

The Search for St-Ignace II

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The Jesuit mission of St-Ignace II was the site of one of the climactic events of early Ontario history: the murder of Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant by marauding New York Iroquois. Although these events have inspired eloquent descriptions from 19th and 20th century authors, as well as several movies, their location remains in doubt. A new assessment of the 17th century maps of Huronia, use of archival resources from the University of Western Ontario, and interviews with participants permit a detailed re-examination of the problem. In many ways, the search for St-Ignace II is the early history of Ontario archaeology.

Introduction

The Jesuit mission of St-Ignace II was the site of one of the climactic events of early Ontario history: the murder of Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant by marauding New York Iroquois. Although these events have inspired eloquent descriptions from 19th and 20th century authors, as well as several movies, their location remains in doubt. Many of Ontario's archaeologists and historians have become involved in this quest; in many ways, the search for St-Ignace II is the early history of Ontario archaeology.

The outline of this story is reported by Heidenreich (1971:47) but recent information, including a reassessment of the 17th century maps of Huronia, access to archival resources from the University of Western Ontario, and interviews with participants in the quest, permits a detailed re-examination of the problem. Because of the controversies it engendered, modern archaeologists have generally avoided the subject of St-Ignace II, yet the absence of scholarly evaluation has encouraged the development of myths about the site and its researchers which are, in some cases, worse than the reality. This paper endeavours to set the record straight.

It should be emphasized at the outset that I do not intend to criticize the archaeological methods utilized by the participants in this story. Without exception, they were serious about their efforts and adhered reasonably closely to the standards of their day. Although some of these standards

might be viewed as inadequate today, archaeologists should nevertheless honour the founders of our modern "scientific" discipline. We may, without disrespect, reinterpret their work in light of more recent advances in method and theory.

The creation and destruction of St-Ignace II, A. D. 1648-9

The mission of St-Ignace appears to have been a subsidiary to St-Joseph, the primary Jesuit mission to the Attigeeonongnahac people of the Huron confederacy. In April or May 1648, this village and/or its mission were apparently moved closer to the home site of Ste-Marie (JR 33:89, 167; Trigger 1976:743; Latta 1985:160-1). For convenience, researchers refer to the first site as "St-Ignace I" and the second as "St-Ignace II"; whether they did, in fact, represent the same population is of course uncertain.

According to eyewitnesses, on 16 March 1649 the Jesuit fathers Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were captured at St-Louis, together with many Huron, by a war party of New York Iroquois. They were taken back to St-Ignace II, which had been captured earlier, and there they were tortured and killed. Their bodies were later retrieved from the ashes of St-Ignace II and brought back to the mission headquarters at Ste-Marie. (Jones 1908 presents a thorough summary of the documents relating to these events; Heidenreich 1971 and Trigger 1976 evaluate them in relation to a number of aspects of contemporary Huron society.)

St-Ignace II was described with considerably more detail than was usual in the Jesuit Relations; in many ways, we know more about this site than about many sites which were much larger and more important to the Huron. Ragueneau observed that it was "...encircled by a deep depression (in the land), with which nature had powerfully fortified the place on three sides, leaving but a small space weaker than the other sides" (JR 34:123,5; Jones 1908:101-108). Jones interpreted this to mean that the site was located on

high ground, surrounded on three sides by deep ravines (1908:41). In addition, a wooden palisade had been erected around the village.

The site of St-Ignace I was depicted on all four of the existing maps of Jesuit Huronia (Heidenreich 1971), though there are a number of inconsistencies among the maps (Latta 1985). It is located on the third river, perhaps the Sturgeon, on the *Corographie* of 1639-48 and also on DeCreux's derivative 1660 map, while the "Bressani" map of 1657 places it on the shore of a distorted Lake Simcoe. St-Ignace II appears on none of these maps.

Since St-Ignace II was not indicated on any maps, its location may be determined from ethnohistoric texts; unfortunately, these are not very specific. The site which served as the basis for most of the Jesuits' estimate of distance, and the single site whose location is established beyond question, is Ste-Marie I, the home of the Jesuit mission to Huronia, located on the Wye River east of modern Midland. There is no reference to the distance between Ste-Marie and St-Ignace II, but there are references to two legs of a triangle: Ste-Marie/St-Louis and St-Louis/St-Ignace II. From this information, it might be possible to determine the third leg, Ste-Marie/St-Ignace II. (See Jones 1908 for a detailed account of this measurement.)

St-Louis lay midway between St-Ignace II and Ste-Marie. It was separated from St-Ignace II by a distance of about one league (JR 34:123) or two Italian miles (JR 35:252) (roughly three miles: see Heidenreich 1975:45-49). A similar distance separated St-Louis from Ste-Marie: they were close enough that smoke and flames of the burning houses at St-Louis were clearly visible at Ste-Marie (JR 34:125). The total of these two distances is roughly six miles, and this represents the maximum distance from Ste-Marie to St-Ignace II. Whether it is correct or not depends, of course, upon whether or not the three sites were in a straight line (Heidenreich 1971:46; Latta 1985).

Despite these questions, the ethnohistoric accounts agree on most details. St-Ignace II was a palisaded Huron village, and most or all of it was destroyed by fire in the Iroquois attack. It was not reoccupied, and there was no further European interest in the site for two hundred years.

The beginning of the search for the site of St-Ignace II

Interest in the site of St-Ignace II began in 1842 with the return of the Jesuits to Canada. Within two years of their re-establishment, Father Pierre Chazelle, Superior of the Society in Montreal, visited Ontario to search for evidence of his martyred predecessors. During a two-day visit, Chazelle took a canoe trip up the Sturgeon River and identified a site as that of St-Ignace II (Hunter 1900:79-80. Fox 1949:72 suggested that this might have been the site of St-Ignace I instead.) The criteria by which Chazelle identified the site, and its location, are not known but he probably communicated this information to other re-searchers in the Montreal area.

