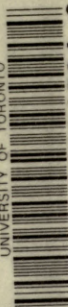


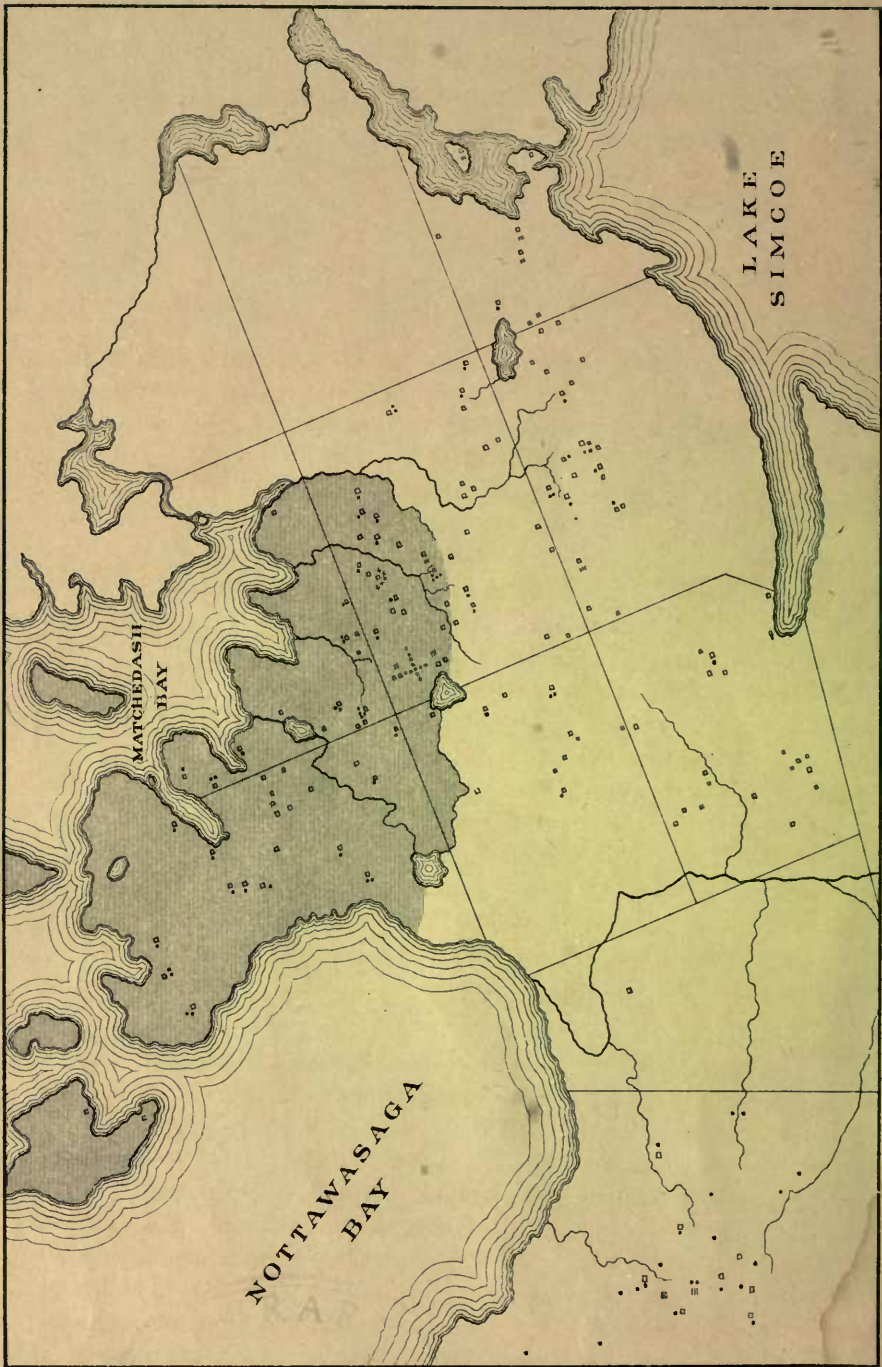
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Hunter, Andrew Frederick  
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migrations of the Hurons as  
indicated by their remains  
in North Simcoe

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MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE HURONS WHEN THE IROQUOIS ATTACKS BEGAN.

