

# The Recollects and the Petun

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## Abstract

The work of the Recollect missionaries among the Petun is examined.

## Résumé

*Les oeuvres des missionnaires Recoliet parmi les Petun sont examinées.*

## Maps

Map 1 - the route from the Hurons to the Neutrals, via the Petuns, used by Father de la Roche Daillon in 1626, as proposed by William Noble and Marion E. White (Trigger 1987:400). Page 5a

Map 2 - the alternative route from the Hurons to the Neutrals, avoiding the Petuns, used by Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot in 1640, as proposed by Edward H. Thomas (n.d.). Page 5b

## Introduction

Two Recollect missionary priests visited the Petun. These were Father Joseph Le Caron in 1616, and Father Joseph de la Roche Daillon (d'Aillon) in 1626 and possibly 1627. In addition, Brother Gabriel Sagard, who was in Huronia 1623-1624, wrote about them, and Petun people who were among the Huron.

The Recollects or Recollets were a branch of the Franciscan Order of friars, also known as the Friars Minor, Minorites or Gray Friars, founded in 1209 by St. Francis of Assisi. Their dress consisted of a coarse gray cloth habit, with pointed hood, and waistcord.

## Father Joseph Le Caron, and Brother Gabriel Sagard

Father Le Caron visited Huronia twice, and was the first missionary to reach both the Hurons and Petuns. He accompanied Samuel de Champlain and others, on the first recorded French visit to the Petun, in 1616. Both he and Champlain (Champlain 1929 III:94-104) wrote about their experiences, but, unfortunately, Le Caron's original writings have not survived. They were destroyed by fire (Crouse 1924:39), probably burned intentionally, with all his possessions, for sanitary reasons when he died of the plague in 1632 (Gingras 1966:438). Some of what he wrote is known from other writers.

Le Caron travelled from France to Canada with Champlain in 1615, but proceeded ahead of him to the Hurons, where Champlain met him again. The wording of Champlain's account is vague, and it is possible that the idea of visiting the Petun, and the first recorded use of the name, may have been Le Caron's (Champlain 1929 III:95). Champlain provided no details of Le Caron's experiences among the Petun, and one of the reasons the 1632 publication in his name (Champlain 1932 IV:278-284) is suspect and rejected is because all references to Le Caron and the other Recollects were removed (Jouvre 1915 I:387-8). Le Caron and Champlain returned to France together in 1616. In 1623-4, Caron again visited Huronia, but on this occasion did not travel to the Petuns. On this occasion he

was accompanied by Father Nicholas Viel and Brother Gabriel Sagard published two accounts of the experience, Le Grand Voyage dv Pays des Hvrns, Paris, in 1632 (Sagard 1632, 1939), and Histoire dv Canada, Paris, in 1636 (Sagard 1636, 1866).

It was in the Histoire du Canada that Sagard included an account of Le Caron's visit to the Petun in 1616, no doubt from Le Caron himself:

"He (Le Caron) passed over as far as the Nation of the Petuns where he met with more suffering than consolation in his dealings with the barbarians, who offered him no hearty welcome nor gave sign that his visit was at all pleasing, acting it may be at the instigation of their medicine-men or magicians, who had no wish to be thwarted in, or condemned for their mummeries. So that after a short stay the good Father was constrained to return to his Hurons" (Sagard 1636:29, 1866:42; translated and cited in Jones 1909:275).

Later writers summarised Sagard's account. Father Chrestien Le Clercq is disputably said to have written the two volume work Premier établissement de la foy dans la Nouvelle-France, published in Paris in 1691:

"Charity and the interests of Faith so earnestly pressed our Huron apostle that, after having first laid the foundations of this Church in their country, he .. passed on with Monsieur de Champlain to the country of the Indians called Petuneux, and seven other neighbouring nations. This zealous missionary had the consolation of suffering much there for the establishment of Christianity, as these Indians cruelly ill-treated him at the instigation of their *Ohi*, or jugglers, who are the sorcerers and magicians of these nations. After learning the ideas and disposition of these Indians, he returned to his Huron village. This expedition was not fruitless for God's glory, as he baptized some children and dying old men, for whom he thus procured eternal salvation" (Le Clercq 1881 I:105-6).

Père Sixte Le Tac wrote that Champlain:

"wishing to continue his discoveries, Father Joseph accompanied him to the Nation of the Petun and seven other neighbouring nations, where he had more pain than consolation in the conversion of these barbarians who did not make him welcome. After spending a few days among them he came back to his Huron village while Champlain continued his journey .." (Le Tac 1888:99).

