prior to 1830 it was the only sugar in common use. Wintergreen tea sweetened with maple sugar was
 58
 the daily drink of many of the early settlers. Rum was used, but the

58 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:338; Campbell Papers, loc. cit.

universal and favorite beverage was distilled peaches in rum, a drink known as l'eustrope. Many of the women enjoyed a hot drink made by infusing sassafras, peppermint, sage, wintergreen, or other aromatic
 59
 leaves. There was plenty of cider of the finest quality, said to sur-

59 Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:74; George W. Catlin, Story of Detroit, 475.

pass that of New England. The old cider mills were quite unique. The crusher, a large stone or wooden cylinder, turned on a wooden axis and

was worked by horse power.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Bela Hubbard, "Early Colonization of Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:355-356.

The farmer's gun supplied him with meat. Beavers' tails, turkeys, wild ducks, partridges, quail, bear-steaks, and venison were common articles of diet. Later on many of the best families cured their own
⁶¹
pork and beef. Meatless days were no hardship to the pioneer Detroiter.

⁶¹ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:338.

The streams afforded varieties of fish in all seasons, of which, white fish was the universal favorite. Few farms were without the necessary equipment for fishing. Perhaps there are other places in the Detroit area where fish is still cooked in the old French way, but the one best known to the native Detroiter is old Joe Bedore's at St. Clair Flats. For years and years summer resorters flocked to Joe Bedore's (the place was always referred to by both names) and good-natured Joe, happy to see the crowd welcomed them all, gave them the hospitality of his whole house, and then proceeded to prepare the meal, most of which was of his specialty, fish. Old Joe is dead but his sons carry on and properly cooked fish is still associated with Joe Bedore's.

A wedding banquet will illustrate the type of feast prepared by the French housewife. A silver knife, fork, and spoon, if these could be obtained, were laid at each place. Frequently each guest brought his own knife--an ordinary jack-knife, or a spring-knife, or a dagger, sheathed in morocco or birch-bark decorated by the Indians. The menu

sounds strange to us today:

"The coup d'appetit was passed around, brandy for the gentlemen, some mild cordial for the ladies; then followed the repast. Soup, poissons blanc, poisson doree, pike, roast pig with its dressing of potatoes, blood pudding, partridges, wild turkey, ragouts, venison larded, pates of pommes de terre, sagamite, pralines pounded fine and mixed with maple sugar; gallettes au beurre, crocquecignole, omelette soufflee, floating island, pears, apples, raspberries, grapes in summer. Coffee ended the feast." 62

62 Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:77. The French dishes are known to us as: poissons blanc (white-fish), poissons doree (pickerel), pommes de terre (potatoes), sagamite (porridge with cream and cracked corn), crocquecignole (doughnut).

Could the hostess in a country where civilization had existed for centuries have provided more of a variety than the simple, hospitable, French woman of the eighteenth century? Despite its apparent impressiveness, there was nothing extravagant on the menu and nothing which could not be obtained close at hand. Though the names sound strange today, it would seem that the food was tasty and delicious for in most French households then as now, neatness and good cooking prevailed.

"There are undesirable and slovenly people in all places. But such
63
were not any more common here than elsewhere."

63 Campbell Papers, 6.

With all their hospitality and abundance of good simple food, the people were sensible and thrifty. The careful housewife made home-spun

woolens and linens of excellent quality. In summer, everyone wore straw hats usually made by the wives and daughters in the winter evenings. ⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

In winter, caps of wool or some kind of fur were the ordinary headdress, Detroit, being a center of the fur industry, the best hides were always obtainable. Some of the men wore heavy blanket coats with a loose cap attached. This was worn thrown back or over the head as required. ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 136.

For festive occasions each man had a beaver hat unadulterated with rabbit or any other cheap material. These beaver hats were stiff and usually bell-crowned, white or black, but durable enough to last for a whole life-time if used with care. When there was any indication of rain or snow the precious beaver was swathed in a cotton or bandanna handkerchief. ⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Campbell Papers, 6.

The dress of the men in winter consisted of colored shirt with vest and pantaloons or leggings. Over all they wore a capote, or heavy blanket coat. On dress occasions a sash completed the costume. This sash spread widely over the body outside the coat and tied behind with the tails hanging down two feet or more. The voyageurs often wore over the trousers, shirts of leather with ruffles of the same material. On

their heads they wore a bright-colored cloth cap which hung over on one side and ended with a tassel.

The women's dress consisted of a short gown falling no lower than the knee, showing the petticoat which reached to the feet. To protect them from the sun they wore large straw hats. For cold weather fur hats or bonnets were the style. The thrifty French lady saved her best clothes for holydays and holidays. Then there was an array of laces and brocades that would do honor to Paris itself. Hamilton when commandant at Detroit commented upon the "smiling" appearance of the habitants on a holiday.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ "Henry Hamilton to the Earl of Dartmouth, Detroit, August 29, 1776," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 10:267; Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 138; Campbell Papers, 10.

Among the French there was a time-honored patriarchal family life. The father commanded veneration and respect, while the mother planned for the training of the children and guarded the family purse. The choice place at the fireplace was reserved for grandmother and grandfather. Here they sat winter evenings whiling away the time telling wonderful tales of adventure to the children gathered around them.

No matter how interesting the tales or rollicking the songs, at a reasonable hour the head of the house would push the glowing coals against the back-log and then cover with ashes to insure keeping the fire alive during the night.⁶⁸ The Catholic family thanked God for His goodness to

⁶⁸ George Wrong, Canada and the American Revolution, 37; George B. Catlin, The Story of Detroit, 475.

them during the day and bade one another farewell until another morning.

The French Catholic even of the second and third generation kept alive that ideal of home life established by Cadillac which was characterized by respect for his religion, contentment with his lot, friendship for his neighbor, and love for his children. This heritage has been handed down through succeeding generations to the present occupants of thousands and thousands of homes where simple, happy, family life has made the modern metropolis of Michigan truly a "city where life is worth living."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Michigan: a Guide to the Wolverine State, 231.

The old resident shut off from all intercourse with other settlements for many months at a time, soon learned the art of providing for his own recreation and amusement. Unlike the New England backwoodsman who enjoyed a solitary life, the Frenchman blessed with a convivial⁷⁰ temperament needed an outlet. It was in his social life that the

⁷⁰ Friend Palmer, Early Days in Detroit, 126.

Frenchman's native gaiety and resourcefulness displayed themselves. He needed no outside aid to make the long winters pass pleasantly. On cold evenings, the young and old danced and joined in games interspersed with singing and music. The more sedate members of the party enjoyed a quiet game of cards. Gambling, however, did not enter into this entertainment as Judge Campbell tells us that the French were much more

free from this vice than were the English.⁷¹ The dances were more lively

⁷¹ Campbell Papers, 6.

than stately and he who could keep the floor the longest was considered the best performer. The difficulty of transportation made large musical instruments such as pianos scarce, but the violin or flute was usually on hand. If no violinist could be obtained there "were many demoiselles who could lift the dancing tunes so blithely and well as to make the violin almost needless."⁷² Too, it is said that every house had

⁷² Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:350.

a fiddle and someone who could manipulate it.

A favorite gathering place for the young people on winter evenings was the Hotel du Grand Marais, located near the mouth of the tiny stream now known as Connor's Creek. This high sounding title referred to a rude cabin of ample proportions which had been constructed by the young men of the colony. They had built in a huge chimney and fire-place at one end, and had supplied it with tables and benches. Frequently during the long cold season, parties of young girls and boys equipped with well-filled boxes and baskets would set out in their carioules on the ice along the edge of the river for the Grand Marais. After enjoying a plentiful meal they pushed back the tables, and the lively maidens and their thin-visaged, but fun-loving, escorts enjoyed the mazes of the art which the French perform so well.

Among out-of-door sports, skating and coasting were always popular.

A favorite resort, Piety Hill, lay inside the Catholic cemetery. Slids would glide from the fifty-foot height through to the present Bates Street.
73

73 Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 140; Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcherson, op. cit., 1:315.

Horse-racing was always a seasonable diversion for the men. Since the little French-Canadian ponies were very inexpensive and box-runners were easily constructed everyone could procure a "turn-out," and the river from the Grand Marais on the east to River Rouge on the west became a race course for the whole community. The contests for superiority were long and eager, and as long as the ice lasted no hour of the day passed without trial of speed. At times a weak spot in the ice would occasion a ducking for the riders but the happy-go-lucky Frenchman took it as part of the sport.
74

74 Campbell Papers, 74; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:350.

gish current made an ideal track for a race. The curved channel, also, afforded the spectators an unobstructed view. Every Sunday after Mass the crowd gathered there to watch the fun. Modern racing enthusiasts would view with disfavor the lack of formality in procedure, but the spectators suffered slight scruples in this regard and their enjoyment could not be exceeded by the observers at any modern race-course. The effervescent Frenchman could not contain himself when the ponies were finally off for the mile stretch down the river. To his clamor were

added the cries of the driver to his pony. Though the rider appeared to be trying frantically to hold in his steed the shrewd animal understood that he was expected to do his best. Such was the type of sport which the Frenchman enjoyed not for the money which he might make but for the excitement and uncertainty involved.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Campbell Papers, 13; Henry Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, op. cit., 1:316-317.

In summer, canoeing was a favorite recreation especially for the young people. "They go abroad on parties of pleasure . . . in canoes."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., Journal of a Voyage to North America, 1:112.

Their elders frequently enjoyed the delights of the barbecue, the open-air roast washed down by draughts of homemade cider. Many Sunday⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, op. cit., 1:315.

afternoons were spent picnicking in the woods surrounding the settlement. Picking berries or gathering nuts according to the season was a simple means of recreation which all enjoyed. Hunting and fishing,⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:315.

although a means of employment for some, were keenly pursued by the small farmer in his spare time. An inventory of Cadillac's possessions

included "1050 large fishing hooks, barbed," indicating the large use
⁷⁹
 of this instrument in the colony. The Indians were experts at la-

⁷⁹ Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 2:1408.

crosse and football and in these games their white friends frequently joined. Bowling with cannon balls in the narrow streets, running, wrestling, and archery were other amusements in which the early set-
⁸⁰
 tlers engaged.

⁸⁰ Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 144;
Ibid., 2:1406.

Despite the lack of toy shops and money, the children of the colony managed to have their share of good times. From her clever French mother the little girl soon learned the knack of making dresses for her homemade dolls. The boy handy with the jack-knife made willow whistles or pop-guns. Friendly Indians taught him to use the bow and
⁸¹
 arrow and with it he brought down many a bird or a squirrel.

⁸¹ Campbell Papers, 11.

These simple seasonal pleasures were not the only amusements enjoyed by the habitant. To him no occasion, religious or racial, was too unimportant to be made an excuse for gaiety. A glimpse at his celebration of a religious or national holiday will lead to a better understanding of his character.

Feudalism afforded its share of holidays. On Michaelmas, the habitant gathered at the seignior's house to pay the annual rental for his lands. The amount was a few sous and a specific donation of grain or poultry. Typically the joyous French made rent-day a festival. At this assembly, the current news was discussed, and old accounts among the neighbors straightened up. The seignior provided the refreshments thus returning a considerable share of the rent. Though the later commandants did not assume the role of lord as Cadillac had done, still they represented to the obedient habitant the link with the home land, the customs of which they always cherished and observed. May Day, a feudal holiday of la belle France, afforded another occasion for feasting and dancing.

82 Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 2:1408.

Many customs and festivals grew out of religious observance. Christmas with the building of the creche was the most important of festivals. It was celebrated then as now with great solemnity, beginning with Mass and Holy Communion for the average good Catholic habitant. The social feature of the day was usually postponed until New Year's, the great day for French family reunions. On New Year's Eve

83 William Bennett Munro, op. cit., 218; Frank O. Call, The Spell of French Canada, 332.

the old custom of La d'Ignolee was observed. Masked young men went from house to house serenading the host and hostess, who then contrib-

uted to the gifts for the poor which overflowed the minstrels' carts. Next day the reception of the paternal blessing took place, calls were made upon friends, and gifts were exchanged.

84

84 Carrie W. Hamlin, "Old French Traditions," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 4:70-71; Thomas M. Cooley, op. cit., 236.

