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Chippewa Settlements on La Pointe
Island, Wisconsin

BY

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PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE REMAINS OF THE
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INTRODUCTION

In August, 1916, on the advice of Dr. Hrdlička, I visited La Pointe Island (now commonly called Madeline) with the intention of conducting archeological investigations on the site of the Ojibwa village on that island. For reasons which I shall touch upon in the body of this report it was impossible for me to do what I intended at that time. I spent, however, several days going over the site, consulting those who were best acquainted with the local history of the Ojibwa, and planning for future work.

While in the Chequamegon Bay region I received much kindness and help, for which I wish to tender grateful acknowledgment, from Mr. Clark, proprietor of the Knight Hotel in Ashland; from Mr. C. N. Cramer of Ashland; from the Messrs. Salmon of the "Old Mission," Madeline Island; from Mr. William C. Stone of Watertown, Wisconsin, and from Mr. G. F. Thomas of La Pointe.

LOCATION OF LA POINTE OR MADELINE ISLAND

The island is one of the archipelago known as the Apostle Islands, in Lake Superior. On the north and east the archipelago is bounded by the open waters of the Lake; on the west lies the Bayfield peninsula; on the south stretches Chequamegon Bay, on the southern shore of which is the city of Ashland. La Pointe Island lies toward the southern extremity of the group of islands. Its main axis runs from southwest to northeast. In length the island is about twelve miles, and approximately three miles in breadth. The major part of it is covered with old forest; the remainder is taken up by farms and summer resorts.

FIRST INHABITANTS OF LA POINTE ISLAND

We do not know who were the earliest inhabitants of La Pointe Island. The Chippewa have occupied it since 1490. A mound which may have been made by their predecessors exists in the thick, swampy woods east of the Old Mission. It is said to be rather small, made

of earth and stones, and to have the shape of "a serpent." It was described by Mr. Stone as being 15 to 18 feet in length and 3 to 5 feet high. An old Chippewa Indian, whom Mr. Stone consulted on the point, was certain that it was not the work of his people. The writer was not able to visit the mound in person. Its presence on La Pointe Island is interesting. Neither Lapham (1855) nor Thomas (1894) reports any mounds so far north. There is a mere possibility that it was made by the Chippewa¹ but, more probably, its builders were an offshoot of the tribes to which must be attributed the numerous mounds farther south in Wisconsin.

MIGRATIONS OF THE CHIPPEWA (OR OJIBWA) AND THEIR HISTORY ON LA POINTE ISLAND, 1490-1620

The Chippewa belong, as is well known, to the great Algonquian linguistic family. Much of that stock dwelt around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and there are traditions that the Chippewa themselves once lived in that region.² Warren, basing his knowledge on what was told him by an old "priest" of the Midewiwin (Grand Medicine Lodge), tells the following story of the westward migration of the Chippewa:

Starting from the region around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Ojibwa moved up the river, following the *megis* (sacred sea-shell), which was their guide. They stopped for a time at Mo-ne-aung, now Montreal. Eventually the *megis* guided them to the Sault Ste. Marie, called by them Bow-e-ting. At Michillimackinac the Ojibwa (who were not then known by that name) split into three separate but always allied divisions; the Ojibwa proper, the Ottawa, and the Potawatomi. The Ottawa moved somewhat eastward from the Sault; the Potawatomi moved south; the Ojibwa moved west. In historic times, at least, the Potawatomi dwelt near Lake Winnebago and Green Bay.³ These three new tribes, as they became, always remained in friendly relations.

