

## HISTORY OF THE WINDSOR AND DETROIT FERRIES.

By F. J. HOLTON, D. H. BEDFORD, AND FRANCIS CLEARY.

In the early days of the eighteenth century in the Great Lakes region, transportation was to a great extent carried on by means of birch bark canoes and bateaux. A bateau was a particular kind of boat very generally used upon the large rivers and lakes in Canada. The bottom of it was perfectly flat and each end was built very sharp and exactly alike. The sides were about four feet high, and, for the convenience of the rowers, four or five benches were laid across, according to the length of the bateau. It was a heavy sort of vessel for either rowing or sailing, but preferred for the reason that it drew little water and carried large loads, and was safer on lakes or wide rivers where storms were frequent. The bateau was at times propelled by means of sails, oars, and poles. The early inhabitants brought their furs to market either in canoes or bateaux. The furs were exchanged with the traders in return for supplies, ammunition, trinkets, etc.

In this region, nearly surrounded by water, the question of transportation was a most important one, and in the early days of the nineteenth century one among the modes in vogue between Detroit and the Canadian shore, of which we have definite knowledge, was that of a log canoe owned by a man named Pierre St. Amour, who, during the period of 1820-1830 kept a small tavern about where the north-east corner of Sandwich Street and Ouellette Avenue now is, and ran his ferry from the shore there across to Detroit, and landed his passengers as might best suit them, either at Griswold Street or Woodward Avenue.

The other ferry was log canoe (No. 2), owned by a man named Francois Labalaine, who lived on the Jeanette farm, about where the Canadian Pacific Railway station now stands. He ran his ferry from the shore at that point to the Detroit side of the river. At the door of his home was hung a tin horn, four feet long, which was used by Madame Labalaine to call him from across the river when passengers were waiting to cross over.

In the winter at that period, and for a long time previous to that time when the river was frozen over, the trip was made in sleighs crossing over on the ice. They were guided by brushwood placed at intervals on each side of the course to be followed. Crossing in this way was attended by great risk of danger and even by loss of life at times. As a proof of this the following is taken from the parish records of the Church of the Assumption, Sandwich, under date of January 1st, 1785: "Time, 8 a.m.; Menard, wife of Belair, was drowned with Demer's little girl while crossing the ice on a cutter. Demer's wife, who held her one-year-old child in her arms, was rescued by her husband. Were rescued also Belair and Duroseau, who hung on to Demer's cape."

Friend Palmer, in his book, "Early Days in Detroit," published in 1906, gives the following account of a trip he made from Buffalo, N.Y., to Detroit,