

ST. HELEN'S ISLAND.

Of the early history of this Island, there can be no question of its discovery by Jacques Cartier, in his second voyage to Canada in 1535 when he visited Hochelaga, an Indian village, ascended the mountain, which he named *Mont Royal*, and looked down upon this island in the midst of the mighty river with wonder and delight.

In the voyages and discoveries of the great Samuel de Champlain, three quarters of a century later, this island was a peculiar object of attention and admiration, and he even contemplated forming an establishment and settling down upon it with his family in 1611, as described in the *Histoire de la Colonie Française en Canada*, page 197 tome 1, as follows :

"Proche de la Place Royale (Montreal), et au fleuve St. Laurent, il rencontra une petite île qu'à situation et élévation semblent avoir fortifiée naturellement : et dans ses yeux pour l'avenir du Canada, il jugea qu'on pourroit bâtir une bonne et forte ville ; mais ce qui est digne d'attention, il la nomma *Sainte Helene*, sans doute pour faire partager les avantages de son futur établissement à Héleue Bouville son épouse, qui, par sa dot, lui donnait le moyen d'en jeter les premiers fondemens. Car il est à remarquer qu'il ne donna le nom de St. Héleue à aucune des îles sans nombre qu'il rencontra u-dessous et dessus de Quebec, sinon à celle qui ézait à côté de la Place Royale, ou il avait resolu de s'établir."

It will thus be seen from the above extract the opinion formed by Samuel de Champlain of the natural features of this island as a place of security and defence, and there is every reason to believe that the early Jesuit missionaries sought refuge here from the ferocious attacks of the Iroquois who exceeded all other tribes of the Aborigines in savage and unrelenting barbarities in their treatment of European settlers, and the Hurons and other tribes who were disposed to be friendly to the strangers.

It was also a depot for provisions, arms and stores, while settlements were forming on the main land. Although the island, as the above extract will show, owes its name to Champlain's marriage with Helene Bouville—a Huguenot by the way, or French Calvinist—I have not been able to collect anything positive as to Champlain's forming a settlement on it himself or even building a residence there for his family, neither does it appear at this early date that any considerable work of defence was erected for its protection. As was stated on a former occasion St. Helen's (with Isle Ronde and Isle aux Fraises adjoining) is situated in the Barony or Seignory of Longueuil granted by the King of France under the feudal tenure 3rd November, 1672, to the Sieur Le Moine de Longueuil.

When the articles of capitulation were drawn up in Sept. 1760 for the surrender of Montreal by the Marquis of Vaudreuil, to Major General Amherst, commander in chief of H. B. M. Forces in North America, it was provided by the third article that the troops and militia who were in garrison in the fort of Jacques Cartier and in the Island of St. Helen's and other forts shall be treated in the same manner and shall have the same honors &c., &c. The commander-in-chief of the French Army de Louis was so dissatisfied with the articles of capitulation that he retired or threatened to retire to the Island with a force of 2,000 men, and keep possession until more favorable terms could be obtained from the British General; without however obtaining his object. In May, 1781 the Baroness de Longueuil and David Alex-

ander Grant (grandfather of the present Seigneur) were married in Quebec, and it is understood they lived in the family mansion on the Island, Baron Grant died at Saratoga in 1800, and was buried in Boston. His wife the Baroness, survived him 35 years. She died in 1841, and was buried at Longueuil.

During the American war of 1812-14, and for some years afterwards the British Government acquired tracts of land in various parts of Canada for defensive purposes. Among others the Island of St Helen's, with the Isle Ronde and Isle aux Fraises were purchased from Baron Grant and his wife, under deed of exchange in 1818, for valuable city lots on the site of the old Recollet Church, and in the vicinity of *Citadel Hill*, now Dalhousie Square, which at the conquest became vested in the Crown by right of military appropriation. The value of the purchase amounted to £15,000. The Island itself is about three quarters of a mile long, and one third of a mile broad—contains an area of 147 arpents, or 124 English acres. The Baronial residence was a splendid stone edifice, with outbuildings and a large garden attached, on the South bank opposite Longueuil; the building was kept up as officers quarters for some years afterwards—and money provided in the estimates for the time for the payment of a *King's Gardner*, named Macfarlane.

