

...IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CADILLAC...



An attempt to follow in the footsteps of Antoine de LaMothe Cadillac, the past summer, has presented to me many objects of interest and has taught me much that I did not before know concerning the founder of the city of Detroit.

Cadillac came to Mackinac (then Michillimackinac) as its commandant in 1694, and remained in charge of that post for three years. He then returned to Quebec and ultimately to Paris where, in the year 1700, he obtained permission to found the city of Detroit. He was well qualified for this task from his previous acquaintance with the country; and from his temperament and natural ability no better person could have been chosen to found a colony in the west. There was, up to this time, no French colony further west than Montreal, for all the western posts were military or religious establishments.

The great object in founding a colony was to establish something permanent that should serve as a protection for the French traders, and the missionaries among the Indians, and which would prevent the encroachments of the English on the territory which France claimed, but the boundaries of which were not well defined then and which were, in fact, never officially designated.

Although many explorers and travelers had passed through the Lakes Ontario and Erie and around the falls of Niagara, before the year 1701, and that pathway to the northwest was fairly well known, Cadillac was directed to take the Ottawa route rather than that of the lakes, on account of the hostility of the Iroquois Indians, who, at this time, were at war with

the French. The Ottawa route, so-called, was up the Ottawa river from Montreal nearly to its source, thence across the long portage to Lake Nipissing, thence through Frenchman's river to the Georgian bay and, coasting the bay, in a southerly and westerly direction to Lake Huron, the River St. Clair, and so finally to the Detroit river. This course was long and tedious, for there were some 30 portages where the canoes and the luggage of the company had to be carried on the shoulders of the oarsmen and voyageurs but it was the route that had been traversed for many years by all those Frenchmen who had penetrated into the upper country.

My desire was to go to Mackinac and by easy stages reverse the footsteps of these voyageurs and pass through the Georgian bay, up Frenchman's river, through Lake Nipissing and down the Ottawa river to Montreal, but the limited time at my disposal would not permit a trip of this duration, and I planned a route more in consonance with that of established travel through the lakes and down the St. Lawrence.

The first object of real interest, as connected with Cadillac, is the Welland canal. Shortly after Cadillac had established Detroit, a peace with the Iroquois was entered into and the pathway around the falls of Niagara was opened for the second and all the succeeding trips to Detroit, and it is not recorded that the Ottawa route was thereafter ever used for those who came so far south as Detroit.

Cadillac's Foresight.

In one of the earliest of Cadillac's reports he advocates the building of a canal around Niagara falls. This was an extraordinary display of foresight. There had been, a few years before this, a sail vessel, the Griffon, on Lake Erie, but it was wrecked the same