Lent was rigorously kept but before the forty days of self-denial began the habitant had a last evening of mirth and enjoyment. Mardi Gras was always celebrated by the virez les crepes, or tossing of the pancakes, an old custom, brought from the homeland. All the guests repaired to the spacious kitchen which was illuminated by the large, open fire-place. Each one took his turn at holding the pan with its long handle while someone else poured in the batter. It took a dexterous hand to toss the light cake as high as possible while turning it, and there was much laughter for the unfortunate one whose cake fell into the fire-place. Meanwhile, the lady of the house poured powdered maple sugar between the cakes and piled them in a high pyramid. These with savory meats formed the central dish in the substantial supper which followed. After the meal, there was dancing which lasted until twelve o'clock when all gaiety ceased until Easter.

85

85 Carrie W. Hamlin, Legends of Le Detroit, 71-72.

Another of the old customs was the distributing of small pieces of blessed bread at the Credo of the Mass. Each family in turn supplied the bread. On great feasts, small cakes, called cousins, were added.

All the ladies coveted the honor of being the laqueteuse, the one who collected the bread and made the distribution. At the proper moment the sacristan approached the laqueteuse and presented her with the silver plate. With dignified composure the lady arose, walked to the altar railing and knelt, and then rising presented her plate at each pew, acknowledging a contribution with a sweeping courtesy. Then the bread was blessed and distributed to each person, who ate it in silence as a symbol of the unity that should reign among them.

86

86 Ibid., 145-147.

Perhaps of all festivities the French loved a wedding best. The preparations formed the all-absorbing topic of conversation for days before the event itself. A wedding in a French family was a very serious affair for divorces were unknown. Mother and father, aunts and uncles, cousins and neighbors, signed the marriage contract at the betrothal. The marriage contract was simply a civil agreement relative to the property which the parties had at the time of the marriage or which they might later accumulate. Property which belonged to the husband and wife should upon the death of either go to the survivor upon the payment of the debts of the deceased. The survivor took it, however, only for life. At his death the property passed on to the children.

87

87 Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:176-177.

as land titles, sale of real estate, the marriage dot, and the aliena-

tion of property in return for care and home.⁸⁸ The documents referred

⁸⁸ Milo M. Quaife, (editor), The John Askin Papers, 1:27-30; 40-43; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:20, 340.

to would seem to disprove the theory of Andrew McLaughlin that the French "had an utter lack of ability to understand legal procedure."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Andrew McLaughlin, Lewis Cass, 11; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:20.

The banns of marriage were published, then as now, on the three Sundays preceding the wedding day. The ceremony was performed by the parish priest. The couple afterwards signed their names and professions in the parish register. Having paid their respects to the commandant who was always present on such occasions, and to the notary, equally important, the young couple led the way either to the bride's home or to the Grand Marais where dancing and a bountiful supper took place.

Sunday was a holiday as well as a holyday, on which the habitant and his family donned their best. Puritan New England might insist on austerity in dress but not French Detroit. On all festal days the little town was a blaze of color. Men donned their best clothes and their carefully preserved beaver hats. The women appeared in their picturesque, bright-colored costumes adorned with ribbons and beads. The Mass being over, the whole country-side gathered about the church doors. Here the curé mingled with his people advising one, sympathizing with another. The little groups gossiped among themselves and

then went off for a day of recreation. They carried along the beach or paddled near the shore; some whiled away the time in dancing, while the nature lovers fished and hunted or skated according to the season. The habitant had been to Mass and now saw no reason why he should not be gay.

90

90 William Bennett Munro, op. cit., 219; Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 141; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:349.

How did the habitant and his lady reach church or the Grand Marais or the neighbors who lived at a distance? Like all pioneers the French accomodated themselves to the means of transportation provided by the rivers and lakes. The chief routes by land were roads along the waterfront along which the young men raced on their ponies. The most commonly used vehicle was the two-wheeled French cart on the floor of which the ladies of the first families sat Turk-fashion on buffalo robes thrown over hay. Although very uncomfortable the light-hearted French did not complain, even when a loosely-made lynch-pin gave out and the occupants of the cart were dumped unceremoniously in the muddy street. Such accidents provided amusement more often than chagrin.

91

91 Theodore Maynard, Story of American Catholicism, 46; "Old French Carts," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 13:491-492.

In winter the cart was exchanged for the light sleigh. As late as 1815, Governor Cass brought his family to Detroit in a carriage, but it could be used only in mid-summer. Even in 1822 there was only one four-wheeled wagon in the city and it was many years afterward that

the two-seated carriage became common. Transportation then, instead of a hindrance to French social life provided another reason for joy-
 92
 lity.

92 Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:673.

With their strict adherence to the religious and national customs of their ancestors, and their joy in the simple pleasures of a pioneer community, the early Detroiters possessed the social temperament characteristic of the French everywhere. Judge Woodbridge, who knew them well, considers that in their social life they retained the manners
 93
 and graceful polish of their ancestors.

93 "Letter of Honorable William Woodbridge to A. Felch, December 27, 1849," Woodbridge Papers, 1849.

Home and social life both give some idea of the type of individual who began Detroit but unless one understands the pioneer Frenchman's attitude toward his religion one does not know the whole man. Religion was an important part of the settler's life. To the habitant his church was everything--"school, counselor, almsgiver, newspaper,
 94
 and philosopher." To it he was unquestionably loyal. This Catholic

94 William B. Munro, op. cit., 225.

faith was brought to Detroit by Cadillac and two priests, a Jesuit and a Recollect. The former, Father Francis Vaillant, unable to reconcile

himself to Cadillac's proposed plan for the Indians, returned almost
⁹⁵ immediately to Quebec. The other, Father Constantine de L'Halle, con-

⁹⁵ John Gilmary Shea, The Catholic Church in Colonial Days, 621.

structed a log church dedicated to St. Anne, which became known as the mother church of the Northwest. The religious services were started almost immediately and they have continued without interruption even to the present time.

Prior to the Recollects, the Jesuits had played the role of John the Baptist in the Michigan wilderness. The Christlike charity they exhibited in their dealings with the natives had made it easier for
⁹⁶ those who followed to gain the confidence of the Indians. The work of

⁹⁶ John E. Day, "Jesuits in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 32:409.

the missionaries of all orders cannot be overestimated. As Thwaites says:

"Our history would lose much of its color were there blotted from its pages the picturesque and often thrilling story of the cures and friars of the French regime." ⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Reuben G. Thwaites, France in America, 138.

Certain historians have magnified the bickerings of the civil authority and the Catholic Church. It is true that the two powers did

clash at times but afterwards "shook hands and went to work with a will."⁹⁸ The Church loyally aided the civil power in agriculture, in

⁹⁸ William B. Munro, op. cit., 127.

education, and, in fact, in all things in which the two could work together for the good of the colony. The clergy never became a privileged order. The priest was paid a small stipend for his services, but in reality he gave to the colony far more than the colony gave him.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Ibid., 129.

In Detroit the center of worship was the church of St. Anne. The records of the church show a total of ten priests during the French regime. Historical mention is made of several. Among these was Father Cherubin Deniau, who rendered great service during the attack of the
100
Sacs and Foxes in 1712. Another outstanding pastor was Father Bona-

¹⁰⁰ "Report of Sieur Dubuisson to Marquis de Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 33:540.

venture Leonard who built a new St. Anne's and buried in it the remains of the first pastor, Father de L'Halle, who had been killed in the performance of his sacred duties. Father Bonaventure was beloved of both white and red men on both sides of the river. Another Father Bonaventure came in 1738. He remained twenty years and was affectionately known as "Pere Bon." When Father Simplicius Boquet came to

Detroit in 1754 the little town had grown to such an extent that a larger church was needed. He set to work immediately and through the co-operation and by the generosity of his parishioners, he was able to remove the relics of Father Constantine to the nearly completed edifice on July 13, 1775. The St. Anne register graphically describes

101 Peter Potier, S. J., Huron Mission of Detroit, 1733-1751, 162;
John Gilmary Shea, Catholic Church in Colonial Days, 628.

the two removals of the body. In 1723 "Father Bonaventure, Henry Campau, Charles Chesne, and Pierre Huber La Croix" signed a testimonial that they had found the coffin and recognized the remains by signs known to everyone, namely, "a small cap, many pieces of cloth of his cloak, very distinct marks on his body of a string and of haircloth." Another record in 1755 states that the body was found under the steps of the altar where it had been deposited temporarily by Father Bonaventure, until it could be given such a sepulchre as would be "conformable to his dignity and to the miracles performed through his intercession."

102 Registre de Sainte Anne, May 13, 1723, 1:105; July 13, 1755, 1:401.

Today the body of the Detroit protomartyr lies in the present St. Anne's Church on Nineteenth Street. That same year, 1755, Father Simplicius invited the Right Reverend Henri de Pontbriand, Bishop of Quebec, under whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction Detroit lay, to visit the growing settlement. He administered Confirmation and blessed the church.

103 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 530; John Gilmary Shea, op. cit., 633.

Father Simplicius remained until 1781 and rendered effective services to the French who in 1760 were placed under the non-Catholic British government.

All this time the Indians had been without a missionary of their own. When Father Charlevoix had visited the settlement in 1721 he had become very interested in the welfare of the red man. Due to his influence the Jesuit superiors in 1728 sent out Father Armand de la
104
Richardie as spiritual guide to the Hurons. To avoid a conflict of

104 Ibid., 630; George B. Catlin, The Story of Detroit, 18.

jurisdiction (the Recollects were still at St. Anne's) the Jesuit obtained permission to establish a mission on the Canadian side and there ministered to the whites and Indians for many years. His assistant was Father Peter Potier. In the course of time the two priests built a church, a rectory, a storehouse for furs, another for provisions, and a blacksmith shop. In 1755 Father Richardie returned to Canada leaving the faithful Father Potier in charge. The latter remained at his post until his death in 1781. Through the medium of these two churches, one on each side of the river, the Catholic faith was kept flourishing in the wilderness, and the pioneers thousands of miles from the nearest large settlements enjoyed all the consolations
105
of their holy religion.

105 Peter Potier, S. J., "The Jesuit Manuscript," (tr. and ed.) Richard R. Elliott, United States Historical Magazine, 1891-1893, 4:151-152; George W. Stark, City of Destiny, 51.

The French clung tenaciously to this faith of their ancestors. Their religion did not consist of mere Sunday observance. It was part of their daily lives. Home and social life revolved around St. Anne's. Here the habitant, a member of a large family, was baptized; here he received the sacraments; and from here he was buried. In his will he did not forget his eternal salvation. The Huron Account Book makes frequent mention of Mass stipends sent over to Sandwich from the pastors of St. Anne's. Such entries as the following occur very frequently:

"50 Masses for Father bon
35 Masses for big pilet
18 Masses for Deruissau's wife
18 Masses for baptisti Chapotan
19 Masses for gervais's wife
10 Masses for the late jazues Campeau
9 Masses for Chene." 106

¹⁰⁶ Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 70:63.

All of this would indicate a strong faith in the people living around the shores of le Detroit.

Although the settlers were loyal to their church and faithful to their religious duties they were not bigoted or intolerant. When men of other creeds came to Detroit, the French dealt with them with their innate courtesy and honesty. Evidence of this religious toleration

¹⁰⁷ Campbell Papers, 76.

is of particular value when it comes from a non-Catholic, Judge Campbell, who was familiar with the prejudices of the eastern colonies. The

bigoted attitude of the English is shown by the remark of a minister, Dr. Alfred Brunson, that the French Catholics "go to church, attend Mass, and perhaps confess and pay for absolution out of their market money and then go home apparently in good spirits." The Recollects

108 "Letter from Reverend Dr. Alfred Brunson to Silas Farmer," Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:201.

and Jesuits in charge of the missions at Detroit and Sandwich were exemplars of the highest standards of the priesthood. Father Charlevoix who visited the settlement in 1721 commented favorably on the state of religion there. Father Emmanuel Crespel in 1729 writes with high praise for Father Bonaventure. He speaks of the priest's home as "a habitation of virtue"; praises his choice of books which "give him an idea of the priest's purity of morals," and ends by envying the pastor who was "happy and had no cause to blush at the means by which he became so."

109 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:530.

Concerning Father Potier, the Pontiac Manuscript says, "The French who knew and respected the Jesuit Father, considered him a saint upon earth."

110 "Pontiac Manuscript," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 8:293.

Writers who through ignorance or malice misrepresented the French habitant and his cure, might be just as incorrect in stating as historical fact other matters concerning the Catholic settlement.