Both Le Clercq and Le Tac appear to add new information, Le Clercq concerning the baptisms, and Le Tac that Champlain and Le Caron soon separated, thus possibly accounting for Champlain's lack of further mention of Le Caron. Unfortunately, neither source is reliable. Le Clercq's authorship is rejected (Dumas 1966:440). As in the case of the 1632 publication supposedly by Champlain, some believe that "Father Le Clercq had nothing to do with the composition of "Premier Etablissement .." of 1691, that the volumes were assembled from a variety of sources, such as Sagard (Hamilton 1976). Le Tac's original manuscript was dated 1689, nearly two centuries before it was edited for publication in 1888, the editor himself adding errors (Jones 1909:277).

The unhappy reception Le Caron received from the Petun, in contrast to the friendliness shown to Champlain, had two causes. The first was Le Caron himself, "ever finding fault and .. disputing from the very outset". The second were the shamans, "their medicine-men or magicians, who had no wish to be thwarted in, or condemned for their mummeries" (Sagard 1636:29, 1866:42, cited in Jones 1909:275). Herein lies perhaps a major clue as to the organization and priorities of Petun society. Not Champlain, nor Le Caron, nor anyone else, said the Petun had tobacco, but Le Caron and others did say they had shamans. Tobacco was used by shamans. The "*ohi, or jugglers .. medicine-men or magicians*" that Le Caron and others scorned were, in fact, the real Petun.

Both Gabriel Sagard and Nicholas Viel assisted Le Caron in compiling a dictionary of the language spoken by "the Hurons, and in the other provinces and tribes by whom this language is used, such as the Tobacco tribe, the Neutral nation .." (Sagard 1939:xxxi, xlv-xlvii, 9). Sagard, perhaps not understanding Champlain's reason for limiting his use of the name 'Petun' to only one village, was the

first to extend the name to include the seven adjacent neighbour and allied villages, and to regard them all collectively as both a tribe and a nation, in the sense applied to the Huron and Neutral. He inventively extended the name Petun to include "Pétuneux" and "Pétuneuses" (Sagard 1939:9, 143, 182, 220, 280, 344, 380).

Sagard did not visit the Petun country, and the details he provided of the Petun were probably obtained from two sources, Father Joseph Le Caron, with whom he travelled to Huronia, and some Petun people residing among the Huron. He described how "the women of the Hurons and Petuns ("les huronnes et Pétuneuses") make only one tress of all their hair, which also lies on their back, tied and done up with very dirty leather thongs" (Sagard 1939:143, 344), and how the Huron men adorned themselves with oil, feathers, snake-skins, and paint, while "Others have their body and face marked ("grauée"=carved, tattooed) in divisions ("en compartimens"), with representations of snakes, lizards, squirrels and other animals, and chiefly those of the Tobacco nation, who, almost all, have their bodies thus patterned. It makes them frightful and hideous to those unaccustomed to it" (Sagard 1939:145, 345). The Petun trait of tattooing "from the head even to the feet" (JR21:197) was shared with the Neutral, perhaps a hint that some of the Petun were, in fact, Neutral. Nearly a century later, the Jesuit Joseph Jouvency, clearly plagiarising Sagard, repeated these descriptions as his own (JR1:279).

Among the Hurons, Sagard met a Petun girl whom he threatened with death for a supposed theft, on which she was about to have "herself conveyed to the Tobacco nation whence she came, in order not to die away from her own country" (Sagard 1939:182). Why the Petun girl was living among the Hurons is not known. How many other Petuns were living among the Hurons, not so identified by such a whimsical circumstance, also is not known. In later Jesuit times, Petun Christian converts moved to Huronia to be closer to the priests (JR23:181). Whether there was a similar or equivalent attraction at this earlier date is not known.

The French were at liberty to travel freely to the Petun. As early as 1623 French traders, one of them circumstantially Étienne Brûlé (Daillon 1627, in Le Clercq 1881 1:264), were recorded in the Gens de Petun on their way to the Neutral. Sagard recorded that "One of our Frenchmen had fallen ill among the Tobacco tribe, and his companions, who were going off to the Neutral tribe, left him there in the care of a savage". The Petun "savage" was shocked at the Frenchmen's uncaring treatment of their compatriot (Sagard 1939:194). Of this journey, and perhaps others, Jerome Lalemant at Ste. Marie wrote in 1641 "Many of the Frenchmen who have been here have, in the past, made journeys in this country of the Neutral Nation for the sake of reaping profit and advantage from furs and other little wares that one might look for" (JR21:203). One was murdered there (JR21:211). How many other unknown traders travelled to the Neutral via the Petun is not known. Why the route from the Hurons to the Neutrals at this time lay via the Petun was probably because the Petun better knew the way, being part Neutral themselves.

