

# A distant bow to Canadian history

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their canoes, and paddled out into the lake. Even there, they were in great danger because the lake was so narrow. They were only saved by covering themselves and their canoes with wet blankets, which protected them from the heat and the flames. Lacking such protection, those who were in the middle of the portage had the flames sweep over them many times, and gained the end of the portage only with extreme difficulty, and with the threat of being roasted alive."

The journal tells of arriving at what is now called Lake Abitibi in early June, and finding a spot suitable for building a fort. (There has been a post there through all the three centuries since.)

Arrived within sight of Moose Fort, a good description of the post is given. Arrangements were made to bring up a battering-ram by which the main gate might be smashed. De Troyes wrote that at this point Ste Hélène came to ask if he could leap over the palisade.

"I replied that when one gave orders to attack and capture a place, it didn't matter how one entered it, provided that one became master of it. He took me literally, and a moment later climbed over the palisade, sword in hand, followed by Iberville, Maricourt, La Noue, Allemand and five or six others." Surrender was only a matter of time, although de Troyes admitted that he was surprised to find that one of the captured cannon was empty, and that no cannon-balls were available. When the battering-ram had smashed in the door of the "fortress" it permitted the discovery that the English were in their nightshirts, totally unprepared for such a pyjama party.

Decision was made to attack Rupert House next, an HBC ship being anchored in the river. Ship and fort were taken easily; almost the only violence reported was de Troyes's comment that the English commander "murdered" the French language.

The hardships of the journey and fighting were beginning to tell on men and officers, and they were becoming short-handed as occupying and guard parties had to be left at the captured posts. But there was one more prize almost within their grasp. Two big cannon captured with the fort were taken aboard the ship, and a new supply of cannon-balls was cast.

Albany presented many problems, not the least being the lack of information as to the exact location of the fort. Then the garrison unknowingly came to their help by firing seven or eight cannon shots on Saturday evening. The thunder of the

guns informed the attackers of the fort's location. There follows an account of the surrender of the fort, one of the most amusing stories in the journal.

Returning the war party arrived at Temiskaming on September 7th, and moved on quickly to Montreal. "Thus ended my trip," de Troyes wrote unemotionally. "I lost only three men on the expedition, and arrived at Montreal with the rest of my detachment without anything notable happening on the way."

By November a Treaty of Neutrality had been signed between England and France, leaving each county in possession of the territories and posts it then held. Fighting continued sporadically in Europe and America until the European war was ended by the Treaties of Utrecht in 1713-14, which recognized English right to the entire area of the Bays, as part of the general settlement.

### FOR FURTHER READING

By far the best account of this brief chapter in Canadian history is *The Battle for James Bay 1686*, by W. A. Kenyon and J. R. Turnbull, published by Macmillan in 1971. It contains a complete English translation of de Troyes's Journal, from which quotations in this article are borrowed, an excellent background summary of the history of the period, English translations of a few of the other contemporary French accounts, and a number of documents from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. One article is a brief report by Dr. Kenyon on his "dig" at Fort

Albany in 1960, accompanied by photographs of many of the artifacts recovered, and now in the Royal Ontario Museum. A reference copy of the book is in the Cochrane Public Library.

A plaque commemorating the expedition was erected in Iroquois Falls by the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board. Of course the story there is only in capsule form, but a fine summary of the historical background was released at the time of the unveiling (September 1960, and published in *The Northland Post* and other newspapers.

Biographies of the more notable figures in these events are to be found in volumes 1 and 2 of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. This monumental work is being published in both English and French.

### WE SHOULD CELEBRATE

The 300th anniversary of the de Troyes expedition is not very far off - 1986. It is an event which should be celebrated in Cochrane and throughout Northeastern Ontario and Northwestern Quebec. Various proposals are being discussed, but one which all the people of Cochrane can push forward at once is that Canada Post be urged to issue a Tricentennial stamp. Even the art work is available - a fine water colour depicting Moose Fort as we might expect it to have appeared when captured. This is in the possession of Dr. Walter Kenyon of the Royal Ontario Museum, one of the authors of the book recommended here. It is not too early for local residents and organizations to start campaigning for release of such a stamp.

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