

THE MYTH OF ETIENNE BRULÉ

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THE French interpreter and Indian agent Etienne Brulé has been given a place in Pennsylvania history on very unsubstantial evidence, with a claim that he descended the Susquehanna River from its headwaters to the sea during the winter of 1615-1616. Sometimes he is even described as the first white man to tread the soil of Pennsylvania. Clement F. Heverly in his *History and Geography of Bradford County* wrote of "this event, 113 years after the discovery of America by Columbus" as "the first in the history of the state and county," and a recent *Guide to Central Pennsylvania* described Etienne Brulé as "the first European to view the site of the future state capital." It expressed regret that he left no "description of central Pennsylvania as it was nine years after the first English settlers landed at Jamestown. . . ."¹

These local writers were in distinguished company. Similar, if less positive and less glowing, references to Brulé's descent of the Susquehanna were made by Francis Parkman, Justin Winsor, and Reuben Gold Thwaites.² Under the patronage of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Consul Willshire Butterfield published a *History of Brulé's Discoveries and Explorations, 1610-1626, Being a Narrative of the Discovery by Stephen Brulé, of Lakes Huron, Ontario, and Superior; and of His Explorations (the First Made by Civilized Man) of Pennsylvania and Western New York, also of the Province of Ontario, Canada*.³ Howard M. Jenkins had the story in

^o The substance of this article was part of a talk at the Friday luncheon of the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association, October 10-11, 1975, when the author completed his term as its president. Most of the research on Brulé was done in 1947 and 1948 at the instigation and with the help of the late Merle H. Deardorff, whose notes, comments, and criticisms were invaluable.

¹ Clement F. Heverly, *History and Geography of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Towanda, Pa., 1926), 17; Peter Carnahan, *The Early American Society Guide to Central Pennsylvania* (Gettysburg, 1975), 8.

² Francis Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World*, Frontenac Edition (Boston, 1905), II, 234-237; Justin Winsor, *Cartier to Frontenac* (New York, 1894), 117, 121-122; Reuben Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland, 1896-1901), V, 291n.

³ (Cleveland, 1898). This 184-page book is the secondary work most often cited on Brulé. It does bring together all the scanty data on his life and explorations, but it is uncritical, resolving every question so as to expand the scope of his discoveries.

Pennsylvania, Colonial and Federal; it appeared in other histories of Pennsylvania, in county and local histories, and in reference works published after 1900; and Morris Bishop cast no doubt on Brulé's Susquehanna explorations in his biography of Champlain.⁴ Moreover, this story found a place in various Canadian historical works such as the *Iroquoisie* of Léo-Paul Desrosiers, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and even a history of early Toronto.⁵ A distinguished exception is the *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, by Marcel Trudel, which does question Brulé's descent of the Susquehanna.⁶

The story of Brulé's exploration of the Susquehanna Valley has been widely accepted and regarded as an established fact. Many reputable and otherwise authoritative works recite it unequivocally, and sometimes it seems to have become firmly embedded in the literature of American history. It comes as a surprise then, turning to the sources upon which it was based, to discover how thin, scanty, and unsubstantial these sources actually are. In reality, historians had only one documentary source on which to build, and that source was vague, confusing, and doubtful, since it was deleted in the final edition of the report in which it appeared. On this basis they made guesses and assumptions in order to make the statements in this source appear to match up with known locations and known Indian tribes. Later historians cited what the others had written and extended the superstructure still more, piling supposition on supposition. Where earlier historians might reserve final judgment and qualify their statements by saying "it would appear,"⁷ "evidently,"⁸ or a noncommittal "He told Champlain,"⁹ or by stating flatly that

⁴ Howard M. Jenkins, ed., *Pennsylvania, Colonial and Federal: A History, 1608-1903* (Philadelphia, 1903), I, 35-37; Frederic A. Godcharles, *Pennsylvania, Political, Governmental, Military and Civil* (New York, 1933), Governmental Volume, 30-31; Oscar Jewell Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County* (Wilkes-Barre, 1909), I, 169-170; George P. Donehoo, *Harrisburg and Dauphin County* (Dayton, Ohio, 1925), 29-31; Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens, Pennsylvania* (Athens, 1908), 33-38; Louise Phelps Kellogg, "Étienne Brulé," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1943), III, 133-134; Morris Bishop, *Champlain, The Life of Fortitude* (New York, 1948), 238-239, 272-276.

