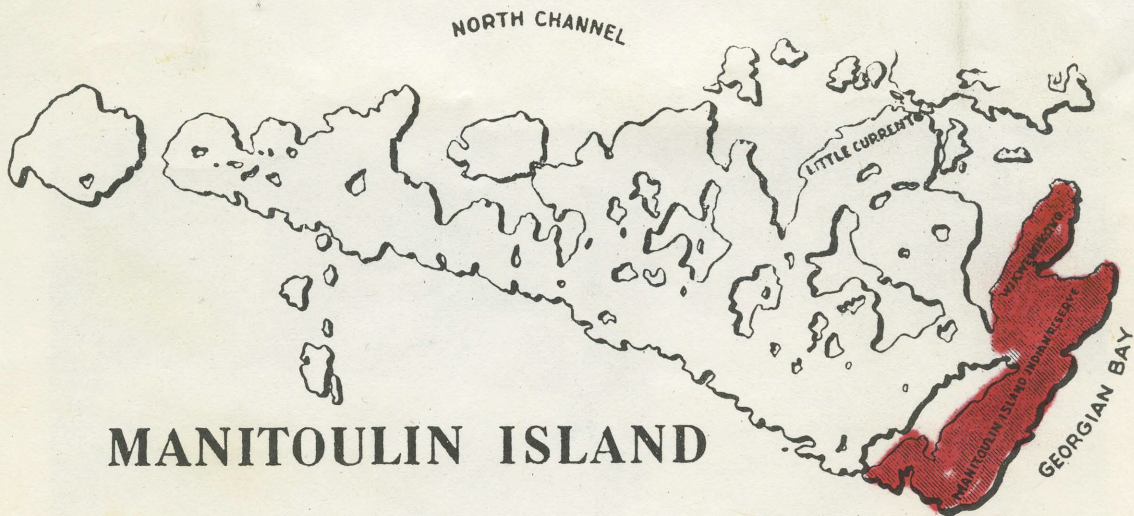


Après 1858



MANITOULIN ISLAND

THE HOLY CROSS MISSION AT WIKWEMIKONG-MANITOULIN ISLAND

The reproduction of the photograph on the front shows the buildings of The Holy Cross Mission which still stand in the little Indian Village of Wikwemikong. The buildings shown are the Church, the Priests' Residence, and what was the Boys' Dormitory when the Indian schools were situated there.

Wikwemikong Indian Reservation, or what is accurately known as "the unceded portion of the Manitoulin Island," is the easterly peninsula or the shaded portion as shown on the map above, and faces the Georgian bay to the east.

In 1836, the whole Manitoulin Island was set aside for the Indians of the Ottawa and Ojibway tribes at a very spectacular meeting between some fifteen hundred Indians and Sir Francis Bond Head representing the British Crown. Our Christmas card of last year reproduced the treaty of that time. The treaty lasted only until 1862 when it was considered a failure due to the relatively few Indians who had taken advantage of it. A new treaty was arranged ceding the whole Island to the British Crown with the exception of a few scattered Reservations and the easterly peninsula of Wikwemikong.

The Roman Catholic Priests have taken a keen interest in the Indians on the Island for the past 300 years. In 1648 we have record of the Rev. Antoine Poncet, S.J., spending a winter of extreme hardship on the Island. From then on missionaries came to the Island at intervals down to 1700, but there is no record of such activities during the next 125 years.

The Island was visited in 1832 by the Rev. J. B. Proulx, a secular priest, and in 1838 he took up residence at Wikwemikong laying the foundation for what was to become one of the largest institutions of its kind in Canada. Here many of the later missionaries received much of their missionary training, notably the Rev. Eugene Papineau, S.J., who was known and loved by the Indians far and wide in the area.

In 1844, it was decided to establish schools at Wikwemikong for the Indian children from all over Northern Ontario. Rev. Chone, a Jesuit, was sent to begin this work. Schools and residences were built for both boys and girls and the children

were brought by boat from many Reservations and taken home again for the summer holidays. The school buildings suffered a good deal from fire through the years and finally in 1911, after the girls' school had again burned, the whole school was moved to Spanish, on the North Shore, as a more central point. The size of the boys' residence in the picture, reflecting the French influence on architecture, gives an idea of the magnitude of the work done by the Mission. The result is indicated by the many fine Indian men and women in the district today who received their early training there.

The church which was begun in 1844 is built of stone, and with its beautiful interior would do credit to a much larger community. The building was built by the Indians themselves under the supervision of the Priests and Brothers and took a long time to complete as many of the stones used in its construction, had to be brought in flat-bottomed boats from the Islands as far away as ten miles. In 1860 it was finally completed and the steeple was added in 1899. The money to do this work came from various sources. One of the most interesting contributions came from the Indians themselves who made quantities of bark work and sent it to France to be sold and proudly netted about \$600.00. Of outstanding interest are the beautiful altars, and chandeliers which were carved in wood by the Indians, and a prayer book which was printed in the Indian language on a hand press at the Mission in 1858.

The chronicles of the Mission indicate the tremendous difficulties under which these things were accomplished in an isolated spot. Access could only be had by water or over the winter ice, and there are many stories of difficult voyages by canoe, sailboat and journeys by dogsled to Lakes Superior and Michigan, and to Georgian Bay, Detroit and Montreal.

Indians were converted to the Christian faith, taught crafts and husbandry and the foundation was laid for the thriving Indian community of Wikwemikong and the surrounding unceded eastern peninsula of the Manitoulin Island. The work still continues under the present Superior, Rev. Joseph Dwyer, S.J.

