LAST OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE FRENCH POSTS
IN THE NORTHERN PART OF NORTH AMERICA

Translation of the Portion of Special Interest in Pennsylvania
With an Introduction and Notes

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In the number for July, 1931, of Le Bulletin des
Recherches Historiques, the official organ of the Bu-
reau of Archives of the Province of Quebec, is printed
under the caption Mémoire sur les Forts de la Nou-
velle France, a document of the greatest interest to
students of the history of our part of the world.

As the caption indicates, it is a report upon the
French Posts in Canada and its dependencies—not
simply upon the fortified places themselves, for it is
to be remembered that in the contemporary termi-
nology, the word “Fort” included the ensemble of
houses, farms, &c., surrounding or in the vicinity of
and protected by the Fort proper, i.e., the fortified
place.¹

The Bulletin found a copy of the document in the
Public Archives of Canada at Ottawa.² It was pub-
lished at Paris in Les Archives de la Marine. It is des-

¹ "Even during the latter half of the last century, it was common to
hear the older French Habitants call their Village the 'Fort': they
were going to the 'Fort' when they were going to the Village or to the
Church, which in most instances was the most prominent of a greater
or less number of buildings". Les Bernard-Brouillet (Montreal, 1930),
p. 10 (note 1)—an interesting and valuable account of a French
Canadian family, made more interesting and valuable by the many
explanatory notes. The connotation of the word “Fort” is still occa-
sionally met with in the terminology of the French-Canadian habitants:
I have myself found it in the Province of Quebec a few years ago.

² Canadian Archives, "F" series, vol. 129. Calendered in the Report
of the Canadian Archives for 1887, p. cclxxiv., under “Chains of Posts.”
titute of signature, date and address; and the author, date, occasion and purpose are all equally unknown.³

It is known that de Bougainville says that he had prepared a Mémoire on the Forts of New France, but is unlikely that this is his work. He had, however, a cousin, Monsieur de Vienne, a man of considerable ability, a sort of French Pepys who gathered together many notes and who was an officer of the administration at Quebec: it is quite possible that he may have been the author—but this is the merest conjecture, liable to be falsified by the slightest real evidence.⁴

As it could not have been written—or, at least, completed—until after 1758,⁵ in which year Louisburg fell to British arms and Quebec was expected to be the next victim, it may have been compiled—or at least utilized—for the purpose of negotiations for peace, closing the Seven Years' War, and ending with the Treaty of

*The able and efficient Chief of the Information Department of the Public Archives of Canada, M. Francis J. Audet, and the equally able and efficient Archivist of the Province of Quebec, M. Pierre-Georges Roy, are unable to give information on the subject; and my necessarily imperfect researches in other quarters have proved futile. Perhaps some other enquirer may be more competent or more fortunate.

⁴In the sumptuous Histoire De La Colonie Francaise En Canada: Jacques Le Coffre et Cie: Paris and Lyon, 1865 (III. 471), is copied a portion of a letter from the Minister of Marine, Paris, to M. Dusquesne, Governor-General and M. Bigod, Intendant of Canada, dated June 7, 1753. The portion copied, reads in translation: "There are several Posts established in the Colony which occasion an enormous excess of expenditure. This kind of establishment is being multiplied, little by little, under the pretext of commerce, or the necessity for retaining some Indian Nation; for those who propose them never fail to cover the motives of self-interest by which they are moved with the veil of public advantage. If in the projects proposed there is involved expenditures by the King, this is always represented as a modest expenditure or one merely temporary. But in the execution of the plans, the expense is very considerable, it becomes permanent and at length increased year by year. And what is still more to be deplored is that very often the Posts serve only to occasion disorders." It has occurred to me that this despatch may possibly have been the occasion of the Report in question; but this, too, is pure conjecture.

(See footnote ⁴ on page 65.)
Paris, 1763. It is well-known that for a considerable period there was a likelihood of Britain accepting Guadeloupe and delivering back Canada.

Whatever the date or occasion, whoever the author, the Mémoire is full of interest and importance.