⁵ Léo-Paul Desrosiers, *Iroquoisie* (Montreal, 1947), I, 63, 72-73; Olga Jurgens, "Étienne Brulé," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1966), I, 131-132; Percy J. Robinson, *Toronto During the French Regime* (Toronto, 1933), 7-10.

⁶ [Volume] II, *Le Comptoir, 1604-1627* (Montreal, 1966), 227-229. This does not question the location of Carantoüan, the Indian village which Brulé was said to have visited, on the Chemung River north of Athens, Pennsylvania.

⁷ Winsor, *Cartier to Frontenac*, 121.

⁸ Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World*, II, 236.

⁹ Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, V, 291n.

"in this declaration he may have depended upon his imagination,"¹⁰ later writers tended to ignore such conditional phrases. In this way a considerable bibliography was built up, and this concealed the fact that there was essentially only one weak and questionable primary source to support it all.

The single primary source for the story of Brulé's exploration of the Susquehanna Valley in 1615-1616 is the narrative of Brulé himself, as reported by Champlain in his *Voyages* for 1615-1618, which were published in 1619.¹¹ When all of Champlain's *Voyages* were collected and republished in 1632, Brulé's narrative was omitted, perhaps because Champlain had found reason to doubt it, perhaps because Champlain and the Jesuit missionaries wished no credit to be given to such a traitorous and dissolute character. It must be admitted that much other material was deleted in preparing the final 1632 version of Champlain's *Voyages*; virtually all the material for the year 1618 was omitted. Most nineteenth-century authorities maintained that Champlain did not prepare this edition, but that it was done by someone else, probably a Jesuit editor. Champlain's latest biographer, however, maintained that he was still in France at the time when it was prepared and that he would have been responsible for any changes.¹² It does seem odd that Brulé's narrative should have been dropped if there was thought to be any basis for it at all, since it would have helped to extend France's territorial claims.¹³

The 1632 edition did retain some mention of a visit to an allied tribe, and two of Champlain's maps locate it on what might be the upper Delaware River. Brulé is mentioned occasionally in the works of the Recollect missionary, Gabriel Sagard, but not in connection

¹⁰ Edward D. Neill, "Discovery Along the Great Lakes," in *Narrative and Critical History of America*, ed. Justin Winsor (New York, 1884), IV, 165. Butterfield, *History of Brulé's Discoveries and Explorations, 1610-1626*, 147, pounced upon Neill's statement, making it appear merely a doubt that Brulé had reached the sea and arguing that Brulé would certainly have known if it were the sea or not.

¹¹ H. P. Biggar, ed., *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 6 vols. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1922-1935), III, 58, 213-226, presents the French original and the English translation. Other important editions include: C. H. Laverdière, ed., *Oeuvres de Champlain Publiées Sous le Patronage de l'Université Laval*, second edition, 5 vols. (Quebec, 1870), IV, 622-625; Edmund M. Slafter, ed., *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, trans. Charles Pomeroy Otis, 3 vols. (New York: Prince Society, 1878-1882), III, 122-124, 208-216; W. L. Grant, ed., *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604-1618*, reprint of Otis translation (New York, 1907), 353-359.

¹² Biggar, ed., *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, IV, 338n.; Bishop, *Champlain*, 324.