Sagard remarked that "In some districts, and especially near the Tobacco tribe, there are turkeys, which they call *Ondettontaque*, not tame, but migrating wild birds" (Sagard 1939:220). The challenge of verifying his statement has been met. By 1981, turkey bones have been recovered during archaeological excavations on eight Petun villages sites (Hamalainen 1981:154).

### The Petun as Thieves

The Recollects are said to have created an image of the Petun (Tionnontaté) as thieves (Trigger 1987:387, 390, 909).

In Sagard's first book Le Grand Voyage .. 1632, he recorded that his hosts at Ossossane "took care that nothing of my little stock of clothing should be lost, and warned me to be on my guard against thieves and cheats, especially the Quieunontateronons, who often came to see me in order to get

something from me; for of all the tribes of savages, this one is among the smartest in the matter of deceit and theft" (Sagard 1939:71).

This matter has been examined elsewhere (Garrad 1999). It is demonstrated that the 'Quieunontateronon' mentioned in this context was more likely to be the Petite Nation or *Weskarini*, an Algonquin tribe living on the Ottawa River. Although this name was twice applied by Sagard to the Petun, it was applied to any people associated with hills or mountains (Steckley 1990:22), and could be, and indeed was, applied to people other than the Petun.

Although the Petun were not the Quieunontateronon, this does not mean they were not open to opportunistic thievery. As mentioned above, Sagard recorded an incident where a girl in his host's cabin stole an ikon from him "and threw it aside into the ashes of the fire, thinking to get it out later for herself". Sagard bullied the girl and threatened her with death so effectively that the following day, convinced she was about to die, she was "on the point of having herself conveyed to the Tobacco nation, from whence she came, in order not to die away from her own country (Sagard 1939:182). From this whimsical circumstance it is learned that the girl was a Petun, living among the Huron, but also that her attempt at theft was unsuccessful.

Strangely omitted from his first book and appearing for the first time in his second, Histoire du Canada, 1636, is another incident of theft. The wife of Father Le Caron's Huron host stole one of Le Caron's garments, but thinking better of her deed, returned it explaining that she had recovered it "from the hands of some thief of the Tobacco Nation" ("retirée des mains de quelque voleur de la Nation du Petun"). Why she chose the Petun to blame for her own action is not known, but clearly no Petun was to blame. The answer may be that this was an editorial liberty with Sagard's original text.

In summary, no examples of successful Petun thievery are on record, and, while individual Petuns may have been open to opportunistic thievery, it would be wrong to regard thievery as a particular Petun trait (Garrad 1999). The Recollects did not brand the Petuns as thieves.

### Guillaume Chaudron

Guillaume Chaudron was the name of the Frenchman who was taken ill while in the Petun country in 1623, and was abandoned there to die by his companions who were anxious to continue to the Neutrals. The Petun in whose charge he was left "was so shocked at the small account these Frenchmen made of their compatriot that he found fault with them everywhere, saying that they were curs to leave their sick companion thus neglected and also to recommend that if he died he be buried naked. 'I will never do such a wrong to a dead body', he said, 'even though he be a stranger. And I would rather take off my own coat to cover him than take his from him'." His Huron host came to carry the sick man back to Ossossane with the help of the compassionate Petun, where he died "after having been confessed by Father Joseph" Le Caron (Sagard 1939:194). Although not named in the Recollect account, his identity was deduced by Dr. Bruce G. Trigger from the circumstances of Chaudron's subsequent death and burial at Ossossane, which was remembered for many years (Trigger 1987:374, 390-1, 452n14). Numerous European observers noted that doing honour to the dead was very important to Amerindian people (Sioui 1992:58-59).

### Father de la Roche Dailon, 1626-1627

In 1626, more Frenchmen travelled to the Gens de Petun, on their way to the Neutral. On the instruction of Father Joseph Le Caron, now Superior in Quebec, the Recollect Father de la Roche Dailon (d'Aillon), who had arrived in Huronia in August that year, went from Huronia to "the unknown Neutral nation, where no priest had been before" (Le Tac 1888:133). The Neutrals were not unknown

to the French, because many had been there (JR21:203), one of whom, "the interpreter (Brusle)(Étienne Brûlé) told wonders" about them (Le Clercq 1881 I:264), he having inferentially been one of the 1623-4 party.