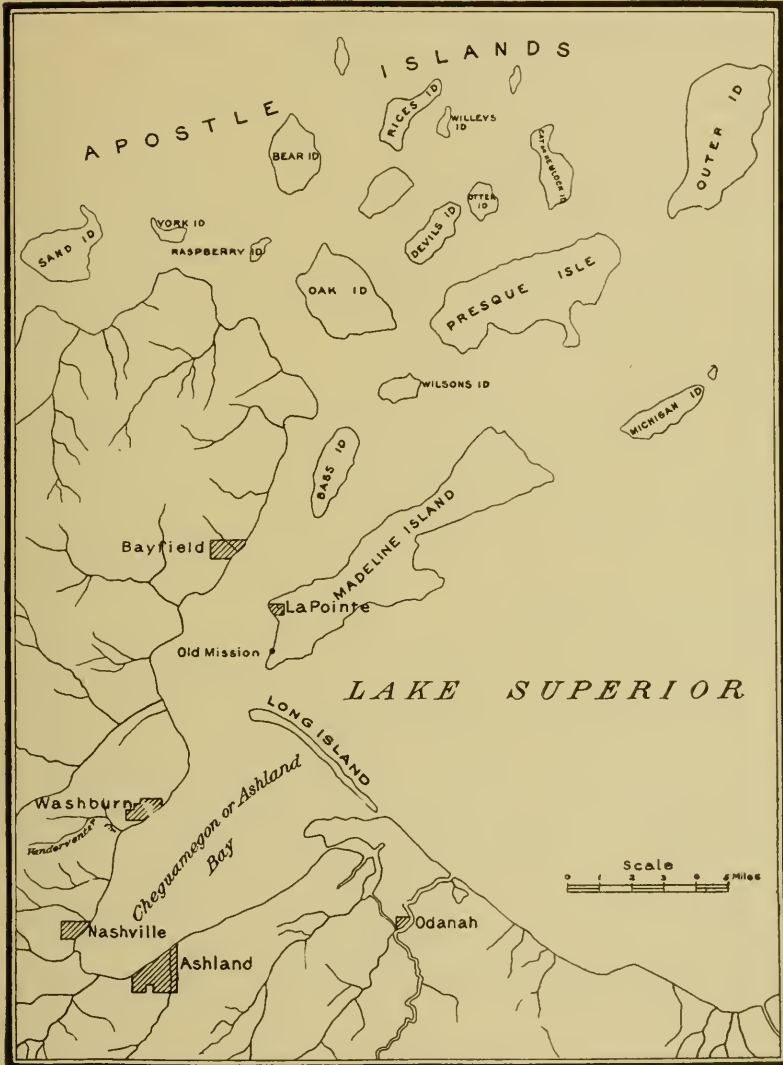
After their separation from the Ottawa and the Potawatomi, the Ojibwa stayed for a long time at Bow-e-ting (Sault Ste. Marie). Many of them remained there after the main body had gone on.

¹ According to Brinton, they occasionally built a mound "to celebrate some special event"—Brinton, D. G., *Essays of an Americanist*, Phila., 1890, p. 70.

² Cf. Warren, 1885, pp. 76-80; Powell, 1891. (Bibliographical references at end of paper.)

³ Bulletin 30, Bur. Amer. Ethn., p. 290; Verwyst, 1886, p. 211; Jes. Rel. for 1640; Thwaites, 1908, p. 194.

The French name for the Ojibwa was *Sauteurs*, People of the Falls. Of those who separated, part went to the northern shore of Lake



MAP I.

Superior; the remainder went west, until they reached the long, narrow sand-spit known as Shaug-ah-waum-ik-ong.¹ This place

¹ Warren, 1885, p. 86; Verwyst, 1895, p. 426.

is the narrow sandy island which forms the northern side of Chequamegon, or Ashland Bay. It is now called* Long Island; formerly it was a peninsula connected with the mainland. It runs at a right angle to La Pointe Island.¹

Upon this rather unsuitable site the Ojibwa built their first settlement in the Chequamegon Bay region.² The settlement took place, according to all authorities, about 1490. As the place was, at that time, a peninsula, it was open to the attacks of the Sioux and the Foxes, which tribes had replaced the Iroquois as enemies-in-chief of the Ojibwa.³ Accordingly, the Ojibwa moved their chief village to Mon-ing-wum-a-kam-ing (place-of-the-golden-breasted-woodpecker), now called La Pointe. There they established their principal village, though there were several other settlements along the shore of Chequamegon (Ashland) Bay.⁴