The author begins at Cape Charles on the north side of the Straits of Belle-Isle; passing to La Baye des Chateaux on the same coast, St. Modet and La Baye Rouge, L'Anse à Loup and La Forteau, Labrador or La Baye Phelipeau, Chicata, River St. Augustin, Me-katina, Montagamis and Maingant, he arrives at the Islets de Jérémie and Tadoussac.

Then up the Saguenay to Chicoutimi where “sometimes the Esquimaux come, but only to ravage”.

Back to the River St. Lawrence, to Panaouameske and Quebec, “a large enough town, absurdly fortified and which can be defended only on the advice given by Minerva to Athena”—this it will be remembered was to trust to wooden walls, which the wise statesman interpreted as meaning ships. Up the St. Lawrence to Lorette, “a Huron village, two leagues from Quebec, whose people with some Hurons established at Detroit are all that are left of that Nation formerly numerous but which have been destroyed by the Iroquois to whom they had taught the art of war as Charles XII. taught it to the Russians.” (The author does not here note the fact that there were still a few Hurons at Michilimackinac.) Three Rivers, Bécancourt, St. Francis, Chambly and St. John, up the Richelieu to Lake Champlain, St. Frederic on its left bank and the Carillon. Back to the St. Lawrence, up to Montreal, then the Ottawa River and the Lake of the Two Mountains with its Indian Village on the north shore, Carillon, the Long Sault. Up the Mattawan, Lake Nipissing, French River to Temiskaming, Tabitibi (Abi-tibi), Michilimakinae (the entrepôt of the Posts of the north)—Sault St. Marie (established in 1750), Michi-
picoton, Nepigon, Kamanestigouia (Kaministiquia, near the present Fort William), the Post called La Mer d'Ouest (i.e., The Sea of the West), comprising several Forts of upright piles, "respectable only against the Indians", namely (1), Fort St. Pierre on the left bank of Rainy Lake, (2), Fort St. Charles on a small island in the Lake of the Woods, (3), Fort Bourbon at the entry of Lake Vinipique (Winnipeg), (4), Fort de la Reine on the right bank of the River Assiniboia, (5), Fort Dauphin on the River Nimauguenacheque or Troubled Water, (6), Fort Paskoid on the river of the same name, and, (7), Fort des Prairies on the river of the same name. This Post de la Mer d'Ouest is the nearest to the English establishments on Hudson's Bay.

From Fort de la Reine on the Assiniboia, the crossing can be made to the Missouri, the Indian Villages upon which are described—but the author goes to Lake Superior and Chagoamigon on the south shore of that Lake. Then to La Baye (Green Bay of Lake Michigan), a Post where 150,000 louis net were realized per annum by concessionaires named, then the Illinois, Onyatanons, Vincennes on the Wabash, Miamis, River St. Joseph and Detroit.

Then Presqu' Isle (now Erie, Pennsylvania), which is not a trading Post but a necessary entrepôt for supplies from Niagara to Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburg), the Port of River aux Boeufs, Fort Machaut, Fort Duquesne and Niagara. Going on down the Great Lakes to Toronto, established to prevent the Indians of the North from going to Chouagen [Oswego] to trade", and at which the King gave the Indians brandy, "forced as they say to this strange abuse by the English giving it"; then on eastward to Catarakoui or Frontenac (the present Kingston, Ontario), and into the St. Lawrence again, La Présentation, St. Regis, Sault St. Louis and "here we are at Montreal again—
the voyage is completed—I have ventured some reflections—my rôle is finished and it is not for me to effect reform”.

**LES ILLINOIS**

A Post made use of by licensees, of which the principal entrepôt is the Fort De Chartres situated on the left bank of the Mississippi—there is a garrison in the different establishments of the Post of six Companies which, with the different Commandants, are furnished from Louisiana.

The following is the division of the Illinois: The Cahos on the left bank of the Mississippi, the Metchi at six leagues Deskas, a little town inhabited by the French.

The Cahos and the Metchi have only one village of about four hundred men—there may be as many Kaws: and these three Nations furnish in an ordinary year, a hundred bales of beaver, deer, wild cats (chats pichoux), fox, otter and bear.

