

THE BRIGHTON AREA AND THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF MICHIGAN (Cont.)

Altho' the French king had abandoned his nation's forts at the southern ends of Lakes Michigan and Huron in 1698, it was but three years later, 1701, that Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac received permission to establish Fort Pontchartrain as the first permanent French settlement in the Lower Peninsula. The fort was to serve as a means of defending the French-claimed territory against the British; promote friendly trade with the Indians and organize a colony of farmers.

Altho' persuaded by the British to attack Fort Pontchartrain in 1704, Chief Pontiac, leading the Ottawas, failed. Again, in 1712, the Fox Indians tried in vain to capture or burn the fort by shooting flaming arrows. In general the French treatment of the Indians encouraged their support and until 1760 Fort Pontchartrain remained in French hands. During these years Robert Navarre established the first civil jurisdiction in the area, and the town of Detroit was inaugurated. Numerous farming grants were made of narrow strips of land fronting on the river and running back as far as the owner wanted. Detroit prospered and the Indians were satisfied and felt secure with their hunting grounds in the interior.

During these same last 71 years (1689/1760) the French and British were engaged in wars in Europe and elsewhere all in the name of their respective empires. In 1757, England determined victory would be hers in North America. Capable generals, large numbers of soldiers and the alliances of her American colonies, enabled England to capture Quebec in 1759; Montreal and Fort Pontchartrain in 1760. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 sealed the fate of French rule in the New World. All other French outposts in Michigan (including those at the Straits of Macinac and Sault Ste. Marie), the Great Lakes and all of French Canada came under British control.

After having been treated as friends by the French and having come to depend on European utensils, cloth, ammunition, etc., harsh treatment meted out by the British soon caused the Indians, under Chief Pontiac, to engage in open warfare in 1763 with the whites. When a surprise attack on Detroit failed, a lengthy siege was begun. While unsuccessful in the siege, Indian warriors attacked white settlements from the Great Lakes to Virginia. Ft. Michilimackinac fell to the Chippewas in June when the soldiers were tricked into allowing the Indians into the Fort to retrieve a ball. The entire Ohio Valley was in the process of being laid waste by Pontiac's troops until he finally received word of the Treaty of Paris of 1763, and realized he could no longer depend on his French allies. The siege of Detroit was lifted, British troops again occupied Ft. Michilimackinac and a peace returned to the frontier. The Indian during the next 30 years developed a cooperative relationship with the British. (To be continued. Condensed and edited from: "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. Pless: "A Short History of Michigan" by John Kern and "War 1812" by George S. May.)

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OLD KENT BANK
300 W. North St.
Brighton, Mi. 48116