¹³ Slafter commented that "it does not necessarily follow that [Brulé's story] was omitted because Champlain came to discredit [it], since many passages are omitted in the edition of 1632, but they are not generally passages of so much geographical importance as this, if it be true." Slafter, ed., *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, I, 143n.

with any exploration of the Susquehanna. Le Clercq's *First Establishment of the Faith in New France* gives an account of Champlain's expedition of 1615 without mentioning Etienne Brulé. The *Jesuit Relations* have some unflattering references to his later career. None of these sources gives any support to his story of descending the Susquehanna to the sea.¹⁴

As a very young man, Etienne Brulé came to Canada with Champlain in 1608. For two years he was part of the tiny French settlement at Quebec, but in 1610 Champlain arranged for him to live among the Indians in order to learn their languages and customs and get acquainted with the country. Young Brulé adapted quickly to Indian ways, learned the Algonquin and Huron-Iroquoian languages, and became an interpreter and Indian agent, eventually receiving a salary of one hundred pistoles a year for his services. After 1612 he was usually in the Huron country between Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe. Often he came with or led the Hurons on their annual trading trip in the spring to the French on the St. Lawrence.¹⁵

To sum up the commonly accepted story briefly, Etienne Brulé, while serving with Champlain on his 1615 expedition to the Huron country, was sent on a mission to the Andaste or Susquehannock Indians, living near the headwaters of the Susquehanna River, to enlist their aid in an attack on the Iroquois. The Andaste village of Carantoüan was located on Spanish Hill, on the Chemung River, northwest of Athens, Bradford County, and at the New York state line.¹⁶ They sent a force with Brulé to join in attacking the Iroquois fort. But their aid came too late, and Brulé was unable to rejoin Champlain. Before returning to the Huron country, however, the fall and winter of 1615-1616 passed. If substantiated, his visit to Carantoüan in that supposed location and his descent of the Susque-

¹⁴ Biggar, ed., *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, IV, 244-245; VI, 249-250; Gabriel Sagard-Théodat, *Histoire du Canada et Voyages que les Frères Mineurs ont Faits pour la Conversion des Infidèles depuis l'An 1615*, 4 vols., paged continuously (Paris, 1866), 306, 338, 418, 429-431, 589, 723, 751-755, 788; Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. George M. Wrong, trans. H. H. Langton (Toronto, 1939), 162, 247, 263, 265; Christian Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith in New France*, trans. John Gilmary Shea, 2 vols. (New York, 1881), I, 98-105; Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, V, 239, 241, 255, 291-292; X, 309, 311.

¹⁵ Champlain did not mention Brulé by name until 1618, but then he spoke of him as going among the Indians in 1610 and thus identified him as the "jeune garçon" who had spent two years in Quebec. Biggar, ed., *Works of Champlain*, III, 213; IV, 118; V, 132; Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, 176n., 193n.

¹⁶ After failure to find any archeological evidence of a fortified village on Spanish Hill, Donehoo thought that it might have been located on the present site of Athens or on the flats along the Chemung below Spanish Hill. Donehoo, in *Second Report of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission* (Harrisburg, 1918), 132-133.

hanna River to the sea would make him the first white man in northern Pennsylvania and the first to explore the Susquehanna Valley.

A number of suppositions have to be made in order to arrive at this version of Brulé's story. The location of the tribe which Brulé visited is not definitely indicated by the sources. The identification of the Indians of Carantoüan with the Andastes or Susquehannocks cannot be proved by any contemporary sources, and there is no convincing interpretation from analyses of the words which would connect them.¹⁷ Similarly, Brulé states only that he descended a river flowing to the sea in the direction of Florida; it is only assumed to be the Susquehanna.¹⁸

Brulé's story of exploring a river to the south was a by-product of Champlain's expedition of 1615. In June of that year the founder of New France had agreed to help the Hurons and their allies in fighting their enemies, probably the Iroquois; for it is mentioned in the context that the Iroquois, if left unchecked, might block the route between the French settlements and their Indian allies. Champlain decided to help them in order to obligate them, to extend his explorations, and to facilitate the conversion of the Indians to Christianity.¹⁹