Father Felix Martin, the Rector of the newly-established College Ste-Marie in Montreal, published in 1852 a French translation of Bressani's *Breve Relation*, including the "Bressani" map. A government grant of \$250 enabled Martin to visit Simcoe County in August of 1855. His notes, maps and drawings, entitled *Voyages et Recherches dans l'ancien pays des Huron en 1855* are located in the Public Archives of Canada and in the Jesuit archives in St-Jerome, Quebec. They have never been published, but they were utilized by Jones in his 1903 and 1908 publications dealing with the location of St-Ignace II. The observations of Chazelle and Martin deserve further study, for they were made at a time when settlement in Huronia was still limited and site destruction minimal; they may contain valuable environmental information as well as a measure of the rate of site decay due to modern agriculture.

Dr. J. C. Taché of Montreal also toured Huronia between 1860 and 1865. His notes and map, also unpublished, were utilized by Francis Parkman (1867); the frontispiece map in *The Jesuits in North America* is reported to have been Taché's (Hunter 1902:68; JR 13:269-70). Parkman's highly coloured work aroused international interest in the events of 1649 and St-Ignace II.

The Newton Site and the Matthew Campbell Site

Andrew F. Hunter began the archaeological search for St-Ignace II in the 1890s. As a part of his intensive archaeological surveys of Simcoe County, Hunter offered the first published speculation on the location of St-Ignace II to be

based on any evidence beyond the 17th century site description. Comparing the ethnohistoric evidence with his own examination of archaeological sites in the region, Hunter decided that St-Ignace II was located on the Charles Newton farm, Lot 11, Concession VI, of Tay Township, on the west bank of the Hog River. The ground, he noted, was "covered with ashbeds and blackened soil, mixed with relics. The latter consisted of iron tomahawks, knives, pieces of metal probably cut out of worn-out brass kettles, and pottery fragments in endless quantities" (Hunter 1900:66-67, 1911:13-16). While Hunter sometimes relied upon second-hand information, this appears to have been a personal observation.

Father A. E. Jones, Archivist of the College Ste-Marie in Montreal, approached the problem of the location of St-Ignace II by a method derived from classical studies. Converting the verbal distance estimates between mission sites into map distances, and utilizing the principles of geometry, Jones determined that St-Ignace II must be located along the Sturgeon River, in eastern Tay Township. He rejected Hunter's chosen spot, noting that the Newton site was only one league

from Ste-Marie, far too close to be St-Ignace II, and on low ground which could hardly be described as "powerfully fortified by nature"; the Newton site might have been St-Louis (Jones 1908:103).

On August 15, 1902, Jones set out to find the site of St-Ignace II by means of his geometric projections. Among his party was a Mr. George Hamilton who had accompanied Jones on at least one similar search three years previously (Jones 1908:121); Hamilton is an important thread in the tangled history of the search for St-Ignace II. One of the sites examined in the 1902 expedition was located on land owned by Mr. Hamilton's father, but Jones noted that "... alas...it did not tally with the description in the old records" (1903:102).

The Matthew Campbell farm, Lot 4, Concession VII of Tay, appeared so like Ragueneau's description of St-Ignace II that the Jones party accepted it at once. No artifacts were found at the site, which was in crop, but iron axe heads had been reported from an adjoining property which Jones felt to have been the location of the battle outside the village (1908:125-7). The party adjourned without hesitation to Coldwater, where a

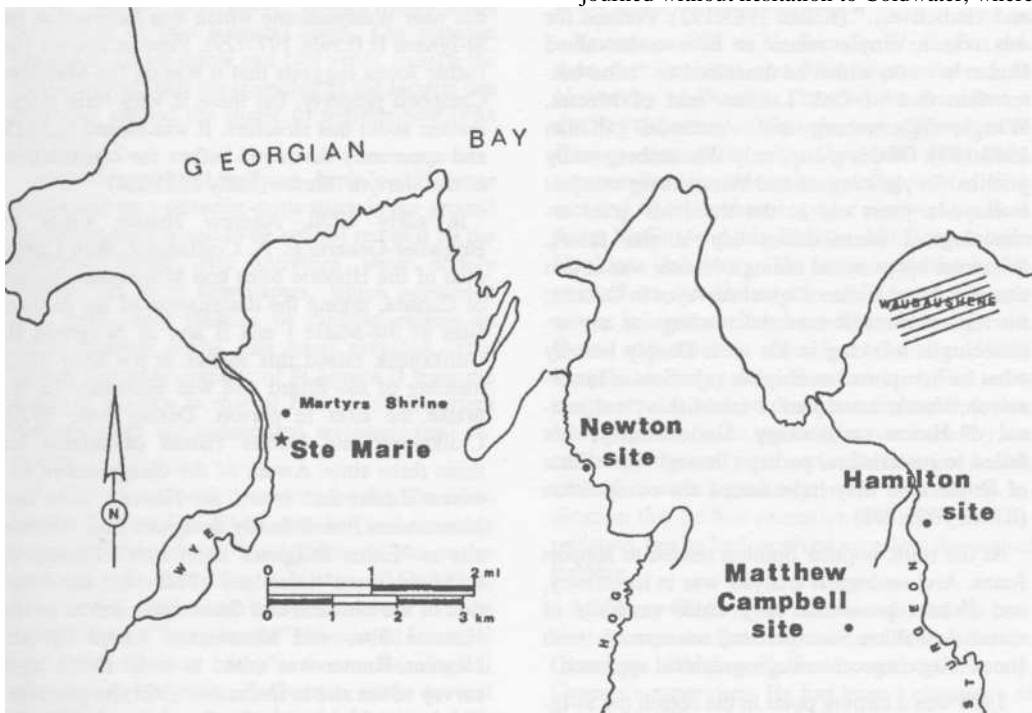


FIGURE 1
The Newton, Matthew Campbell, and Hamilton Sites in Northern Huronia

restrained celebration was held in honour of the success of the venture.