We may safely assume, then, that by or soon after 1500 a large Ojibwa town flourished on the area just indicated. This important community was menaced by the Sioux from the west and the Foxes from the south, but escaped destruction, and in the course of time numerous settlements were established by the Chippewa on the mainland, which served as outposts to the main village at La Pointe. War against their enemies occupied much of the Ojibwas' strength and time for generations.⁵

For about 120 years, from about 1500 to 1620, the Ojibwa lived uninterruptedly on La Pointe Island. About 1620, however, circumstances arose which led them to desert the place. There are two theories put forth to account for this desertion. One is that the branch of the Ojibwa who remained at the Sault (or possibly their kinsmen the Ottawa) received firearms at this time from the earlier French settlers, and, passing them on to their allies on La Pointe, enabled the latter to drive off their hitherto formidable enemies by means of their powerful new weapons, and progress over the mainland to the southward and westward. The other theory is that a craze for human flesh grew upon the medicine-men of the Ojibwa at La Pointe to such a degree that they even made use of

¹ See map 1, p. 3.

² This island is flat, sandy, sparsely settled, and not too much forested, offering every advantage to the archeologist. Finds from the northwestern end of the island would date from a very early prehistoric and an early historic period.

³ Warren, 1885, p. 95; Verwyst, 1895, p. 430.

⁴ Verwyst, 1895, p. 430.

⁵ Warren, 1885, p. 92.

poisons and violence to meet their desires.¹ In time this abuse attained such proportions that parents were terrorized into giving up their children to the insatiable appetites of the shamans. At length, however, a father, braver than the rest, overcame his superstitious terrors and killed the shaman who had eaten his child. But the island came to be regarded as haunted by the Che-bi-ug, "Souls of the victims," and this belief grew, so that at last the site and the whole island were deserted.

Possibly both causes contributed to the abandonment of the site, though superstitious fear and unhappy conditions within the community would be sufficient for such a step. At all events, the island was completely deserted by all inhabitants about 1620. There were then already numerous Ojibwa villages around Chequamegon Bay and elsewhere on the mainland, and to these doubtless the La Pointe Chippewa went.

THE CHIPPEWA UNDER FRENCH CONTACT, 1634-1760

French knowledge of the existence of Lake Superior may be said to date from 1618. In that year one Étienne Brulé, a *voyageur* of Champlain's, reported the location of the Lake and also brought some copper from there.²

It was Jean Nicolet, however, who, in 1634-35, first came in contact with the Ojibwa of Sault Ste. Marie. News of his arrival quickly spread among the tribe.³ In 1635 Champlain died, and a new Governor, Montmagny, was appointed, under whom exploration fell off. In 1641, however, Brébœuf and Daniel, two priests, visited the Sault, and in 1642 Jogues and Raymbault did likewise.⁴

In 1651 a very important event took place. According to Father Le Mercier, the fur-trade was begun in that year by a party of Indians.⁵ The French were not slow to avail themselves of this chance for wealth, and the Company of the Hundred Associates was formed to carry on the trade.⁶

Groseilliers and Radisson were the first Frenchmen actually to enter the region of Chequamegon Bay. Warren declares (1885,

¹ Warren, 1885, p. 109 ff.

² Neill, 1885, pp. 399-400; Parkman, 1886, p. 56.

³ Neill, 1885, p. 400; Parkman, 1886, p. 166; Thwaites, 1908, pp. 22-31; Butterfield, 1881, pp. 35-74.

⁴ Cf. Neill, 1872, p. 19; Parkman, 1886, p. 213; Bull. 30, Vol. 1, p. 278.

⁵ Jesuit Relation for 1653-54.