There is another Post upon the River of the Illinois where a Commandant lives in a Fort called Femelevi. The Paorias, about seven hundred men, trade there, furnishing two hundred and fifty bales of the same quality of peltries, fewer beavers and more cats.

On the Missouri for eighty leagues from its embouchure into the Mississippi are the Ousacqs and the Missouri, Nations near each other: the trade we are going to make there might in an ordinary year amount to eighty bales of deer and bear with a few other skins.

Ascending the River about eighty leagues, there is found the village of the Kaws (misspelled “Kanes”): we have there a Fort and a garrison, and the Post furnishes a hundred bales, many of beaver badly cured, the rest deer and bear.

Fifty leagues further up are found the Otacks and the Aymorts, two hundred men, who furnish eighty bales of the same kind as the Kanks [Kaws].

A large quantity of wheat and Indian corn was this year furnished to Fort Duquesne.

**LES ONYATANONS**

A Fort of upright piles situate on the left bank of the River Wabash or Saint-Jerome: this Post is farmed out for twelve hundred livres to the Commandant: the Indians who trade here

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*Les Illinois was on the Mississippi. There were several Posts in the Illinois Country, the chief entrepôt of which was Fort de Chartres on the River South of St. Louis.

† This Post was a short distance south of Vincennes. It was really a “dependency” of that Fort.
are the Onyatanons, the Kickapoos, the Mascoutins and the Vermillion Nation—they can furnish three hundred warriors: there comes from this Post and those dependent upon it, from three to four hundred bales.

**POSTE DE VINCENNES**

A pretty town, also situate on the Wabash, dependent upon New Orleans, the Governor of which sends there a Commandant: there may be eighty Habitants, who cultivate the soil and reap wheat. The Peauchichias trade there—they can furnish eighty bales.

**LES MIAMIS**

A Fort of upright piles upon the right bank of the river of the same name: at this Fort commences a portage of three leagues which leads to the Falling Waters to the south-west. The Post is farmed out to the Commandant at twelve hundred livres.

The Indians who trade there are the Miamis and the Ceppicoinaux (Tippecanoes)—the former may furnish a hundred and fifty warriors. In any ordinary year from two hundred and fifty to three hundred bales may be obtained at this Post.

**LA RIVIERE ST. JOSEPH**

A Fort situated upon the right bank of the river of the same name, twenty leagues from its embouchure into Lake Michigan—it is farmed out to the Commandant. The Indians who trade there are the Pottawatamis, some four hundred men, and some Miamis. They may furnish four hundred bales in cats, bears and deer.

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8 Vincennes, now in Indiana, was on the site of the Indian Village, Chip-kaw-kay; the French built a fort as early as 1702, the first in that country; it was long, practically, the Chief seat of the French Government of the Ohio country. It was taken by the British in 1763, but full possession was not taken till 1777, when the conqueror changed the name to Fort Sackville; Clarke with his Virginians took it for the Revolutionaries in 1778, and it has not since changed allegiance. “Old Vincennes” is a name to conjure with in legend and story, not unmixed, be it said, with myth.

9 Les Miamis, Miami, Miane, Maimes, Miamies, Maumee—all these and other orthographies are to be met with—was the scene of many conflicts, not coming to an end, indeed, till Jay’s Treaty. A very full and interesting account of this place will be found in “The New Regime, 1765-1767”, *Illinois Historical Collections*, Springfield, 1916; the story of the trouble in post-Revolutionary times is given in some detail in my “Life of John Graves Simcoe”, Toronto, 1926.

10 The present Kalamazoo.
The Pottawatamis are the most faithful to our interests of all the Indians—they have never dyed their hands with the blood of the French and have even informed us of plots formed against us by the other Nations.

**LA PRESQU'ISLE**

A square Fort of squared timbers, situate upon Lake Erie almost at the mouth of a large bay about a league and a half deep and half a league wide.

It is not a trading Post; it is an entrepôt necessary for the communication of Niagara with Fort Duquesne; it has a Commandant and a garrison.