Today the large Catholic population of Detroit reflects the solidly religious foundation furnished by its pioneers. Very truly does the Michigan Catholic, official diocesan organ, write:

"The wax which fastened the broad seal of the Catholic Church to the soil of Michigan especially on both sides of the strait of Detroit was so adhesive that neither dynastic changes nor political control nor progressive expansion of a great city has weakened its tenacity. After two centuries and a half, the seal remains as firm as when first affixed by the Franciscan monk and martyr, Father Del'Halle, in the first year of the eighteenth century." ¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Michigan Catholic Bicentenary Supplement, 3.

Catholicity was the invigorating principle of every phase of the pioneer's life. In no other aspect is this more apparent than in the matter of education. Cadillac sought out priests to teach the little ¹¹² savages the French language. In 1705 he tried in vain to procure

¹¹² "Letter from Cadillac to Governor Frontenac, October 18, 1700," Cadillac Papers, 1:12.

Sisters of Charity from Canada. In 1746 Bishop Pontbriand of Quebec suggested to the French minister in charge of colonial affairs that a Catholic school be established at Detroit. In 1747 and 1748 the Bishop made similar proposals but they were not heeded by the minister. Meanwhile, the Bishop appealed to Louis, Duke of Orleans, who left a legacy to the Sisters of the Congregation stipulating that one hundred pounds of it was to be used in establishing a foundation at Detroit. Monseigneur de Pontbriand made another attempt in 1749 when he acquainted

M. Rouille in charge of the ministry of the Colonies with the fact that several residents of Detroit had offered to pay the expenses of three Sisters for the instruction of their daughters. Since the Sisters were never forthcoming it would seem that the prospect failed because of anticipated political troubles. All educational matters were then left
113
for some years to private initiative.

113 Sister Mary Rosalita, Education in Detroit Prior to 1850, 18-20.

Was it true then that the "average of education among the people
114
was low for many never went to school at all"? In regard to this state-

114 Thomas M. Cooley, op. cit., 237.

ment it must be remembered that Detroit was a primitive settlement in the wilderness where the habitant had to clear his land, plow his farm, make his clothes, ever be on the watch for Indian attacks, and constantly be engaged in the many duties incident to his state of life. He had little leisure for the educational or artistic side of life. In this the village did not differ much from the century-old British colonies on the coast in some of which compliance with educational legislation
115
was enforced only under severe financial penalty.

115 Edward Channing, History of the United States, 2:464.

If this is true of an area settled earlier and better protected than the little French colony on the Straits, it is hardly fair to crit-

icize the latter for its apparent lack of a general system of education in its pioneer days. In this respect Andrew McLaughlin states that although some French citizens may have been illiterate, the reader must not be carried away by sweeping generalities. An examination

116 Andrew McLaughlin, Higher Education in Michigan, 4.

of the public records of early Detroit shows that writing was not an unknown art and many of the signatures indicate that the writers were very familiar with the use of the pen. Rameau, an early French trav-

117 James V. Campbell, Outlines of the Political History of Michigan, 254.

eler who spent much time in examining Detroit and Canadian archives in a search for land grants, was well qualified to form a like opinion.

"Some there are who really seem to regard the art of writing as a wonderful innovation imported into this region at the time of the Anglo-American invasion. But before that epoch large numbers of your forefathers read and wrote very well. Indeed, I must say that in perusing old papers, I have often been astonished, considering the paucity of resources at their command and the difficulties of all kinds which they must have encountered in the instruction of children in these remote parts, at finding that so large a proportion of the ancient population of Detroit could read and write. Nor was their writing the rude, ill-looking scrawl of a beginner; in many cases, it was extremely beautiful." 118

118 Excerpt from Rameau's Notes, quoted in Richard R. Elliott, "Romance of the Country of the Lakes," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1893, 18:91.

The most approved means of educating children was to send them to Quebec or Montreal where there were fine schools under ecclesiastical
 119
 auspices. But many of the children who did not leave the settlement

119 Andrew McLaughlin, Higher Education in Michigan, 14; William B. Munro, op. cit., 130.

also obtained an education. Just when schools were established is not known for there is no mention of schools in the records until May 15, 1765, when the parish records of St. Anne's carry the notice of the marriage of "Jean Baptiste Rocoux, director of the Christian schools
 120
 and first choir master of this parish."

120 Registre de Ste. Anne, 2:624. (This date is given in most secondary accounts as May 15, 1755, but it is clearly indicated in the Register in the Burton Collection as May 15, 1765.)

This man is mentioned again in 1772 when he is still pursuing his former occupation.

"Alexis, baptized December 4, 1772, son of Jean Baptiste Rocoux, teacher of the Christian schools of this city and first choir master of this parish." 121

121 Ibid., 2:806.

The Episcopal Archives of Quebec contain several documents referring to Rocoux. One states that in 1765 a house was sold to the trustees of St. Anne's on condition that free lodging for a chanter, "for a school, and for other Christian instruction," should be given to

Rocoux as long as he could fulfill both duties. Apparently an attempt had been made to deprive him of his home. Many of the old parishioners sent a petition to the Bishop of Quebec, certifying that "since the year 1760 Mr. J. B. Rocout has been established . . . as the first singer and teacher of this parish, and that he has discharged . . . these two employments with all the equity of which a good subject could be capable."¹²²

¹²² "Episcopal Archives, Quebec, E. U. V., 85, 86," quoted in Sister Mary Rosalita, Education in Detroit Prior to 1850, 20-21. Name is Rocoux in Registre, Rocout in most secondary accounts.

Summarizing education in Detroit during the first century of its existence one may say with Munro that whatever of education there was in the early days was due entirely to the Catholic Church.¹²³ Although

¹²³ William B. Munro, op. cit., 130.

both the ecclesiastical and political authorities failed year after year in their attempt to found a formal school, they recognized the need of scholastic training for all. By 1760 the French Catholics of Detroit had succeeded in establishing a school which contradicted the opinion of Cooley that "the Catholic schools in which most of the education was given were not of a high order and taught Catechism more than grammar or arithmetic."¹²⁴ The letter in the archives of Quebec

¹²⁴ Thomas M. Cooley, op. cit., 237.

would indicate that this school was used for secular education as well as the teaching of Christian Doctrine. It was no doubt a parochial school in the sense in which we understand it today--a school where children are taught all the ordinary branches of learning besides their Catechism. Thus the pioneers during the eighteenth century had started a system of education which under the powerful influence of Father Gabriel Richard was to advance by leaps and bounds.

The education of the Frenchman, therefore, was not as inferior as the traditional account would have us believe. Intellectually, he was not "boorish nor unintelligent." According to Charlevoix "the least

125 George Fuller, Social and Economic Beginnings of Michigan, 115.

rusticity, either in language or behavior, is utterly unknown." Concerning their topics of discourse he says that "the sciences and fine arts have also their part so that the conversation never flags for want of matter."

126 Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., Journal of a Voyage to North America, 1:113, 112.

Cadillac, the founder of Detroit, was also its first author. His writings are comparable to those of the early New England writers in that both have given us some idea of life in the settlement. Cadillac considered no aspect of colonial activity too unimportant to be of concern to his superiors in France and Canada. In these letters and reports now known as the Cadillac Papers one gleams much of the early history of Detroit. He pictured vividly the vegetation, the animal

life, the abundance of fish, the excellence of the climate, and the need of more colonists from France. His opinions were very clearly and precisely expressed. His descriptions of the site of Detroit before it was touched by civilization could be read with profit by every native son.

If the French colony in the days following Cadillac's rule produced little that might be called literature it is probable that its existence as a colony was too brief. In the pioneering days of any colony its intellectual potentialities lie dormant. The physical effort to wrest a living from the soil leaves body and soul exhausted and the pioneer finds little time for artistic achievements. Gradually, as the forests are cleared and a settlement becomes permanent, standards of living improve and with these improvements come occasional hours of leisure when man's soul turns to the beautiful things of life. In this way a nation achieves its art and literature. So it was with Detroit. The primitive red man had no literature. With the coming of the Frenchman love songs and ballads of the homeland blended with new songs of a new land. Music was indigenous to the region. It was needed to cheer the loneliness of those so far from home. In music
127
the Catholic Church was prominent. The records of St. Anne's which

127 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:354.

prove that Detroit had an early schoolmaster also mentioned the fact
128
that Jean Baptiste Rocoux was "chorister of the parish." The Pontiac

128 See citation 120.

Manuscript alludes to an instrumental concert given in Detroit on June 3, 1763, in honor of the conclusion of the peace between France and England. It would appear, therefore, that Detroit must have had

129 "Pontiac Manuscript," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 8:310.

trained musicians in the early days. The French also found solace far from their European homes in the remembrance and rendition of the old folk songs. These ballads have a strong rhythmic impulse, expressive of an active vivacious temperament. The coureurs de bois in the for-

130 Conway Walker, Folk Song and Dance, 10.

est, the voyageurs on the lakes, and the habitant on his farm sang them as they worked. No evening party was complete without the old songs, and the man or woman who could recall the greatest number was held in highest esteem. Rarely had the lay any relation to the habitant's own life. It was a song of princes and princesses, of well-saddled cavaliers or prisoners in far-off Nantes--not a song of beaver or of Indian or of hardship. But the rhythmic melody set the pulse beat of the voyageurs' paddles and lifted the spirits of the habitant while plowing his field. Too, these old songs helped his conservative instinct by keeping him ever mindful of things as they had been in the past. The French who in the early days sailed

131 Frank O. Call, The Spell of French Canada, 277.

the Detroit River composed many French dialect songs which they sang on the Great Lakes. One of the most popular, "The Wreck of the Wood Scow Julie Plante," has been attributed to the Canadian poet, Dr. Drummond. There is evidence, however, to show that it was sung by Frenchmen on "Lak' San Clair" before Dr. Drummond's time. The song humorously relates the tragedy that overcame "de capitan" aboard the scow,

132

Julie Plant. Two of the most popular French Canadian songs are "Vive

132 Michigan, a Guide to the Wolverine State, 132.

la Canadienne" and "Un Canadien errant." These speak of the love the Frenchman bears his cherished land. In Canada today, the worthy descendants of a musical race still preserve and cultivate the old songs which once made merry the shores of "le Detroit."

133

133 Conway Walker, op. cit., 69-70.

The long, winter evenings were particularly suited to the narration of the time-honored legends of France. These stories were sometimes bits of history into which some supernatural element had been infused, or some newer version of an old tale brought from France. The habitant was accustomed to people the earth and the air with spirits of many motives and of various forms. Perhaps the red man's superstitions added to the Frenchman's high-strung temperament may have been responsible for this. At any rate, every little settlement had its particular chronicle, and the Detroit village was no exception. Taken all together the legends with their moral lessons made a wholesome body of folk-lore.

Through them the children became steeped in the history of their race
 134
 and imbued with respect for its traditions.

134 William B. Maure, op. cit., 221; Frank O. Call, The Spell of French Canada, 257.

In former times the conteur or story-teller was a well-known and important personage. Here is a word-picture of this man and his audience:

"The fire roared loudly in the double stove,
 Until its sides like burnished copper glowed;
 Outside the snow fell, and the north wind drove
 White, ghostly figures down the frozen road.
 They listened, open-mouthed and open-eyed,
 To Jean's weird stories of the Vendigo
 That haunts the woods, and of Pierre who died
 Because he saw the Walker of the Snow.
 He told the story of the Phantom Bell
 And Ghosts and mighty hunters came and went.
 Like children frightened by the tales they tell
 They listened until half the night was spent;
 Then Jean arose, looked out and shook his head
 'How dark it is! I will stay here,' he said." 135.

135 Ibid., 258-259.

The French language was used by the early inhabitants in their stories, songs, and daily conversations. Charlevoix wrote that nowhere in the world was the language of France spoken with greater purity than in New France. "There is not even the smallest foreign accent
 136
 remarked in their pronunciation." Much the same thought was expressed

136 Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, S. J., Journal of a Voyage to North America, 1:113.

by a French journalist, Ferri Pisani, who in company with Jerome Bonaparte, visited Detroit in 1861. Even at that late date, the journalist marvels at the French spoken in the market place. "One hears more French than English. It is of a decided Norman accent." The visitors, too, seemed to see a decided resemblance between the styles of Detroit and those of France. It is possible that an ardent French visitor would see only the best in his country-men here in Detroit, but the fact that the French language was still being spoken without being too greatly Americanized is worthy of note.