⁶ Thwaites, 1908, p. 34 ff.; Neill, 1885, p. 40; Jones, 1861, p. 165 ff.

pp. 121-122) that their first post was built on the eastern end of La Pointe Island. This is emphatically refuted by Thwaites¹ who, quoting Radisson, states that the fort then built by Radisson was on the mainland between the modern town of Washburn and the city of Ashland. In the winter of 1661-62 Groseilliers and Radisson penetrated Minnesota, returning to Chequamegon in the spring of 1662. At that time they built a second fort, probably on the point of Shaug-ah-waum-ik-ong, where the earliest Ojibwa village had been.²

In 1661 Father Ménard had established a mission among the Ottawa on Keweenaw Bay, but abandoned it before very long. Father Claude Allouez was sent, in 1665, to re-establish the mission, settling near the mouth of Vanderverter Creek, just south of modern Washburn. In a short time the name of "La Pointe du Saint Esprit" became attached to the whole of the present Bayfield peninsula.³ At this time there were at Chequamegon Bay many Indian traders of the Ojibwa, Sauks, Foxes, Ottawa, and other tribes.⁴ The labors of Father Allouez seem to have been ill requited, for he was relieved, in 1669, by Father Jacques Marquette. Soon after the arrival of the new missionary, the Ojibwa and the Sioux resumed their ancient hostility, and the former, together with Marquette, were driven to the Straits of Mackinaw. The first missionary period of Chequamegon Bay ended, then, in 1670.⁵

The fur-traders, however, met with a success never attained by the missionaries. In 1673 Sieur Raudin, or Radin, an agent of La Salle's, and Daniel Greysolon du Lhut, or Duluth, entered the western end of Lake Superior and explored it with a view to commercial enterprises.⁶ Their trade languished after a time. In 1693 le Sueur was sent out to reopen du Lhut's old trade routes, notably the Bois Brulé-St. Croix route, in order that they might take the place of the better Fox-Wisconsin route which had been closed by the recently awakened hostility of the Foxes for the French. His many activities included a spectacular but commercially unprofitable copper mining, and also the construction of a fort and village on La Pointe Island.⁷ I am sure from what I saw and heard on La Pointe Island that the

¹ 1895, p. 401.

² Thwaites, 1895, p. 402 ff.

³ Thwaites, 1895, pp. 403-4; map at page 419; Jes. Rel. for 1666-1667 and 1670-1671.

⁴ Thwaites, 1895, p. 406; Bulletin 30, Vol. 2, 474.

⁵ Parkman, 1887, p. 33; Thwaites, 1895, p. 406.

⁶ Thwaites, 1895, p. 407 ff.; Appleton's Cycl., Vol. 2, p. 252, Article Du Lhut.

⁷ Thwaites, 1895, pp. 408-411; Appleton's Cycl., Vol. 3, p. 698, Article Le Sueur.

site of this fort is in the large field on the southwestern end of the island. A description of this, the "French Fort Site," will be given later, together with a report on present conditions there. The fur-trade flourished under the French throughout the region from 1693-1756. There was a succession of French commandants, one of whom, Linctot, made peace between the Ojibwa and the Sioux about 1720.¹ In this long stretch of years the Ojibwa, who by now had returned to the island, passed through many changes. Their needs were elaborated and Europeanized; race intermixture occurred, and new forms of disease were introduced, together with a craving for whiskey. The anthropologist who wishes to study the Ojibwa in their primitive circumstances must, then, look behind this period.

From 1730-1744, the Chequamegon region was controlled by the *Sieur La Ronde Denis* and his son. They were not successful in their search for copper mines, but they built a forty ton sailboat which was the first on Lake Superior.² At that period the island was called *Isle La Ronde*.

In 1760-1761 the French fort on *La Pointe* was destroyed by some traders who were horrified by the crimes of a *voyageur* who, in that winter, had killed *Joseph*, a clerk, and his master, as well as *Joseph's* wife and child.

In 1765-66 *Alexander Henry*, a British trader, was vested with sole right to trade on Lake Superior. He associated with him in his business a young Frenchman named *Jean Baptiste Cadotte*.³ During the same period (1760-1800) a Scotch-Irishman named *John Johnston* established himself near the old French fort at *La Pointe Island*, not far from the spot later occupied by the "Old Mission," and carried on trade with an Ojibwa village on the site of the modern *Bayfield*. *Johnston* married a daughter of the chief of *La Pointe*.⁴

The family of *Jean Baptiste Cadotte, Sr.*, soon arose to prominence among the Chippewa. He married a girl of the tribe and lived with her at *Sault Ste. Marie*. His two sons, *Jean Baptiste, Jr.*, and *Michel*, took up his business in 1796. In 1802 *Michel* moved to *La Pointe*, where he married *Equaysayway*, daughter of *White Crane*, chief of *La Pointe*.⁵ *Michel Cadotte* occupied the site of the old French fort. His house, dismantled and dilapidated, remains to this day. He became an agent of *Astor's American Fur Company*, which

¹ Thwaites, 1895, p. 411.