The Portage from this Fort to that of the River aux Boeufs is seven leagues. During the winter, which is mild and rainy, with little snow, transportation is impracticable. The spring and autumn are in the same case, and the summer is the only season in which vehicles can traverse it. Saddle horses can travel it at all times. There are many Indians along it, and their help is almost always necessary by reason of the haste with which the journey must be made to take advantage of the waters of the River aux Boeufs. In reality, if the roads were properly attended to, the Indians might easily be dispensed with. But policy requires that they should be made use of in time of war, especially in respect of the portage; they prevent the ill-disposed Nations interfering with our transports. Moreover, what they earn in that way added to the presents made to them, puts them in a condition to buy what is necessary; otherwise, they would betake themselves to the English who treat them much better than we do; and it is very necessary that they should not learn this difference.

It would be easy to attract the Indians around Presqu'isle to establish themselves and form villages; the soil is good, the chase and fishing abundant.

**FORT DE LA RIVIERE AUX BOEUF**

A square Fort of upright piles, situate on the River of that name: the River is quite navigable in Spring, Autumn and, often, Winter: in Summer the water is too low, and it is necessary to portage in many places.

This Fort is simply necessary as the entrepôt for La Belle Rivière: it has no trade and it would be necessary to rebuilt it and make it safe against a sudden attack.

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11 Presqu'isle is, of course, the present Erie, Pennsylvania.
LE FORT MACHAUT

Situated thirty leagues from the Fort de la Rivière aux Boeufs, at discharge of that River into the Ohio: it is the last entrepôt for Fort Duquesne—this also, it would be necessary to make safe against a sudden attack.

LE FORT DUQUESNE

Situated on the left bank of the Ohio at the confluence with the Malenguele, this Fort is a patch-work affair, small, ill-projected, dominated by two places within musket-range, undefendable if attacked: it has the name of a Fort, and has enriched him who built it—and that was all he wanted of it. It may contain five hundred men in a garrison, whom it is difficult to furnish with subsistence—the Illinois have been their source of supply, this year.

This establishment is necessary to hold the English on the other side of the Appalachians, and to preserve for us the affection of the Indians above, but there is needed a more respectable Fort, one which in time of war could hold five to six hundred men. The country is good, the air wholesome, the land fertile—I should like Habitants there, they would supply the garrison with food.

This is also a Trading-Post which is made use of by licensees, the licences being free thus far in order to encourage the merchants to bring in their goods. Too much care cannot be taken that the goods be cheap so that the Indians may find it to their advantage to trade there and not go to the English—an essential object for political reasons. The Loups, the Chavanons and the Iroquois have been coming to this Post to trade since its establishment—there may come from it from two hundred to two hundred and fifty bales annually.

The Little Portage the first entrepôt of Niagara, and which leads to Fort Duquesne from Niagara, that is, from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, has no trade—the same considerations apply to this Portage as to that of Presqu’isle—political exigencies require that use be made of the Indians to work it.

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Fort Duquesne was on the site of the present Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; its story is well known, and is to be found in the Encyclopedias. The “Little Portage” began about the present New York side of the embouchere of the Niagara into Lake Ontario, somewhat north of Niagara Falls, New York. The name was sometimes given to Fort Niagara. In later times, a much frequented Portage was on the west side of the Niagara River, but at this time, most, if not all of the goods from Lake Ontario for Fort Duquesne, were portaged on the east side of that River.
NIAGARA

A place fortified by M. Pouchot; it may now be regarded as a very stronghold for the whole Continent. It has strength and consequently is capable of a vigorous and long defence. The works are about to be faced with stone, this operation is necessary to give them solidity.

Niagara is situated at the confluence of the discharge of the waters of Lake Erie into Lake Ontario: as the land is excellent, the climate temperate, the chase and fishing abundant, I would like to have Habitants established in villages: this establishment and that of Detroit, both governed by good laws, would be the granary of the upper districts; it would save the King immense sums and the Canadians toilsome voyages which enervate them; and as a result, Canada would be in a position to make a greater quantity of export.