Traveling by what later became a well-known traders' route, Champlain with his party of ten Indians, an interpreter, and his man went up the Ottawa River, portaged to Lake Nipissing, descended the French River to Lake Huron, and then voyaged along the shore of Georgian Bay to the Huron country. After visiting several villages, they arrived on August 17 at the important village of Cahiaгуé, the rendezvous for the expedition against enemy Indians. He was welcomed joyfully, for the Indians thought that the Iroquois had captured him. Because their uncertainty had made them slow in coming together, Champlain had to wait at Cahiaгуé until the first of September, before the Indians were ready to move and begin the forty-day march to the enemy fort. A few days later, when the expe-

¹⁷ After reviewing and dismissing numerous attempts to link them etymologically, Merle H. Deardorff made an amused comment, "How simple these things are, after all. If you just follow in the footsteps of the masters, and determine in advance the result you want, you can always find it."

¹⁸ The identification of the Indians of Carantoüan with the Andastes or Susquehannocks seems really to have been derived from their supposed geographic location, but by 1615 the Susquehannocks were on the lower Susquehanna River, where Captain John Smith met them in 1608. While they may have occupied the upper North Branch area in prehistoric times, it is highly unlikely that any remained there after their principal villages were on the lower course of the river.

¹⁹ Biggar, ed., *Works of Champlain*, III, 31-32.

dition had halted briefly, Champlain and his Indian allies decided to send out a party of twelve Hurons and an interpreter to a certain allied nation which had offered to send five hundred men to join in the attack.²⁰

This unnamed nation allied to the Hurons lived three good days' journey above the Entouhonorons, and seven days' journey from a place where the Dutch traded on the fortieth parallel. The Dutch helped the Indians there in making war on them. The year before the allied nation had captured three Dutchmen but let them go free, thinking that they were French. They were very warlike and had only three villages in the midst of more than twenty hostile villages. As they were separated from the Hurons by the Chouontouaroïon country, they found it difficult to help each other.²¹

The interpreter who volunteered to make the trip is not named at this point in Champlain's narrative, but later he is identified as Etienne Brulé.²² Brulé and his Indian companions were to notify the allied nation of the expedition's departure, so that the five hundred men could meet them near the enemy fort. On September 8 they began their perilous trip which would lead through enemy country.²³

Champlain's expedition continued on its way through the Ontario wilderness and eventually came to a large lake, which he called the Lake of the Entouhonorons. They crossed to the southern shore and passed some large islands toward the eastern end of the lake. After traveling about four leagues along the sandy shore, they turned inland and, after some thirty leagues more, arrived before the large palisaded village of the enemy on October 10. The details of the siege need little discussion. Champlain's Indian allies, impetuous and undisciplined, paid little or no attention to his attempts to use European military methods. After a number of the Indians and Champlain himself had been wounded, they refused to continue the siege unless the five hundred allied warriors should arrive to help them. When there was no sign that they were coming, the Indians broke camp on October 16 and began their retreat.²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 34-42, 45-50, 53, 56, 64; IV, 244-247.

²¹ *Ibid.*, III, 53-55, 58. This translation of the 1619 version renders Entouhonorons as Onondagas and Chouontouaroïon as Seneca. In the parallel 1632 version the translation lets them stand as in the original French. The 1632 version omits any reference to the Dutch. *Ibid.*, IV, 244-247.

²² *Ibid.*, III, 213. Sometimes Brulé's name is spelled with a circumflex over the "u" as if it meant "burning" or "burnt thing," but not by Champlain.

²³ *Ibid.*, III, 58.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 58-59, 62-67, 73-76.

If the course which Champlain's expedition followed to the enemy fort and the location of that fort were known, it would be helpful in indicating the location of the allied tribe; for Brulé said later that it was three short days' journey between them.²⁵ Unfortunately, Champlain's account is vague as to directions, distances, and names. It is obvious from reading his journal and examining his maps that, from the time he left the Huron country until his return, he did not know where he was or in what direction he had gone. Following where his Indian allies led him, he had taken off into the void and returned by good luck.