Father Daillon (sometimes d'Aillon) and companions set off to go to the Neutrals on October 18, 1626. Their route lay through the country of the Petuns:

"Passing to the Petun nation, I made acquaintance and friendship with an Indian chief who is in great credit, who promised to guide me to this Neutral nation and supply Indians to carry our baggage and what little provision we had; for to think to live in these countries as mendicants is self-deceit; these people giving only as far as you oblige them, so that you must often make long stages and spend many nights with no shelter but the stars. He fulfilled what he had promised to our satisfaction, and we slept only five nights in the woods.." (Report of Father de la Roche Dallion (sic), dated Toanchin, July 18, 1627 in Le Clercq 1881 I:264, 272). H. H. Langton translated the opening words as "Passing through the Tobacco Tribe's country" (Daillon 1981). How long Daillon (d'Aillon) and his party stayed among the Petun in either direction, or even if they returned by the same route, is not mentioned. No lengthy stay among the Petun is implied. This is difficult to reconcile with the calculations of Father Jones of an absence from Huronia of twenty-one weeks for a stay with the Neutral of three months (Jones 1909:292). Deducting two or even three weeks for travelling implies an improbable six weeks with the Petun, coming and going.

According to Jerome Lalemant in 1641, Frenchmen and Hurons from Ossossane went to the Neutrals in the spring of 1627 to bring Father Joseph back, he not having learned the language and communicating mainly by signs (JR21:203-5, 231).