Hunter reacted to Father Jones' discovery with a vehemence which doubtless surprised Jones, by all accounts a jovial and pleasant man. For some time, Hunter had been engaged in an acrimonious debate with Dr. David Boyle, Archaeological Curator at the Ontario Provincial Museum, concerning Boyle's failure to hire Hunter as a staff archaeologist and to give Huron research a more prominent status in the new museum. Hunter viewed Jones' work, and especially its publication in the *Annual Archaeological Reports of Ontario*, as a personal slight. His own views had appeared in previous issues, as well as in addenda to Thwaites edition of *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* and Hunter seems to have viewed Huron archaeology as his own private research area. He apparently felt that the publication of Jones' differing conclusions was intended by Boyle to cast doubts upon his own competence.

One can sympathize with Boyle in this debate; even Hunter's friends admitted that he was "...solitary and idiosyncratic..." and under pressure his personality became "...aggressive, rude and vindictive..." (Killan 1983:192). Perhaps for this reason, Boyle seems to have undervalued Hunter's work, which he described as "...no bet-ter than that of Col. Laidlaw and of Messrs. Waugh, Wintemberg and Anderson" (Killan 1983:194). Of this group, only Wintemberg really justified Boyle's regard and Wintemberg was just twenty-six years old at the time; his great archaeological contributions lay in the future. Whatever his personal failings, Hunter was at that time the finest archaeological surveyor in Ontario; his reports are still essential reading for any archaeologist working in his area. Deeply hurt by what he interpreted as Boyle's rejection of his re-search, Hunter attempted to establish a rival journal of Huron archaeology. Unfortunately, this failed to materialize, perhaps through the efforts of Boyle who may have feared the competition (Killan 1983:193).

At the time, popular opinion tended to support Jones. Archaeological analysis was in its infancy, and Hunter possessed only crude methods of material culture comparison, compared with Jones' elegant geometric-geographical approach.

1908 was a turning point in the search for St-Ignace II. Plagued by financial difficulties, Hunter accepted a position with the Geological Survey of Canada and his active archaeological survey work

ceased, although his interest in the problem of St-Ignace II lasted throughout his long life. Boyle suffered a debilitating stroke, which ended his involvement with Canadian archaeology. Jones **published *Sendake Ehen or Old Huronia***, expanding his 1903 article to include more documentary evidence. An unexpected result of this expansion was that Jones recognized a number of theoretical weaknesses in his own case. Shortly before his death, he told a number of friends that he no longer placed any reliance on his calculation of the location of St-Ignace II (Moir and Mc-Givern:pers. com.).

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, public interest was stirred by the recognition of the Jesuit martyrs by Pope Pius XI. Brébeuf and Lalemant, among others, were beatified on 21 June 1925 and canonized on 29 June 1930. In the decades which preceded these events, attention focussed on the site of Ste-Marie I whose ruins were still clearly visible on the east bank of the Wye River, and this raised hopes that St-Ignace II, the site of martyrdom, might also become accessible to the faithful.

A chapel was raised by the Jesuits in 1907 on a site near Waubashene which was believed to be St-Ignace II (Craig 1977:29). Popular respect for Father Jones suggests that it was on the Matthew Campbell property, but there is very little information about this structure. It was closed in 1925 and apparently destroyed before the construction of the Martyrs' Shrine (Lally 1951:2,4)

In early 1920, Andrew Hunter wrote to Brigadier-General E. A. Cruikshank, then Chair-man of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, urging the designation of the historic sites of Ste-Marie I and II and of St-Ignace II. Cruikshank raised this matter at the May 1920 meeting of the Board and was appointed to appraise the sites in person. During June 1920, Cruikshank and Hunter visited candidates for these three sites. Aware of the disagreement between Hunter and Jones, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board finally designated the Newton site as "Either St-Ignace II (Hunter's choice) or St-Louis (Jones' selection)". Following the donation of the site land and the access corridor to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board by Mr. Newton, Hunter was asked to assist in the legal survey of the site in December 1921; he personally selected the location for the stone cairn (Cruikshank 1920) which was dedicated on 15

September 1923 under the auspices of the Orillia Historical Society (On 1923).

The Hamilton Site: early explorations

One individual was particularly stirred by the story of the Jesuit martyrs: Alphonse Arpin, an illiterate farmer from Penetanguishene. Newspaper photos show a slim, erect man with dreamy eyes and a gigantic mustache which obscured the lower half of his face. Arpin had memorized all of the relevant passages from the Jesuit Relations and he produced a location on Lot 5 or 6 (ac-counts vary) of Concession IX, Tay Township, which was, he explained, the only spot which exactly matched the description of St-Ignace II (Fox 1949). By coincidence, Lot 6 was the farm of George Hamilton, Jones' erstwhile companion, which had been rejected by Jones himself in 1902.

A scientific test was carried out by Arpin and T. G. Connon of Elora. They wheeled a bicycle with a mounted odometer from Ste-Marie to the Hamilton farm to determine whether the locations were indeed six miles (Jones' calculated equivalent of two leagues) apart. The distance proved to be six miles and 600 yards, though the men observed that the bouncing of the bicycle tire probably caused the meter to register low (Fox 1949:86-7).

According to local tradition, Arpin's choice was confirmed by a miracle: cards stuck in the ground overnight were found to be stained red as if by the martyrs' blood. His activities were widely reported in local newspapers, which compared him with other persons of humble origins to whom mystic truths had been revealed. This shifted the investigations of St-Ignace II from the realm of science to that of faith, with important consequences for subsequent archaeological re-search.