137

137 Milo M. Quaife, (editor), Burton Historical Collection Leaflet, 4: 49-55.

Although not an inhabitant of Detroit, Father Charlevoix contributed greatly to its intellectual development. It was he who was instrumental in having priests sent to educate and train the Indians, and it is to his own accounts that many modern writers refer for an accurate description of this part of the country in early times. The priests on both sides of the river also contributed their share to the intellectual culture of the French. Father Potier was the author of three grammars of the Huron language. The others by their writings in the Jesuit Relations interested their contemporaries in France in this country, and they left to posterity a dependable view of their own times. The St. Anne Register is an invaluable aid to research. Its five volumes covering the period from 1704 to 1848 give a census of the settlement, state the occupation of the father, and the family name of the mother. They are in fact the only records which were kept before the days of Robert Navarre. The Huron Account Book, the work of Fathers de la

Richardle and Potier, portrays the period 1733-1751. The price of articles, the method of payment, the type of supply desired—all are pictured here. Richard R. Elliott considers that this book sheds more light upon the social status of the Detroit French than does any other record. Father Gabriel Richard's many contributions are listed under

138

138 Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 127; Peter Potier, S. J., Huron Mission of Detroit, 1733-1751, 145.

the American regime.

Detroit may not be able to boast of its artists of the early days, but the French overseas became interested in Detroit as early as 1702 because of the rude sketches sent them by the explorers and missionaries. The French geographer Guillaume Delisle drew his manuscript, "Carte du Canada et du Mississippi," upon which is the word le Detroit. In 1703 he engraved and printed two other maps both locating Detroit. This engraving is very helpful in a study of early days. The actual or probable appearance of Detroit as a trading post and as a stockaded fort is shown on manuscript charts done in the early days in the style of Hennepin or Lahontan, and now preserved in the library of the Service Hydrographique in Paris. Other valuable maps which show the settlement in the various periods of its growth are in Paris museums. There is

139

139 Randolph G. Adams, Iconography of Old Detroit, 247-251.

no indubitable proof that these drawings were done by French living in Detroit, but they must have been drawn from crude sketches or from

written descriptions of the village.

Other evidences of a gradual intellectual development were seen in the establishment of art museums, libraries, literary societies, and debating groups which did not really function, however, until after the beginning of the American period.

In conclusion, it may safely be stated that there were signs of an intellectual development from the very beginning of the colony. The writings of the priests, the notary, and Cadillac, the preservation of a national literature and folk-song, the purity of the French spoken language, the improvement in the standard of living-all showed that there was a growing intellectual culture. The habitant was advancing, not falling back into barbarism. Had the English and American residents coming into this section after the defeat of the French been obliged to make a beginning of civilization, many years would have been lost before they could have developed any high refinement of their own. That they were able to start such enterprises as the University of Michigan, the Detroit Lyceum, the Detroit Gazette, and to foster many literary and debating societies for "mutual improvement" is a sign of thorough preparation on the part of the French. The foundation had been laid by the early French Catholic; the superstructure was left for the hustling Yankee who, perchance, had married into an old French family.

During this period of French occupation how did the settlers earn a livelihood? Is there any connection between their employment and that of millions of Detroiters today? Fundamental changes in the economic and social life of the city have characterized each step of its gradual development, yet one sees in Cadillac's dream of two centuries ago a tiny beginning of the world's largest industrial center of today.

Detroit was founded as a commercial colony. Trade was Cadillac's main objective. Though the articles of exchange and methods of business have varied with the years, trading which began back in 1701 has helped to make Detroit the dynamic city it is today.

For more than a century under French, English, and American rule, the fur trade was the most important of French colonial interests. A full third of the population was engaged in this trade. Great quanti-
140

140 Reuben G. Thwaites, France in America, 134.

ties of skins were received and exchanged. Over one thousand beaver skins were shipped in a single year, and when Rogers came to Detroit in 1760 he found \$500,000 worth of furs in storage. The French had
141

141 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:767.

bequeathed a thriving industry to their successors.

During this early period there was little money in circulation so the usual currency was the animal pelt. Accounts were figured according to beaver skins, and other furs were reckoned according to their value in such skins.

Until 1726, card money, used customarily to pay soldiers, was seen occasionally in Detroit. This was made from ordinary playing cards which had been cut in four pieces and signed by the governor, the in-
142
tendant, and the clerk of the treasury.

142 Ibid., 1:846.

When silver money became plentiful the settler, usually his own banker, laid his savings away until a good bargain presented itself. Campbell remarks that although there were spendthrifts in Detroit as in all communities, the majority of the French inhabitants were frugal and thrifty.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Campbell Papers, 15.

As there were no separate stores for hardware, drygoods, or groceries, every trading depot furnished articles of all kinds. The gunsmith and jeweler, however, had shops devoted to their industries and had quite a flourishing trade. Every reputable Indian traded his furs freely for his dearly loved brooches, hat and arm bands, and other knickknacks. The blacksmith did a lucrative business in traps, horse-shoeing, wheel-tiring, and sleigh-repairing.

The early traders kept books accurately. Their handwriting was legible and frequently even handsome, embellished with grand flourishes. An interesting method of keeping accounts is related by Campbell. Often when articles were sold at uniform rates they were charged by chalking up the amount upon the door. The tally, also, was in common use. The dealer of bread and milk kept the score by cutting notches upon squared sticks, each notch representing one item. When the bill was settled, he whittled the stick smooth. Shingles were sometimes used for pass books, entries being made with red chalk or lead plummet.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 18-20.

The account books kept by the Jesuit priests at the Huron mission on the Canadian side acquaint the reader with business methods in the later years of the French regime. Here, too, there was a great deal of barter as in a pioneer community. Very seldom in the accounts is there any mention of actual cash. Madame Goyau had been hired to do the laundry, work and baking for the mission for one hundred livres a year. She received her pay in the following manner:

"Madame Goyau has received a shirt, 3 livres 10 sols; a quart of brandy, 3 livres; a Quart of brandy, 3 livres; a Quart of brandy, 3 livres; a pair of mitasses, made of molleton; a pair of mittasses made of molleton; a Quart of brandy; 2 minots of pease, 18 livres; 6 blankets, 54 livres; a pair of mitasses, 3 livres. Madame Goyau is paid in full for The 1st year." 145

145 Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 69:257.

Meloche, the mill operator, was paid in like fashion.

"Meloche: I paid him on account of his work, 100 livres less 10 sols, in small furs; also 30 livres, paid to Him on my account by madame Caron; also 100 pistoles, paid to him on my account by Sieur Carignan, Trader of detroit. Also paid 300 livres to the aforesaid, by Monsieur navarre. He is paid in full." 146

146 Ibid., 70:35.

The Jesuit Relations reveal the fact that the Detroit pioneers were engaged in a variety of occupations. The priests had dealings with Parent, the joiner; Sieur Delatti, the interpreter; Campau, the farmer; Chauvin, the blacksmith; Meloche, the mill operator; and,

Sieur Roy, the voyageur. Skilled artisans came to the settlement with each new group of immigrants. One ingenious French new-comer devised a mill to be run by the current of the Detroit River. Though it was not a success, the effort showed interest in improvement.

147 Almon E. Parkins, Historical Geography of Detroit, 83; Reuben G. Thwaites, loc. cit.

Many of the Frenchmen were farmers. In no other occupation is the pioneer so severely criticized. "Farming was superficial and not thorough." McKenney speaks of "neglected lands" between Detroit and Grosse

148 George Fuller, (editor), Historic Michigan, 1:80.

149 Points. Croghan reports that "all the people here are generally wretches

149 Thomas McKenney, Tour of the Lakes, 126.

. . . though their land, with little labor, produces plenty of grain, they scarcely raise as much as will supply their wants. . . ." Jouett in his

150 "Croghan's Journal," Early Western Travels, Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), 1:152.

document refers to "that indolence and want of skill in agriculture which so conspicuously marks the Canadian character in this country."

151 "Jouett's Report," American State Papers, Public Lands, 1:192.

If the above statements are to be taken literally then indeed the Frenchman was a poor farmer and a hindrance to the incipient settlement. Perhaps there is an explanation. From all evidence it would appear that there was not a great deal of farming done in the early days. This in Yankee eyes was unforgiveable; hence the people guilty were considered shiftless. It may be possible that the settler had early learned that the lawless savage coveted any surplus wealth either in money, cattle, or grain. Therefore he cultivated only as much grain and corn as his family would require, devoting the rest of his land to his orchard, or to a pasture for his cattle and ponies. Utley, in com-

¹⁵² Richard R. Elliott, "Romance of the Country of the Lakes," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1893, 18:92.

menting on the French period, particularly on the years in which England and France were at war, gives as a reason for little agriculture the danger of dwelling outside the palisade. Upon any alarm he was forced to betake himself and his family to the fort for protection. Little farming could be done under such circumstances. Another reason

¹⁵³ Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Gutcheon, op. cit., 1:190-191.

is given by Pound. "They grew plenty for their own needs which were small. If they raised more where would they sell the surplus?"

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Pound, Dynamic Detroit, 49.

Too, land was plentiful and fertile, the garrison was small, and even those who lived near the fort had gardens large enough to supply their own needs. Food had little place in commerce, furs being the medium of exchange for manufactured wares. Consequently, the farmer had little incentive to change his methods. ¹⁵⁵ Burton also

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 181.

states that the first farms were small and poorly tilled chiefly because there was no inducement for greater efforts, "the only market for the surplus produce being that afforded by the soldiers of the garrison, a few tradesmen, and their families." ¹⁵⁶ When George Croghan

¹⁵⁶ Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:485.

came very soon after British occupation he referred to the habitants as a "set of able farmers." ¹⁵⁷ In the Campbell Papers we read that

¹⁵⁷ James Sullivan, (editor), Papers of Sir William Johnson, 3:302.

much attention was paid to gardening and every farm had its vegetable patch upon which much labor was bestowed, but beyond this farming was not carried on very extensively. The reason he gives is that the Indians had their own grain and it was rarely necessary to export to ¹⁵⁸ Mackinac.

¹⁵⁸ Campbell Papers, 67.

Land grants must have had something to do with a lack of flourishing agriculture. Bela Hubbard points out the many obligations and restrictions laid upon the grantee. He must pay rent each year, plant a Maypole before the door of the mansion house, have his grain ground at the manor windmill, and pay tax on every sale of land. He could not mortgage his land. He was forbidden to buy articles of merchandise carried to or from Montreal. With all these prohibitions it is surprising that agriculture as an occupation flourished at all. The same writer discussing the crude farm implements adds that "the Canadians were speedy to adopt the superior implements and modes of cultivation used by the Anglo-Saxon settlers."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 119-120.

There is yet another angle from which to consider this question of French farming. Most of the criticism has come from those who saw Detroit after the American troops were in possession. Did the British in their years of occupation encourage agriculture? The question of what the British did for Detroit will be considered more thoroughly in the following chapter, but a sentence or two will not be amiss.

The history of the times shows that agriculture actually languished during the period of British control. The unsettled conditions resulting from a change of government and the Pontiac War retarded ordinary living and farming. When the war ceased the state of affairs was worse for the French. Many of them were suspected of having incited the Indians. They were always under surveillance and if over-

heard uttering words disloyal to the British cause they could be arrested and sent into exile. If they raised a large crop they had to sell it in a restricted market at a low price. Gradually the farmers began to produce just enough for their families and to while away the remainder of their time in hunting and in fishing. There was little trading for them as the British had taken over the fur trade altogether. The result was that there were more famines during the short British period than during the whole of the time of French occupation. Is it any wonder that the Yankee arrivals beheld run-down farms and
160
saw indications of an apparently idle life?

160 Clarence M. Burton, Early Detroit, 23.

To summarize, the short period of sixty years in which the fleur-de-lis of France waved over Detroit the settlement was making a slow but steady struggle for existence. A civilized community inhabited by a religious and conservative, but yet a joyous and light-hearted citizenry was being established. Adhering to the principles of their Catholic faith they were at peace with their white neighbors and were striving to Christianize the red ones. Aided by their Church and their government, they had as much education and intellectual development as was possible under pioneer conditions. As the majority of them were of the best type of French, they had brought with them and preserved that refinement of taste and mind which we call culture. The customs, the songs, and the folk-lore of la belle France lived and flourished anew along the shores of le Detroit.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRENCH COLONISTS UNDER BRITISH RULE

1760-1796

Detroit in 1760 was essentially a French settlement flying the British flag. The conqueror was in control but French customs and civilization remained. The French did not resist the new authority chiefly because they had been accustomed to obey all lawful rule and their faith enabled them to see and accept God's will in their new
¹allegiance. Too, they looked upon the English victory as merely a

¹ George Wrong, Canada and the American Revolution, 29; Almon Parkins, Historical Geography of Detroit, 93.

temporary one. At any moment France might be successful as she had
²been in the past.

