

Gandougarae

1656 - 1960



Dedication of the Site
of the
CHAPEL OF ST. MICHAEL
Holcomb, N. Y.

Saturday, June 11, 1960

7 p.m.

PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies

Rev. Robert F. McNamara
St. Bernard's Seminary,
Rochester, N. Y.

"God Bless America"

St. Bernard's Choir

Invocation

Rev. Ignatius X. Cameron
Pastor, St. Bridget's Church,
East Bloomfield, N. Y.

"The Meaning of the Monument"

Rev. Henri Bechard, S. J.
Caughnawaga, Canada

"An Historical Introduction"

Herman G. Hetzler

"The Life of Rev. Joseph
Chaumonot, S. J."

The Hon. Joseph Fritsch
Judge of Children's Court,
Rochester, N. Y.

The Presentation to His Excellency,
Most Rev. James E. Kearney, D. D.,
Bishop of Rochester

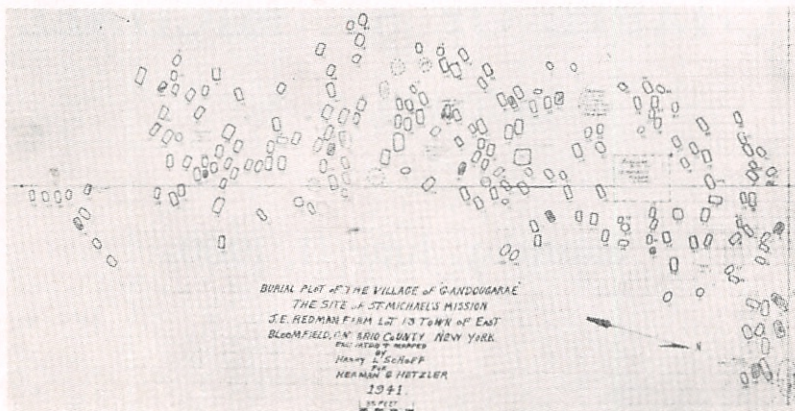
Herman G. Hetzler

"Holy God, We Praise Thy Name"

St. Bernard's Choir

COMMITTEE

Edward Weldon of Adams-Friederich & Sons, Harry Schoff, George
B. Selden, John T. Hamlin, Sheriff Earl Thompson of Ontario County,
Joseph A. Murphy, Carl Schoenherr



REV. JOSEPH CHAUMONOT, S. J., AND HIS WORK AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS

My dear Most Reverend Bishop, Monsignory,
Reverend Fathers, Beloved Sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here today to do honor to one of the greatest missionaries of the 17th century, the Reverend Joseph Chaumonot, a member of the Jesuit order who spent 54 years of his life among the Indians of America, especially the Hurons in our part of the country, then known as New France.

On this site, approximately 800 feet directly north of this monument, he erected the first chapel in the Rochester Diocese in the month of June, 1656.

Let us first, so you will understand, consider where Midland, Canada, is because this town will be mentioned several times in my talk. This is the site of the capital of the Huron nation. It lies in the Georgian Bay district or Lake Huron between the Sturgeon River and River Wye. It is where over a hundred thousand people travel each year to visit its National Shrine. This Huron country was the first to be evangelized by the early missionaries. They started in this village as far back as 1636. The Jesuits travelled from Quebec to Montreal, to the Ottawa River and the Ottawa nation, to the French River, and Nipissing River, into the Georgian Bay. It was twenty years later before the missionaries entered Western New York. The sites and chapels of St. Ignace, St. Marie, St. Joseph and St. Michael were destroyed by the Senecas in 1649. You will hear about this later.

Father Chaumonot was born in Burgandy on the River Seine. He was a novice in Rome at the age of 12 years and was ordained in 1632. He died in 1693. He left Rouin in a terrible storm that lashed and sunk many ships, even in the harbor. He was accompanied by the Reverend Joseph Poncet and Madam Marie de la Incarnation, who later established the Ursuline Order in Quebec. After three months on the open sea he arrived at Quebec August 1, 1639. We find him in 1640 among the Huron nation administering with Father Brebeuf in Huronia until the nation was destroyed in 1649. He spoke five dialects of the Indian language, which made him a great asset to the French mission.