² Thwaites, 1895, p. 411; Butler, 1894, p. 87.

³ Henry, 1809, p. 197 ff.

⁴ Thwaites, 1895, p. 415.

⁵ Thwaites, 1895, p. 415.

played an important rôle on the island in the first half of the nineteenth century. He died at La Pointe in 1837.

In 1818 Lyman Marcus Warren and Truman Abraham Warren arrived at La Pointe from western Massachusetts. Lyman Warren, also an agent for the American Fur Company, married a daughter of Michel Cadotte; he died in 1847. His son, William Whipple Warren, is our chief authority on the earlier history of the Chippewa.¹

Although the wife of Lyman Warren was a Catholic, he invited missionaries of his own church (Presbyterian) to La Pointe. For the first time since the days of Allouez, missionaries were important in the lives of the Ojibwa. In 1831 the Rev. Sherman Hall arrived at La Pointe with his wife, who was a teacher. With them was their friend, Mrs. John Campbell, who acted as interpreter.² They built their mission about a mile north of the French fort. This building is now a part of an attractive summer hotel owned by the Messrs. Salmon who showed the writer so much kindness.

About 1830 the American Fur Company moved its village to the place where the La Pointe of our own day stands. The old anchorage (at the French Fort Site) was filling with sand, while the size of the boats used was steadily increasing.³

In 1845 most of the Ojibwa remaining on the island were moved over to the new La Pointe Reservation at Odanah, where they are to-day. The last representative of the Cadotte family was an old Indian whom Mr. Stone knew so well and from whom he received much information about the past of his tribe. This old man, Jean Baptiste Cadotte, 3d, died in 1913.

PRESENT CONDITIONS ON LA POINTE ISLAND AND
PROSPECTS OF ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK ON
THE ISLAND AND IN THE REGION OF
CHEQUAMEGON BAY, WISCONSIN

When the writer went to La Pointe Island, Wisconsin, with the expectation of doing archeological work there, he found the present conditions unfavorable for work at just that time. The situation was this:

La Pointe Island is thickly settled, largely with a population of summer residents. A good-sized hotel (the "Old Mission") attracts many people there, and the half-breed Indian natives of the island largely support themselves by work connected with the hotel and its

¹ Thwaites, 1895, p. 416 ff.

² Thwaites, 1895, p. 419.

³ Thwaites, 1895, p. 421.

dependent cottages. A goodly portion of the land in which lie the archeological materials is now given over to cultivation; the remainder of the ancient sites is still covered with dense woods. In places of the former sort, where the trees had been cleared off and the vegetal mold removed, it would have been simple enough to make excavations, were it not for the fact that standing crops of corn occupied the fields. The writer found it impracticable to buy the



MAP 2.

crops, and of course it was impossible to dig without destroying them. To wait until they had been harvested would have occupied many weeks. In the wooded portions of the sites the trees are very thick and the undergrowth is dense. It would be impossible to make satisfactory clearings without the aid of several laborers. These were not then available.

The archeological sites on La Pointe Island will now be defined in chronological order. In the portion of this paper which deals with the history of the Ojibwa the importance of the several sites is dwelt on at greater length.

