

Axe head notches an important place in Sault's history

By FRANK WILSON

It is one of our original Sylvan Valley axes.

Since coming to the valley, it's had ten handles and seven heads, Earl Orchard had said, referring to an old axe stuck in a tree.

Strangely, such long-forgotten words were recently brought to mind by an old tin cup, an abandoned, battered trophy awarded in 1945 to a billiard champion. The yard-sale price of the cup was 50 cents. The, good news, however, is this: presently the cup does enjoy a favoured place in my wife's chi-

na cabinet.

But such favour is denied my old axe head. And the suggestion that I hang the axe head and set it in the shed alongside the rake is no answer. To ensure its longevity, an axe head — like a crucifix or heirloom — needs its own story.

It had long haunted me, the possibility of this axe head finding itself in one of those ubiquitous yard sales; and even worse was the idea of it not attracting a buyer.

Observe that I distress myself by personifying objects, but it is a habit. And

though I much admire those religious souls who personify kindness, faith and wisdom, I prefer to be connected socially and practically with more concrete things. But back to this axehead.

Like most other things old, axe heads disappear with the passing of time. Gone is the head from the axe used to cut out from the woods the pole for the Calvary Cross, the kindling for the Joan of Arc fire, the mast for Jacques Cartier's ship, the beams for the Don River Bridge.

Gone is the head from the axe used to cut out from the woods the logs for the

fort at Port Royal, the piles for the wharf at Niagara, the timbers for the locks in Sault Ste. Marie. Also gone are the heads from those axes used to cut out from the woods the cities of Chicago, Detroit and New York. And gone forever, of course, is that first axe head, that sharp stone tied to that long-handled stick.

Is it then surprising that I cherish Mr. Vidal's axe head, the one from the axe used by him to cut out from the woods the City of Sault Ste. Marie?

On hearing this, my wife laughed, knowing how I hate being laughed at. "A mountain out of a mole mill," she

said. Mountains out of mole hills! Everyone in Sault Ste. Marie is every day walking in the tracks of the axe of Mr. Vidal; everyone in Canada (and the U.S.A., too) is somewhere daily following the tracks of an axe.

Mountains out of mole hills! I'll show her. Before this week is over this axe head will be encased in a fine box and sitting on the mayor's desk, a tribute to the citizens of Sault Ste. Marie who widened Mr. Vidal's axe lines and built along these lines this beautiful city of ours. Good news. Surely this axe head is good news. At least I think so.