Champlain received no word from Brulé and his mission to the allied nation until April 22, 1616. Champlain was then at the village of Carhagouha, ready to leave the Huron country for Quebec. Some Indians who had returned from Carantoüan told him they had left Brulé on the road, and he had gone back to Cahiagué. That was only twenty-five miles away, but Brulé felt no need to go and report on the results of his mission and on his explorations. It was not until two years later, in July, 1618, that Brulé finally encountered Champlain, almost by accident, and told his story. Brulé had come with the Hurons to trade at Three Rivers, Champlain was there, and a good story was necessary to explain three years' absence.²⁶

Champlain sent for Brulé. He asked why the reinforcement had not been brought and why he had delayed bringing a report. Brulé said he had reached Carantoüan safely with his Indian companions, in spite of the many perils of the journey through the land of the enemy. At Carantoüan they received a cordial welcome "to the accompaniment of the dances and feasts wherewith they are in the habit of feasting and honoring strangers." The village was strongly defended with tall palisades, tightly bound together, and with more than eight hundred warriors.²⁷

They were willing enough to go to the aid of Champlain and the Hurons, but they took so long with their "feasting and dancing," with holding a council to plan the march, and getting the men ready that Brulé said he warned them they would be too late. Actually they did not make the three short days' journey from Carantoüan to the enemy fort until two days after Champlain and the Hurons had lifted the siege and departed from their encampment.²⁸

²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 216.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 168, 213-214.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 213-216.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 216-217.

As he told it, Brulé then returned to Carantoüan with the warriors and had to spend the winter waiting for an escort to take him back to the Huron country. In the meantime he explored the country, visiting the tribes nearby and following a river which flowed in the direction of Florida. There were a number of strong and warlike tribes which fought each other. Although the climate was very mild and game abounded, it was not easy to reach and explore this country because one had to pass through unsettled, desolate areas ("deserts"). He continued descending this river to the sea, past islands and neighboring shores where several tribes lived. They were friendly to the French, he said, but disliked the Dutch because of their harsh treatment. The winter there was rather mild; it seldom snowed, and when it did, it was not a foot deep and soon melted.²⁹

On his way back to the Huron country from Carantoüan, Brulé became separated from his Indian companions when enemy Indians attacked them. He wandered for several days in the woods, almost starving, until he met some Indians who took him to their village. At first these Indians were friendly. But when they discovered he was a Frenchman, they fell upon him and began to torture him. An Indian tried to grab his *Agnus Dei*, a religious medal which hung around his neck. Brulé threatened that, if he touched it, he and his entire family would suffer a sudden death. The Indian persisted, and immediately the sky which had been clear was "filled with thick heavy clouds." There was such a terrific burst of thunder and lightning that the Indians ran away in a panic without untying him. He called them back with gentle words and made them understand why his God was angry. The Indians untied him, tended his wounds, feasted him, promised to make peace with the French, and helped him on his way back to the Huron country. After staying there for a while, he resumed his journey toward the French settlements, going along the northern shore of the Mer Douce (Lake Huron). He would have explored more of that region, as Champlain had ordered; but rumors of preparation for war had made him postpone this task.³⁰

Brulé had made his story really good, even tossing in a miracle to make it more effective, as it was in an age less skeptical than ours. At the time Champlain was much impressed and convinced that Brulé was "more to be pitied than blamed," so many mishaps had befallen him. He encouraged Brulé to continue his explorations to the west

²⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 217-219.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 219-226.

and promised that he would be rewarded for his services.³¹ What Champlain thought of him later is another question.

Oddly enough, Brulé told Brother Sagard the same story about the miraculous thunderstorm when he was with him in 1623-1624, but then he said nothing about a journey from Carantoüan. Instead, he merely got lost in the woods, wandered a long way until he came upon an Iroquois village, and was captured and condemned to death. The good friar was distressed by Brulé's admission that, when he tried to say his prayers, he could not think of any but the *benedicite* (i.e., grace at table). The Indians had him down on the ground and started to pluck out his beard. When one of them tried to snatch his *Agnus Dei*, Brulé let out a loud yell and told the Indian if he touched it, God would punish him. No sooner said than it clouded up and a terrific thunderstorm broke. All the Indians fled for their cabins, and Brulé fled, too, but in a different direction. Sagard commented that some people would not believe this, but that God had sometimes worked greater miracles for even worse people.³² It will be noticed that the circumstances of his capture and escape are quite different here from those in the story told to Champlain. Even allowing for such discrepancies, it seems strange that, when Brulé told Sagard about the miracle, he did not also tell him about the Carantoüan adventure and the trip down a river to the sea.