² George B. Catlin, Story of Detroit, 33.

Such was not the attitude of the Indian. He was deeply hurt and angered by the domineering attitude of the conquerors. The French had been his friends and had treated him with respect.

"While the French lived here they kept a smith to mend our Guns, and Hatchets and a Doctor to attend our People when sick." ³

³ "Croghan's Journey," Reuben G. Thwaites, (editor), Early Western Travels, 1:114.

Even the English admitted this. "The French have a different
⁴
 manner of treating them from us."

⁴ "Letter of Captain Donald Campbell to Colonel Henry Bouquet, Detroit, December 23, 1760," Bouquet Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 19:47.

The difference in the treatment of the Indian by the English and the French is one of the big points in favor of the first colonizers of Detroit. The English and the later American settler, having no settled philosophy to guide them, and finding the Indians troublesome effectively exterminated them by an unchecked policy of spoliation and neglect, thus clearing the way for their own increase in fortune. The French pioneer, too, found the red brother troublesome and desired to enrich himself at the Indian's expense. But he was restrained in doing so. He respected and obeyed, perhaps at times grudgingly, the voice of the Catholic Church which bade him retard his own progress, if necessary, by carrying his backward brother along with him. This he did despite failures and mistakes, and to the best of his ability incorporated him in his own family and saved him for God.

If the French had been able to keep their hold upon this country the fate of the Indian would have been different. But the Quebec victory was the signal for his decline. From this time on the Indian race
⁵
 was to melt and vanish before the Anglo-Americans.

⁵ Francis Parkman, The Conspiracy of Pontiac, 1:ix.

Besides resenting the lordly manner of the British, the Indian

began to realize that the invaders were going to attempt to deprive him gradually of his lands, and in the meantime to cheat and deceive him at trade.⁶ Seeing their danger the Indians led by a daring cham-

⁶ Almon Parkins, op. cit., 86-88.

pion struggled fiercely to avert it. The leader was the young Ottawa chief, Pontiac. He was endowed with courage, resolution, address, and eloquence. "He possessed a commanding energy and force of mind, and in subtlety and craft could match the best of his wily race." His faults were many but they were the faults of the race and they were not greater than his noble qualities.⁷ He was just the man for the

⁷ Francis Parkman, op. cit., 1:191.

work, for his personal influence was so strong that he could unite all his fellows into a harmonious whole to forget ancient feuds and to attempt to drive the invaders from the land. Pontiac's plan was to exterminate the British all along the frontier. Revenge and patriotism⁸

⁸ Robert B. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 165.

alike acted upon him and toward the end of the year 1762 he sent his messengers to the various nations bearing the war-belt of wampum and the red tomahawk. Everywhere the message was approved and help was pledged. The blow was to be struck sometime in May. It is interesting to note here that while the rulers of France, England, and Spain

were signing the treaty of Paris in February, 1763, countless Indian warriors in America were dancing the war dances and sharpening their scalping knives. The great war-chief who was to lead the attack on Detroit himself prepared by fast and prayer for the great event. After several days' preparation he emerged from his retreat, and filled with a savage enthusiasm he spoke to the people of the success which had been assured him by the Great Spirit. Then he sprang into the great circle and brandishing his hatchet chanted of his own exploits and those of his ancestors.

"Warrior after warrior follow his example, until the whole assembly, as if fired with sudden frenzy, rush together into the ring, leaping, stamping, and whooping, brandishing knives and hatchets in the fire-light, hacking and stabbing the air, and breaking at intervals into a burst of ferocious yells, which sound for miles away over the lonely midnight forest." ⁹

⁹ Francis Parkman, op. cit., 1:206.

Pontiac then disclosed his plan. He would demand an audience with the commandant on a matter of great importance and thus gain admittance for himself and his principal chiefs. All were to carry weapons under their blankets and at the appointed moment they would kill the officers present, while the other Indians, hearing the signal, would attack the men of the fort and thus Detroit would be taken easily. The plan was adopted and all withdrew to their lodges to await the proper moment. ¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., 1:218.

Clever as the plan was it was thwarted. Warned in advance Major Gladwin had his whole camp under arms when Pontiac and his warriors appeared. Seeing that his plot was discovered the chief endeavored to assure Gladwin of the friendship of the tribes and left. Balked in his treachery the chief retired to his village but was still resolved to persevere. He again approached Gladwin but upon being repulsed he "threw off the mask which he had worn so long," called his followers and departed. Spasmodic attacks were made upon individual settlers at a distance from the fort, and finally early in the morning of May, 1763, the fort was attacked by the whole barbarian swarm--Wyandots,¹¹ Pottawattamies, Ojibwas and Ottawas. The story of the siege is a long

¹¹ Ibid., 1:233-246.

and interesting one. Despite innumerable hardships, including the terrible massacre at Bloody Run, the destruction of property, and the scarcity of food, the garrison was able to hold out until sufficient help arrived. Finally on October 12, 1763, the Indians abandoned hope and sued for peace. Pontiac held out until he received a letter from M. Neyon, commandant of Fort Chartres, saying that he could expect no help from the French king. Seeing that his course was lost, Pontiac sent a message to Gladwin telling him that he would be willing to bury the hatchet if the English would do the same. Then Pontiac withdrew with the intention of renewing the war in the spring. His power was gone, however, and finally on July 23, 1766, he announced his abandonment of the French cause, for which he claimed to be fighting, and gave

his allegiance to the English.¹²

¹² George B. Catlin, Story of Detroit, 60-63.

Detroit was the only one of all the frontier settlements to be saved. This good fortune was due to the fact that Gladwin had been informed in time. Fact and fancy intermingle as to the officer's informant. Was it the wife of St. Aubin, friendly French trader, who visiting the Ottawa village to obtain a supply of maple sugar, saw and reported to her husband that many of the Indians were filing off the muzzles of their guns? Did her husband, anxious as he and his neighbors were to have the territory returned to France and yet not at the cost of a general massacre, relate the suspicious circumstance to

¹³
Major Gladwin? Or is a popular tradition true that a beautiful Ojib-

¹³ "Gabriel St. Aubin's Account of Pontiac's Conspiracy," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 8:352-353.

wa girl called Catherine by the soldiers was in love with Gladwin and
¹⁴
revealed the plot to him? There seems to be some truth to the story

¹⁴ Francis Parkman, op. cit., 1:227-229.

that Angelique Guillerier, whose father was a good friend of Pontiac, and who herself frequently visited the Huron village and mission store, had somehow obtained knowledge of the affair and told the details to her lover, James Sterling, a Scotch trader at the fort. The fact that

Sterling had once been the means of saving the garrison was mentioned
 later in a letter recommending him for the position of interpreter.¹⁵

¹⁵ Clarence Burton, City of Detroit, 2:888; George W. Stark, City of Destiny, 63-64.

Another theory has been offered by Richard R. Elliott, Detroit historiographer. Elliott's story has it that Pontiac must have been a frequent visitor at the Huron Mission for he naturally preferred the French to the English. One part of his plan was the sawing off of the muskets so as to conceal them under the Indians' blankets. Where did he obtain the files to do this? Elliott says that files could be obtained only from the forge at the Huron mission. Such a large transaction would have easily come to the attention of Father Potier who would not have neglected to warn the commandant. After Father Potier's death, it was found that the leaves of his diary for the years of the trouble had been removed. Was this to destroy the evidence that Gladwin had been warned either by him or through Angelique Cuillerier?¹⁶

¹⁶ Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 172-174.

The Pontiac Manuscript tells the story of an Ottawa, "named Mahigama, who was not in favor of the conspiracy and who carried word unknown to the others," first to Campbell and then to Gladwin.¹⁷

¹⁷ "Pontiac Manuscript," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 8:275.

Whatever may be the true facts in the case, Major Gladwin was informed in time and a general massacre of Detroit was prevented.

British officials blamed the French for starting the massacre. However, from the several stories mentioned it was only through the French who had free contact with the Indians that the plot was discovered. George Fuller, State Librarian at Lansing, disagrees with any criticism of French loyalty during the war. His belief is that very few of the French took any actual part in the war. "As soon as definite news of the treaty of peace was received, all except some men of no standing acquiesced in the change of government." "A militia officered by French gentlemen . . . acted with complete fidelity." "It was the recognition by the French of their new allegiance that disconcerted Pontiac and destroyed his plans." Parkman does not hesitate to give

¹⁸ George N. Fuller, (editor), Historic Michigan, 1:81; Judge James Campbell, "Early French Settlements in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 2:103.

¹⁹ credit to the French settlers who aided the English during this time.

¹⁹ Francis Parkman, op. cit., 1:227, 243, 246, 248, 253.

More than any other individual Father Potier worked for the coming of peace. He was responsible for a group of Frenchmen who visited Pontiac's camp in an attempt to persuade him not to attack. Unsuccessful in their project, they were urged by the priest to "pray with fervor to appease heaven who chastised them by this war." Too, the missionary had such power over the savages that by refusing them the sacraments,

20

he kept a band of Hurons from going to war. The Catholic Church on

20 "Pontiac Manuscript," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 8:310, 293.

the Detroit side aided the morale of the people, likewise. During the siege the church bells rang out as usual, and the procession during the Rogation Days took place during May although Pontiac and his fol-
21
lowers were encamped near the town. The Bouquet Papers in the Archives

21 John G. Shea, Life and Times of the Most Reverend John Carroll, 104.

of Ottawa contain frequent reference to the assistance given the English by the French previous to the time of the attack. "They have
22
granted everything I have desired of them in Quartering the Troops."

22 "Letter of Captain Donald Campbell to Colonel Henry Bouquet, Detroit, December 23, 1760," Bouquet Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 19:48.

"The inhabitants continue to supply us with flour, and Indian corn and
23
do all I could desire of them for the service." From these various re-

23 "Letter of Captain Donald Campbell to Colonel Bouquet, Detroit, March 10, 1761," Bouquet Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 19:62.

ferences to the kindness of the French it appears that instead of inciting the Indian against the British, the Frenchman had done all in

his power to aid his conquerors, and when despite his attempts the attack came, he remained loyal to his new allegiance, particularly when he found that France and England had made peace.

With the exception of the Pontiac War there were few important episodes in the history of the French settler during the British period. However, he kept civilization alive in the Lake region until the Americans could gain that territory. The British conquest meant little in the way of additional culture.

For one thing the British added few to the population of the town. Ruled by mercenary motives, the merchants and manufacturers in England argued that the development of the country would lead to an increase in manufacturing here and this in time would destroy their own trade with the colonies. Fur traders opposed the settlement of the country as the establishment of farms would tend to the extermination of fur-bearing animals. The home government, desiring to appease the Indians, avoid a repetition of the Pontiac episode and also influenced by the above considerations, issued the Proclamation of 1763 which prohibited²⁴ colonists from moving beyond the Alleghenies. Thus the English sel-

²⁴ Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, op. cit., 195; Thomas Cooley, Michigan, 81.

fish policy and not French indolence and sloth was responsible for the slight development of the settlement when the American appeared.

Besides not aiding the territory there is proof that the English influence was positively detrimental to the progress of Detroit. The officers in charge had little interest in anything but securing mili-

tary defense and building up the fur trade. They had little idea of the needs or even the geography of the settlement. Unlike Louis XIV who had taken a personal interest in the colony, the officials in England had little notion of even the location of the place. When Sir Guy Carleton, Governor of Canada, was asked in the House of Commons whether Detroit and Michigan were under his government, his reply was that Michigan was, but Detroit was not. Men whose interest was not in
 25
 in the settlement could not be expected to do much for its welfare.

25 Almon Parkins, op. cit., 94.

The English trader was a source of great trouble in Detroit. He was an unscrupulous fellow without principle and his methods in business soon aroused the hatred of the savages. This condition, with the military despotism of the civil authorities and the general unrest due to British domineering ways caused many years of turmoil which was not conducive to a rapid growth of the colony, nor to the peace necessary
 26
 for an increase in cultural living.

26 Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 1:117.

Moreover, there is a tradition that when the British were finally forced to evacuate the fort to the Americans, they filled the wells with rubbish and destroyed the old-time windmills. McLaughlin thinks that this is probably an exaggeration but he maintains that their occupation was detrimental to later American interests.

