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The Iroquois in Ohio.





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WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TRACT 40.

THE IROQUOIS IN OHIO.

Read Before the Society, December 28th, 1868,

By C. C. BALDWIN.

In 1608 an Indian from the Ottawas visited Quebec and urged Samuel de Champlain, the "Father of New France," to join an Indian war party against the Iroquois. In May, 1609, Champlain set out with his little band. On the west shore of the lake, still called Champlain, they met the enemy. The allies opened their ranks for their mail-clad, heaven-armed champion, who advanced to the front. At the report of his arquebuse an Indian fell, and after a very few discharges, the astonished Iroquois fled from the supernatural enemy, whose thunder and lightning struck them dead before they could reach him.

Such was the first introduction of the Iroquois to civilization. This act ruled the history of Northern Ohio for a century and a half. The Iroquois forgot not the event; for until New France became a British colony they kept up the old hatred, generally the old war; and they held the entrance to our country. "To this Indian League," says Morgan, "France must chiefly ascribe the final overthrow of her magnificent schemes of colonization in the northern part of America."

The Iroquois have been called the "Romans of the New World." Colden, in his History, relates many things in their manners and policy wherein he finds a resemblance to the classic ancients, and a superiority to our own ancestors, the Britons.

The origin of the nation as such is concealed by time. When first known to the whites they occupied the country stretching from east to west through Central New York and along Lake Ontario. It was a confederacy composed of five tribes whose union was strength. Of kindred tongue were the Andastes of Pennsylvania, Eries of Ohio, Hurons and Neutrals (so-called) of the Peninsula, north of Lake Erie, reaching to Lake Huron. Their language and character were so different from the surrounding nations that some have imagined them of altogether different origin. The Indian languages have more mobility than any other, and, according to Professor Whitney (Science of Language), text books prepared by missionaries have become almost unintelligible in three or four generations. Here lay the five nations, like an island, in a great sea of Algonquins; their situation well depicted in the third volume of Bancroft's history (page 241), showing that theirs must have been an interesting history. Had they driven away the "Mound Builders" from Western New York, and their more thickly settled seats in Ohio? Schoolcraft repeats the tradition that they came from the St. Lawrence to New York, that the confederation had taken place, and that its "chief repaired to the South to visit a ruler of great fame and authority who resided at a great town in a lodge of gold;" that this great ruler built many forts, and almost penetrated to the banks of Lake Erie; that the confederates resisted, and after a war of 100 years the towns and forts were conquered and were heaps of ruins. The Delawares had a similar tradition, different in detail, associating the Iroquois with themselves in the destruction of a race, possibly the Mound Builders.

It is curious that it is a part of the tradition related by Schoolcraft, that the Iroquois excelled in arts of savage warfare; that after the driving out of the Nation of the "Lodge of Gold" from their town and forts, there was a large increase of wild beasts, as there must have been after the destruction of the Mound Builders; who were so numerous that they must have lived by agriculture. Were

the fortifications of Northern Ohio and New York those of this tradition?

Schoolcraft states that after this the Huron-Iroquois family fell asunder, and still afterward the Iroquois confederacy was formed. Mr. Morgan, in his careful and able book, "League of the Iroquois," concludes that the course of the Huron-Iroquois was from the St. Lawrence to New York; that they were separated into families, and that the league of the Iroquois was afterward formed, he supposes, about the year 1500, though he says tradition dates it earlier. Governor Dongan told the Lords of Trade that, for aught he knew, they had lived in New York hundreds of years. At Lancaster, at the treaty of 1744, Canassatego said to "Brother the Governor of Maryland:" "When you mentioned the affair of the land yesterday, you went back to old times, and told us you had been in possession of the province of Maryland above 100 years: but what is one 100 years in comparison of the length of time since our claim began—since we came out of the ground? For we must tell you that long before 100 years our ancestors came out of the very ground, and our children have remained here ever since."