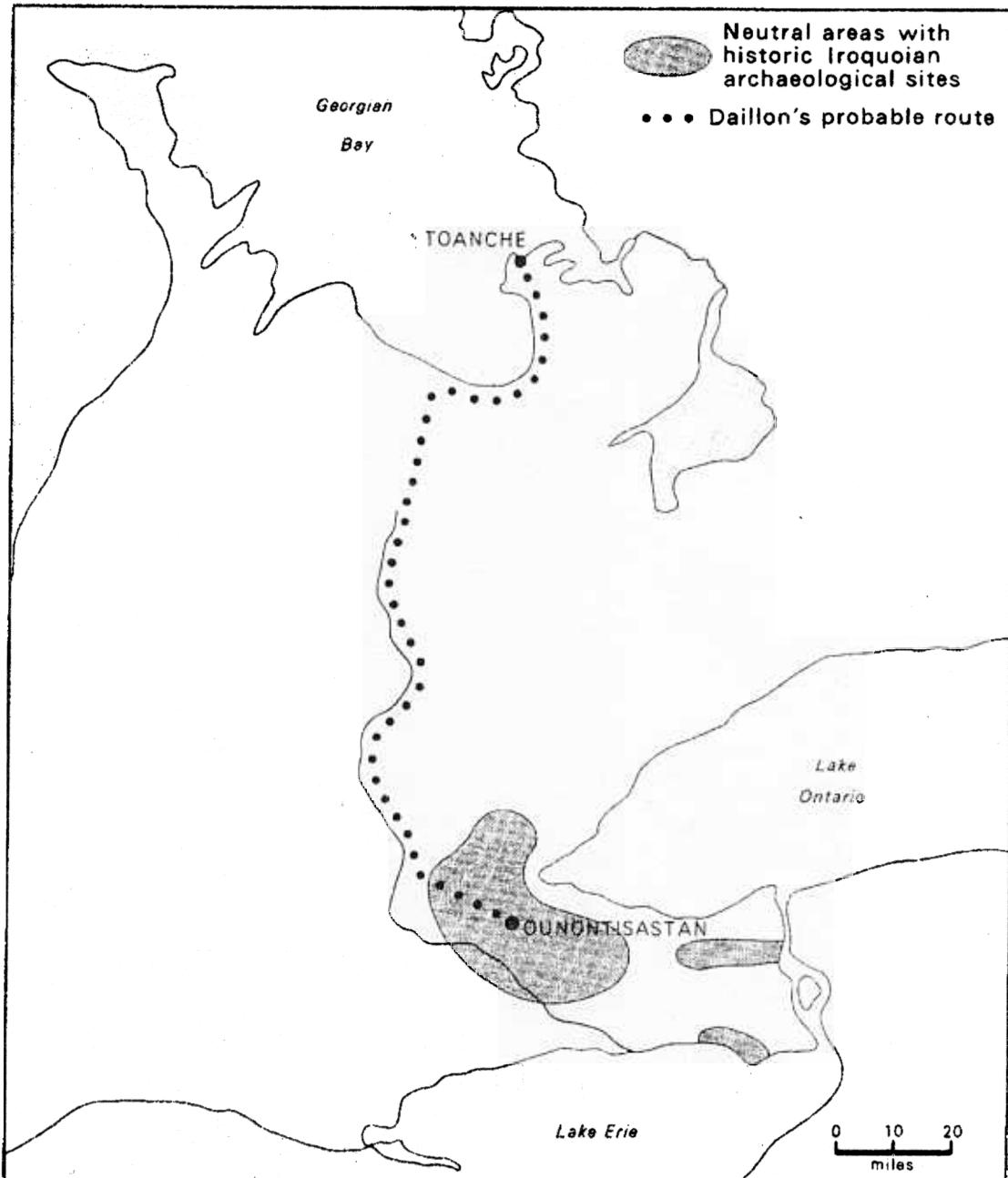
### The Route to the Neutrals

Of related interest is that French travellers from the Hurons to the Neutrals did not all use the same route. Étienne Brûlé and other French traders in 1623, and the Recollect Father Daillon (d'Aillon) and party in 1626-7, are known to have gone to the Neutrals via the Petun country. In 1640 the Jesuit Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot took a different and shorter route and avoided the Petuns.

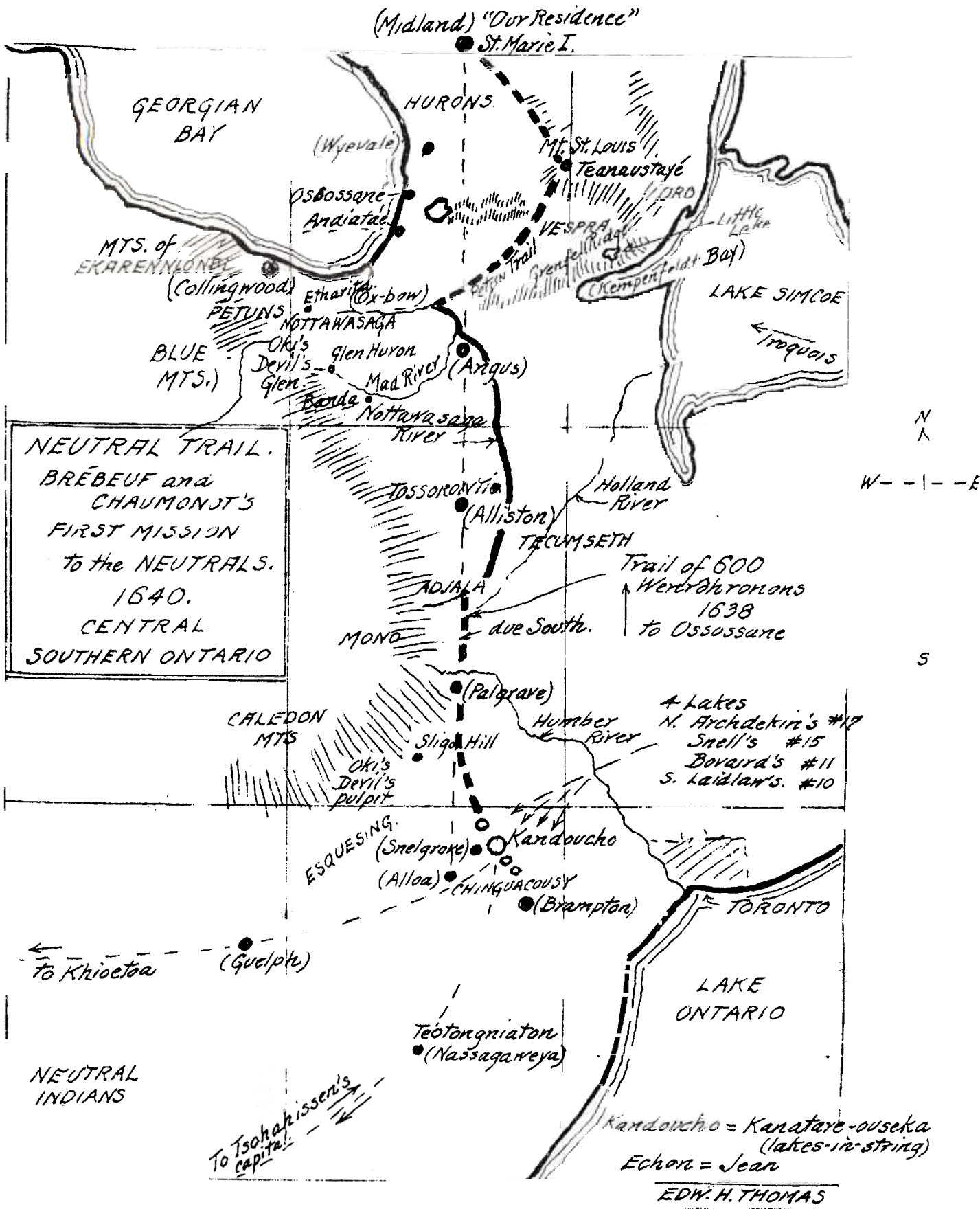
Daillon does not name "the first village" he reached, but he inferentially eventually reached Ounontisastan, the capital village of his host the principal chief Souharissen. On the assumption that the Donovan site between Hamilton and Brantford is Ounontisastan (White 1978:408), a route has been proposed substantially following the Grand River (Trigger 1987:400). This would imply but a short and seemingly feasible portage between the headwaters of tributaries of the Nottawasaga and the Grand rivers. No record of this portage is known.