"They left behind them the rubbish of a cruel and unnecessary occupancy, much less easily removed and much more inimical to the advancement of American interests than was any material debris." 27

27 Andrew McLaughlin, Lewis Cass, 32.

Considering that the Indians were encouraged until years after the War of 1812 to attack the Americans would show the truth of this statement of McLaughlin. Though some authorities seem reluctant to blame the British government for deliberately trying to win the friendship of the Indians so as to incite them against the Americans, still there is ample proof that if the British government was not guilty, its traders were.

28 "Letter from Governor Hull to W. Eustis, Secretary of War," American State Papers, Indian Affairs, 1:798; L. P. Kellogg, British Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest, 277.

During the British period the population of Detroit remained predominately French. In 1778, James May gives a picture of Detroit in which he says that the population consists of French Canadians with a sprinkling of Scotch, Irish, and English traders. During the latter

29 Almon Perkins, op. cit., 99.

part of the eighteenth century the population became more varied with French, German, English, Irish, Scotch, Yankee, Indian, and Negro peo-

ple represented.³⁰ Many thought that the Germans and English would

³⁰ Ibid., 121; Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 17:284.

change the character of the settlement but instead they soon displayed the characteristics of the French, apparently finding their methods congenial.³¹ The same is true of the Scotch. They seemed to prefer the

³¹ Thomas Cooley, op. cit., 81; Almon Parkins, op. cit., 122.

conservatism of the French and many marriages are recorded between these two peoples. If the French were indolent it seems strange that they should be admired by the thrifty Scotch.

English and Scotch visitors have left us interesting pictures of the continuing Gallic civilization. James Sterling, trader and interpreter, speaks of his bride Angelique Cuillerier, as a "prudent Woman & a fine scholar; has been used to trade from her infancy, & is generally allowed to be the best Interpreter of the different Indian Languages at this place."³² Archange Askin, a Detroit girl who has married

³² "Letter of James Sterling to John Duncan, February 26, 1765," Sterling Letter Book, 1765.

an Englishman, writes to her mother and sisters from abroad describing the fashions. From her minute descriptions it would appear that the Detroit girls copied the foreign models.³³ Indeed, the characteristic

³³ "Letter of Archange Meredith to her mother, September 2, 1794," Askin Papers, 1:517.

French fondness for dress is mentioned by several writers. Utley concludes that the farmers must have been fairly prosperous to be able³⁴ to dress their wives and daughters so well. That they did use good

³⁴ Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, op. cit., 1:317.

materials is shown by a letter in which "Mrs. Askin begs you'll be so kind as to deliver Madam Perinault the piece of Silk with the trim-³⁵ mings, that is coming . . . from England for her."

³⁵ "Letter from John Askin to Messrs. Todd and McGill, Montreal, May 8, 1778," Askin Papers, 1:84.

Isaac Weld visited Detroit in 1795. He writes that "two-thirds of the inhabitants are of French extraction." He then goes on to note that the people enjoy themselves the same as those in large cities.

"The stores and shops are well furnished and you may buy cloth, linen, and every article of wearing apparel as good in their kind and nearly on as reasonable terms as you can purchase them in New York or Philadelphia." ³⁶

³⁶ Isaac Weld, Travels in North America, 2:185.

With the coming of the new traders more goods were on display, and at the numerous parties there was no lack of silk and satin in gowns, hosiery, and ribbons. The Canadian girl in the rude surroundings of her forest home was as curious of the styles and as anxious to please by her toilet as her more favored Parisian sister. She

enjoyed the corn huskings and dances where she tripped in marvelous
 rapidity la jig a deux or gracefully swayed in la rance ronde.³⁷

³⁷ Carrie W. Hamlin, Legends of la Detroit, 115.

All apparently was not dark and stormy at the post in old Detroit during the British rule. The English officers made friends with the lively French maidens, and periods between Indian war whoops were made merry by dancing and music. The Frenchman's spirit of hospitality was extended to the newcomers, enemies though they were. Sir William Johnson's private diary bears witness to this. Johnson had been sent by the English to make friends with the Indians, and his entire stay was one round of pleasures.

"Monday, 6th (September) I opened the ball with Mademoiselle Curie--a fine girl. We danced until five o'clock in the morning.

Tuesday, 15th In the evening, the ladies and gentlemen assembled at my quarters, danced the whole night until 7 o'clock in the morning, when all parted very much pleased and happy." ³⁸

³⁸ William L. Stone, (editor), Life and Times of Sir William Johnson, 459-463.

During the same period Miss Ann Powell, a visitor in the town, com-
 ments upon the old-fashioned hospitality. Arent Schuyler De Peyster,³⁹

³⁹ Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:350.

commandant at the fort, relates at length in one of his poems that on certain occasions dinners of venison were barbecued in the open air⁴⁰ and served on the bank--a winter picnic. With dancing, picnics, and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1:337.

simple pleasures, the Frenchman kept alive the joyous spirit of his ancestors during a period of hostile occupation.

Education continued under British rule. Father Simplicius Bocquet⁴¹ had a school at St. Anne's for the instruction of children. Whatever

⁴¹ John G. Shea, Life and Times of Most Reverend John Carroll, 183.

of religion there was in Detroit was Catholic for when the English took over the French colonies there were only three hundred male adult Protestants as against one hundred and fifty thousand Catholics in all

⁴² Canada. Faced with the foes of their religion, a people in whose home

⁴² Michigan, a Guide to the Wolverine State, 39.

country the Catholic religion was proscribed, the French remained true to their faith.

Feudal dues continued during this period. On February 28, 1773, Badishon Labadie was given a receipt for his quit rent from James Sterling. The dues consisted of

"three minots of wheat and twenty-four livres twelve sols in cash, in consid-

eration of the permission granted to him
to cultivate a tract of land" 43

⁴³ Askin Papers, 1:46-47.

French customs then continued even though the country was under the rule of the English government. The same can be said of education, religion, and home life. There was only a veneer of English civilization. The really French culture was the foundation.

The Revolutionary War did not cause much excitement at first in Detroit. Most of the settlers were loyal to the British government. The majority of them had never known the colonies along the coast and had no innate longing for civil liberty. Detroit, however, was in a good position to form the starting point for parties organized to harass the Americans. Commandant Henry Hamilton was greatly responsible for the success of this plan. In July, 1777, he reported that he had⁴⁴ sent out fifteen parties to raid the frontier. Detroit was on most of

⁴⁴ Thomas Cooley, Michigan, 92.

these occasions forced to witness the return of the Indians with their captives. Frightful barbarities were performed within sight of the fort with the knowledge of the commandant. So well-known were Hamilton's messages to the Indians that he became known as "Hair-buyer" Hamilton. His habit of paying bounties for scalps gave Detroit a name for cruelty. Washington and others recognized the importance of Detroit but the difficulty of getting through a hostile country prevented the Americans

from taking it. It is probable that they would have received a welcome from the French here as Hamilton evidently suspected their leanings toward the patriot cause as the war progressed.

"For the French Inhabitants . . . I firmly believe that the greatest part . . . are rebels in their hearts." 45

⁴⁵ "Letter of Henry Hamilton to General Haldiman," Haldiman Papers, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 9:465.

At last in June, 1782 came word of the cessation of hostilities. Although the terms of the treaty turned over to the United States government the territory west to the Mississippi River, the British refused to evacuate the Northwest. Thus Detroit remained until 1796 under the
46
rule of the English.

⁴⁶ Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, Rise of American Civilization, 1:369; Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, op. cit., 250-252.

On July 11, 1796, Captain Moses Porter arrived to take possession for the Americans. He found a colony under the control of the British,
47
but one which was essentially French in culture and outlook. The in-

⁴⁷ Milo M. Quaife, Introduction to Askin Papers, 1:2.

habitants had not changed their ideas when they changed to the British flag.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRENCH INFLUENCE DURING THE EARLY AMERICAN RULE

With the acceptance of the Jay Treaty the American era began in Detroit. It was many years, though, before the settlement began its increase in population which was in time to make it the fourth city of the Union. Was this slow rise in population and progress all the result of "trammels of Celtic bondage and provincial ignorance" inherited from the French? ¹ Was it because when the Americans came, the inhabitants

¹ Andrew McLaughlin, Lewis Cass, 3.

of Detroit, who were almost exclusively French, "were extremely ignorant and were under the influence of a strong religious superstition?" ²

² Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the Northwestern Territory, 281.

Many reasons for the slow progress of the territory can be given. Few, if any, have to do with the early French occupation. When it became evident that the American government was really to come into possession of the Detroit area, many of the British residents left the town and moved to the Canadian side of the river. These removals seemed for a time to threaten the extinction of Detroit as a town of importance. The first census taken by the Territory of Michigan on October 1, 1805 showed five hundred twenty-five heads of families at Detroit

and six hundred sixty-seven males over sixteen years of age.³

³ Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Early Michigan, 1:580; George B. Catlin, Story of Detroit, 101.

This same year brought a sad blow to Detroit. It was the time of the great fire in which every house was burned. The kindly French hospitality from the owners of the farm houses along the river did much to alleviate the suffering. At the time of the disaster, according to Ross, there were not more than six hundred people in the settlement. "Perhaps a third of these left the city to seek shelter elsewhere."⁴

⁴ Michigan, a Guide to the Peninsular State, 236; Robert R. Ross and George B. Catlin, Landmarks of Detroit, 277.

Another misfortune which visited Detroit in the same year was the appointment of a governor and three judges according to the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance. A strange feature of the arrangement was that the men were ignorant of the language, the customs, and the lives of the people whom they were to govern. Too, they usurped authority for they "introduced the laws, adopted them, enforced them, and sitting as judges, interpreted them." They rendered no account of lots sold and for more than a year after the fire not a house was built.⁵ Such men could scarcely win the confidence of the bewildered

⁵ Michigan, a Guide to the Peninsular State, 237.

French residents who, not understanding the English language and being more accustomed to the methods of the French commandants, could not sympathize with the new rule. Cooley places squarely on Jefferson the blame for appointing such men.

"He sent to this distant frontier as rulers . . . people who were not only ignorant of this part of the country and of its people, but were without practical acquaintance with similar communities elsewhere. It was not to be expected . . . that they would readily . . . come into sympathy and cordial relations with the people they were to govern." ⁶

⁶ Thomas Cooley, Michigan, 147.

One of these men in his ignorance even presumed to censure the French in regard to their religious observance. Judge Symmes endeavored to convince them that they "consumed more time in the discharge of their religious duty than was required by the Scriptures or consistent with their temporal prosperity." The effect of that interference produced general excitement and was viewed by some of the habitants as an attempt of the American government to put down their religion. To the

⁷ Judge Jacob Burnet, op. cit., 282.

people these officials represented the government of the United States. Can they be blamed if they did not accept willingly and quickly the strange methods of these newcomers?

The people had scarcely recovered from the effects of the fire, and were trying to live under a corrupt government when the War of 1812 broke out. Though far from the coast and not very well informed in re-

gard to impressment of seamen, the settlement was an important location during the war. As soon as the prime importance of Detroit as the gateway to the upper lakes and to the west became apparent, Detroit took on a martial air. For three years from the time the first blood of the war was shed in a tiny skirmish in the Hull campaign, Detroit⁸ witnessed scenes of desolation and barbarity. The cowardly sur-

⁸ George W. Stark, City of Destiny, 149.

render of the city by Hull, the terrible Indian massacres, the rule of British agents who did not protect the people, the destruction of crops, and the pillaging of homes--all had a deterring effect upon immigration and upon upbuilding. It took years to overcome the effects of the war.⁹

⁹ Almon Parkins, op. cit., 142.

War, fire, bad government--all retarded immigration, but there was more. Tiffin, surveyor of the United States Land Office, reported unfavorably on the settlement. He gave as his judgment that "Michigan was unfit for cultivation, an irreclaimable marsh and wilderness,¹⁰ which was not worth the expense of a survey." Dwight in 1804 reported

¹⁰ "Report of Edward Tiffin," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 5:24.

that Detroit was unhealthful "not from the waters of the lakes but from

the marshes which line its borders." ¹¹ Naturally, it took many years

¹¹ Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, 4:79.

to right the wrong impression given by these reports. Gradually through the writers of the emigrant guides and the glowing accounts of travelers, much of this prejudice against Michigan was broken down. In 1818 a United States Land Office was established in Detroit. This did much to bring in settlers. The arrival of the steamboat in 1818 and the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 hastened the period of ¹² active emigration. It would appear that there were factors quite dis-

¹² Almon Parkins, op. cit., 143-148.

ting from a native French population which kept Detroit so long in reaching statehood. Rather, the French solidly established in Detroit were a real help to the implanting of American ideals and government.