The Iroquois made their name feared far and wide. They collected tribute of many of the Indians of New England, and the cry of "A Mohawk, a Mohawk," drove all the Indians to places of concealment or refuge. Of their conquest of cognate tribes, Francis Parkman gives a wonderfully interesting account in his "Jesuits in North America." They conquered the Hurons and broke up the French missions, though the French assisted in their defense. They even defeated the Hurons in sight of Quebec. The first mention in history of the country south of Lake Erie occurs in the relation of this war. In 1615, Etienne Brulé, the interpreter of Champlain, is supposed to have visited the Eries for reinforcements to assist the Hurons. The Iroquois destroyed the Neutrals, who occupied the territory north of Lake Erie, extending to Niagara river, around Lake Erie,

and possibly some little distance along its southern shore. In 1654 they had totally conquered the Hurons, who, driven from place to place, separated, part of them settling in Western Ohio, and remaining until a late day, from Sandusky westward, under the name of Wyandots. The Iroquois then made peace with the French and few remaining Hurons, and announced at Quebec that they were going to war with the Eries. On the 10th day of August, 1654, Father Simon Le Moine gave them hatchets for this service, and also by his nineteenth present, "wiped away the tears of all their young warriors for the death of their great chief Annenraos, a short time prisoner with the Cat Nation" (Eries.)

This tribe is located by all south of Lake Erie. Bancroft places the Andastes on the lake between them and the Iroquois. There can be no doubt that this is wrong; though it may be considered at least doubtful whether the Eries extended beyond the lower end of Lake Erie, or even to its eastern extremity. The map of Charlevoix places them along the Western Reserve, and extending somewhat east of it. Mitchell's map, of 1755, places them "south of Lake Erie." The earlier maps of De Lisle, the great French geographer, and Coxe, give them the same location. The Eries were so entirely destroyed, after a war of great ferocity, that no remnant of them has ever been satisfactorily identified. The whole story, the occupation of the Eries, the coming of the Wyandots, the final triumph of the Iroquois, and the flight of the Eries, is supposed by Mr. Schoolcraft to be represented in an "extensive" and "well sculptured" inscription on Kelley Island. We can probably rely with much more certainty upon the French accounts and even Iroquois traditions.

The Iroquois then turned their arms against the Andastes occupying the upper waters of the Alleghany and Susquehanna, they being conquered, all the bordering cognate tribes were subject to the Iroquois, and they reached the

NOTE.—A too brief article on the Eries, by Mr. Shea, in the new American Encyclopedia (1874) says the greater part of the Eries were destroyed, and the balance incorporated with the Senecas.

Algonquins on every side. The Hurons, Eries, and Andastes had been greatly feared. What must be the strength and fierceness of their conquerors? The terror of the Iroquois seems to have extended far and wide, and saved them many battles. Added to this was generally their superiority in fire arms. The Dutch established a trading post at Fort Orange (Albany,) in 1615 and trade commenced with the Iroquois for furs in which they were soon supplied with arms. Generally hostile to the French, they were constant to the Dutch and English; having no quarrel for 150 years. The extent of subsequent Iroquois conquests has been much debated. One side represented by Colden and Governor Clinton; the other by President Harrison in his discourse before the Historical Society of Ohio. The first relying altogether on the Iroquois accounts, the other relying too much on the traditions of the Western Indians. It seems to be well settled, however, that the Iroquois continued to occupy a considerable portion of Ohio at will. The memorials and reports of English officers show that the Iroquois, whose own country had not much game, considered Ohio their best hunting ground. A considerable portion of Northern Ohio east of Sandusky seems to have continued to be, even after the Revolution, a partly neutral ground, permanently occupied by no tribe, no doubt the bloody field of many small contests.

But the Iroquois extended their arms further. Across the peninsula north of Lake Erie they attacked the "Chitagticks" or Illinois with varying fortune, but with such success, that their pre-eminence was acknowledged, though they may have occupied no new territory. Then they warred with the "Twightwees" or Miamis. Colden's "Five Nations" is full of this war, which was to some degree carried on across our territory. He says they had entirely subdued the Illinois in 1685, and resolved to call the Miamis to account for the disturbance they had given the Iroquois in beaver hunting, beaver being the most valued fur. In 1684, Garangula, a celebrated orator, whom Colden thinks resembled Cicero—

even in his features—stated to the French that the Iroquois had knocked the Illinois and Miamis on the head because “they had cut down the trees of peace which were the limits of our country; they have hunted beavers on our lands; they have acted contrary to the customs of all Indians; they have left none of the beaver alive; they have killed both male and female; they have brought the *Satanas* (Shawnees) into their country to take part with themselves; they have designed us ill. We have done less than either the English or the French. They have usurped the lands of so many Indian nations, and chased them from their own country. This belt preserves my words.” The principal beaver hunting-ground seems to have been north and northwestward of Lake Erie, being expressly pointed out as such in a provincial report to England. There were beavers in Ohio, perhaps less plenty, and the title of the Iroquois there may have been less disturbed.