When Brébeuf and Chaumonot went to the Neutrals in 1640 their immediate destination was a village named Kandoucho. Preferring A. F. Hunter's placement of Kandoucho near Brampton (JR21:316-7) to James H. Coyne's suggestion that it was near Brantford (Coyne 1895:13), Edward H. Thomas proposed a trail substantially following the Nottawasaga River south from above Angus to below Alliston into Adjala, and from there directly south, always below the Niagara Escarpment. It is known that on their return route the party crossed frozen Lake Simcoe, where Brébeuf fell on the ice and broke a clavicle (Jones 1909:324). Thomas also suggested that the Hurons with Étienne Brûlé, heading south to the Humber River in 1615 to recruit allies for the attack on the Onondaga, used the route, as did the Wenrôhronons migrating north to Ossossane in 1638 (Thomas n.d.). The negative evidence supporting these proposals is the absence of any mention of the Petun being associated with either party.

Neither Ounontisastan or Kandoucho are certainly identified and consequently both suggested routes



Map 1 - the route from the Hurons to the Neutrals, via the Petuns, used by Father de la Roche Dailon in 1626, as proposed by William Noble and Marion E. White (Trigger 1987:400).



Map 2 - the alternative route from the Hurons to the Neutrals, avoiding the Petuns, used by Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Pierre-Joseph-Marie Chaumonot in 1640, as proposed by Edward H. Thomas (n.d.).

are speculative.

The reason or reasons that some travelled via the Petun and others did not is not given in the sources. It is speculatively suggested that if Huron guides familiar with the shorter route were unwilling to be of assistance, then access to the Neutrals living among the Petun and who knew a way became the necessary alternative. Possibly, Father Dailon's "Indian chief who is in great credit" was himself a Neutral who found the suggestion of a return visit to his homeland both opportune and acceptable. The presence of Neutrals among the Petuns is well established. At the time of the Dispersal, some Petuns fled to, or returned to, the Neutrals, the family of Honare,enhak being an example (Garrad 1998:8). It is noted that the route decision conforms to the religious division, the Recollects went via the Petun and the Jesuits avoided the Petun. Whether this is meaningful or coincidental is not known.

### The End of the Recollect Period

The Recollect missions to the Huron and Petun fell victim to the politics in France following the war with England which commenced in 1627. Sagard's first book, Le Grand Voyage appeared in 1632 when the colony was about to be restored to France, and may have been partly intended to assert the Recollects right to return to Huronia. His second, Histoire du Canada .. appeared in 1636 after the restoration of Quebec to France in 1632 was accompanied by the decision that only the Jesuits were to return. It is said that the exclusion of the Recollects caused Father Le Caron to die of grief (Sagard 1939:xviii), perhaps a more romantic end than dying of plague (Gingras 1966:438). The Recollects had to be content with having been the first to reach both Hurons and Petuns, and to plead the injustice of their subsequent exclusion through a series of books, of which the first was Sagard's Histoire du Canada .. in 1636. Other noted Recollect works include Premier Établissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France, supposedly by Chrestien Le Clercq (1691), although this authorship is challenged (Hamilton 1976); Histoire Chronologique de la Nouvelle France or Canada .. written in 1689 by Sixte Le Tac, published in 1888; and Les Franciscains et le Canada by Odoric-Marie Jouve (1915).

It cannot be said that the Recollect work among the Petun had any positive effect in deterring their shamans.

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