Their hospitality was a welcome aid to the first American immigrants, and the moral tone of the whole settlement was high, thus inviting desirable elements from the older centers. ¹³ A visitor to the

¹³ George N. Fuller, Social and Economic Beginnings of Michigan, 498.

city remarked that his entertainment of the evening before had assured him that "he was . . . in the circle of hospitable and polished life." ¹⁴

¹⁴ Thomas McKenney, Tour to the Lakes, 113.

Samuel Henley writing to General Wilkinson in 1796 says that "I should be very much gratified with the amusements of Detroit this winter, but must dispense with that privilege." ¹⁵ A New Yorker traveling through

¹⁵ Silas Farmer, History of Detroit, 1:223.

Michigan says, "I found myself among the most intelligent population ¹⁶ of the middle class I ever mixed with." Mrs. Jameson, that famous

¹⁶ C. F. Hoffman, A Winter in the West, 1:152.

traveler, was quite delighted with the cultured French manner.

"If you would see the two extremes of manner brought into near comparison, you should turn from a Yankee storekeeper to a French Canadian. It was quite curious to find in this remote region such a perfect specimen of an old-fashioned Norman peasant--all bows, courtesy, and good humor." ¹⁷

¹⁷ Mrs. Anna Jameson, Winter Studies, 2:87.

Besides his warm welcome of them, the fact that the Frenchman accepted willingly and cheerfully the change in government was a help to the incoming Americans. It seems an insult to mention the slur of Judge Sibley on their patriotism to their new government. The judge said, "Nothing frightens the Canadian like taxes; he would prefer to be treated like a dog and kenneled under the whip of a tyrant than con-

tribute to the support of a free government."¹⁸ Nothing could be more

18 "Letter from Solomon Sibley to Jacob Burnet, August 2, 1802," Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Settlement of the Northwest, 495.

untrue. Although the form of government was entirely new to them and they looked with bewilderment at the hurrying ways of the Yankee, still they were sincerely attached to their new allegiance and its republican institutions. Hubbard states that in the difficult periods of the Revolution and the War of 1812, the Frenchman was always the American's reliable and active ally. "If a man was wanted for a dangerous enter-¹⁹prise, it was a Frenchman who was chosen." When General Anthony Wayne

19 Bela Hubbard, Memorials of a Half-Century, 142-143.

was in Detroit in 1796 he praised the inhabitants for their quick acceptance of the ideals of democracy. He had observed

"the general satisfaction which has appeared to prevail among the citizens of Detroit . . . upon the establishment of the government of the United States, and the alacrity and laudable desire they have evinced to promote the due execution thereof." 20

20 Michigan: A Guide to the Wolverine State, 236.

The Frenchman's Catholic faith and educational ideals were also a help to the young American settlement. The French priest in the town had always been a man of refinement and learning, but during the early American period there was a priest who towered over all the rest. Fa-

ther Gabriel Richard stands out prominently among all the leaders of this difficult period. He contributed largely to the educational, social, and political development of Michigan. The Sulpician priest would have been a "man of mark in almost any community and at any time."²¹

²¹ Thomas Cooley, Michigan, 141; Michigan: A Guide to the Wolverine State, 45.

As his name is synonymous with the educational effort of the period and as he represents French culture in its highest degree in the new settlement, it will be worth while to consider some of the details of his busy life. The priest was born at Saintes, in the Charente-Inferieure in October, 1767. At seventeen he entered the Sulpician Seminary at Angers for a five-year course. He was ordained at Issy on the outskirts of Paris in 1791. In just another year he was compelled to flee from his native land to escape the fury of the French Revolution. Coming to America he was welcomed by Bishop Carroll who invited the holder of a Master's degree in mathematics to the faculty of the Seminary at Baltimore. As the school was small it was soon found that the faculty was too numerous. Too, missionaries were needed badly on the American frontier. Thus the young ecclesiastic, uprooted from the cultural surroundings of a European center of learning, was transplanted to the frontier of Kaskaskia and Cahokia. From there he came in 1798 to the more civilized but no less difficult field of Michigan. Father Richard had much to give the settlement which had opened its arms to him and because he gave unstintingly of

his best he stands in the front ranks of educators, civic leaders, of social and spiritual influences in the history of Detroit.

He began at once to exert a salutary influence upon the French citizens and the Indians. His parish, St. Anne's, included about three thousand parishioners and practically all of the northwestern portion
22
of the United States. Busy as he was with the needs of such a huge

22 Clarence M. Burton, City of Detroit, 2:1215; Jean Dilhet, Beginnings of the Catholic Church in the United States, 118.

frontier territory with its religious conditions far from ideal, he had time for others besides his own flock. Lacking a Protestant clergyman, the non-Catholics of the neighborhood invited Father Richard to speak to them, and he availed himself of the opportunity very frequently. He is considered the first priest in the United States to deliver a series of lectures to non-Catholics. The incident is of real significance when one considers the lack of religious toleration in the country during this period.
23

23 James V. Campbell, Outlines of the Political History of Michigan, 255.

Interested in teaching his people to love the beautiful music of the Catholic Church, he installed a pipe organ in St. Anne's. This organ is believed to be the first one in the Northwest. Too, the priest personally trained boys in plain chant. During the War of 1812 the Indians removed the pipes of this organ and used them as horns making

24

the woods ring with their shouts and tooting.

24 Sister Mary Rosalita, Gabriel Richard, American, 5; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:357.

What of this pioneer's interest in education? In speaking to a group of teachers, William D. Wilkins, a school inspector, maintained that Father Gabriel Richard, the head of the Catholic Church in the Territory, "a man of political power as well as fine education, did not approve of educating the masses and I cannot find any early promise of the thronged spacious church schools which now ornament the city in so many quarters." ²⁵ Is this really true? Was not the great man interested

25 William D. Wilkins, "Traditions and Reminiscences of the Public Schools of Detroit," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:450.

in the educational development of his adopted children? Although authorities differ widely in their views of the early French, all seem to agree on this point in regard to Father Richard--that he encouraged education in every way. Not only did he organize schools for the immediate training of his own people, but he also favored all other proper schemes for general intelligence.

In his own rectory he began a little seminary for the training of future priests. Rooms were fitted up in the presbytery for this purpose and Mr. Dilhet, his assistant, opened the school with nine pupils. They were taught Latin, geography, church history, sacred music, and the practice of mental prayer. Mr. Dilhet kept up this school until

26

his departure for France in September, 1805. Four young ladies of

26 Jean Dilhet, op. cit., 117.

wealthy families were instructed and prepared as teachers by Father Richard. They were placed in charge of a seminary for girls in which he and Father Dilhet taught the higher branches. Father Richard was

27 Richard R. Elliott, "Romance of the Country of the Lakes," American Catholic Quarterly Review, 1893, 18:96.

well qualified to instruct his young teachers. Pages from his diploma state that "Jacobus Gabriel Richard" had received the first prize in rhetoric, besides being first in French oratory, first in Latin poetry, and second in Latin oratory. Too, in France, formal teacher training

28 "Pages from Father Richard's Diploma," Richard Papers, 1784.

had been the accepted thing for a hundred and thirty years, so the work was not new to the well-instructed French priest.

29 Sister Mary Rosalita, Education in Detroit Prior to 1850, 67.

These young ladies, Monique Labadie, Elizabeth Williams, Angelique Campau, and Elizabeth Lyons were early leaders in Catholic Action and were the foundation stones of the Catholic school system of Detroit.

According to Wilkins they were the teachers of the first free school
³⁰
 in the town.

³⁰ J. A. Girardin, "Life and Times of Reverend Gabriel Richard," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:486; William D. Wilkins, op. cit., 1:450.

In 1805 the disastrous fire destroyed the material evidence of the priest's hard work. Church, schools, and the homes of parishoners were ruined. Within three years, so resourceful was this Frenchman, another church was provided and Catholic schools were again in session.

By 1808 he had established five or six schools, an academy for girls, and the Spring Hill Indian School. Aid had been sought from those who knew his work. On October 1, 1806 he had petitioned the legislature in the name of Angelique Campau and Elizabeth Williams for a lot for the purpose of "erecting a young ladies school." He himself
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³¹ Askin Papers, 1806.

during the same month petitioned for a lot for the building of a college
³²
 "thus enabling him to render the Education partly gratuitous."

³² Richard Papers, 1806.

Much in regard to these early school is learned through a memorial addressed by Father Richard to the legislative authority of Michigan, October 18, 1808. He recounts what he has done for education in De-

troit and asks as help in his work the proceeds of a lottery.

"Besides tow English schools in the Town of Detroit, there are four other Primary schools for boys and tow for young ladies, either in Town, or at Spring Hill, at Grand Marais even at River Hurons. . . .

In Detroit . . . under the direction of Miss Elizabeth Williams there are better than thirty young girls who are taught . . . reading, writing, arithmetic, knitting, sewing, and spinning. In these schools there are already nearly three dozen of spinning wheels, and one loom. . . .

To encourage the young students . . . the undersigned had these three months past sent others to New York for a spinning machine of about one hundred spindles, an air-pump, an Electrical Apparatus . . . and a few colours for dyeing the stuff. . . .

It would be very necessary to have in Detroit a Public building for a similar Academy in which the high branches of Mathematics, most important languages, Geography, History, natural and moral Philosophy should be taught to young Gentlemen of our country, and in which should be kept the machines . . . for making the most necessary physical experiments. . . .

The undersigned acting as Administrator for the said Academies further prays, that, for the Encouragement of Literature and Useful Arts . . . one of the four Lotteries authorized by the Honourable Legislature on the ninth day of September 1805, may be left to the management of the subscriber as Administrator of the said Academies, on the conditions that may appear just and reasonable to the Legislative Board. . . ." 33

33 "Outline of a Scheme of Education for Youth in the Territory of Michigan, January 20, 1809," Richard Papers, 1809.

Father Richard was years ahead of his time in advocating industrial and vocational training as well as cultural education. In 1809 he sent

to the President of the United States an "Outline of a Scheme of Education for Youth in the Territory of Michigan." This plan was approved by the president. In it Father Richard contemplated the establishment of several primary schools every five or six miles. He advocated the instruction of school masters and pointed out the necessity of admitting children gratis.

In his second article he commented on the need in the territory of "the theory and practice of Agriculture and of the most useful arts and trades." He had, indeed, seen the weakness of French agriculture and was trying to help them help themselves.

In the third article he seems to show a disapproval of modes of discipline in his day. "The hope of pleasure shall be the best allure-ment to study." The boys and girls are to have separate schools but are to be taught the same subjects.

Fourthly, the Indian was considered. "Living under the same roof, eating the same bread, and receiving the same instruction," white and red children shall learn that they belong to one family.

The fifth article deals exclusively with Indian education. He seemed to be of the opinion that the Indian should be given the fundamentals of education, and then taught a trade which would make him a useful member of society. He compares this to the successful work done by the Jesuits in Paraguay and says that the same good work can take place here. All that is needed is the generosity of the American
34
people.

³⁴ "Outline of a Scheme of Education for Youth in the Territory of Michigan, January 20, 1809," Richard Papers, 1809.

The documents show that Father Richard did not obtain the help which he so desired but he was not the type of man to give up. To provide the text-books necessary for his schools, this promoter of literary culture purchased in the east a printing-press and brought it over the mountains to Detroit. The first book printed on it was for the use of his children, "The Child's Spelling Book and Michigan Instructor," compiled no doubt by the priest himself. He published likewise many other books of a religious and educational nature. Interested in the people in general, Father Richard used his press to print territorial documents and publications, including the first compilation of the Laws of Michigan Territory. In 1809 he was instrumental in having published the first newspaper in the territory, Michigan Essay or Impartial Observer. This, too, has been said to be the first Catholic paper in the United States. It was short-lived but it showed the trend of his thoughts and desires.

³⁵ Catholic Encyclopedia, 4:758-759; Richard R. Elliott, "Romance of the Country of the Lakes, op. cit., 98; Sister M. Rosalita, Gabriel Richard, American, 6.

The War of 1812 temporarily stopped the educational and civic activities of this leader. For refusing to take the oath of allegiance to England he was sent as a prisoner to Canada. He said at the time, "I have taken one oath to support the Constitution of the United States, and I cannot take another."³⁶ When he returned he found that

³⁶ Michigan Historical Commission Bulletin, 5:70.

the ravages of war had destroyed much of his work, but courageously he began anew. In 1819 he founded the University of Michigan. He was professor of several subjects and vice-president of the institution.
37

37 Ibid., 5:71; Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:521. (Reverend John Monteith is equally entitled to the name of founder.)

