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When History was in the Making at St. Johns!

WHEN ST. JOHNS, QUE., WAS "THE KEY TO CANADA"

Some Interesting Historical Notes
By Major the Rev. A. H. Moore,
Rector of St. James' Church
(Anglican), St. Johns.

The visitor who spends a short time in St. Johns might, if unacquainted with the details of Canada's history, never realize that he is actually treading historic ground. The whole length of the Richelieu River, from Sorel at the mouth to Fort Lennox, on Isle aux Noix, near the American border, has been the scene of many stirring and historic incidents. Conan Doyle has given a vivid picture of

conditions in this district during the French Regime in "The Refugees": All writers on Canadian history have had to follow closely the course of events in the historic Richelieu valley.

The placid waters of the Richelieu made it the great highway for the canoes of the red men, and when in 1690 Capt. John Schuyler made his raid into Canada, Chambly and Laprairie being his objectives, he left his canoes near St. Johns, which was as yet unoccupied. Chambly was a strong French outpost then and a stone fort was built there about 1726. It is twelve miles down the river from St. Johns and well worth a visit. Writing of the situation of 1745,

Parkman speaks of "the portals of Canada guarded by Fort St. Jean." But the French defensive works here were never of a strong or permanent character. At Isle aux Noix, some twelve miles further up the river, De Bourlemaque had erected in 1759 a number of strong works which, in General Amherst's opinion rendered it "by all accounts impregnable". In spite of this the French abandoned it the following year. The present cut stone barracks and extensive defenses there were erected in 1823. Like Chambly it is most interesting and one cannot but regret the decay with which it is threatened.

To specify the developments and incidents at St. Johns in detail is

forbidden by the iron exigencies of space. We come at once to the period represented by the accompanying illustration which I am able to give here through the kindness of Dr. Doughty, Chief Archivist at Ottawa. In May, 1775, that vigorous Vermonter, Ethan Allen, having captured Ticonderoga by subtlety and Crown Point by superior numbers, sailed down the Richelieu, captured an armed sloop at St. Johns with the dozen unsuspecting soldiers who guarded the fort, and returned. It was now seen to be imperative that St. Johns should be strengthened. One old barracks building constituted the "fort". Sir Guy Carleton sent
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A View of St. John's upon the River Sorell, in Canada, with the Redoubts, Works, &c.
Taken in the Year 1776 during the late War in America.

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