The other buildings of value were Grant's Mills. (ordinary grist mills) on a point of the Island immediately opposite Molson's distillery, and in front of the present ordnance store buildings—which at one time, with the "Miller's House" was to be converted into a General Hospital.

There are still the remains of an old French redoubt at the south west point opposite the city, and lines of entrenchments on the opposite extremity facing Hochelaga Bay. The only works of defence ever erected by the British Government appear to have been two block houses for the accommodation of about 40 men, principally for musketry and light guns on the top, and the construction of a ditch and parapet in front of the soldiers barracks opposite the city. The block houses, which appear to have been a favourite mode of defence at this period in Canada, were built entirely of wood, and being of little value in modern warfare, have been allowed to fall into decay and become useless. The most elevated part of the Island, near the centre, is about 125 feet above the datum line of the river adopted by the Harbor Commissioners; and further northward, in rear of the Ordnance Store building, the site of one of the old block houses is 100 feet above the river datum line.

During the occupation of the Island, over fifty years, by the Imperial authorities, several valuable buildings were erected, and improvements of various kinds effected. It was the principal depot for war like stores of every kind for the Montreal district. The grand magazine alone would accommodate nearly 6,000 barrels of powder, while expensive magazines and other buildings could be readily fitted up for 6,000 barrels more. The wooden store building next the river, near the site of "Grant's Mills," is of immense capacity, and in excellent condition, and will easily accommodate an equipment of six field batteries of artillery; the new armory on the east side, recently built of stone, and two stories high, on the site of the old military prison, is also of great capacity; the ground floor alone, in addition to accommodation for powder, will hold 40,000 stand of arms. The infantry barracks with bomb proof kitchens and Commissariat

bakery, will easily accommodate 7 or 8 officers and 100 men. At the northern extremity are the work shops of the Military Store Department and cottages for the artificers and laborers, a practice battery for a floating target in Hochelaga Bay, and a good wharf with 10 feet of water alongside at summer level.

At the south or upper end there is a rifle range of 500 yards with a metal shield and target, and a saluting platform battery of 9 guns on the side opposite the city. The old French lines before mentioned were principally along the crest of the bank on the N. E. side of the island, at an elevation of about 35 feet above the water level, and commanding that part of the Longueuil shore and Hochelaga Bay where the late Board of Ordnance acquired property in 1843-47 in connection with an advanced work and *tele de pont* for the security of Montreal.

From the time of the great Champlain in 1610-11 down to the period of the late civil war in the States, the position of the island for the protection of Montreal has attracted the attention of eminent military men.

Sir James Carmichael Smyth, the eloquent author of "*The précis of the Wars of Canada*," was sent by the Duke of Wellington to this country in 1825, on a professional tour of inspection, and this island in particular attracted his attention as a military position of great importance for the defence of the commercial capital of Canada. The difficulty of approach by an enemy is almost insurmountable—the shallowness of the St. Lawrence in certain parts of the basin in front of Montreal, and the force of the current combined, render the passage intricate and difficult even to the experienced pilots of the steam ferry boats. The difficulty of access would be still greater in the East channel between the Island and the main land.

The latest of all the schemes for the defence of Montreal was that recommended by Lieut.-Col. Jervois, Deputy Inspector General of Fortifications, in 1865, and published in the *London Times* for the erection of a strong keep or fortress on this island as a *point d'appui* to an extended line of forts on the south shore, connected by entrenchments and a covered way, within two and a half to three miles of the main keep on the Island, which was proposed to be erected at the expense of the Dominion Government, at the same time the Imperial authorities pledged themselves to erect a line of forts at Point Levis for the protection of Quebec on the south side of the river.

There can hardly be any doubt that the defensive works on this Island by the French Government were hastily constructed during the seven years war between England and France, which commenced in 1855, and was concluded by the Treaty of Paris in Feb. 1763.

Montreal was several times threatened during this war by a British force from New York by way of Lake Champlain, but it was not till the autumn of 1760 that a detachment of three thousand three hundred men under the orders of Colonel Haviland, advanced from Crown Point to the St. Lawrence, where he was joined by General Murray's force of 2,450 men from Quebec on the very day the French garrison at Montreal surrendered to the forces of General Amherst.

There seems to be a popular error among the early French writers in connection with the *Sault St. Louis*—which is frequently mentioned as the current passing between the Island and *Ville Marie*, now Montreal—whereas the current and rapids in front of