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mentary state, especially as regards the early period. There are, however, some reasons for this neglect. For example, the sources of information with regard to that period are unfortunately very meagre, and it is an undertaking of no small difficulty to gather, from the scant and incomplete documents which have come down to us, data and facts upon which a clear and comprehensive statement could be based.

The papers left by the Royal Engineers who, in the last years of the seventeenth century, inaugurated the improvements of our waterways, have either been destroyed or are at present lying in some unknown place where they may, at some future date, be detected.

In the meantime, he who desires to trace the origins of our canal system must be contented with a few reports and letters written by some of the Royal Engineers, or even by men outside of the profession, such letters containing but scanty details of the work. It must be said, however, that through the patient and intelligent labours of one of the Dominion archivists,—I refer to the late Douglass Brymner,—the store of documents bearing on the construction of the first Canadian canals has been considerably increased and, since the publication of his report for the year 1886, considerable light has been thrown on the subject, although many points are still obscure. The documents unearthed by Mr. Brymner refer to the small canals between Lake St. Louis and Lake St. Francis, and also to a lock built at Sault Ste. Marie in the early years of the eighteenth century.

There was, however, a previous attempt made at improving navigation, which, it is believed, has never been properly known to Canadians. It was the good fortune of the writer to peruse some of the old manuscripts in the possession of the gentlemen of the Seminary of St. Sulpice (*) and to find in them an account of the efforts made by former members of their order to overcome the difficulties of navigation between Montreal and Lachine.

A few years only had elapsed since the establishment of the French at Montreal, when the necessity for bettering the means of communication between the rising city and the settlements already existing at Lachine, Ste. Anne, etc., became apparent. The young colony was too poor, however, to think of building a canal with locks to overcome the very considerable fall in the nine miles of river from Pointe-à-Callières to Lachine.

The route followed by canoes at the time was along the north

(*) The writer desires to tender his most sincere thanks to Rev. P. Rousseau for the opportunity afforded him to consult those precious documents and for his kindness in guiding the search through them. For the last twenty years the reverend gentleman has lived with the old manuscripts and is probably the best informed man in Canada as to the early history of the Island of Montreal.