The King conducts the commerce of this Post, but his officers manage it badly, in a fashion troublesome for the Indians and lucrative only for themselves. It would be necessary that the commerce should be free; competition would lower the price of trade goods and make them more plentiful. At the least, the King should order that the markets at Niagara and Fort Duquesne [Duquesne] should always be fully supplied with goods and that these should be sold at a low price.

I repeat that the interest of commerce is not the essential object here—it is a matter of the conservation of the Colony inferior in number in the proportion of one to five: we can sustain it as our own only by the affection of the Indians. This is the counterweight which has up to the present time made the balance incline in our favor: but the Indians have become enlightened as to their interests, and the interest of their trade is the only one they have in the world. They know perfectly how generous to them is their trade with us and how much they gain by trading with the English. I have heard them all lament (gemir) over the destruction of Chouagen giving them thirty leagues more to go: they carry their peltries to Corlar [Schenectady] and even to Orange [Albany] and they accept the hatchet of those with whom they have an advantageous trade.

The Indians who came to trade at Niagara are the Five Nations, the Mississagues and the Wolves (Loups)—there come from it in an ordinary year two hundred and fifty to three hundred bales.

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This was Fort Niagara on the right bank of the River. It remained as part de facto of the old Province of Quebec, formed by the Quebec Act of 1774, 14 Geo. III., c. 85, and afterwards of the Province of Upper Canada until 1796, when it was given up to the United States under Jay's Treaty of 1794.
TORONTO

A small Post situate to the north of Lake Ontario, opposite Niagara, established to prevent the Indians of the North going to Chouagen\textsuperscript{14} to trade.

The King conducts the trade here and gives to the Indians brandy as at Niagara—a strange abuse, to which it is said we are driven by the English, because they give it to them.\textsuperscript{15}

The Indians who come here to trade are the Saulteux and the Mississaguas, and it can furnish forty to fifty bales.

\textsuperscript{14} For Chouagen and its destruction, as well as the foundation of Toronto, see note \textsuperscript{5}.

\textsuperscript{15} The author is in error in stating that the English gave “eau-de-vie” to the Indians: they gave them rum. There were constant recriminations between the French and the English fur-traders about the one and the other furnishing eau-de-vie or rum to the Savages, instead of the salutary and delicious liquor of the complainant, which was so far from being injurious to the Indians that it actually benefitted him—at all events, it drew him to the giver to dispose of his furs. The preference of the Indian does not seem to have been noted—we hear nothing of his opinion. Those who are interested in the matter may like to know that the French Canadians called the Jamaica Rum of the English traders \textit{Tafia} or \textit{Guildive}—the name Rum (Rhum, Rom and Rome were variants), seems to have been used only after the Conquest in 1760, after which the mention of “Rhum de la Jamaique” is not infrequent, the liquor not as yet being displaced by “le whisky blanc, le rye, le gin et le scotch”, as my friend, the learned and facile French Canadian writer, M. E. Z. Massicotte, puts it. (\textit{Le Bulletin des Recherches Historiques}, July, 1931, p. 407.)

