

OLD PENETANGUISHENE.

Sketches of its Pioneer, Naval and Military Days.

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INTRODUCTION

Penetanguishene, once the centre of British naval and military operations, and reminiscent of French occupation and the fur trade, is situated at the head of a beautiful bay of the same name, an inlet of the Georgian Bay, projected right into the land of the ancient Huron, of whose former domain Simcoe County now embraces the greater portion.

This euphonious name owes its origin to the sand dunes of the Tiny peninsula, on the western shores of the bay, which glisten like gold in the sun, and which, in the Indian tongue, are known as "Penetanguishene," signifying, when freely translated, "The Place of the White Rolling Sands." The bay, whose waters lave its banks, receives the same name, which is in turn applied to the town nestling on its shores. Penetanguishene, Hochelaga, Stadacona, with the hosts of striking aboriginal names, spread over the Dominion of Canada and the continent of America, not only appeal to the imagination and excite a profound interest in the curiosities and limitations of the Indian dialects; they also stand as "imperishable Cenotaphs" in that grand galaxy of place-names, perpetuating the memory of long extinct nations, pointing to their pathetic history and fate. They likewise reveal the footprints of vanished races, innumerable as the sands upon the shore, who once roamed this vast wilderness lords of the soil. In these fantastic names savage tradition and modern enlightenment salute one another across remote centuries of time, as now discovery, development, the arts, and sciences, clasp hands with each other.

This highly poetic and expressive name is claimed by local tradition to be of Abenaki origin, a dialect of the great Algonquin family which once occupied the region extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, north of