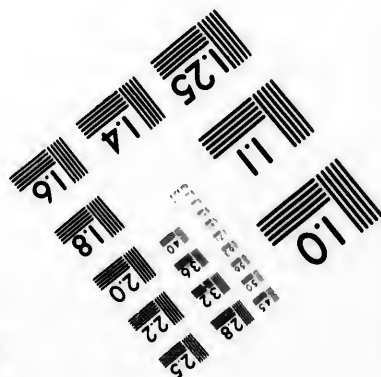
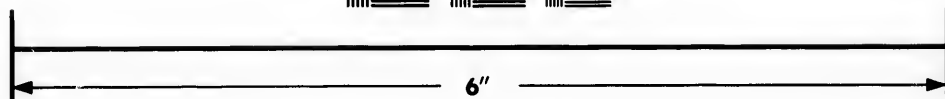
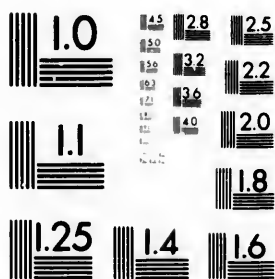


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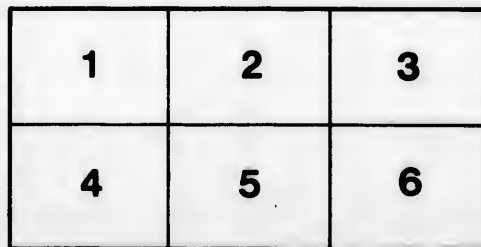
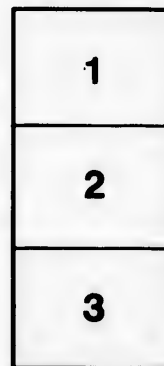
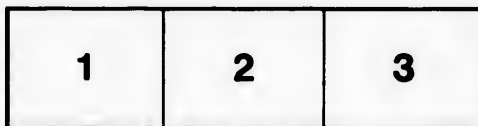
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# FATHER MARQUETTE

AT

MACKINAW AND CHICAGO.

A PAPER,

READ BEFORE THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OCTOBER 15, 1878.

By HENRY H. HURLBUT.



CHICAGO:

JANSEN, McCLURG & COMPANY.

1878.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROOMS,  
CHICAGO, October 17, 1878.

HENRY H. HURLBUT, Esq.,

DEAR SIR:— I have the honor to inform you, in behalf of the Chicago Historical Society, that a unanimous vote of thanks was extended to you for your excellent paper on "FATHER MARQUETTE AT MACKINAW AND CHICAGO," which you read before the Society on the evening of October 15, and a request was made that you furnish the Society with a copy of it for preservation in its archives.

Very Respectfully,

ALBERT D. HAGER,  
*Secretary.*



# FATHER MARQUETTE

AT

## Mackinaw and Chicago.

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THE able and eloquent oration of Rev. Dr. Duffield, at Mackinaw, published in the *Chicago Times* of the 15th of August last, has led me to say something referring to it and the good missionary, as well as the proposed enterprise of erecting an obelisk. I trust it may not be considered altogether unpardonable, if I have questioned or denied the correctness of some of the positions assumed by the orator referred to, for the truth of history certainly is the most important interest involved.

It is creditable to our common humanity when the grateful hearts of all classes of worthy citizens unite to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of a good man. It was suggested several years since, as well as more recently, that Chicago should erect a pillar in honor of Father Marquette; she may do so in the future, uniting, perhaps, with his name those of other pioneers, whose memory is identified with Chicago of long ago. Yet it seems fitting that, at the Island of Mackinaw, now a national park, a monument to the missionary should be reared, towering heavenward, at the Straits, the grand gateway of the Northwest, the field of labor of the devoted priest. Besides, Michigan has a prior claim to his celebrity; her early forests sheltered his form, she received his

