

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

COUNTIES OF FRONTENAC, LENNOX, AND ADDINGTON.

THE counties of Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington, on account no doubt of their position in the country, were formerly included in what was known as the Midland district. They front the river St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, extending a considerable distance westward from its estuary, the Bay of Quinte. The extent of the united counties is fifty-six miles in width, and is bounded on the south by the mighty St. Lawrence and the Bay of Quinte, on the north by the Madawaska River, on the east by the counties of Leeds and Lanark, and on the west by the county of Hastings.

The county of Frontenac was doubtless named after the founder of the first settlement in Upper Canada, Count de Frontenac, whose name will always have a prominent place in Canadian history. Although he was the founder of the first settlement in Upper Canada, he was in no way associated with the discovery of this country. Touching this subject, the honor of its discovery seems to be claimed by several parties. John Cabot sailed from the port of Bristol, England, in May, 1497, and following very nearly the same course now pursued by vessels making the voyage from Great Britain to North America, discovered, on the 26th of June, in the same year, the island of Newfoundland, which he named St. John's, in honor of the day. After a brief stay here he continued his westerly course and arrived off the coast of Labrador on the third day of the following month. If this be correct, as asserted by some historians, Cabot had the honor of being the first discoverer of our country, which, as it is said, was not seen by Columbus until thirteen months afterwards.

To Count de Frontenac belongs the honor, however, of overcoming the most formidable difficulties, enduring the most severe hardships, and finally, of seeing his adventurous course crowned with signal success. That he had gained great distinction there can be no doubt, as we find he had attained to the rank of brigadier-general, while he was honored with the confidence of his sovereign, who intrusted him with the most important instructions in regard to this new country. On coming to Canada, he was to secure by all means the aggrandizement of France. Immigration in large numbers from that country was strictly prohibited; he was, therefore, to seek the increase of population in New France (as Canada was then called) by inducing early marriages, and to this day it is a singular fact, the rate of increase by birth among the French is considerably greater, that is, in this country, than with the Anglo-Saxon. De Frontenac was to foster agriculture in all its forms, by raising stock and cultivating the land; he was to afford every facility to increase fishing operations and the trade abroad, and he was intrusted to adopt measures to construct a highway between Canada and Acadia—a plan which is now only about to be accomplished in the Intercolonial Railroad. His instructions were very explicit as regards his procedure with the Jesuits and Recollets, and he was charged to "administer justice with the strictest impartiality." The colony being at peace, Frontenac's chief difficulty was in dealing with the Church, and he found it necessary to take high-handed steps to bring the clergy into subjection to the state. There had been for years a struggle with respect to the liquor traffic among the Indians, the bishops being opposed to it, while the Government unluckily favored it, notwithstanding its debasing, degrading, and soul-destroying tendencies, merely for the purpose of increasing the trade in furs. The dissensions between the parties became so great, and representations to the home authorities so numerous and vexatious, that Frontenac and the Intendant were both recalled in 1682. During the incumbency of De Frontenac, explorations had been continued in the West, and the fort at Cataragui had been fully established, and the Mississippi had been discovered by Père Marquette and M. Joliet, in 1673. That same year Frontenac set out, the 29th of June, from Montreal, with an expedition for Cataragui, arriving there 12th of July. There was at this time a gentleman named Robert Cavalier de la Salle, a native of Rouen, who had come to Canada when a young man, full of a project for securing a road by a northwestern passage to China. He was evidently a man of considerable tact, ability, and energy, although his conclusions were often far from being correct; his means were slender, yet by some means or other he managed to secure the favorable notice of Count de Frontenac, who regarded him as a man of sterling worth.

The establishment of a fort on the banks of the Cataragui took place on the 13th of July, 1673. Count de Frontenac's expedition consisted of one hundred and twenty canoes, two bateaux, and four hundred men. His object in building the fort, no doubt whatever, was to prevent the encroachments of the Iroquois. The following description of his entrance into the river Cataragui is extracted from a journal of his voyage to Lake Ontario:

"12th (July, 1673), broke up camp very early in the morning, and having proceeded till 10 o'clock, halted three hours to eat and rest. On approaching the first opening of the Lake the Count wished to proceed with more order than had been already done, and in line of battle. He accordingly arranged the whole fleet in this wise:

"Four squadrons, composing the vanguard, went in front and in one line. The two bateaux followed next. After this came Count de Frontenac, at the head of all the canoes of his guards, of his staff, and of the volunteers attached to his person, having on his right the squadron from Three Rivers, and on his left those of the Hurons and Algonquins.

"Two other squadrons formed a third line, and composed a rear-guard.

"This order of sailing had not been adhered to for more than half a league when an Iroquoiscanoe was perceived coming with the Abbé d'Urse, who having met the Indians above the river Kalarakoui (Cataragui), and having noticed them of the Count's arrival, they were now advancing with the captains of the Five Nations.