T. G. Connon was the agent for the Canadian Pacific Railroad in Elora, but his real interests were collecting and local history. He wrote several books, including a history of Goderich, bought and sold used books, and had a wide reputation as a "bone hunter": Sherwood Fox later described Connon as "...the archaeological authority on Huronia... ". Connon wrote several newspaper articles concerning the location of St-Ignace II, stressing his own (and Arpin's) conclusions. In June 1933, these articles came to the

attention of Fred Landon, the Librarian at the University of Western Ontario who, in turn, communicated the information to two other interested parties: J. Murray Gibbon and W. Sherwood Fox. Gibbon, Fox and Connon formed an *ad hoc* consortium to promote the Hamilton site as the real St-Ignace II.

At first Connon was flattered by this recognition, but as time passed he became convinced that his discoveries were being stolen by Fox and Gibbon. His correspondence with Fox showed increasing agitation, demanding that the consortium give him primary credit for the discovery of the site.

in was not involved in this exchange. When he died in May 1936, Arpin, being illiterate, left no records of his own work, and it is not possible to determine the relative contributions of Arpin and Connon to the discovery of the Hamilton site. Connon died four months later, and in October 1936 the search for St-Ignace II passed to the capable hands of Dr. Sherwood Fox.

The Hamilton Site: Fox and Wintemberg

Known as Bill to his friends, W. S. Fox was then the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Ontario, the President of the Royal Society of Canada, and a person of influence throughout the Canadian educational community. His university training was in Classics and Greek archaeology; he received his B. A. from McGill and his PhD in 1911 from Johns Hopkins University. He was immediately appointed to the University of Western Ontario, where in a short time he was promoted first to Dean and then to President (Landon 1969). Despite his heavy administrative load, Fox wrote many articles and books, often light rather than scholarly in tone; he is fondly remembered by one contemporary as "a man who loved a good story even if it wasn't precisely true". There is no indication that he had extensive archaeological experience, but he had received excellent theoretical training.

J. Murray Gibbon, the third member of the consortium, was the Public Relations Director for the Canadian Pacific Railroad and, indirectly, Connon's supervisor. He had been a classmate of Fox at McGill and their friendship was sustained by a mutual interest in Canadian history. Gibbon also wrote a number of books on popular history

and he was greatly excited by the opportunity to be involved in the search for St-Ignace II.

Following Connon's death in 1936, Gibbon wrote to Fox suggesting that they obtain the services of W. J. Wintemberg of the National Museum to excavate the Hamilton site. Fox was already acquainted with Wintemberg, probably through the Lawson site excavation, and at first he was not enthusiastic, noting that Wintemberg "...lacks knowledge of the missionaries and their literature..." and referring to Wintemberg as "...a self-trained man and trained only in the Indian field." There is no indication of the reason for the coolness between these two men, but it appears throughout their association. In this case, Fox was eventually persuaded, and by 15 December 1936 he reported that Wintemberg was willing to do their work if he could be spared from the National Museum.

Despite Fox's reservations, Wintemberg had extensive experience with other Iroquoian sites, and he was already familiar with the St-Ignace II problem from his early association with David Boyle at the Ontario Provincial Museum. He seems to have been reluctant to accept the offer, perhaps because of his feelings about Fox and certainly because of his failing health, but he too was persuaded by Gibbon who clearly perceived that Wintemberg was the best man for the job. Two periods of excavation were carried out under Wintemberg's supervision: 15-21 September 1937 and part of July and August 1938. During the latter period, assisted by several workmen whose salaries were paid by the Martyrs' Shrine, Wintemberg excavated a palisade line which circled an area of about ten acres and exposed the entirety of two postmould patterns which he identified as longhouses.

Wintemberg was one of the first archaeologists in Ontario to search actively for evidence of structural remains. Several of his reports show palisade lines, but there is reason to doubt whether he ever actually saw the characteristic pattern of an Iroquoian longhouse. Certainly, he found no house remains at sites such as Roebuck and Southwold where more recent re-excavation has shown that they occur in abundance; the "house patterns" which he reported from the Lawson site bear little resemblance to those which later archaeologists have observed.

Wintemberg was, however, a superb analyst of material culture. His methods and theoretical approaches bear comparison with good modern

work and he knew what sort of artifacts should be found in an Iroquoian site. For this reason, his observations on material culture at the Hamilton site are more reliable than those on settlement pat-terns. Unfortunately, Wintemberg did not provide any artifact summaries for his two seasons, though ceramics and one or more iron objects are mentioned. European trade items fascinated Wintemberg throughout his career, perhaps because they provided the most reliable date for a site. None of Wintemberg's previous excavations had been in so late an historic site and he had no way of estimating the amount of trade material to be expected at St-Ignace II.

Wintemberg's field notes for both seasons are extremely brief and concerned primarily with his growing belief that the Hamilton site might be the authentic St-Ignace II. Nevertheless, he had some reservations: "One of the most puzzling features of the site is that so few specimens were found; the fact that the village was inhabited for such a short time that no great accumulation of relics could be expected and that most of the possessions of the vanquished Hurons were probably carried away by the victorious Iroquois, *does not seem a sufficient reason for their almost total absence from the areas that were excavated*" (my emphasis). His explanations, but not his reservations, were quoted repeatedly by Fox in later years.

During the winter of 1938, Wintemberg had a serious heart attack. He had not recovered by the fall of 1940, when he suffered a stroke which ended his archaeological career. The consortium was disturbed by this delay in the excavation of the Hamilton site. After Wintemberg's stroke, Fox wrote (9 November 1940) to Diamond Jenness, the Director of the National Museum of Canada, suggesting that since Wintemberg would not be able to make any further use of his notes, they should be turned over to "a responsible party" for analysis. Jenness responded cautiously that the notes in question were in a locked cabinet to which Wintemberg had the only key, and that it might be better to wait for a few weeks to see whether Wintemberg recovered; if not, then Jenness felt that the notes should go to Fox with the restriction that nothing be published until a care-fully prepared final statement was ready.