The discrepancies and contradictions in Champlain's references to the village and people of Carantoüan and their neighbors, and the similar vagueness of Brulé's narrative, provide no definite clues to indicate the location of Carantoüan or to identify the river which Brulé descended. When Champlain heard of the certain nation allied to the Hurons at the start of their campaign, he did not give its name. In fact, he did not use the name Carantoüan until April, 1616, when he heard of Brulé's return to the Huron country; and the name disappeared in the 1632 edition of his *Voyages*. As Carántouën it appears on his manuscript map of 1616 to the south of what may be either the Delaware or the Hudson River, probably the latter since it is labeled "place where the Dutch are." To the north are the "Hirocois," and far to the west are the "antou=honorons," the equivalent of Entouhonorons, south of a shrunken, elongated, and unnamed version of Lake Erie. Although Champlain did not publish this map, Pierre du Val, royal geographer, added various place names and

³¹ *Ibid.*, III, 214, 225-226.

³² Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 430-431; also a brief allusion to the miracle in Sagard, *Long Journey*, 162.

minor details, and published it in 1653, 1664, and 1677.³³ On none of these would the "antou=honorons" have been between the Hurons and Carantoüan. On Champlain's 1632 map, the Carantouannais (meaning people of Carantoüan) are shown toward the headwaters of what is obviously the Delaware River, the "Hirocois" are to their north, and the "Antouoronons" toward the western end of Lake Ontario, called "Lac St. Louis." On the other hand, the table to identify the places on this map described the people of Carantoüan as a tribe living to the south of the "Antouhonorons," only three days' journey away, and as friendly to all other tribes except them. To confuse matters still more, the table stated that the country of the "Antouhonorons" lay near the River St. Lawrence, which they prevented all other tribes from passing. They and the Iroquois made war on all other tribes except the Neutrals, who lived west of the "Antouhonorons."³⁴ It is hopeless to attempt to make these details fit with details in Champlain's original journal, and there are other inconsistencies between them and Brulé's narrative.

The distances given by Champlain and Brulé are not especially helpful in determining the location of Carantoüan. Champlain was told by the Hurons in 1615 that Carantoüan was seven days' journey from the place where the Dutch traders were, but it would have been at most four or five days of travel from the lower Hudson to the North Branch headwaters or to the Spanish Hill area. This suggests that Carantoüan was farther west, but the deletion of material about the Dutch in the 1632 edition raises the possibility that Champlain thought it was incorrect. Champlain placed the distance of Carantoüan from the Entouhonorons at three good days' journey, and Brulé said that it was three short days' journey from the enemy fort. But it is not easy to say where the Entouhonorons or the enemy fort were.³⁵

If Champlain's map of 1616 be accepted as his fresh impression of the country after the campaign he had just finished, it can be argued that the Lake of the Entouhonorons was Lake Erie, since that map showed "antou=honorons" south of that lake. In that case, it would be Lake Erie which Champlain and the Hurons crossed on the way

³³ Champlain Society, map portfolio, including explanatory note, "The Champlain Map of 1616," by Lawrence C. Wroth. The original map is in the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island. Du Val's map of 1653 is in the Public Archives of Canada. The Bureau of Archives and History, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, has a photocopy.