\textsuperscript{5} We read: “In 1755, a vessel of Bayonne came to Cape Moraska for whale-fishing . . . in 1756, there came two other ships from Bayonne.” The Post Chagoimagon on a Bay on the south shore of Lake Superior was “farmed out at eight thousand, one hundred livres up to 1758.” “Kamanestigouia [the present Kaministiqua], was farmed out up to 1758 at four thousand livres, and the Saulteux still do their trading there”. The War was still going on: certain “Abenaquis established at the foot of the Bay of Misisquoi in Lake Champlain have since the beginning of this War been removed to St. Francis and Beancourt”. “St. Frederic . . . at the head of Lake Champlain . . . might be regarded as a real barrier in a campaign . . .”. The author in some instances speaks of personal experience, \textit{e.g.}, in describing Niagara, he says (speaking of the Indians who trade there), “I have heard them all lamenting the destruction of Chouagen . . .”. Chouagen was the name given by the French to the English Post at the site of the present Oswego, New York, at the mouth of the Oswego River. There were two Forts, that on the west side of the River being called Fort Oswego.
that on the east side, Fort Ontario. The Post was established by the English in 1727 to protect their establishments on the Hudson River, Fort Orange (Albany), Manhattan (New York), &c., and the Indian trade. This Post not only interfered with the fur trade of the French, but also menaced the communication between the Upper and the Lower Country of Canada. See Documentary History of the State of New York, I. 486. "French Plan of Forts Ontario & Pepperell or Chouagen, 1756": on p. 482 is an English plan of the same locality. Vandreuil determined to destroy it, and entrusted the project to Montcalm. At the head of 3200 men, 1474 being Canadians and 250 Indians, Montcalm, August 10, 1756, landed a short distance from Chouagen which was defended by 1400 men of the Shirley Pepperell and Schuyler Regiments commanded by Colonel Mercer. After a furious bombardment, under which the Commandant was killed, the Post surrendered, August 14; 72 officers and 1600 soldiers, sailors, workmen, merchants, &c. were made prisoners. The French suffered a loss of 6 men killed and 24 wounded; the English 150 and 30 respectively. The Fort was destroyed by Montcalm. The complaint by the Indians mentioned in the Text was because "they could not stop there but had to carry their "peltries thirty leagues further to Corlar [Schenectady] or even to Orange [Albany]," the result being "they take the hatchet of those with whom they have the most advantageous trade."

In the Mémorie du Canada, written about 1770, of which the author seems to be unknown but the original manuscript of which was preserved in the Bibliothèque Imperialis of St. Petersburg, having been obtained in Paris, in 1810, by Pierre Dubrowski, an Attaché of the Russian Embassy there, is found the following concerning Toronto and its raison d'être (I translate):

"The English had built on the south shore of Lake Ontario, a Fort which they called Oswego, in Indian Chouagui. The situation of this place was advantageous in every respect. They attracted there the surrounding Nations, five in number—the Fort held them in check. For though we had Niagara on the same shore and Frontenac [the present Kingston, Ontario] on the other, these two Forts, nevertheless, could not supply all the Indians' needs. It is true that one of the greatest obstacles in the way of these Forts was in not being able to find like there was at Couaguin or Chouaguin as much brandy or rum as the Indians wanted. The priests had made it a case of conscience and put the sale of liquor to Indians in the class of those incurring excommunication. They had brought the government to their view, so that it was a crime. This regulation is admirable in towns where the Indians might commit excesses and excite trouble; but in the Posts, it is a different matter. It is with liquor that one attaches them, and thanks to the liberty of drinking it at Chouaguin, that Post has survived, and the Nations resorting to it have always been our enemies."

"The General [de la Jonquière] thought that the re-establishment of Fort Toronto would absolutely stop the Mississaguas and the Nations
of the North who passed that way to go to Chouaguin, and as M. de Rouillé was the Minister of Marine, his name was given to it. The position of the Fort was directly opposite to Niagara; it consists of some upright piles and four small cannon. Every year a great quantity of goods was seen there. The Commandant had instructions to maintain good relations with the Indians and keep them from going to trade at Chouaguin”.

[Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec pour 1924-1925, p. 100.]

In cartography, “Fort Toronto” appears for the first time in the map of Homan-Danville of Nuremberg in 1756.

The siege and capture of Chouagen is graphically described in the same work, do. do., pp. 123, 124.

It is said, too, of de Montigny, who was in the late days of French domination sent in Command of a detachment of troops to Niagara: “He had interests at Niagara—that was the motive which was most effective with him in having himself placed in command of the detachment sent thither [from Frontenac]. He had his canoes laden with provisions and goods without forgetting barrels of wine and brandy which he sold very well en route to his detachment and the Indians. He got to Niagara in twelve days though he had to go by way of Toronto, he stopped there for business reasons and to take under pretext of refreshments for his troops, provisions and brandy . . .” do. do., pp. 143, 144.

From which, it appears that even at that time, more than a century and a half ago, it was by some considered well to load up with intoxicating liquor when going across the Lake from Toronto.