expiring breath, and her soil contains his dust. I regret, however, that the orator at Mackinaw deemed it expedient to ignore the fact that Louis Joliet was at the head of the expedition wherein Father Marquette unintentionally achieved his fame. It was Joliet who, it is said, had previously been near the Mississippi, that was selected by the government of New France to explore the *great river*; Marquette was an *ecclesiastical attaché*. The one sought the glory of the French realm by extending its discoveries and enlarging its possessions; the other was ambitious to carry the knowledge of the true God to the benighted natives of the wilderness. That Joliet faithfully carried out his instructions and fulfilled his mission in the expedition to the Mississippi, we have no reason to doubt. But it was his great misfortune that, just upon the eve of his return, and of rendering the minute and extended report of his journey and discoveries, he was capsized from his canoe in the rapids above Montreal. By this accident his maps, his journal, and all his notes and papers were irrecoverably lost, and he barely escaped with his life. Joliet made a report to the government from memory, yet it lacked the particular and elaborate items which made up the daily journal, and hence the prestige and value of the original were wanting. We have no reason to believe otherwise than that the same enterprising and fearless spirit of adventure attended the footsteps of Sieur Joliet as waited upon those of the good missionary. Dr. Duffield says: "The honor of this discovery" (meaning the Mississippi) "has unjustly been given to La Salle, and also to Father Hennepin." Now, though Dr. D., it would seem, has scarcely been just to the memory of Joliet, I would deprecate any wrong done by shorn honors to Father Marquette. But really, of the public services of each of the gentlemen named, none need be ignorant; no conceit

of narrow-minded authors, nor the blundering stupidity of literary quacks, can entail any lasting injury upon the fame of either. Joliet and Marquette arrived at the Father of Waters in June, 1673, while La Salle did not reach and descend that river for nearly nine years afterward, not until early in 1682, though he had dispatched Father Hennepin upward thereon two years before. Dr. Shea, the author, whose admiration of James Marquette is second to none, when referring to his expedition to the Mississippi with Joliet, says: "France would have derived no benefit from this discovery but for the enterprise and persevering courage of Robert Cavelier de la Salle. When Joliet passed down Lake Ontario, in 1674, he stopped at Fort Frontenac, where La Salle was then commander under Frontenac. He was thus one of the first to know the result of Joliet's voyage, and perhaps was one of the few that saw his maps and journal, which were lost before he reached the next French post."

James Marquette was born in Laon, France, in the year 1637, became a Jesuit at the age of seventeen, and twelve years afterward, in 1666, sailed for Canada as a missionary, landing at Quebec, in September of that year. During the two succeeding years he was engaged in studying the Indian languages, and in the spring of 1668, he embarked, *via* the Ottawa and French rivers and Lake Huron, for the River St. Mary, at the falls of which a mission was to be established, with Marquette at its head. There were of the same religious faith earlier missionaries than Marquette, in the region of the great upper lakes, who were brave and devoted men; but it was Marquette's tour to the Mississippi which has made his name pre-eminently famous. Pushing out as he did into the region of the yet undiscovered wonders of the great valley, details of which journey have been fortunately preserved to

us by his faithful obedience to the instructions of his Superior, our admiration is enlisted by the charm of its romance. Yet it was the lofty aim of Marquette to be of enduring service to his fellow men; it was his integrity, his unselfishness, his untiring zeal, his gentle and uncomplaining disposition, and his early self-sacrifice near akin to martyrdom, that command our sympathies, and these are what made him truly great.

Dr. Duffield, I think, had a wrong impression when he said: "Taking probably the short trail through the woods, which is still distinctly visible, he found his admirable companion at Point St. Ignace." If I understand the Doctor's language correctly, it means that Marquette left the Falls of St. Mary (in 1673) over land, for Point Ignace, where he found his "admirable companion," meaning Joliet. There are facts which seem to conflict with the statement. Quite unlikely is it that Marquette, had he been at St. Mary, would have taken so uncomfortable a mode of travel as going on foot, through the swamps and tangles, from the Falls to Point Ignace, when so convenient a mode as by canoe was at hand. But I do not believe that Marquette was ever, either in life or death, at what is now called Point St. Ignace. However, be that as it may, from St. Mary's, in the autumn of 1669, he was chosen to go to Lapoint, or Chegoimegon, near the west end of Lake Superior, to continue the labors begun some years before by Allouez, or still earlier by Menard. In the spring of 1671, Marquette accompanied the fleeing Hurons, who sought a refuge at the Straits of Mackinaw from the fierce Sioux warriors, who had taken the war-path against them. I think the inference is a reasonable one, in the absence of positive evidence, that for safety they located on the Island of Mackinaw. There, as I believe, was the first mission of St. Ignatius founded by Marquette; and thence, in the spring of 1673,

Joliet, the leader, having arrived, they departed on their expedition for the *great river*. Dr. Duffield was not, perhaps, aware that the mission referred to occupied several different localities, at various periods, namely: the Island of Mackinaw, and the place on the north shore now called Point St. Ignace, as well also the mainland, south of the Straits, since known as Old Mackinaw. This last-named post seems to have been an important one, at least in the year 1695, twenty years after the death of Marquette, when La Motte Cadillac, who had succeeded Louvigny the year before at Mackinaw, and subsequently the founder of Detroit, was in command there. In a letter of his from there, of the year above named, he says: "This village is one of the largest in all Canada. There is a fine fort of pickets, and sixty houses, that form a street in a straight line. There is a garrison of about two hundred men, besides many other persons who are residents here during two or three months in the year." \* \* \* \* \*


"The villages of the savages, in which there are six or seven thousand souls, are about a pistol shot from ours. All the lands are cleared for about three leagues around their village, and perfectly well cultivated. They produce a sufficient quantity of Indian corn for the use of both the French and savage inhabitants."