³⁴ Biggar, ed., *Works of Champlain*, VI, 249-250; map portfolio.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 53, 54, 216.

to attack the enemy fort. Of course, there are difficulties, but for every other route which has been proposed there are some difficulties to be explained, thanks to the vagueness and inconsistency of the sources. It should be emphasized that this theory is not advanced seriously, but merely to demonstrate what a variety of interpretations, what wild ideas, are made possible by the meager and contradictory data in the sources.³⁶

Even if it is conceded that Champlain and the Hurons attacked an enemy fort somewhere in western New York, several routes for the expedition and locations for the fort are possible, and each has had staunch advocates. The first site proposed for the enemy fort was on Lake Canandaigua, southwest of Rochester, which would place it in Seneca country. Secondly, Orsamus H. Marshall argued forcibly for a location on Lake Onondaga, near Syracuse, which would have been in the territory of the Onondagas; this view has also been strongly supported by Morris Bishop. Finally, General John S. Clark came to the conclusion from maps, research, and personal observation that the site was on Nichols Pond, to the south of Oneida Lake, which would have been in Oneida territory. His opinion was endorsed by many other historians, and New York State has an official marker at the site.³⁷ However, in his introduction to a pamphlet arguing for the Nichols Pond site, William N. Fenton commented that it was unlikely that the controversy between this and the Onondaga Lake site would ever be settled. There are good arguments for each site.³⁸

The proposed location of the enemy fort at Nichols Pond led directly to the proposed location of Carantoüan on Spanish Hill. Seeking to add to his laurels by finding another historic Indian site, and perhaps to buttress his argument for the first one, General Clark began to look for a suitable location "three short days' journeys" from Nichols Pond. At first, he thought in terms of a site somewhere on Lackawaxen Creek, a tributary of the Delaware River, obviously because Champlain's map of 1632 seemed to show that the people of

³⁶ John Gilmary Shea, in a note on "Champlain's Expedition into Western New York," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, II (1878), 103-104, called attention to the great variety of opinions about Champlain's route and the site of the enemy fort, pointing out that one history of Canada had wildly located the fort on Lake St. Clair.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-108; Orsamus H. Marshall, *Historical Writings* . . . (Albany, 1887), 20-42, 43-66, reprinting two articles from the *Magazine of American History*, Jan., 1877, Aug., 1878; Bishop, *Champlain*, 355-359; Trudel, II, 221 and n.; A. G. Zeller, *The Champlain-Iroquois Battle of 1615* (Oneida, N.Y., [1962?]), 31-37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3; Trudel, II, 221n. This lengthy note surveying the entire controversy was especially helpful.

Carantoüan lived in that area. After much correspondence with local historians in Bradford County, Clark went there, examined Spanish Hill, and "came to the conclusion *unhesitatingly*" that this great natural landmark was the site of Carantoüan.³⁹ This confident and forthright identification of the site had as its corollary the story of Brulé's exploration of the Susquehanna Valley.

Nevertheless, the supposed location of Carantoüan on Spanish Hill was disproven years ago, as early as 1916, by archeological work conducted by Warren K. Moorehead in the so-called Susquehanna Archeological Expedition, which was accompanied by George P. Donehoo, then the secretary of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission. No evidence whatever of such a fortified village as Brulé described could be found on or near Spanish Hill, and Donehoo commented that "this location has been accepted by nearly all the local historical writers, upon what seems . . . to be very unscientific grounds." But, as mentioned earlier, he clung to the idea that Brulé's Carantoüan was somewhere in that vicinity.⁴⁰

As for the name Carantoüan itself, that can be of no help in determining the location of the village. It was a Huron name for the River Rouge and for Detroit, and it may even have been an alternate name for one of their villages. A Bernou map of Lake Huron about 1680 gives a variant form as an alternate name for Manitoulin Island, which is described as "the place of assembly for all the Indians going to trade at Montreal." It is likely that the Indians used it as a common noun rather than a proper name, and that it was applied to describe a place of a certain kind. Its use for Detroit would imply "crossing place," and as a name for Manitoulin it suggests "meeting place." It may even be the equivalent of "certain allied nation," the term which Champlain used for it until April, 1616.⁴¹ It is significant that the name disappeared completely from maps in the upper Susquehanna region as soon as the country began to be further explored.

