

Describing this part of the allies' journey between the Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, Dr. Parkman says, "The Huron fleet pursued its course along the bosom of Lake Simcoe,* up the little River Talbot, across the portage to Balsam Lake, and down the chain which form the sources of the River Trent."

This was no new route chosen for the occasion, but was one of the long established lines of travel between Lake Huron and Lake Ontario. The warriors of the Five Nations had often travelled it on their way to pillage and scalp the Hurons, and of the two thousand five hundred braves now led by Champlain, or, rather perhaps, leading him, it is probable that every lake, and stream, and swamp had frequently been traversed by the greater number.

Along such a highway it would seem reasonable to look for many traces of the former people, and this too more especially at the points of landing or departure forming the termini of the portages connecting the numerous lakes.

The old trail between the Talbot River and Balsam Lake is now used as a public highway, and is generally known as the Portage Road. As it nears the lake it runs through an extensive farm, known as "The Fort," the property of the brothers Laidlaw.

It is fortunate in the interests of archaeology that a gentleman of Mr. A. E. Laidlaw's tastes should be so favorably situated for the observation of the facts illustrative of what pertains to this subject, and that he should have been so scrupulously careful in the preservation of everything found in the neighborhood that might tend to throw more or less light on the sociology of the first inhabitants.

On the "Fort" farm a short distance from the lake there is a village site which on examination yielded a considerable quantity of fragmentary pottery and several bone needles or awls. Not far away and *on lower ground* were two rows of single graves numbering altogether about twenty. In most of these only faint traces of human remains were found, but in a few there were still some of the larger bones entire, but so fragile that they crumbled away on exposure. I managed to secure two skulls in an imperfect condition. As the Hurons always selected high ground for their places of sepulture, the position of these graves seems to point to the possession of this territory by a different people, unless we regard the burials under consideration as having been intended for only temporary purposes, prior to removal at the period of the Great Feast of the Dead. It is noteworthy, however, that no ossuary or communal grave is known in that part of the country. The situation, depth, order and regularity of these simple graves indicated intentional permanence on the part of the people who made them. The bones in every case were at least three feet below the surface, and in some cases even more. In the grave from which the most perfect skull was taken, the bones were lying in natural order, at a depth of four feet.

It is also to be observed that the almost total absence of bones from some of the graves did not lead to the conclusion that any removal had taken place, but rather that decay had completed, or nearly completed its work, and this would favor the belief that the bodies were placed here long anterior to the beginning of the seventeenth century, a period we can fix with certainty in connection with some Huron ossuaries in which the bones may still be found in a comparatively sound condition. It should be mentioned, further, that no tools or trinkets of any kind were discovered in these graves.

In company with Mr. Laidlaw I visited most of the Islands that add so much to beautify the waters of Balsam Lake.

* Then and for many years afterwards known as Tentaron, Taranto, Toronto, or Toronto. It was also known to the French as La Claire.