At the time of the destruction of the Huron nation, Father Chaumonot and Paul Raginay, seeing that it was a matter of annihilation, made a successful escape by boat across the River Wye. As they looked back they could see the chapel and villages burning. The dreaded Senecas appeared before the forts of the Huron nation early in the morning equipped with 2,000 guns which they received from the Dutch and English at Fort Orange (now Albany) in exchange for their beaver pelts. The Hurons were a large nation, but being equipped with only the bow and arrow they were no match for the barbaric Iroquois. They scaled the walls and entered the village and massacred nearly everyone. They burned the chapel site of St. Ignace, St. Marie, St. Joseph, and St. Michel and murdered the missionaries, who were within the stockade or the chapels. The first missionaries who died were Father Brebeuf, known and honored by the Hurons as the great Echon.

The way the Iroquois treated their captives is too horrible to describe on paper. Little did Father Chaumonot know at this time the horrors of death until seven years later when some of the Huron eye witnesses explained to him on this very spot.

The survivors of this nation, except a few who escaped, were brought back to Monroe County. They were held in bondage and slavery four miles to the south of their village in Gandougarae, the present site of Victor, and other points through the states.

Father Chaumonot journeyed to Quebec and returned to New York State with the Reverend Claude Dablon on October 7, 1655. He followed the North Shore of the southern channel of the St. Lawrence River, arriving at the mouth of the lake at Wolf Island on the 29th of October, 1655. They killed over 25 bear on this island at the end of the lake. I wonder whether the present Bear Point did not receive its name from this evidence of historical research and

data. He crossed the river at this point; and for the benefit of residents of Jefferson County and local historians who believe that Fathers Dablon and Chaumonot had crossed the lake on their travel to Onondaga (Syracuse), I find this is not so. They travelled eight leagues to the south and took the inland route that was most undoubtedly taken by LeMoyne two years previous and that of Champlain in 1615. They entered into the entrance of Chaumonot Bay, where the village of Oronthea was located, and spent the first night on the sands at its entrance to the lake. He remained here three days. Here he was greeted with open arms and hugged on meeting the same Hurons whom he had administered to seven years before in Huronia. This same incident occurred at Port Ontario. Leaving his canoes and paraphernalia at Chaumonot Bay, he started on his travels to Onondaga. He spent the second night on the gravel of Stony Creek nearby Ellsburg, Jefferson County. He arrived on the 4th of November at Port Ontario where the La Famine River enters the lake at the Village of Oneota, and from there he traveled south to Onondaga. After arriving in Onondaga he travelled to the Cayuga nation where Father Rene Menard and Stephen de Carhile later built the first chapel in Cayuga County at the Mapleton site. He travelled westward and south of Manlius near Phoenix. He built a chapel under the name of St. Jean Baptista. We next find him at the mouth of the Oswego River where Father Le Moyne was engaged in loading 30 canoes to move to Beauport on the Isle of Orleans near Quebec. It was Simon Le Moyne who told him of the large assembly of Hurons among the Senecas. He defied everyone to enter upon this barbaric center of the Iroquois nation who had murdered so many of his brethren seven years before at Midland, Huronia. He found this Huron site where thousands of Hurons, captives of the Senecas, were located and immediately built a chapel of St. Michael to replace his chapel of St. Michel in Huronia. Later in the year in the heart of the land of the Senecas, four miles to the north, he established a chapel to St. James at Boughton Hill in Victor. The village of Gandougarae along with the chapel site were burned in an accidental fire and rebuilt in 1668. The first sermon preached to these Hurons is described by Father Fremin at the opening of the chapel in 1668. This same chapel along with the village of Gandougarae was burned again by Dennonnenville in 1687. The church and village were never rebuilt. Many Christian Hurons who did not follow the missionaries into Canada were educated and instructed here.

When political circumstances deprived these Jesuits of administering and teaching these Indians, their instruction was continued by the Canadian Missions. France may have lost her supremacy in America and could have been called unsuccessful, but the missions closed successfully with the knowledge enshrined in the souls of many American Indians.

Close to 100 years later we find Father Piquet, a Sulpician Missionary, who had received the good will of the Governor General of Canada, who allowed him to build the second last of the French missions at what is now Ogdensburg, New York. Then it was known as the village of La Presentation. Eighty long houses were built to harbor 3,000 of these Christian convert Indians.

TO THE BISHOP

My dear Reverend Bishop, it has been an honor to have you with us today on this occasion. I hereby present to you a deed to the property and marker for the Diocese of Rochester, also this key which was dug from this mission site. This key in all probability was the key to the chapel. It is also the key to Catholicism in your Diocese, the key to bringing the word of God to these pagan Indians. This site is a salutary reminder to people of all creeds and denominations; a simple shrine to the memory of the heroic missionaries who brought the precious heritage of Christianity to our Diocese.

THANK YOU!

HERMAN G. HETZLER

June 11, 1960