Fox next wrote to various friends expressing his doubts about Wintemberg's ability to continue the evaluation of the Hamilton site. He assured each correspondent that although Wintemberg had ini-

dally had some reservations about the validity of the site, "two or three days' work had been sufficient to completely convince him of its identity." Furthermore, Fox noted, he himself was preparing a full report on the site to be presented at the coming meetings of the Royal Society of Canada in May 1941.

He also wrote (8 January 1941) to James Hamilton, the site owner, concerning Wintenberg's health. In this letter, Fox made the curious request that any previous speculations about St-Ignace II (presumably Wintenberg's) were unauthorized and should be ignored. He then personally confirmed that the site was actually that of St-Ignace II and offered his services in the sale of the site to "...the proper authorities...".

Fox appeared ready to take *over* the St-Ignace II project completely when (9 March 1941) he received a shakily handwritten letter from Wintenberg announcing his plans to resume the excavation and analysis of the Hamilton site. Although he was clearly aware of Fox's intentions ("I was very much disappointed to learn that I had been superannuated"), he offered to read Fox's manuscript for the Royal Society presentation. Fox replied (12 March) congratulating Wintenberg on his recovery, but he noted that his paper "...cannot yet be submitted to the perusal of another..."—this, to the man who had **actually** carried out the research!

On 25 April 1941, just before the Royal Society meeting, Wintenberg suffered another massive heart attack and died (Jeness 1941). Jury noted that this was a sad blow to the group (1975:2) but by 2 May Fox **had** recovered sufficiently to write T. F. McIlwraith at the Royal Ontario Museum proposing a division of the **archaeological** spoils. Ste-Marie needed careful excavation and funding; it would go to the R.O.M. and a promising young archaeologist named Kenneth Kidd. St-Ignace II, Fox observed, was a small project and would not require much more work. "Jury could direct this work quite satisfactorily since he has worked a season with Wintenberg and knows the latter's methods." At the May meeting of the Royal Society, Fox announced that Wintenberg had "proved" that the Hamilton site was actually the location of St-Ignace II.

The Hamilton Site: Fox and Jury

War pressures slowed the investigation of the Hamilton site. In 1946 and 1947, Wilfrid Jury,

with a crew of six labourers and shovels, completed the site excavation, recording twenty-four additional longhouses.

Jury became interested in archaeology as a young man. After his services in the British Naval Intelligence during World War I, he developed tuberculosis and spent several years in a sanatorium near Byron, Ontario. During this period, he began to collect and identify natural objects and artifacts, using the laboratory facilities and the library at the sanatorium. He became acquainted with W. S. Fox, who provided him with a room for his collections at the University of Western Ontario and gave him a special weekly course on **archaeological** method and theory.

At the beginning, Jury served as liaison with T. G. Connon, making arrangements for visits to the Hamilton site and assuring Connon of the good-will of Fox and Gibbon. He worked with Wintenberg on several occasions, including the Lawson site and the Southwold Earthworks, and he wrote a brief report on the latter site.

Fox's Royal Society paper (1941) was combined with supplementary reports on the 1946 excavations (Fox 1946; Jury and Fox 1947) to produce a book (Fox 1949, with assistance from Jury). Confusingly, all four works bear nearly the same title: "St-Ignace II: Canadian Altar of Martyrdom". All four quote Wintenberg's **suggestions** that the site was occupied for a short period and that the Iroquois had carried off the inhabitants' few possessions. The fact that these statements appear in Fox's earlier correspondence, and that Jury (1975) later observed that he had never seen Wintenberg's field notes, suggest that Sherwood Fox himself was responsible for the deviation from Wintenberg's actual skeptical phrasing.

In both correspondence and published works, Fox noted that the evidence for this identification was so strong that it completely convinced Wintenberg, a seasoned archaeologist, after only three days of site examination. This evidence was of three sorts: (1) iron tools, which had been analyzed at the Royal Ontario Museum and identified as 17th century in origin; (2) the remarkable dearth of artifacts at the site due, as noted above, to the facts that (a) St-Ignace II had been occupied for no more than ten months and (b) all portable items had been removed by the Iroquois; and (3) that the site's situation corresponded in every particular with the description of St-Ignace

II in the Jesuit Relations and no other location fulfilled these requirements. It is important to remember that these conclusions were not unreasonable in 1949.

The Hamilton Site: Reassessment

In order to evaluate the Hamilton site, we must consider four bodies of data: (1) the evidence for the site location, (2) the house remains, (3) the fortifications, and (4) the artifacts. As will become apparent, this information is complex and, in many cases, self-contradictory.

Site location

Fox stated in his correspondence and publications that Wintemberg had examined every possible site location and confirmed that only the Hamilton site fit the terrain requirements. Wintemberg's own notes are more precise: "I know of no other site in the neighbourhood that fulfills all of Father Ragueneau's description...". Since Wintemberg spent no more than six weeks at the Hamilton site, during most of which time he was involved in excavation, we may wonder whether his survey was truly exhaustive. Had he looked further, he might have found other suitable locations. It is also worth reiterating that the two most **knowledgeable** early surveyors, Hunter and Jones, both rejected this location (Jones explicitly) as being *unlike* the published descriptions of the site.

