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Stirring Tales Of Canada's Early Days

Crafty Pontiac Follied in Plan to Massacre the British Garrison.

The transfer of the great wilderness west of Montreal from France to England after the Conquest of Canada in 1760 was a delicate business. Reluctant as were the French garrisons of the various trading posts, there was nothing for them to do but obey the orders of the recent Governor of Canada, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, and hand over. The Indian population, however, was difficult to handle. Used to the tact and conciliatory methods of the French and fearing nothing from them as they feared from the English the seizing of their lands, they were ill-content to find themselves and their hunting grounds handed to the power of England. The English, that is the American colonists, for they were the English that they knew, in their experience were little inclined to love them, indeed, very much inclined to hold them in contempt and to be harsh, dishonest in trade, and brutal.

The Seneca nation of the Iroquois fomented the great rising which eventually took place. They, most of all, feared the inrush of the American English trader and settler in the valleys of the Genesee and the Alleghany—rich lands and desirable. The other nations of the Iroquois were held to the British interest through the influence of Sir William Johnson. For three years the unrest grew and more than one rising was forestalled only by prompt action on the part of British officers in charge of western posts. Then suddenly the Indian war blazed up throughout the whole great west.

The credit of the entire scheme and organization has usually been assigned to Pontiac, an Ottawa chief and head of a confederacy of Ottawas, Chippewas and Pottawatomies living mainly in what is now the State of Michigan but also in western Ontario. It would seem, however, that the affair had less the nature of an engineered plot as far as the other far-lying tribes were concerned, than of a prairie fire. The savage material was as well prepared for sudden battle and murder as the driest meadow grass for flame. And almost the only failure in surprise was at Detroit where Pontiac himself planned the rising.

Pontiac was a crafty, treacherous, primitive savage, but eloquent and very able. In April 1763 he set up his summer wigwam as usual for trading in the neighborhood of Fort Detroit, but nearer than heretofore. Gathering the chiefs of his confederacy and of the Wyandots, a remnant of the dispersed Hurons, in council, he incited them to attack the British garrison. But first there should be reconnaissance. So with thirty-nine warriors he asked for and obtained admission to the Fort to dance the peace-dance. Thirty performed the weird and grotesque ceremony for an hour while the other ten surveyed the place in detail.

In another council held in the village of the Pottawatomies two miles south of the Fort which stood on the west side of the Detroit River, Pontiac incited his hearers afresh and outlined his plan. He would go with fifty warriors to an audience with Major Gladwyn, commander of the Fort. Beneath his blanket each should carry a gun with barrel sawed off short. If he, Pontiac, should present the customary belt of wampum wrong side out, guns should flash and every British officer should fall. As the shots rang out within the building there should be a massacre outside.

Whether Major Gladwyn received his information from the French blacksmiths in the settlement with streets for miles on both banks of the river, for they must have sawed the guns, or whether he received it from an Ojibway girl, his "Indian wife," this being the most romantic and quite believable story, or from some friendly Indian, certain it is that he received it just in time.

Midmorning on May 7th, 1763, a long procession of brilliantly blanket-dressed chiefs, painted and feathered for ceremony, approached the Fort with measured tread and stately bearing. Pontiac in the lead. Already there had assembled within the gates a goodly number of Indians and their squaws, all concealing weapons. The chiefs stepped into a lane of soldiers standing with bayonets fixed. The trading stores were closed, and knots of traders' men stood here and there, each a walking arsenal. Except for the first involuntary start the warriors stalked imperturbably within the council-house, where, amid armed guards sat Major Gladwyn and his officers with a brace of pistols in every belt and a sword by every officer's side. Distrustfully and with hesitation the warriors took their seats upon the mats prepared. Pontiac stood to speak. As he raised the wampum belt Gladwyn's hand moved slightly and a drum rolled despatching within the room while arms clashed threateningly in the outside passage. Pontiac stammered through some empty words and relapsed upon the floor. Gladwyn replied briefly in general terms, promising friendship and protection to those who merited it and vengeance upon presumption. The council was unusually short. The chiefs filed out the gates followed by a dejected crowd of squaws and warriors.

Pontiac, not yet convinced, tried to gain entrance again with his savage horde. When refused admittance on the 9th he threw off the mask and started the siege of Detroit while his young braves murdered a number of English residents of the neighborhood.

London's three principal Hydro stations are being equipped with radio telephones. Indigo blue serge suits, \$28.50 Tweedell's. Gabriel D'Annunzio hopes to fly from Rome to Argentina in June.

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CANADIAN PACIFIC It Spans the World

LITTLE KNOWN BITS OF CANADIAN HISTORY

By Lyman B. Jackson.

IMPOSTERS IN CANADIAN HISTORY

In the spring of the year 1613, Samuel de Champlain started from Quebec on his long deferred tour of western exploration. Like many others of the time he sought a water route to the unmeasured treasures of the Orient.

He had planned to reach Hudson's Bay from the Ottawa, and then turn westward to China and Japan. He had been misled in this theory by an imposter, a man named Nicholas Vignan. This Frenchman had come out to Canada with one of the parties organized by De Monts. He told Champlain stories of how he had explored the Ottawa to its headwaters, and had come to a lake which gave entrance to the great northern sea that had been discovered by Henry Hudson three years before.

Enthusied with this false information, Champlain started off and toiled onward through vast difficulties, until he reached the district near Lake Coulonge. He stopped there to confer with an Indian chief. In the presence of Vignan, the Indian denounced him as an imposter and under pressure he admitted that he had never been any farther west than the point upon which he then stood. Champlain, weary and disgusted, abandoned his exploration and returned to Quebec.



An imposter's map, showing "the King's castle," palm trees, a unicorn, etc.

Other imposters there were in great numbers. Most of these were court followers of the various monarchs who had sanctioned the voyages of the early navigators to these shores. These hardy adventurers had a difficult task to secure the necessary aid to enable them to start on their undertakings, but in many cases they had a far more difficult task to maintain their rights after the return home. The possibility of reward stimulated many rogues and rascals to attempts to take their laurels. Some went the length of claiming that they had made the discoveries many years before, and in some instances they backed up these false claims with ingenious maps.

It is, perhaps, not quite true to state that these maps were based entirely upon the imagination of their authors, for undoubtedly some of the information was obtained from disgruntled members of the crews of various explorers. The Cabots had to fight against these imposters in the courts of King Henry the Seventh, and did not receive any reward until 1565, although their discoveries were made in 1498.

Columbus faced the same thing, but the most interesting of these maps by imposters was prepared shortly after the return of Jacques Cartier from his second voyage in 1534. This contains just sufficient truth to show that the information was obtained from members of Cartier's crew. The outlines of Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence are fairly well drawn, although a serious mistake is made in reversing the entire map from left to right. The imposter traces the St. Lawrence as far as a high mountain, which is meant to represent Mount Royal. For the rest of his information he has drawn entirely upon his imagination or has been at the mercy of yarn spinning sailors. The south of his map is generously finished off with a series of scollops and the information added that time did not permit of detailed exploration there. But in an attempt to prove that he was in the southern portion of the continent he draws in a large series of Eskimo snow houses. He draws flocks of ostrich and herds of unicorns, and scatters them with a lavish hand throughout the country we now know as Labrador and northern Quebec. Not to be outdone he also paints in a portrait of the king of the country and the royal castle where he was royally entertained.

It is hard to realize today how such imposters could thrive and flourish. But it was an age when knavery and trickery were at the peak. This imposter has passed into history leaving little but his imaginary map, for us to laugh at, but he succeeded in keeping Cartier from his reward until 1541.

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