The oldest site is to be found covering a large area about two and one-half miles northeast of La Pointe village. The anciently occupied area extended from the southeastern shore to the northwestern shore at this point. (See map 2, p. 9.) By the year 1500, in all probability, the Ojibwa had established themselves in this area. They continued to occupy it and adjacent territory to the southwest until 1620. This territory to the southwest of the oldest site is referred to elsewhere in this paper as the "French Fort Site." Though geographically and chronologically a subdivision of the larger and older site northeast of it, the French Fort Site was occupied long after the oldest site had been deserted. In fact, the French Fort Site was the seat of the Ojibwa tribe until well along in the nineteenth century. The last, and the least important, Ojibwa site and burial ground on La Pointe Island is that immediately to the north of the "Old Mission." It is small, and, because recent and Christian, it is not of archeological interest.

Almost all of the oldest site is covered by woods. Some of it is in farms. Where fields now exist, the writer learned, the plentiful skeletal material is in fairly good condition owing to the fact that the sun dries out the sandy soil and the bones it contains. In the woods, conditions are probably less favorable, owing to roots and, above all, to dampness.

A serious difficulty on the island, however, is the question of labor. The mixed-bloods refuse to disturb the graves of their ancestors, and white laborers in the region of Chequamegon Bay were found to be few, expensive, and of doubtful quality.

Two or three miles south of the French Fort Site lies Long Island, where the Ojibwa first camped, about 1490. There are few trees upon Long Island, and the northwestern extremity of it, on which the village was, seems an ideal place for the archeologist. Because of its remoteness it is not, like the sites on La Pointe Island, liable to hostilities on the part of the half-breeds of La Pointe, who, Mr. Salmon assured me, would not hesitate to attempt a forcible prevention of excavations which they consider sacrilegious, at least on the more recent French Fort Site.

So much for present conditions on La Pointe Island and on Long Island.

The following table gives a brief chronological recapitulation of the various sites.

SYNOPSIS OF SITES OCCUPIED BY THE OJIBWA

FIRST SITE (about 1490-1500). The northwestern end of Long Island, then called Shaug-ah-waum-ik-ong. This site would yield very old objects.

SECOND SITE (1500-1620). The region about two and one-half miles northeast of modern La Pointe village. This site was called Mon-ing-wun-akaun-ing. As it was occupied a long time, the occupied area gradually spread southwestwardly along the shore into the "French Fort Site."

THIRD SITE (1620-1661). Just south of Washburn, probably at the mouth of Vanderverter's Creek. Other places were inhabited by the Chippewa at this time, also.

FOURTH SITE (1661-1662). On the northwestern end of Long Island.

FIFTH SITE. 1662-1693 was a period of uncertainty for the Chippewa. They were harassed by the Sioux, and were forced to wander about.

SIXTH SITE (1693-19th Century). The "French Fort Site" which, as has been said, was very old, was reoccupied during this period.

MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE OJIBWA

It may be well to note in this connection those aspects of the life and material culture of the Ojibwa which offer some indication of the class of objects that the archeologist may expect to find in excavating the various sites occupied by the tribe.

HOUSES AND GARDENS

The wigwams of the Ojibwa in their primitive periods were oval or oblong lodges, made either of birch-bark or of skins laid over a light framework of slender rods. The fastenings were thongs or certain rushes. The type persisted long after the Europeans had shown the natives how to erect more commodious houses of logs, and is still to be met with occasionally among some of the less civilized groups of the tribe.¹ The lodges had but one fireplace, and they were occupied by but one family. In other cases, however, long lodges with two or even three fireplaces existed. These accommodated as many as six families. Besides, there were the lodges of the Midewiwin.

The Ojibwa had gardens, even in the earliest periods. Pumpkins and maize were apparently the agricultural staples, if not the only vegetables grown, but wild fruits, wild rice, and maple sugar were

¹ A picture of a dome-shaped Chippewa (same as Ojibwa) house appears in Bulletin 30, Vol. 2, p. 131. See also illustration in Dr. Hrdlička's report on his trip to the Chippewa of Minnesota, in *Explorations and Fieldwork of the Smithsonian Institution in 1915*, Smithsonian Misc. Coll., Vol. 66, No. 3, fig. 89.

gathered in addition. Hunting and fishing were relied on to furnish the major part of the food.¹

IMPLEMENTS, CANOES, ETC.