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NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND MIGRATIONS OF  
THE HURONS AS INDICATED BY THEIR  
REMAINS IN NORTH SIMCOE.

BY A. F. HUNTER, M.A.

(Read 25th September, 1891).

The tract of land lying between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay is commonly known as the abode of the Huron Indians during the first half of the seventeenth century. But, to describe their location more definitely, it was on the high ground of the interior of this tract that they chiefly dwelt, as appears from their remains found at the present day; in the low parts of the wide valley of the Nottawasaga River, between them and the Tobacco Nation, very few traces of aboriginal occupation are found. It will be proper to lay special emphasis on the fact that the Hurons occupied high ground, because in this respect they contrast in a striking manner with the later Algonquins, who subsequently occupied the same district but preferred to haunt the waterways during the greater part of the year, and were naturally an aquatic people. Corresponding with this difference between the Hurons and Algonquins in the choice of locality, there was a similar contrast between their places of burial—so marked indeed that it is still impossible to confuse them. The Hurons selected places for burial purposes near their villages, almost always in dry and sandy soil, and remote from water. Of all their ossuaries brought to light in this century, only a few have been found where the soil is clay. But the Algonquins buried their dead near the river banks and lake shores, in places which they could easily reach in canoes.

The almost complete annihilation of the Hurons at their own villages in 1649, has been the most notable event in connection with the history of their race. It is possible to see at the present day the very spots where the massacres took place; these are indicated by large numbers of iron tomahawks strewing the ground, besides other marks of strife which are still visible. In Indian warfare, tomahawks were often hurled at the enemy—a practice that has been noted by Catlin [*Life Among the Indians*, chap. 2.] and other writers. Hence we now find patches of ground where they are found in abundance. On the accompanying map of North Simcoe there is defined the district in which these patches

occur, and which may therefore be regarded as the scene of the attacks by the Iroquois. The southerly limit of this afflicted territory is sharply defined. Two small lakes, joined by a stream which passes through a large swamp several miles in length as well as breadth, formed a natural protection to the Hurons on their exposed southwestern frontier; and thus, on the south eastern boundary only, were they exposed to the Iroquois invasions. Such was the position they occupied just before the final attacks were made upon them. The small district thus bounded contained all the villages in which the Jesuits labored, and included even Teanaustaye (St. Joseph) which Dr. Parkman, following Dr. Tachè's notes, places much farther to the south. There is a fringe of villages lying outside the southern and eastern boundaries of this district where but few tomahawks or signs of conflict are to be seen amongst the remains. Other features of the small district in question, besides the patches of tomahawks, are: the abundance of small ossuaries, indicating hasty burial; artificial holes in the ground, sometimes in rows and occasionally in crossrows; *vaches* and isolated graves in great numbers. All these features are usually associated together, and indicate the village sites where massacres took place.

Compared with that portion of New York state once occupied by the Iroquois, the Huron territory contains fewer earthwork enclosures; Squier [*Antiquities of the State of New York*] records no less than 15 of these earthwork enclosures in\* Jefferson Co., N. Y., alone. Compared also with the counties west of Lake Ontario and along the north shore of Lake Erie,—the district once occupied by the Neuters,—there is a similar contrast; Mr. Boyle, in his Annual Archaeological Reports of the Canadian Institute, has described several in that section of the country. In North Simcoe, however, whatever earthworks there are to be found are few and unimportant; only in a few cases does earth or *debris* appear to have been thrown up to any extent, except the ash-piles at the

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\* Since the above was written, a valuable article by Rev. W. M. Beauchamp, of Baldwinsville, N. Y., on the "Indian Occupation of New York," appeared in *Science* (Feb. 5, 1892). Mr. Beauchamp gave therein the numbers of earthworks, stockades, mounds and ossuaries of each county in New York State, recorded up to date, the earthworks in Jefferson Co. being placed at 33, and the ossuaries at 6.

