

## PENETANGUISHENE

BY  
A. C. OSBORNE

THE HISTORIC TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE, noted as the former site of a British naval and military station in the early days of Canada, is charmingly situated on the eastern shore of a picturesque bay of the same name, a southern extension of Georgian Bay.

Penetanguishene signifies "The Place of the White Rolling Sands," so named from an extensive bank of sand on Pinery Point to the right on entering the harbor, which glistens like gold in the summer's sun and which, like the Sand Dunes of Ontario, is ever shifting, changing, rolling to the waters beneath. . . . This poetic designation, which is of A-ben-a-ki origin slightly modified by the exigencies of changing dialects, already swayed its magic sceptre over these waters when the Huron savage first appeared upon the scene, and is one of the few names—melancholy relics, sparsely scattered here and there north of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes—which remain to tell of Abenaki occupation.

Penetanguishene Bay, in the "Land of the Hurons," first became known to white men as early as 1615 by Champlain's voyages, and subsequently by the Jesuit and Recollet Fathers. That intrepid explorer, as pioneer of this region, visited, among many others, the Indian town of To-a-guan-chain, near the head of the bay, Penetanguishene's Huron prototype, during his famous progress through the country in September of that year. This remarkable name and location—a sort of "land of enchantment"—is at once the centre of a vast region replete with historic memories, interwoven with romantic legend, venerable traditions, story and tragedy.

Near Colborne Basin is the former site of Ihonatiria, where the devoted Brebeuf started the first Jesuit Mission among the Hurons in 1632—the opening scenes in one long, thrilling drama of seventeen years, concluding with the tragedy of St. Ignace, in which Brebeuf and his companions perished, and the Mission became extinguished. Dominating the town and the magnificent scenery of the bay, stands the Memorial Church, an imposing edifice destined to be one of the grandest ecclesiastical structures in Canada, erected to perpetuate the story of these early French Missions, and as a grateful tribute to the sufferings and death of these heroic men. The savage conflict between the Hurons and the Iroquois having culminated in the bloody battle of St. Louis and the dispersion of the former nation in 1649, the remnant of Hurons and French retired to Christian Island and finally to Quebec. An interregnum of one hundred and ten years followed, in which the "Land of the Huron" was devoid of history and almost without tradition, except that the savage conqueror in turn gave way and was gradually replaced by the Ojibway of the north, who ruled lords of this domain till the conquest and the advent of the English, which changed the course of savage empire.

During the autumn of 1793, Governor Simcoe visited the bay with a view to establish a military naval station as a base of supplies and for defence, a complete survey of the harbor being made by his deputy Aitken before the close of the year. In 1798 the bay and islands were purchased from the Chippewas under Treaty No. 5 for £101 worth of goods. The old Military Road, a noted institution of Penetanguishene's pioneer days, having for its northern terminus the present site of the Ontario Reformatory grounds was opened from Kempenfeldt Bay by the famous Surgeon Dunlop, known as "Tiger Dunlop," in November 1814. Its history is linked with the little Military Cemetery on the hill-side and with the story of the ill-fated Duke of Richmond, as well as many others.