Jury himself was apparently less convinced than Wintemberg about the identity of the Hamilton site. "I never saw any of Wintemberg's notes—**only his map. Looking back over thirty years** I can only suggest that Dr. Fox considered they **provided** no information that would be of help to me or that would add to the data on the map. My notes, charts and map were handed over to Dr. Fox on my return to London. I would indeed have liked to **have prepared a detailed** report, but in 1946 one didn't argue with the President of the University!" (In reference to Fox 1949:) "Re-reading it after thirty years, I would revise or re-edit certain sentences. It will be noted that I made no claim to the identity of the site further than introducing it by 'the site we call St-Ignace' once" (Jury 1975).

House patterns

Jury suggested that the village had not been completed when it was attacked by the Iroquois (Fox 1949:134), thus contradicting Ragueneau's indication that the village had been moved the

previous spring. While Jury's hypothesis accounts for the dearth of artifacts, it requires the village to have been built at a time when the ground was frozen; the limited ethnohistoric evidence suggests that spring and fall were the preferred times for building, perhaps because rains softened the ground.

No field notes are known to have survived from Jury's work but I have been fortunate to be able to interview Jerry Juneau, a member of Jury's 1947 field crew. Juneau, who was 19 years old at the time, was an occasional labourer at the Martyrs' Shrine. He later participated in excavations at Ste-Marie I and he **had** visited several other Huron site excavations. His memory of the 1947 field season was quite clear, and he could provide good comparisons between the Hamilton site and the other sites of his experience.

The excavation methods used by both Wintemberg and Jury were probably the same: large areas of the site were opened by shovel-shining down to the point at which plough scars disappeared. Illustrations in Fox (1949) show this method, although it is not clear which excavation they represent.

Jury's work is described in detail by Fox: "In the early stages of his trial trenching he (Jury) noticed the frequent recurrence of a coincidence: running parallel to every wall lining uncovered he observed a thin strip, three or four feet wide, of mixed ashes and sand. Beyond a doubt this **had** been formed by the complete combustion of wall posts after they had fallen outward to the ground. Such a layer of ashes was therefore almost always a clue to the remains of a wall. So, whenever Jury came upon a layer of this kind, by thrusting out trenches a few feet on both sides, he quickly **discovered** the line **where** the posts **had stood**" (Fox 1949:102). Juneau did not remember *either* the stains or the trenching method; perhaps this technique was only used during the 1946 season.

It is hard to picture wall posts consistently falling parallel to, but separate from, their wall line. Unfortunately, none of these stains was recorded in photographs. No field plans survive from either Wintemberg's (1938) or Jury's (1946-47) houses, although there is reasonable evidence that such maps existed; Juneau confirms that Jury personally measured and mapped each post mould. The published site map (Fox 1949) shows the location of the houses but does not provide details such as post mould or wall stains.

As a result, there is little information about the internal structures of the houses except that Wintemberg's two houses had central support posts. Of Jury's twenty-four houses, eight lacked fireplaces (Fox 1949: Appendix A), one had "two at each end" and the rest are not indicated. The only published house plan is that of Structure 26 which is aberrant by any standards in having internal partitions, double walls and a surrounding fence line. Jury's estimate that this was European (Jury and Fox 1947:73) seems very reasonable; whether it dates from the 17th century is less certain, given the nature of the artifacts.

There is no mention from any of the researchers that there was any problem in recognizing the post moulds at the Hamilton site, but Juneau observed that they were extremely difficult to spot because they were "invisible", the same colour as the soil. Jury determined their location by probing the soil; soft spots were post moulds and "it was really amazing how he could find them, all in a straight line". Once located, the post moulds were excavated by feel.

This technique is commonly used in the tropics where high annual rainfall rapidly leaches the organic remains from post moulds. Jury probably learned it from Fox, whose background in Classical Archaeology would have involved studying Mediterranean sites. There was no reason, at that time, to assume that preservation would necessarily be different in Ontario, but more recent re-search has clearly shown that post moulds survive for much longer periods in this environment. Furthermore, a recent visit to the Hamilton site revealed that its soil is a soft sand. At the time, the site was riddled with rodent burrows and showed evidence of erosion.

Juneau remembered that every post mould contained charcoal, deeply buried from one to two feet below the plough zone. This was felt to indicate that the posts, and the site, had burned to the ground. In my own experience, deeply buried traces of burning are found in many parts of this region, including areas which have no evidence of prehistoric occupation. As the field was in crop prior to the beginning of excavation, it had probably been cleared of forest cover by burning, the common practice in Simcoe County during the 19th century. Since none of this charcoal was kept, it is not possible to test its age; such evidence should be treated with caution.

Photographs from Fox (1949) show modern wooden posts set into some of the identified post

moulds. There is no indication whether the photograph was taken at Wintemberg's or Jury's excavation, but this technique, which was widely employed until the 1970s, effectively destroys any original features and ensures that post moulds are present, if only very recent ones.

All of this information raises questions about the twenty-six houses defined at the Hamilton site. Were they accurately defined? Was their number correctly estimated? Did they exist at all? We will return to these questions later.

Fortifications

As noted at the beginning of this paper, the best described aspect of the site of St-Ignace II was its fortifications. Ragueneau noted that these consisted of an encircling "...deep depression (in the land) with which nature had powerfully fortified the place on three sides, leaving but a small space weaker than the other sides" (JR 34:123,5; Jones 1908:101-108). Jones interpreted this to mean that the site was located on high ground, surrounded on three sides by deep ravines (1908:41).

In addition, Ragueneau observed that the village was "...surrounded with a stockade of pine trees from fifteen to sixteen feet in height, and with a deep ditch...there remaining only a little space which was weaker than the others" (JR 34:123-5). Writing four years later, Bressani noted: "...the gates of the first fort of the Hurons, called Saint-Ignace. The place was impregnable to the **Barbarians—both** from its position and *be-cause of the fortifications we had made there*" (JR 39:247; my emphasis). On **the strength of this** statement, many archaeologists have assumed that the palisade of St-Ignace II must have been French in style, probably with straight walls and corner bastions. The fact that Wintemberg's excavations at the Hamilton site produced a traditional ovoid Huron enclosure has been cited as proof that the Hamilton site was not, in fact, St-Ignace H.