³⁹ Louise Welles Murray, ed., *Selected Manuscripts of General John S. Clark Relating to the Aboriginal History of the Susquehanna* (Athens, 1931), 3, 9, 18-22, 32. The italics are Clark's. He never prepared the results of his research on Carantoüan for publication; this was a posthumous publication.

⁴⁰ *Second Report of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission*, Moorehead's summary, 120-121; Donehoo's commentary, 130-134; George P. Donehoo, *A History of Indian Villages and Place Names in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1928), 19.

⁴¹ Father Pierre Potier Manuscripts, pp. 210, 212, photocopies, Research Collections, PHMC; Bernou map of Lake Huron, Paris, Service Hydrographique, B 4044-44, photocopy, Public Archives of Canada; Biggar, ed., *Works of Champlain*, III, 53; notes on Carantoüan, Merle H. Deardorff, now in MG220, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

In any case, Brulé's reputation and character make the truth of his story very doubtful. Sagard, who knew him well and spent the winter of 1623-1624 in the Huron country with him, mentioned him as an example of the dissolute life most Frenchmen were leading among the Indians, and told Champlain it was very wrong to send out men of such bad character.⁴² Even stronger denunciations were offered by the Jesuits.⁴³ When one remembers the tight spot Brulé was in when he told of visiting Carantoüan and exploring down a river, his tale appears even more dubious. As William A. Hunter has remarked, it would be very difficult to believe anyone telling a story under such compulsive circumstances.⁴⁴ If the usual canons for weighing historical evidence are applied to the facts given by the sources, nothing really definite remains to support the story of Brulé's exploration of the Susquehanna, and there is no basis for assigning a location for the alleged village of Carantoüan.

Etienne Brulé may not have been the first white man to explore the interior of Pennsylvania, but some other firsts remain to his credit. He did discover Lake Superior and the falls of Sault Ste. Marie and seems to have been first to report the presence of copper in the Lake Superior region.⁴⁵ Almost certainly he helped Sagard in the compilation of his Huron dictionary which was appended to *The Long Journey*. He was with Sagard in 1623-1624, and it does not seem possible that Sagard without his help could have learned enough in only ten months to prepare such a work on a difficult language.⁴⁶

Later, in 1633, because of some outrage which displeased them, Brulé fell out with his Huron friends, who killed and ate him.⁴⁷ That, in the words of the Canadian historian William J. Eccles, made Etienne Brulé "the first Frenchman, but by no means the last, to be completely assimilated by the Indians."⁴⁸

To conclude, the claim that Etienne Brulé was the first white man to explore the Susquehanna Valley cannot be proven on the basis of any available evidence. Neither is there evidence to locate the site of the Indian village of Carantoüan which he claimed to have visited. In all probability his story of descending a river was a fabrication,

⁴² Biggar, ed., *Works of Champlain*, V, 131-132.

⁴³ Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, V, 241, 291; X, 309, 311.

⁴⁴ "The Historic Role of the Susquehannocks," in John Witthoft and W. Fred Kinsey, eds., *Susquehannock Miscellany* (Harrisburg, 1969), 10-11.

⁴⁵ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 589, 788.

⁴⁶ Percy J. Robinson, Note on Sagard's Dictionary, in Sagard, *Long Journey*, xlv.

⁴⁷ Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, V, 239, 255, 291-292.

⁴⁸ William J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760* (New York, 1969), 26.

but—even if it was not—the river cannot be positively identified. For that matter, even if the story of his exploration of the Susquehanna Valley should some day be proved, it would be a fact of very minor importance in the history of Pennsylvania. It led to no French claims; it brought no French traders to offer competition to the Dutch and Swedes on the Delaware; it was entirely without effect on the historical development of Pennsylvania. No one had the least idea of Etienne Brulé on the Susquehanna for more than two centuries—not until General John S. Clark began looking in 1878 for a promising site of a fortified village three short days' journey from Nichols Pond.