The early maps and statements regarding the mission of St. Ignatius are either contradictory, or indefinite and unsatisfactory. The map in the Jesuit Relation of 1672 shows the mission as on the north shore; but from the same work, in the Relation of 1675, the year of Marquette's death, we learn that the mission existed at Old Mackinaw, and a church edifice had been erected there after the departure of Marquette, in 1673. On Marquette's map, drawn by himself in 1673 or 1674, the mission of St. Ignatius appears on the Island. If

any chapel or church building was erected by Marquette during his short residence at the Straits, it was doubtless a slight or temporary structure, and need not certainly be looked for at this day at Point St. Ignace. La Hontan's work, and the map therein, have been quoted as authority concerning the church at St. Ignace; but La Hontan is believed by many to be inaccurate and unreliable. It was eight years after the missionary died that he came over the sea, and five years later still when he appeared in the West. La Hontan had been dismissed from the service of the French government when his book was written, which was published in 1703. That work, it is understood, was the product of ill-humor and spite, and is referred to in the latest Encyclopedia, as "entirely untrustworthy for details of fact."

From a letter of Dr. J. G. Shea to myself, I quote as follows: "Though it is more than twenty years since I first wrote, I have never been able to identify the various positions which the mission of St. Ignace assumed at Mackinaw. The vagueness and uncertainty continue."

As for the late report that the grave of Father James Marquette has been discovered and identified, I must, in the absence of satisfactory evidence, and for reasons herein named, doubt its truth. Even with the assurance of Dr. Duffield, and the plea of Mr. Barnes, that we may place entire faith in the story, I must yet, with all due deference, cling to the probabilities, and believe the tale a sheer delusion. The great difficulty in the way of identifying the grave and remains of Father Marquette is, first, to establish the locality or neighborhood where they were last placed, and then to determine which grave is the right one. By the east coast of Lake Michigan, on his way to the Straits, it is well known that Father Marquette was first buried, where he died. Two years



later, that is, in 1677, his remains are said to have been taken to Mackinaw. Tradition has it that his bones were re-interred more than once, and again, that his grave within the foundation walls of a church on the north shore was washed into the lake. Furthermore, not a few believe that his last burial was at *old* Mackinaw, on the south peninsula. The late Dr. Amsden, of St. Joseph, Mich., who was familiar with the languages of the Indians living along the borders of Lake Michigan, told, many years ago, of some traditionary knowledge among them about Father Marquette, and that they pointed out to him the missionary's grave on the river bank, where he died. But a similar tradition about his grave was recorded by Charlevoix, who was on Lake Michigan a hundred years earlier, or forty-six years after Marquette's death.

It is claimed that the fragments of a mocock of Indian manufacture, supposed to have inclosed the bones of Father Marquette, have been found within the ruins of an old church at Point St. Ignace, though then, unfortunately, that grave neither presented an inscription nor contained a bone. But it must be conceded that the remains of many devout Roman Catholics may have been buried in bark mococks, and within the walls of churches, during the twenty decades which have passed since the remains of the missionary arrived at the Straits. I will allow that, under the circumstances, old stone walls were very suggestive; local pride, also, naturally, for honorable distinction, avails itself of the possibilities; and a fertile imagination, sometimes, by constructing plausible theories, lends specious aid to him that delves for the hidden. From all the facts of which we are as yet cognizant, I must believe that the dust of Father Marquette still lies enshrouded in the depths of a grave whose position is one of doubt and uncertainty.

The writer of this, not without some fear that he may have incurred the charge of personating the iconoclast, still rejoices in the possession of an immense bump of reverence for the *antique*; yet, as a general remark, of which, of course, I make no special application, I will say, when credulous ignorance or designing humbuggery essays to invest the unreal with the habiliments of the true relic, our faith may well stumble, and propriety exclaim, "Alas! for the quidnuncs!"