Examination of the original Italian statement clarifies this matter. Prof. Michael W. Ukas of the Department of Italian, University of Toronto, indicates that a more accurate translation would be "...and because of the fortifications that had been built (made) there." The preceding sentence would suggest that the fortifications had been built by the Hurons, or at least by those living in the place. There is no indication in the Italian of any involvement by the writer or by other Europeans. This would seem to solve the problem of the missing French fortifications; they emerged

through a translator's error in the Thwaites edition of the Jesuit Relations.

Artifacts

The Hamilton site artifact collection has not been located either at the National Museum, the Museum of Indian Archaeology, the Midland Huronia Museum or Ste-Marie Among the Hurons. Fortunately, several of the reports contain pictures of the key artifacts, permitting tentative evaluations. The following data are taken from Fox (1949); they conflict in some cases with earlier reports, but this latest work may be presumed to be definitive.

2 groups of ceramic sherds, one group found in 1938, one in 1946

6 shell disc beads

1 stone celt

1 chipped stone point (called a knife in some reports)

4 cobble mauls (called club heads, nut grinders, or bone crushers)

2 gaming stones, one broken

2 iron axe heads

2 iron knife blades

It is not always clear which artifacts were obtained by Wintemberg and which by Jury, but most appear to have been found in 1946, with the greatest concentration in aberrant Structure 26 (Jury and Fox 1947:71-2). In his notes, Wintemberg commented on the fact that "...so few specimens were found...".

The only artifacts which Wintemberg mentioned specifically are "...a few pottery fragments, all undecorated body pieces...". All published references are to the handful of ceramics found in 1946: "They bear ornamentation in a cord-design and originally belonged to vessels with narrow rims. Some of the fragments had been broken from vessels that had been re-covered with twigs.... a type of tough ceramic work common to Huron settlements of the late period" (Jury and Fox 1947: 72). Cord-decorated sherds are found in small numbers on Iroquoian sites, but the probably of finding *only* this type of sherd is in the order of tens of thousands to one. The description appears more appropriate to Early or Middle Woodland vessels, or perhaps to the cord-marked vessels of the upper Great Lakes.

The shell disc beads look typically Huron. The bifacially-chipped corner-notched point **appears**

to be of Late Archaic or Early Woodland style. Such points are occasionally found in Iroquoian sites, representing, perhaps, prehistoric collection of yet earlier prehistoric remains, but points of all kinds are rare on historic Huron sites and corner-notched ones are extremely rare.

Photographic reproduction hinders assessment of the celt. It appears to be crudely flaked, perhaps a pre-form, without any ground bit. There are no pictures of the gaming stones; these may have been ground stone disks or **small** flat pebbles, both of which are regularly found in historic Huron sites. Cobbles were used in many prehistoric periods for a variety of purposes. They occur naturally in glacial till in many parts of Huronia. The photographs do not show any signs of workmanship which might mark the cobbles as tools.

The iron axes and knife blades are unquestionably tools. They were analyzed by Dr. O. W. Ellis, Director of Metallurgy and Engineering in the Ontario Research Foundation, Toronto. Ellis concluded that they were genuine 17th century objects because they were made of wrought iron rather than tempered steel (Fox 1949:133-4).

The significance of these objects is somewhat clouded by the fact that one knife and both axe heads had been found by James Hamilton, the land owner, before excavation commenced (Fox 1941:75) and the second knife blade was found by Kenneth Hamilton, the owner's son, who was assisting with the excavation (Jury and Fox 1947:72). Whether these tools were actually recovered from the Hamilton site, whether the owner was mistaken in his memory of their point of origin, or whether he was actively salting the site in order to sell it at a better price cannot be determined. **17th century iron axe heads and knives were fairly easy to obtain in north Simcoe County in the early decades of this century and**, as we have seen, Hamilton had visited other sites in Huronia.

There is no indication in any of the reports or correspondence that any European artifacts were ever found at the Hamilton site by Wintemberg, Jury or any other archaeologist, but this is incorrect. Juneau reports that a late 19th century cabin was found on the site, within the defined palisade line and directly south of the present cairn. Since Jury felt that the occupants of the cabin might have picked up artifacts from the Huron component, the cabin was carefully excavated.

Although the superstructure was entirely gone, the stone foundations remained in excellent condition, and so did the contents of the cellar: jars of jam, well preserved under their seals, glass and ceramic detritus, and a fine, complete hand gun. Juneau remembers seeing an iron knife which he believed to be of recent origin.

In fact, the cabin did not prove to contain any unquestionable Iroquoian remains. It is highly likely, on the other hand, that remains of this late component were to be found in other parts of the site.

To conclude, the artifacts may be divided into three groups. The first group consists of objects which might, in light of modern knowledge, be reasonably expected from a site of the culture and period of St-Ignace II: the iron tools, the shell beads and Wintemberg's plain body sherds. The second group contains artifacts which appear to be of earlier or non-Huron origin: Jury's cord-decorated sherds and the stone projectile point. The remaining objects appear to be natural rather than artificial. Whether or not they were ecofacts cannot be determined from information now **available**.

Wintemberg had investigated many Iroquoian sites and was familiar with the quantity of artifactual refuse which was normally encountered in these occupations. His tentative suggestion that the small collection recovered from the Hamilton site was due to its short occupation has been doubted by most archaeologists ever since. Any site occupied for a period sufficient to construct twenty-six longhouses and a massive **palisade** would have yielded at least a modest amount of domestic refuse. The suggestion that the Iroquois raiders would have taken all of this **garbage** does not really merit discussion.