The Ojibwa were canoe-using people, which was a natural outcome of their environment. Some of the canoes built were of considerable size. These large canoes were often employed for carrying war-parties in the old days, and in later times they were used for carrying *voyageurs* and their merchandise. They were constructed in much the same manner as the wigwams, namely, of bark laid over a light framework, sewn together and calked with pitch. Dug-outs were not made by the Ojibwa, though used by some surrounding tribes.²

The Ojibwa were skillful makers of pipes, the material used being commonly a fine-grained, soft, reddish pipe-stone from the mainland. Mr. Stone presented an excellent example of such a pipe to the Wisconsin Historical Society a few years ago; it was about seven inches long and of fine workmanship. The writer was shown, by the farmer who now holds the "French Fort Site," several fragments of well-cut and polished pipes of similar nature. The cavity for the tobacco appeared to have been made by use of the sand-water-and-stick method; it was too narrow to permit the insertion of any other implement, and the striations caused by the sand were visible on the inside of the bowl.

The old Ojibwa made fire by the bow method. Pottery, decorated with simple incised designs, was used in cooking. These vessels as well as the various receptacles and utensils made of stone, birch-bark, and skins, were gradually discarded after the contact with whites was established.

The dress of the men consisted of a long coat or shirt of skins, and long leggings. The women wore a short garment of deerskin. Fringes, porcupine-quills, and feathers were employed for decoration. Fur robes were used in cold weather. Nose- and ear-ornaments were common. Moccasins, both low and high, were worn, and a long puckered seam running up the foot was distinctive of the Ojibwa moccasin³ and gave the tribe its name.

¹ Cf. Gilfillan, 1901, p. 62; McKenney, 1827, p. 289 (picture), p. 418 (picture); Jones, 1861, pp. 71-73; Warren, 1885, pp. 40 and 97; Lahontan, 1905, p. 220; Carver, 1781, pp. 283-293.

² Thwaites, 1908, p. 18; McKenney, 1827, p. 200; Lahontan, 1905, p. 80.

³ London, 1808-11, Vol. 2, p. 327; Jones, 1861, pp. 73-74 and 75-77; Carver, 1781, pp. 225-230; Warren, 1885, p. 36.

BURIAL CUSTOMS

When an Ojibwa died, his body was dressed in new and elaborate garments. He was then wrapped in strips of birchbark and, together with his best implements and weapons, was buried, his head to the west, the land of the future. In later times wooden coffins came into use. McKenney gives a picture which indicates that scaffold-burial was used, possibly during winter when the ground was frozen hard, for Ojibwa children. Though common in Dakota, it was probably rare among the Ojibwa.¹

PICTOGRAPHY

The pictography of the Ojibwa was connected mostly with the Midewiwin and its rites. Brinton, however, mentions *adjidjiatig*, or grave-posts. Hoffman has discussed at length the nature and significance of the sacred bark records of the Midewiwin and figures several specimens of them.²

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the foregoing, it would seem that archeological exploration of the oldest Chippewa burials on both Long and La Pointe islands will probably result in the recovery of considerable skeletal material which, in view of the extensive subsequent admixtures into the tribe of white and other blood, would doubtless prove of great value to science. Besides, there will doubtless be stone pipes, more or less pottery, and some stone implements including possibly some ceremonial forms, and there is a chance that some primitive tools of native copper may also be found. More perishable articles have of course by this time disappeared. In the burials dating from the time when contact with the French was established, there is a bare chance that a recovery may be made of medals, coins, or other articles which would serve to corroborate certain dates.

At all events, the La Pointe and surrounding sites must be regarded as among the best dated and, from the standpoint of anthropology, most valuable sites which await careful exploration in the northern states.

¹Loudon, 1808-1811, Vol. 2, p. 296; Carver, 1781, pp. 398-399; Jones, 1861, pp. 98-101; McKenney, 1827; Bulletin 30, Vol. 1, p. 946.

²Brinton, 1890, p. 228; Hoffman, 1891, p. 286; Carver, 1781, pp. 414-417; Belcourt, 1872, p. 232; Willis, 1859.

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