Dr. Duffield says: "On October 25, 1674, Marquette again left St. Ignace to fulfill a promise to the Indians in Illinois." If the Doctor had said *St. Xavier*, instead of St. Ignace, he would have been nearer right, for at that mission on Fox River, near Green Bay, he had just passed a full year in poor health. From there he kept a journal of his movements, commencing on that 25th day of October, the which formed a letter, though never finished, to his Superior, Claude Dablon, at Quebec. Even at this far away day, the sympathies of the reader of that journal can scarcely help being moved by the infirmities of the failing missionary, toiling through the storms of that inclement season, without murmur (excepting, perhaps, to say, "cabined poorly enough"), forty days from Green Bay to Chicago, where he was obliged to stop, short of his destination. The precise spot where the missionary made his temporary home I am unable to designate, but it was unquestionably upon the *south* branch of Chicago River, and not on the north, as sometimes said. I think it quite likely, that near where the outlet of Mud Lake joins the south branch, sheltered somewhat by the grove that skirted the water side, the feeble, though courageous man, pitched his tent.

Joliet and Marquette, on their return from the Mississippi the year before, came by way of the Illinois, the Desplaines



and Chicago. As far as satisfactorily proven, they were the first white men who placed foot upon the soil, or voyaged upon the stream, at Chicago. I am aware that Charlevoix tells that Nicholas Perot was here several years before them, but Dr. Shea, the editor of a late edition of Charlevoix, claims that the source of Charlevoix's information does not warrant the statement. I am inclined to think, however, that it would appear, could we arrive at the truth of the case, that more than one white man had been at Chicago before either Joliet, Marquette, or Perot, even if the latter may have been here in 1670. We are assured that Jean Nicolet, a Frenchman, an envoy from Canada, was at Green Bay in the year 1639, where he held a treaty with several thousand Indians. This council was held purposely to form a reciprocal and friendly acquaintance with the natives whose country bordered on the great upper lakes. It was designed to extend the dominion of the French King, Louis XIII., and specially and directly to aid and further the traffic of Canadian merchants, who wished to furnish their red brothers of the wilderness, in exchange for furs, the conveniences and luxuries, as well as the gauds and taints, of civilization. Nicolet, on this visit, crossed the portage to the Wisconsin, but we are not advised that any of his party went further south. Yet I am loth to believe that thirty years passed away after Nicolet's introduction at Green Bay before any Canadian trader coasted along the Illinois shore of Lake Michigan, or, following a then old-time route, went up the Chicago River and down the Desplaines to the interior. Those early traders followed the thoroughfares to the Indian villages; but, ever greedy for furs which might bring lucrative prices and early gains, they preserved no note of their business tours; at least no record was left behind, that I am aware of, which has been kept to answer the inquiries of the present day.

It was the large Indian village of Kaskaskia, on the upper Illinois, whose people Marquette had seen on his return from the Mississippi the year previous, that he was now, late in 1674, attempting to visit. The route from Green Bay was by the way of Sturgeon Bay (then as now so called), and the portage to Lake Michigan, and thence along the lake shore. Marquette had in his service two Frenchmen, called Peter Porteret, and James; of the surname of the latter we are not informed. As far as I know, these assistants of Father Marquette were the first, as well as the last, recorded slayers of the wild buffalo on Chicago soil. That they were faithful in their attendance upon the invalid missionary, in those weeks of his ebbing life tide, is quite evident; and for this, as well as the fact that they were among the earliest known residents of Chicago, their memory will be preserved.

I quote a few entries from Marquette's journal, or last letter, he having then arrived at the Chicago:

"Dec. 4. We started well to reach Portage River,\* which was frozen half a foot thick.' There was more snow there than anywhere else, and also more tracks of animals and turkeys. The navigation of the lake from one portage to the other† is quite fine, there being no traverse to make, and landing being quite feasible all along, providing you do not obstinately persist in traveling in the breakers and high winds. The land along the shore is good for nothing, except on the prairies. You meet eight or ten pretty fine rivers. Deer hunting is pretty good as you get away from the Pottawatomies."

"Dec. 12. As they began to draw to get to the portage,‡ the

\* Meaning the Chicago.

† Meaning those of Sturgeon Bay and the Desplaines.

‡ That is, upon the ice on the river, as I understand it.

Illinois having left, the Pottawatomies arrived with much difficulty.\* We could not say mass on the Feast of the Conception on account of the bad weather and the cold. During our stay at the mouth of the river, Pierre and Jacques killed three buffalo and four deer, one of which ran quite a distance with his heart cut in two. They contented themselves with killing three or four turkeys of the many which were around our cabin, because they were almost dying of hunger. Jacques brought in a partridge† that he had killed, every way resembling those of France, except that it had like two little wings of three or four feathers, a finger long, near the head, with which they cover the two sides of the neck, where there are no feathers."