According to the French memoir of 1687, they had attacked the Miamis and Illinois at Fort St. Louis, built by La Salle on the Illinois in the neighborhood of the Mississippi (meeting La Salle himself), massacred and burnt a large number, carried off many prisoners, and threatened an entire extermination. They had ranged the whole of Ohio, and country south and west of it.

On the south and southeast of their country they had defeated and driven away the Shawnees, who had gone westward; received by the Miamis and for many long years holding their lands in Southwest Ohio, and southwest of that, as the property of the Iroquois.

They had long before made “women” of the Delawares who, gradually moving westward, began to occupy Southeastern Ohio, all the while acknowledging the supremacy of the Five Nations. About 1700 “*Messieurs les Iroquois*” as La Hontan calls them, were at the acme of their power. Morgan makes their nominal government to extend over New York, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the north and west of Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, North Ten-

nessee, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan; a portion of New England, and great part of Upper Canada. The government was, of course, slight, for an Indian, as La Hontan says, "believes in no ruler but himself."

Governor Dongan, about 1684, writing to the home government, says: "The Five Nations are the most warlike people in America, and are a bulwark between us and the French and all other Indians. They go as far as the South Sea, the Northwest Passage, and Florida to war." In 1685, the memoir to the French government of M. De Nonville, says the French need never expect to subjugate the Senecas, "except we be in a position to surprise them." The orator, Kaqueendara, delivered to the French the thoughts of his nation in these words: "You think yourselves the ancient inhabitants of this country, and longest in possession; yea, all the Christian inhabitants of New York and Cayenquiragoe (Governor of New York), think the same of themselves. We warriors are the first, the ancient people, the greatest of you all."

The Iroquois held the key to Western trade, though they could not have it all themselves. The French could not have safe conduct, being closely watched and attacked, for fear of their supplying the Western tribes with arms and ammunition. The English lost the trade because the Iroquois were between. Peace was plainly for the interest of the English; and there was much argument showing that the trade passing either north or south of Lake Erie must meet at the Niagara, so that the English, with advanced trading posts protected by the Iroquois and with cheaper goods, could get it. They persuaded the Iroquois to receive the Illinois and Miamis as friends. Then came the struggle between the English and French, for territorial sovereignty. The French claimed the territory watered by the Ohio and between and around the lakes, because first discovered and explored by them. The English claimed sovereignty over the Five Nations, and therefore over all land conquered by them. Thence the English interest in extolling the extent and strength of the Iroquois government. The French

replied that their discovery was before the Iroquois conquest.

Governor Burnet, in 1721, thinks the French have no title by occupancy to the West, as the Iroquois were before them, and had used the lands as a hunting ground, having subdued the old title and conveyed their title to Great Britain at Albany, 1701, in these words: "We do give up and render all that land where the beaver hunting is," etc., "to Coraghkoe, our great King, and pray he may be our protector and defender;" in which very treaty he says complaint was made of the French settlement at Detroit. The Governor should have added to the grant the following words: "To be protected and defended by his said majesty, his heirs, and successors forever to and for our use, our heirs, and successors," meaning the grantors.

The deed of 1684, under which Ohio was claimed, was similar, and even more explicit. The English, however, often claimed absolute title of the lands under these instruments.