Assessment of the Hamilton Site data

Comparing the published and **unpublished** data, we must concede that Sherwood Fox **had engaged** in an unscientific process of selecting data and rephrasing quotes in order to support his own preconceived conclusions. Ignoring Hunter's and Jones' site choices, which were at least based on scholarly criteria, he opted for Arpin's miracle site **and fought** vigorously for its acceptance despite critical interpretive problems. In fairness, we should note that **archaeology** in the 1940s was only beginning to become a scientific discipline.

To some extent, the search for St-Ignace II had a simple economic basis. Fox, the president of a

small and growing university, needed to raise money from a community which was only recovering from the Depression. His involvement in the St-Ignace II story brought the University of Western Ontario into national prominence, and it attracted funds from devout Catholics and historians.

There is another factor, however, which casts Fox's activities in a better light. His efforts to identify the Hamilton site as St-Ignace II—a location associated with physical defeat and spiritual triumph, and one affirmed by Arpin's "miracle"—coincide with the early years of World War II. Fox might well respond that the boost to the nation's morale of finding St-Ignace II was of far greater importance than the tedious questions of scientific accuracy. The newspaper accounts suggest that the St-Ignace II quest did indeed provide a focus for faith and hope for many Canadians. Fox's conclusions certainly **make a** better story.

On the strength of Fox's and Jury's reports, the resident priests at the Martyrs' Shrine were able, in 1954, to persuade the Ontario Historic Sites and Monuments Board to raise a plaque which designated the Hamilton site as St-Ignace II. Following this action, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board changed the plaque on the Newton site to indicated that it was now identified with the site of St-Louis. A stone cairn was subsequently erected by the Martyrs' Shrine on the Hamilton site.

Recent work at the Hamilton site

In the following years, the archaeological community became increasingly dissatisfied with the claims for the Hamilton site. Heidenreich (1971:46-8) summarizes their reservations, which include (1) failure to consider other candidates for St-Ignace II, (2) the fallacy of assuming that St-Ignace II was due east of St-Louis, (3) the fact that the Hamilton site was not fortified with French-style straight-line palisades and bastions, and (4) the relative lack of trade materials. To these, we may add (5) the general lack of native artifacts and rubbish, particularly broken pottery and bones, (6) the inappropriate age of several of the reported artifacts, (7) the fact that the only genuine trade goods were recovered by the owners of the property who had the most to gain from its identification with St-Ignace II, (8) the fact that there was an unreported historic component on the site, and (9) the fact that the post

moulds could only be detected by texture. It seems unfair to blame Jury for most of these failings; in his relative inexperience, he relied upon the methods and conclusions of Fox and Wintemberg who ought to have known better.

A field party directed by William A. Russell and composed of Allan Tyyska, Roberta O'Brien and Jamie Hunter set out in 1975 to re-examine the Hamilton site. They excavated for several days in the vicinity of the stone cairn and found no artifacts and no evidence of settlement patterns. Not even the stakes set in the post moulds were recovered; as noted above, these should have left some discernible traces even if no other remains were present. They did not attempt to locate any post moulds by texture.

Russell observed that Wintemberg identified his site by reference to a large stump, and there is a large stump near the cairn; there was another large stump in a neighbouring field, however. O'Brien suggests that, in the absence of any maps by Wintemberg or Jury, the cairn may have been erected in the wrong place. According to tradition at Martyrs' Shrine, Russell added, Wintemberg's survey stakes were pulled up following his excavation because they were felt to be intrusive on the sacred nature of the site. It may even be that Jury, returning after eight years to a site which he had only visited briefly, commenced work in the wrong field. One would expect, however, that Mr. Hamilton would have been able to correct any confusion of this sort.

The conclusions drawn from the 1975 excavation were that, if it existed at all, the Hamilton site is not at the site of the cairn. In light of Juneau's information, even this deduction must remain in question.

Conclusion

Archaeological interest in the St-Ignace II problem waned after 1950. Recent researchers (Heidenreich 1971; Trigger 1976) have been reluctant to predict the site's location, preferring to wait until excavation should offer some more tangible evidence in favour of one site or another. A suggestion by Ridley (Trigger 1976:743,855) that there might be only one site of St-Ignace appears to be incorrect (Latta 1985:161).

The Newton site is still tentatively identified as St-Louis (cf. Jury and Jury 1955). No site has yet been reported in the vicinity of the Matthew Campbell property, nor is there any record of the

location of the early 20th century chapel which may have been built on or near that location.

The archaeological evidence relating to the identification of the Hamilton site as St-Ignace H consists of typed copies of Wintemberg's original rough notes and Jury's finished map. The location of the artifacts, of Jury's field notes and of Wintemberg's map are unknown; it would be a valuable contribution to science if these should materialize. No field notes remain from the 1975 excavation, but interviews with the participants suggest that the location of the Hamilton site itself is in doubt.

The only tangible evidence remaining to link the Hamilton site with St-Ignace II is the stone cairn and the plaque erected by the Ontario Sites and Monuments Board. On the basis of the 1975 excavation, this agency decided in July 1985 to rescind the designation of the Hamilton site; the plaque, which had already fallen down, will not be replaced. The Martyrs' Shrine, which owns the land, will decide whether or not to keep the cairn and the property as a symbol of the Jesuit martyrs.

After more than one hundred years of active scholarship, only one fact remains. On the night of 16 March 1649, the Jesuit fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were taken to a native village known as St-Ignace II and there they were killed. No further knowledge of this site currently exists.

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This article is dedicated to Bill Russell who first introduced me to the curious problem of St-Ignace II and who encouraged me to write about it. I can only regret that I moved too slowly to be able to profit from his offer to read and comment on the resulting document; no doubt, his contributions would have enriched our understanding and corrected many inaccuracies in this text.

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