"They saluted the Admiral, and paid their respects to him with evidence of much joy and confidence, testifying to him the obligation they were under to him for sparing them the trouble of going further, and for receiving their submissions at the River Kalarakoui, which is a very suitable place to camp, as they were about signifying to him.

"After Count de Frontenac had replied to their civilities, they preceded him as guides, and conducted him into a bay about a cannon-shot from the entrance, which forms one of the most beautiful and agreeable harbors in the world, capable of holding a hundred of the largest ships, with sufficient water at the mouth and in the harbor, with a mud bottom, and so sheltered from every wind that a cable is scarcely necessary for mooring.

"On the 13th of July, 1673, the fort was commenced, and on the 19th it was finished, and De Frontenac left on the 27th for Montreal, having laid the foundation of the future city of Kingston."

The news of Marquette and Joliet's discovery of the Mississippi, in 1674, created intense excitement in Canada, especially as Joliet represented that a person could go from Fort Frontenac, in Lake Ontario, in a barque to the Gulf of Mexico, there being only one carrying-place, half a league in length, where Lake Ontario communicates with Lake Erie.

Elated with a desire to emulate these adventures, De la Salle, to whom reference has already been made, petitioned His Majesty, Louis XIV, in 1674, for a grant of Fort Frontenac, four leagues of country along the border of Lake Frontenac, as it was then frequently called, the two islands in front, and the interjacent islands.

So intimately connected is the petition with the history of Frontenac County, that our sketch would be utterly incomplete without it; hence we take the liberty to submit it to our readers without abbreviation.

MEMOIR FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF FORT FRONTENAC.

"The proposer, aware of the importance to the colony of Canada of the establishment of Fort Frontenac, of which he was some time in command, and desiring to employ his means and his life in the King's service and for the augmentation of the country, offers to support it at his expense, and to reimburse its cost on the following conditions, to wit:

"That His Majesty be pleased to grant in seigniority to the proposer the said fort, four leagues of country along the border of Lake Frontenac, the two islands in front named Ganoukoesnot and Kaouenesgo (supposed to be Wolfe and Amherst Islands) and the interjacent islets, with the same rights and privileges obtained hitherto by those who hold land in the country in seigniority, with the right of fishing in Lake Frontenac and the adjoining rivers, to facilitate the support of said fort, together with the command of said place and of said lake, under the orders and authority of His Majesty's Governor, Lieutenant-General in the country; on which condition the proposer will be bound:

"1st. To maintain the said fort; to place it in a better state of defence; to keep a garrison there at least as numerous as that of Montreal, and as many as fifteen or twenty laborers during the first two years to clear and till the land; to provide it with necessary arms, artillery, and ammunition; and that so long as the proposer will command there in His Majesty's name, and until some other persons be authorized to settle above the Long Sault of the river St. Lawrence, through which people pass to said fort, without being charged with similar expense, or to contribute to that which the proposer will be obliged to incur for the preservation of said fort.

"2d. To repay Count de Frontenac, His Majesty's Governor and Lieutenant-General in Canada, the expense he incurred for the establishment of said fort, amounting to the sum of 12,000 or 13,000 livres, as proved by the statements thereof prepared.

"3d. To make grants of land to all those willing to settle there in the manner usual in the said country; to allow them the trade (*la traite*) when their settlements will be in the condition required by the Edicts and Regulations of the Sovereign Council of said country.

"4th. To attract thither the greatest number possible of Indians; to grant them land for villages and tillage; to teach them trades, and to induce them to lead lives more conformable to ours, as the proposer had begun to do with some success when he commanded there.

"5th. To build a church when there will be one hundred persons; meanwhile, to entertain one or two Recollet friars to perform Divine service, and administer the sacraments there.

"6th. His Majesty accepting these proposals, is very humbly supplicated to grant to the proposer letters of noblesse, in consideration of the voyages and discoveries which he made in the country at his expense during the seven years he continually lived there, the services he rendered in the country, and those he will continue to render; and all the other letters necessary to serve him as titles possessory to said seigniority."

This petition was granted in the succeeding year, and a decree to that effect was issued by the King on the 13th May, 1675, and a patent of nobility issued to La Salle, and Fort Frontenac, with four leagues of the adjacent country, was created a seigniority of Canada, and La Salle its first seignior.

DECREE ACCEPTING THE PROPOSALS OF ROBERT CAVALIER DE LA SALLE.

"COMPEIGNE, 13th May, 1675.

