

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Address at the Representative of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, M. Aegidius Fauteux, at the Unveiling of the Memorial on the Site of Hochelaga, in Montreal, on Friday, May 22

Aegidius Fauteux

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THE ADDRESS OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HISTORIC
SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA, M. ÆGIDIUS
FAUTEUX, AT THE UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL ON THE
SITE OF HOCHELAGA, IN MONTREAL, ON FRIDAY, MAY 22.

A good government must cater to the mind as well as to the matter; it must meet the spiritual, as well as the material needs of the people.

One of the spiritual needs of our nation, and perhaps none the less urgent in any community, is the formation of a national spirit binding together every one of us in a common effort towards a common goal. Pride in our country might be given as another name for that same national spirit. One feels proud of his country, not only on account of its actual merits, but still more perhaps on account of its achievements in the days gone by. It is vitally necessary that we never forget the past; for its lessons are the wisdom of the future. That is what really gives its importance to history. Through history generations are linked together in a continuous effort, and the weight of accumulated centuries is thrown in the battle for a permanent ideal. History is the royal road to national enthusiasm, and already a host of deserving scholars and writers are leading us ahead, as they unfold the secrets of the past, and reveal to the nation the annals of its country.

But this is not sufficient yet to stimulate to the full the interest in history which is so urgently needed. The printed page unfortunately does not find many readers, and it is the man in the street himself that must be reached.

It is precisely with that object in mind that the Canadian Government has created the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, whose duty is to mark by appropriate memorials on the grounds that have witnessed them, the notable events of the past as links in a long chain to bind the people of Canada together as a nation. History is thus made popular in the fullest sense of the word; it is now meant to be written everywhere along the public roads, in the parks of the various cities, on the hill tops and in the valleys. Willingly or unwillingly the passer by must read it, and nobody can escape its wholesome effect. But there is no need of enlarging on this truism or of insisting on the magnitude of the service that may ultimately be rendered by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

We are now unveiling one of those open-air bronze pages to which we invite the attention of the passer by in the streets of Montreal. Among the historical sites deserving commemoration, that of Hochelaga has been one of the first, if not the first, to attract the attention of the board, and it is only the fault of circumstances if its marking has been deferred to this date.

The site of Hochelaga is associated with the earliest event in our history on this continent—the advent of the white man in the virgin forest of America.

Unfortunately, and in spite of their laudable efforts, our historians have not been able to gather much information that is beyond dispute on the famous village of Hochelaga, which we are now trying to plant definitely and firmly, by the means of this memorial, into the wider domain of popular history. We do not even know precisely what particular tribe of the Iroquois inhabited it. Not more than fifty years after Jacques Cartier visited it, it had disappeared so completely that Champlain and his followers, in 1611 could find no vestige of its existence. To satisfy our desire of knowledge, we have had for centuries the interesting plan of Ramusio, it is true, but who could tell whether this plan

is the exact picture of truth or a creation of the fertile imagination of the 16th century illustrators! Nobody down to about sixty years ago, had been able to locate this site with any approximation. But it fell to the lot of a geologist, one of the pioneers of his science in our country, to offer a fair solution to the mystery. Everybody knows how, in 1861, near this very spot were unexpectedly discovered human remains, pottery and primitive implements. The precious find immediately aroused the widest interest among scientific and historical circles. Sir William Dawson established without much difficulty that the remains unearthed here belonged to the prehistoric age of Canada and demonstrated the former existence on these grounds of an important aboriginal village. The authority of Sir William Dawson carried great prestige abroad, and it has been generally admitted since that the location of the famous Hochelaga village is no longer a problem. It is without hesitation that the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is today marking this spot as one of first national importance. It is here that was sowed one of the first seeds that has germinated and grown into the tree under whose branches thrives and prospers an already great nation from ocean to ocean in this Canada of ours.