"Dec. 14. Being cabined near the portage, two leagues‡ up the river, we resolved to winter there, on my inability to go farther, being too much embarrassed, and my malady not permitting me to stand much fatigue."

When Dr. Duffield tells us that Marquette's "two faithful companions erected a log hut and chapel," I think the statement would be difficult to prove. The missionary's letter imparts all we know regarding the matter. Indeed, I am constrained to believe that the quarters occupied by Marquette, during that winter of his sojourn here, were hardly what were needed by a sick man. His domicile is called a cabin; yet so were all their wigwams called cabins in their late journey from Green Bay. The frames of those Indian cabins were only a trellis-work in the form of an arbor, constructed of light poles fastened to the ground. Placed by the Indians at convenient spots along shore for camping, they

\* Two parties of Indians who left Green Bay at the same time he did are here referred to by Marquette.

† It was a grouse or prairie chicken no doubt.

‡ The leagues were guessed at, of course, not measured.

were, when uncovered and vacated, generally left standing for the use of the next household of those red and irrepressible tramps of the wilderness. The sheathing of those cabin-frames was usually of bark, sometimes of mats, and was always carried as a part of the traveler's outfit. With such also were Marquette and his Frenchmen doubtless provided, and the like cabin-frames were those which they used. Such cabins were never warmed; the small fire in the centre upon the ground merely warmed the hands and feet slightly when held near it, and the smoke found egress through the opening above, the same as in the Indian wigwams of to-day. That house, or wigwam and chapel, of Marquette at Chicago, possibly was doubly clad with bark, or mats and skins, but I much doubt its being a timber-built edifice.

The journal again says:

"March 30. The north wind having prevented the thaw till the 25th of March, it began with a southerly wind. The next day game began to appear; we killed thirty wild pigeons, which I found better than those below,\* but smaller, both young and old. On the 28th, the ice broke and choked above us. On the 29th, the water was so high that we had barely time to uncabin in haste, put our things on trees, and try to find a place to sleep on some hillock, the water gaining on us all night; but having frozen a little, and having fallen, as we were near our luggage, the dyke burst and the ice went down; and as the waters are again ascending already, we are going to embark to continue our route."

"March 31. Having started yesterday, we made three leagues on the river,† going up without finding any portage. We dragged for half an arpent. Besides this outlet the river

\* At Quebec.

† Meaning Mud Lake channel.

has another,\* by which we must descend. Only the very high grounds escape inundation. That where we are† has increased more than twelve feet. Here we began our portage more than eighteen months ago. Geese and duck pass constantly. We contented ourselves with seven. The ice still brought down detains us here, as we do not know in what state the river is lower down."

Marquette returned to Chicago, without doubt, after his visit to the Indian village on the Illinois, and in the month of May, 1675, he passed out of our river to the other side of the lake, and not only to the other side of it, but to the eternal shores beyond. On his way to Mackinaw, by the eastern shore of the lake, accompanied, doubtless, by the faithful Peter and James, he went ashore at the mouth of a river, since known by his name, and retired by himself, having requested the men to leave him alone for a brief space. But the good father had died in a little time, and they buried him upon the bank of the stream. Such is the tradition. So much, certainly, is not unreasonable, without giving credence to the numerous, minute, and dramatic details, portrayed by imaginative and artistic limners, as attending the exit of that true gentleman and kind-hearted missionary.

Marquette was evidently by nature a man of good intellectual ability, which had been improved by the culture of study and observation. He was the first to discover and tell us of the tidal rise and fall in the waters of Lake Michigan. Nearly a hundred and fifty years later the same facts were noticed by an officer of our army, but how much or what truth has since been demonstrated, or what deductions have

\* Meaning, no doubt, the Desplaines.

† On or near the Desplaines, no doubt.

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been established by scientific observers regarding the phenomena, I am unable to say.

Various utterances, indicating high Christian principle, appear in the letters of Marquette; and though some of us may reject many dogmas pertaining to the religious faith of the Romanists,—though we may place no confidence in the Order to which Marquette belonged, that Order founded by Loyola, the government of which has been so often marked by intrigue, tyranny, and crime,—yet all must concede to Father Marquette a sincere devotion to what he believed to be the most important interests of his fellow men.

He is understood to have died on the 18th of May, 1675; probably the 28th, as we now count the time. He was comparatively a young man, being only thirty-eight at his death. His physical organization and powers, we must believe, were quite unfitted for the ordeal of labor and exposure which he took upon himself. Yet the sum of what he accomplished we are not now to know; as for earthly immortality, his name will not soon be forgotten.



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