"The King having caused to be examined, in his Council, the proposals made by Robert Cavalier, Sr., De la Salle, setting forth that if it should please His Majesty to grant him, his heirs, successors, and assigns,

the fort called Frontenac, situate in New France, with four leagues of adjacent country, the islands named Ganoukoesnot and Kaouenesgo, and the adjoining islets, with the right of hunting and fishing on said lands and in the lake called Ontario, or Frontenac, and circumjacent rivers; the whole by title of Fief, Seignior, and Justice, appeals from the judges of which will be to the Lieutenant-General of Quebec and the Government of said Fort Frontenac, and letters of noblesse, he would cause considerable property he possesses in this kingdom to be transported to the said country of New France for the erection and establishment there of settlements, which may, in the lapse of time, contribute greatly to the augmentation of colonies in said country. Said De la Salle offers to reimburse the sum of ten thousand livres, the amount expended for the construction of said Fort Frontenac; to keep in good order the said fort, and the garrison necessary for the defence thereof, which cannot be less than that of Montreal; to maintain twenty men during nine years for clearing the land which shall be conceded to him; and until he shall have a church built, to keep a priest or friar to perform Divine service and administer the sacraments; which expenses, etc., the said De la Salle will defray at his sole cost and charges, until there be established above the Long Sault called Garonouy some individuals with similar grants to that he demands, in which case those who will have obtained said grants shall be bound to contribute to the said expenses in proportion to the lands which will be granted to them; and having heard the report of Sieur Colbert, Counsellor of the King in his Royal Council, and Comptroller-General of Finances, His Majesty in Council has accepted, and does accept the said De la Salle's offers, hath in consequence granted to him the property of the said fort called Frontenac, and four leagues of adjacent country, computing at two thousand toises each league, along the lakes and rivers above and below said fort, and half a league, or one thousand toises, inland; the islands named Ganoukoesnot and Kaouenesgo and the adjacent islands, with the right of hunting and fishing on said Lake Ontario and circumjacent rivers. The whole by title of Fief, and in full Seignior and Justice; on condition that he cause to be conveyed immediately to Canada all the effects he possesses in this kingdom, which cannot be less than the sum of 10,000 livres in money or movables; that he produce a certificate from Count de Frontenac, His Majesty's Lieutenant-General in said country; reimburse the sum of 10,000 livres expended in the construction of the said fort; put and maintain it in a good state of defence; pay and support the garrison necessary to defend it, which is to be equal at least to that of Montreal; likewise maintain twenty men during two years to clear the land, who shall not be otherwise employed during that time; cause a church to be erected within the first six years of his grant, and meanwhile to support a priest or friar for the administration of the sacraments; also, induce the Indians to repair thither, give them settlements, and form villages there in society with the French, to whom he shall give part of said land to be cleared, all which shall be cleared and improved within the time and space of twenty years, to be computed from the next, 1676, otherwise His Majesty shall be at liberty, at the expiration of the said time, to dispose of the lands which shall not be cleared or improved. His Majesty wills that appeals from the judges (to be appointed by the said De la Salle within the limits of the said country conceded by His Majesty) be to the Lieutenant-General of Quebec; and to that end His Majesty wills that all donatory and concessionary letters hereunto necessary be issued to the said De la Salle, together with those for the government of said Fort Frontenac, and letters of noblesse for him and his posterity."

It will be seen from this document that His Majesty, the King, attached peculiar importance to the clearing of the lands contiguous to the fort, and there is little doubt De la Salle made very great improvements between the years 1675 and 1678. The following is a copy of a license he received to discover the western part of New France:

"Louis, by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre; to our dear and well-beloved Robert Cavalier de la Salle, greeting: We have favorably received the most humble petition presented to Us in your name, to permit you to endeavor to discover the western part of New France; and We have the more willingly assented to that proposal, as there is nothing We have more at heart than the discovery of that country. We have every reason to expect from the application you have exhibited in clearing the lands We granted by the Arret of our Council of the 13th May, 1675, and letters-patent of the same date, in forming settlements on said lands, and in placing Fort Frontenac, whereof We have granted you the Seignior and Government, in a good state of defence. These and other causes Us moving hereunto, We have permitted, and by these presents, signed by our hand, do permit you to labor in the discovery of the western part of New France; and for the execution of this undertaking to construct forts in the places you may think necessary, whereof We will that you enjoy the same clauses and conditions as of Fort Frontenac, according and conformably to our said letters-patent of the 13th May, 1675, which We have as far as necessary confirmed, and by these presents do confirm. We will that they be executed according to their form and tenor, on condition, nevertheless, that you complete this enterprise within five years, in default whereof these presents shall be null and void; and that you do not carry on any trade with the savages called Outawacs and others, who carry their beavers and other peltries to Montreal; that you perform the whole at your own expense and that of your associates, to whom We have granted as a privilege the trade in cibola skins. We command Count de Frontenac, our Governor and Lieutenant-General, and Sieur Duchesneau, Intendant of Justice, Police, and Finance, and the officers composing the Sovereign Council in