A paper on "Early Indian Forts in New York" was read by the same writer at the Rochester meeting of the American Association in August, 1892. The paper is summarized in the Proceedings of that body as follows: "The form and construction of earthworks varied, and these generally preceded stockades, which were of four kinds: single, double, triple, and quadruple. The ditch was less defensive than incidental, and in stockades post-holes were not always used. Many examples of both modes of defence still remain, and Squier's estimate of their number was a fair one. According to the catalogue of the Bureau of Ethnology (Washington) defensive works belong mainly to the northern U.S., especially near the great lakes."

villages, and the pits made during the conflicts mentioned in the last paragraph.

There is a deficiency in regard to ossuaries in the Iroquois and Neuter territories in comparison with the Huron district. Squier, in his examination of the Iroquois country of Central New York in the volume already referred to, records but two in Jefferson County, and in Erie County but four or five. In three townships of North Simcoe—Tiny, Tay and Medonte—the three which include the afflicted district described above, more than sixty to our knowledge have been found. The location of sites upon high peninsular points of land, especially along the brows of lake terraces, sand ridges, or bluffs, seems to have been extensively followed by all three nations.

Since the year 1820, when Simcoe County first began to receive European settlers, discoveries of Huron ossuaries have been constantly taking place. In order to preserve a record of Huron occupation, we have catalogued 140 of these ossuaries; and from the scanty facilities enjoyed in the accomplishment of this task, it is clear that many more still remain unrecorded in our list. In these 140 ossuaries there was buried a population that from a careful estimate may be set down approximately as 25,000. The ossuary of average size, in the district, contains about 200 skeletons. From these figures it will be seen that the Jesuits' estimates of the Huron population were by no means exaggerated.

The proportion of ossuaries to village sites is much greater in the Huron district than seems to be the case in other parts of the province. It is not an unnatural inference from this fact, that those who occupied the other parts to the south and east, perished in North Simcoe and were buried there. In other words, it became the cemetery of Central Ontario at that period. It is not difficult to understand the cause of this, viz., the persecution of the Hurons by the Iroquois and the consequent retreat of the former toward the north.

Two or three additional facts may also be stated in support of the view just given. The most southerly towns of the Huron district were the largest, indicating a migration from the south. Champlain's map shows that in 1615 the Hurons extended southward to Lake Ontario as well as into the counties east of Lake Simcoe, and were not confined to North Simcoe alone as they became at a later date. This has been confirmed by the finding in South Simcoe, and in York, Ontario, Victoria, Peterborough, Durham and other counties, of many village sites and ossuaries of Huron origin. In a valuable paper by Mr. George E. Laidlaw, published in Mr. Boyle's Fourth Annual Report (1890), he suggests that

the aboriginal remains in Victoria County were the work of Hurons. Further evidence of their migration is yielded by the frequency of French relics in North Simcoe and their scarcity in the southern and eastern counties, indicating that the former was chiefly occupied by the Hurons after the year 1615 when the French first came amongst them. This has already been shown at some length in a paper by the writer entitled "French Relics from Village Sites of the Hurons," which was read before the Institute and published in the Third Archaeological Report (1889).

It is often stated that a "Feast of the Dead" was held in each of the five tribes of the Nation once in ten or twelve years. But from the large number of ossuaries which contain French relics, and which accordingly must have been interred between the years 1615 and 1649, it is evident that the ceremony took place much oftener.

There can scarcely be a possibility that an agricultural nation, such as the Hurons were, could have had its beginnings in this province, where the prevalence of forests would prevent any development in an agricultural direction, but where, on the contrary, the conditions would produce hunters and fisher-men like the Algonquins. It may be reasonably inferred that they originally came from a region where there were few trees to interfere with agricultural operations, such as the western plains; at any rate a northern or eastern origin of this people in the Laurentian rock region appears unlikely. Much investigation, however, is still required before these questions can be settled and the origin of the Huron race determined.

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