Governor Tryon, in his report of 1774, puts the original title of Great Britain on the ground of the submission of the Five Nations to the Crown. There seems no doubt that they never did submit, but always regarded the English simply as allies, as they were. Practically the title of the Indians seems to have been recognized by subsequent purchase. From about 1696 to 1755, the French and Iroquois were at peace. The latter occasionally troubled distant tribes, but their fierce wars were ended. Some of them, chiefly Senecas, emigrated to Northeastern Ohio, settling therein on friendly terms with their dependents, the Delawares and Shawnees, and inter-marrying with them. Government among Indians was loose, and war was sometimes as accidental and without plan as the chase. The Ohio Indians were sometimes hostile, when the Six Nations proper were quiet. In 1768, a purchase was made of lands on the Susquehanna. The Ohio Iroquois not being included in the distribution, were dissatisfied, and some of them returned to New York, thinking their share in future sales might be more secure. The history of those who remained can be more easily followed, in the history of the tribes with whom they were associated. One of their

number, Logan, a Mingo, or Cayuga chief, was a man of mark and power in Ohio history, whose wrongs, vengeance, and eloquence are known throughout the world. His band remained in Ohio until a late day, receiving from the United States, in 1817 and 1818, grants of 40,000 acres of land called the "Seneca Reservation," where Seneca county now is, and where they remained until moved West in 1831.

Although the Delawares prior to 1765 agreed to stand by such conveyances as the Iroquois might make, and the latter expected the Shawnees to do the same, the Ohio tribes were dissatisfied. The whites sometimes quarreled with them, and sometimes purchased more than once.

According to a valuable unpublished map,* made by Colonel Charles Whittlesey, the occupation of Ohio from the French war to the Revolution was as follows: The general western limits of the Iroquois proper was a line running through the counties of Belmont, Harrison, Tuscarawas, Stark, Summit, and Cuyahoga. The Delawares occupied the valley of the Muskingum, their northern line running through Richland, Ashland, and Wayne; the Shawnees the valley of the Scioto, the northern line being a little lower than the Delawares; the last two tribes occupying as tenants of the Iroquois. It will thus be seen that the Iroquois had not only admitted sovereignty, but actual legal occupancy of the greater part of Ohio.

Sir William Johnson, the most influential and sensible agent with the Iroquois the English ever had, saw that it was worse than useless to rest any claim to Iroquois territory on the old treaties, and in 1764 represented to the home Government "As the (then) Six Nations, Western Indians, etc., were never conquered by the French or English, nor were subject to laws, they considered themselves free people; that the English must be cautious not to circumscribe limits too far; that in the treaty then pending (in reference to lands east of the Ohio) the bounds should be clearly understood, and the Indians paid for all lands without that boundary when they were wanted." He stated that the Six Nations and confederates extended far enough so that they not only claimed many parts south of the Ohio, but many of their

*NOTE.—Since published in 1872 in Walling & Gray's Atlas of Ohio.

people were actually settled south of it, their claim however not extending south of that part below the falls.

At the treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1768, the Iroquois deeded to the Alleghany river. They ceded to the United States all the land west of the east line of Ohio in 1784. In 1786 they united with many western tribes in an address declaring all treaties void unless all joined, but, nevertheless, made a treaty where all did not join in 1789. The pioneers of the Connecticut Land Company, on their way to the Reserve, also met the Iroquois in treaty at Buffalo, in 1796. There were other treaties and deeds before these which deserve mention, but these transactions demand a separate paper. I have only referred to them to show the general connection of the Iroquois with Ohio.

Both the British and Americans courted these Indians at the opening of the Revolution, but the influences of the Johnsons, and avaricious traders and land speculators was too strong. They adhered to the British and committed the usual atrocities of Indian warfare, which excited popular indignation on both sides of the sea. In an English caricature of the time, George III. is represented seated with his Indian ally in a cannibal feast, wherein both gnaw the same bone, of which the Indian has the best share, while the King holds a skull filled with smoking punch. The Iroquois battles, however, were not fought on Ohio soil.

Their confederacy, perhaps, exerted an influence toward the union of the colonies. At the Lancaster treaty of 1744 Canneestoga said: "Our wise forefathers established union and amity with our neighboring nations. We are a powerful confederacy, and by your observing the same methods our wise forefathers have taken, you will acquire fresh strength and power: therefore whatever befalls you never fall out one with another."

At the Albany Convention of 1754, before the French war, such a union of colonies was recommended by them. And perhaps the general influence and example of the confederacy, toward the union of States, has really been as important in the history and condition of our State, as the previous direct conquest and occupation of its territory.

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