

T O R O N T O

CANADA'S QUEEN CITY



TORONTO, the capital city of Ontario, the Semi-centennial of whose foundation was held in 1884, occupies a position which was of great importance long before the advent of the white race, at a time when the entire province was covered with a dense hardwood forest, penetrated only in a few directions by the Indian trails.

The site of Toronto was the termination of the most important of these trails, which supplied the shortest and most convenient road between Lake Huron and Lake Ontario. The name itself is of Huron origin, and means a "place of meeting," a term applied to the neighborhood of Lake Simcoe, which was the northern end of the first stage on the great portage.

In course of time the name has been transferred from the neighborhood of Lake Simcoe to the southern end of the trail. It was by this road that the Six Nation Indians passed during the middle of the seventeenth century, through to the present County of Simcoe, and in a series of bloody conflicts, almost entirely exterminated the Huron Indians. At the time of the conquest of Canada, the province was occupied by the Mississaugas, a branch of the Algonquin people.

During the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the fight for the fur trade with the Indians was maintained with great vigor between the English from Albany and the French from Montreal. The control by the French of the trade passing by the Niagara River led the English to establish a fort at Oswego for the purpose of gaining the traffic from the northwest, and as a counter-stroke, a French trading-post was established in 1749 on the site of Toronto, which was named Fort Rouille, after the French colonial minister. It was situated on the lake shore in what is now the western part of the city, and its site is marked by an obelisk in the southwest corner of the Exhibition Grounds.

In 1758, the threatened attacks on Quebec, Montreal, and Niagara, led by the English forces under Wolfe and Amherst, compelled the Governor of Canada, M. de Vaudreuil, to withdraw his forces from the smaller forts, and, under his instruction, Fort Rouille was burned in 1759.

In the period intervening between the destruction of the fort and the settlement of the town, the fur trade continued to be very valuable, and it is said £1,000 was offered by traders for a season's monopoly, as far back as 1767. The termination of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence was followed by the expulsion of the United Empire Loyalists, many of whom settled in Upper Canada. Some of these settlers found their way to the vicinity of Toronto, and civilized settlement had then its beginning. At that time the eyes of the Imperial officials were cast on it as a suitable site for the future capital of Ontario. Surveyor-General Collins reported it in 1788 as possessing a capacious, safe, and well-sheltered harbor. The surveyor-general at Lower Canada, Colonel