William Woodbridge, secretary of Michigan Territory and temporary governor, has left the official papers in which Father Richard is appointed to his various teaching fields. A portion of one follows.

" . . . reposing special trust and confidence in the integrity and ability of Reverend Gabriel Richard, I have appointed him professor of intellectual sciences in and of the University of Michigan." 38

38 Richard Papers, June 16, 1831.

In 1823 still endeavoring to obtain federal aid for education in Michigan, Father Richard was selected delegate to Congress from his chosen territory. So bitter was the opposition that finding no other means to stop him, his enemies had him imprisoned on the charge of defaming the character of one of his parishioners. This individual had come to Detroit and had married a French girl. Finding that he was already married, the priest had him excommunicated. The culprit, urged on by the opposing forces, sued for damages to his reputation. He won the case and the priest was ordered to pay the fine. This he refused to do, as he had been acting in conformity with his official duty. As

punishment Father Richard was put in prison. This did not prevent his friends from campaigning for him, and he won the election, being released in time to reach Washington. The bitterness among his flock is evidenced by a letter from a member of his parish, John R. Williams, who told him that "you are out of your element when you give up your breviary and your bible in order to meddle with political affairs which you do not understand." That the man was so opposed to Father Richard's running for office may have been occasioned by the fact that he, too, was a candidate. That he was wrong in regard to the priest's ignorance of political matters is manifested by the great Detroit-Chicago highway, a lasting monument to the priest's efforts to serve his people.³⁹ Father Richard's philosophy is admirably expressed in the

³⁹ Campbell Papers, 197; J. A. Girardin, "Life and Times of the Reverend Gabriel Richard," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 1:493.

prayer opening the session: "O Lord, bless dis Legislatif Council and enable dem to act for de people and not for demselfs." Too, the

⁴⁰ "Father Gabriel Richard," Burton Historical Leaflet, Milo M. Quaife, (editor), 1:84, March, 1923.

French tradition was still very strong in Detroit if as late as 1823 the territory's delegate spoke broken English.

Another decade passed and Detroit was visited with an epidemic of cholera. The venerated and well-beloved priest was everywhere among the sufferers and finally fell a victim to the disease, which

he had contracted in his tireless devotion to both Catholics and Protestants. Like Detroit's first priest, Father de L'Halle, he died a martyr to his love for his fellow-men.

His life in Detroit would seem a sufficient answer to detractors of him and of his race. His whole time and effort had been given for the education of the people. For what were all these great works intended if they were not for the instruction of his fellow-men? Having so many other affairs it was not possible for him to give all his time to education but hours were surely devoted to that cause. Were not these for the education of the masses? What more could he do with the scanty means at his command?

⁴¹ J. A. Girardin, op. cit., 1:486.

Summing up his work for Detroit, it can be said that while ministering conscientiously to the needs of a growing Catholic population, this remarkable parish priest found time to build a new church after fire had destroyed the previous building, to prepare teachers and to organize several schools, to be the first Catholic priest to be elected to Congress, to edit a newspaper, to publish text books and religious tracts, to assist in founding the University of Michigan, and finally to exert a salutary influence upon all the citizens of this increasingly populous territory. Father Gabriel Richard is an example of the high type of French citizen inhabiting Detroit. Who can say that Detroit is not a better place to live because citizens of this kind laid the foundations of its civic and cultural life?

When Father Richard was called to his reward September 13, 1832,

the old French population was being mixed with thousands of Yankees from the east. Fifteen thousand emigrants arrived in 1830, and in 1831, 1834, and 1836 particularly the steamboats were crowded with passengers for Michigan and the West. The emigration fever seemed to have pervaded almost every hamlet of New England. Popular songs such as:

"Come all ye Yankee farmers who wish to change
your lot,
Who've spunk enough to travel beyond your native spot,
And leave behind the village where Pa and Ma
do stay,
Come follow me, and settle in Michigania,--
Yea, yea, yea, in Michigania."

or poems such as the following helped speed emigration:

"Know ye the land to the emigrant dear
Where the wild flower is blooming one half of
the year;
.....
Know ye the land of the billow and breeze
That is poised, like an isle, 'mid fresh water
seas,
Whose forests are ample, whose prairies are
fine,
Whose soil is productive, whose climate benign?" 42

42 Silas Farmer, op. cit., 1:335.

These poems sound rather reminiscent of Cadillac's efforts as a real estate promoter. He had written his romantic letters to induce the king to send more settlers; the nineteenth century gazetter, map-maker, or newspaperman was also striving to increase the population. If Cadillac had not made his start a century previous there would have been little to welcome the incoming settler.

With the arriving thousands, the older Gallic civilization was submerged, but it was not banished. United with the best of the new "the society of this western city secured an element quite exceptional in polish and culture, that has effected its characteristics to the present time."⁴³

43

M. M. Quaife, Introduction to the John Askin Papers, 1:2.

CONCLUSION

It is man's longing for the finer things of life which raises his efforts from the level of mere self-preservation to the quest of the things of the spirit, the fine arts, which embrace literature, music, painting and the like as found in religion, education, and intellectual development. The accomplishment of this quest is the measure of a people's culture. This paper has tried to show that the early French in Detroit sought and attained a relatively high degree of culture. They were not content merely to exist in the wilderness. Cadillac and his successors built homes, tilled the soil, and traded with the Indians for furs. With a reasonable feeling of security attained, their spirits overflowed in song, dance, and story in the leisure hours that were theirs. Customs of their older civilization were kept alive in the home and school. Religion was fostered by the curé of St. Anne's. Like the pioneer in any new country the Frenchman had little time to produce formal literature or art, yet he manifested definite trends towards these things. The literary contributions of his priests, and the reports of his commandants and notaries serve as valuable history of these times. Father Gabriel Richard, whose plan of teaching was beginning to shape itself by 1812, is an outstanding example of this trend.

CHAPTER SIX

EPILOGUE

In the preceding chapters I have striven to prove that the early French exerted a lasting influence upon Detroit. Some people have the erroneous notion that civilization sprang of itself in the northwest section of our country. Indeed, this is not so. The settlement of Detroit was planned in the halls of Versailles before the eastern section of our country was scarce aware of Michigan's existence. Paris read eagerly the Jesuit Relations describing the work of the missionaries in this territory, and contributed liberally to the support of this missionary work. These French priests were men of high culture who came to a savage world in a noble cause and with no hope of earthly reward. They converted the Indian and prepared the way for the settler to take up his abode in peace.

The actual choice of Detroit as a place of settlement was the contribution of Cadillac. To his far-seeing vision our city owes its location on the north shore of the Detroit River. Cadillac left his colony unwillingly after having given it a fine start. Others were to expand and glorify it. A period of strife and bloodshed occasioned by Indian attacks followed the departure of Cadillac. Eventually peace returned and the colony far from the political troubles of Europe grew and flourished. Tastes were simple, the people were pious and happy, work was sufficient, and family life was lived to the full. It was an ideally happy period which gave rise to the homely and civic virtues for which Detroit has always stood. Today although its population is in the millions, it is still a city of homes, and family life is pro-

tected. The little Catholic town has become an archdiocese and its two priests brought by Cadillac to serve the fifty soldiers and the Indians have been increased to seven hundred forty-nine priests who serve six hundred two thousand Catholics. The seed planted by the early French-Catholics has indeed taken deep root.

The period of peace and calm was disturbed by the French and Indian War from which the British emerged as masters of the French colony. The victors were accepted although they were of alien race and religion, and religious toleration which has always prevailed in Detroit took its inception. The British did little to aid the colony as they wished to take over the prosperous fur trade. They intermarried with the French element producing thereby a certain mixture of Gallic and Anglo-Saxon civilization. But so great was the French preponderance that throughout the British period Detroit remained essentially French in culture and outlook. In 1796 England was forced to turn over the colony to the Americans. Because of poor government, the difficulty of transportation, and the dissemination of false reports about the soil and the climate of the territory, the colony did not increase until the building of the Erie Canal in 1825. The influx of Americans then became so great that the older Gallic civilization was submerged but not banished. During this early period Father Gabriel Richard was predominant as the leading citizen of the territory. His work for the betterment of his people makes him notable in the ranks of great educators, civic leaders, and social and spiritual influences in the state of Michigan. In education he continued the work desired by Cadillac and started by his French successors. That work for Catholic education has increased and multiplied until at the present time

there are one hundred seventy-two elementary parochial schools attended by seventy-six thousand, eight hundred eighty-four children and seventy-nine high schools with an enrollment of twenty-two thousand, six hundred forty-five. The British could have given no such impetus to Catholic education because of the proscriptions against Catholicism in England. The result, therefore, in religious and educational circles today would seem to point to evidences of early French training.

The Americans did not step into a wilderness. They came into a settlement where the refining influence of old-world civilization had asserted itself. Neat farm houses extended up and down the river front from Lake Erie to Lake Ste. Clair. Every farm had its fine orchard, where apple and pear trees abounded. The latter in particular were the pride of the Frenchman's heart. Today there is still an old pear tree.

As was evidenced by General Anthony Wayne and the visitors of the period, the habitants received hospitably the incoming Americans. Religious toleration practised during the British period persisted, for although the prevailing religion was Catholicism, the habitants were not narrow nor bigoted. So friendly were the two groups that the French priest of St. Anne's, Father Gabriel Richard, was asked by the governor to conduct religious services for the Protestants of the post. This was the first time in the history of the United States that a Catholic priest delivered lectures to non-Catholics. One doubts that such a proceeding would have been in order in New England.

Merry and fun-loving, the average early Frenchman enjoyed life to the full. He was no less brave nor less enterprising on this account than the grim forefathers of Plymouth. Detroiters today work hard but like their French ancestors they find their recreation in simple pleas-

ures. It is significant that most of Detroit's automobiles are owned by workingmen, who enjoy Sunday rides with their families as their Gallic forefathers delighted in riding around with the household in the uncomfortable sleds or carts. The city has little of the night life of the somewhat smaller city. Its inhabitants love a baseball game, a hockey contest, or a boxing match. The Detroit Tigers, whether they win or lose, enjoy a loyal following.

The work of the early settlers was farming, fishing, or trading. Our occupations are largely commercial and industrial, yet the ancient French conservatism remains. There has seldom been a great deal of speculation and Detroit has usually been considered a sane and reliable city. So even in modern times when the descendants of the old habitants seem few in proportion to the large population, the spirit of a former generation still pervades the city.

Detroit as a great industrial center has attracted many nationalities, but the French blood still flows in the veins of many of her citizens. The cognomens of many descendants of the early settlers appear in today's city directory and telephone book. The word Detroit, the names of streets, theaters, parks, libraries, and schools perpetuate the memory of the early French. Statues, monuments, and plaques recall their achievements to their children.

The president of the Detroit Historical Society, George W. Stark, declared recently that the history of Detroit is the story of individuals and their dreams. Among these individuals then must be counted the early missionaries in northern Michigan who prepared the way for the settling of Detroit, and whose dreams were chiefly of the spread of God's glory in the New World; Cadillac, whose dreams and the energy

he threw into the realization of them resulted in the choice of the site of Fort Pontchartrain, the seed of Detroit; the hard-working, pleasure-loving habitants whose virtues have come down to us, those heroic souls who through the British regime held on to their faith and their philosophy of life; and finally, Father Gabriel Richard and his associates in the early American regime who envisioned schools, libraries, museums, and newspapers, and whose untiring labor gave an impetus to their inception. Indeed, who can say that the missionaries, the settlers, and the educators of the French race have not had a profound influence on Detroit?

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Campbell Papers, 1823-1890, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit.

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Hamlin, Marie Caroline Watson, Legends of Le Detroit, Detroit, Thorndike Nourse, 1885, p. 317.

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Good material on everyday life of the French habitant by scholar who has learned the ways of that people by observation and research.

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Michigan: A Guide to the Wolverine State, (American Guide Series). New York, Oxford University Press, 1941, p. 682.

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Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, 40 vols., Lansing, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, 1874-1929.

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Rosalita, Sister Mary, I. H. M., Gabriel Richard, American, (pamphlet), no imprint, p. 12.

Short life of Father Richard, points of which were selected from author's thesis. Good bibliography.