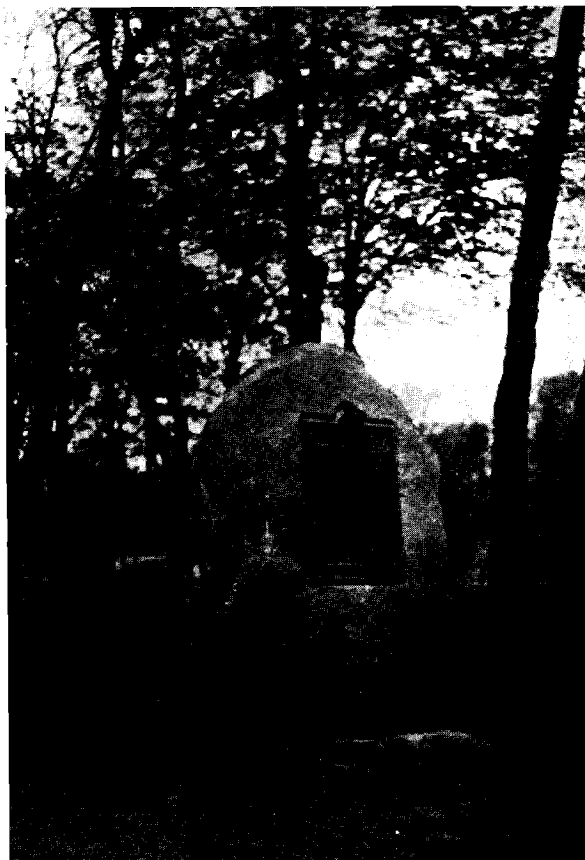
Je n'ajouterai que quelques mots en français, car je sais que nous sommes tous ensemble appelés ailleurs par d'autres devoirs, et je ne veux pas vous retenir plus longtemps. L'on aurait certainement lieu de s'étonner si, dans cette circonstance, je ne parlais pas au moins pendant quelques instants la langue même de l'illustre découvreur dont nous commémorons la première venue en ces lieux. Ce sont en effet les accents du langage français qui se sont mêlés pour la première fois, le 2 octobre 1535, aux exclamations des enfants des bois, et, en vérité, ils résonnèrent si bien que jusqu'aujourd'hui l'écho ne s'en est pas encore perdu.

Il est à peu près certain que lorsque Jacques Cartier, l'envoyé du roi François Ier, aborda sur ces rivages, il y a aujourd'hui près de quatre cents ans, jamais auparavant pied d'étranger n'avait foulé le sol canadien. On conçoit facilement l'émoi mêlé de curiosité qui dut s'emparer des peuplades indigènes en voyant surgir soudain au milieu d'elles ce visage pâle dont elles n'attendaient pas la venue et dont le langage leur était inconnu. L'impression ne dut pas être moins vive chez l'explorateur français qui se trouvait lui aussi plongé avec la même soudaineté dans un monde aussi étrange que nouveau. Essayons de nous représenter cette fatidique entrevue entre les aventureux Français du vieux monde et les primitifs enfants du nouveau, dans l'enceinte de la bourgade d'Hochelaga. Il n'est peut-être pas d'événement plus solennel dans toute notre histoire que cette première et émouvante rencontre entre deux nations étrangères l'une à l'autre. Comme l'illustre marin lui-même en eût été autrement impressionné, s'il eût pu en prévoir les merveilleuses conséquences dans un avenir aussi rapproché!

Sans doute, dans la satisfaction d'un grand effort à demi accompli, il se flattait d'ouvrir au roi puissant qui l'avait envoyé un domaine nouveau d'une grande étendue, mais comment eut-il pu rêver que, sur ce sol même qu'il foulait, au pied de ce Mont Royal dont il venait de gravir la pente, s'élèverait bientôt une cité plus vaste et plus riche que la plus ambitieuse que l'on connut en Europe de son temps? Comment eut-il pu rêver qu'en moins de quatre siècles les forêts qu'il venait de traverser auraient déjà fait place à une civilisation nouvelle?

Et pourtant, c'est cette même bourgade d'Hochelaga dont nous marquons aujourd'hui l'emplacement qui a été un des points de départ de ce merveilleux essor dont il est encore impossible de mesurer la portée définitive. Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que la terre qui a vu un tel commencement est une terre sacrée.

The ground of Hochelaga on which we now stand happens also to be that of McGill University. Is it not appropriate that the obscure cultures which once prevailed here be replaced by what is the summum of modern civilization, a great university? One of the foremost principals of McGill University, besides, has contributed more than anyone else to determine the location of this site,



SITE INDIAN VILLAGE OF HOCHELAGA
MCGILL UNIVERSITY GROUNDS, MONTREAL, QUE.

which is of such vital importance in our history. For these two reasons, it is highly appropriate that McGill University be constituted the guardian of this memorial which commemorates the national site of Hochelaga, and on behalf of the Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, I have the honour of transferring it more immediately to the keeping of the McCord Museum Committee.

Professor Stephen Leacock, in a few appropriate words, accepted on behalf of McGill University the charge of the Hochelaga Memorial.