

THE RADISSON PROBLEM

THE PRAIRIE ISLAND CASE

I have recently had occasion to consult once more that very valuable volume entitled *The French Régime in Wisconsin* by Louise Phelps Kellogg. Dr. Kellogg's studies in the early history of the Northwest have been carried forward with extraordinary patience and industry, and have let in a flood of light upon some of its phases which apparently had been lost forever in obscurity. Her treatment of the "voyages" of Pierre d'Esprit, sieur de Radisson, however, does not seem to me to be wholly satisfactory.

A part of note 9 on page 108 of the *French Régime* reads as follows: "See Warren Upham, *Minnesota Historical Collections*, X, 449-594; refuted by J. V. Brower, *Minnesota*, in *Memoirs of Explorations of [sic] the Basin of the Mississippi* (St. Paul, 1903) vi." Dr. Kellogg makes no other mention of Upham's monograph. It seems to me that she has not here used her customary care, for she has not given Brower's book a critical examination. The dogmatic utterances with which his book abounds indicate an attitude of mind that is not conducive to a careful weighing of evidence, a fact that should have put Dr. Kellogg on her guard against a too ready acquiescence in his views.

In 1902 Brower made a careful archeological examination of Prairie Island, which is also called Bald Island and Isle Pelée, and of the surrounding country. He collected a great number of stone implements and fragments of pottery, pictures of many of which appear in his book. Brower writes: "The various mound groups and village sites were visited and many hundred archæologic objects collected, all of which were fully determined to be characteristic ancient Dakota Indian specimens almost exactly similar to

the same class of objects obtained at Kathio and Mille Lac."¹ Of course they were. They were not only "almost exactly similar," but they were identically the same in form and workmanship as those previously found wherever the Sioux Indians have resided. What of it? Brower writes as if he expected to find archeological specimens showing Huron workmanship, and failing to find them, he is disposed to believe that Hurons did not live on Prairie Island. It is perfectly evident that the only implements of Indian manufacture that the Hurons possessed while living on Prairie Island were obtained from the Sioux, because those were the only native implements obtainable. The guns and knives and kettles and awls and needles which the Hurons took with them when they went to Prairie Island about 1653 were all made in Europe, and did not differ from similar articles taken to Prairie Island by a long line of French traders who went there in the years that followed.

Did Brower think that the Hurons were going to set up a workshop on Prairie Island and proceed to manufacture pottery and stone and bone implements after some ancient Huron model? As we read on, we find that that is exactly what he did think:

A thousand or twelve hundred Indians residing at a given point two years would most certainly deposit a vast quantity of village debris. The only quantities of such material found at Prairie Island were of Siouan origin, which I have preserved for museum display, all of which is similar to artifacts illustrated in this volume. Our investigations at Prairie Island were disappointing, for we all certainly expected to find a large Huron village site.²

After Brower had failed to find a "Huron village site," he sent for Dr. Warren Upham and demanded that he should point out the location of such a site or make retrac-

¹ Jacob V. Brower, *Minnesota: Discovery of Its Area, 1540-1665*, 56 (*Memoirs of Explorations in the Basin of the Mississippi*, vol. 6 — St. Paul, 1903).

² Brower, *Minnesota*, 56.

tion of his statement that Radisson had visited Hurons on Prairie Island.³ Of course Dr. Upham refused to make any such retraction.

Brower includes in his book articles by Henry Colin Campbell and Benjamin Sulte, both of whom had made considerable study of the Radisson narrative. It should be remembered that Campbell was the first writer to suggest that Prairie Island might be identical with Radisson's "first landing isle." In 1896 he published the following statement:

Late in the winter, Radisson says, he and Groseilliers and 150 Indians traveled fifty leagues on snow shoes, came to the mouth of a river where they stopped to make boats, ascended the river for eight days, visited the Pontonemick, probably Pottawattamies, and the Matoneck, and continued their journey until they reached what Radisson calls "the first landing isle." Does Radisson mean to state that they crossed the upper peninsula of Michigan, ascended the Fox River and made their way to Bald Island, in the Mississippi River? That long journey, which included fifty leagues on snow shoes, was remarkable, and Radisson's description of it plainly shows that the objective point could not be any of the islands in Lake Michigan or in Lake Huron. At the "first landing isle," Radisson and Groseilliers found many Hurons, in fact, the object of the journey seems to have been to find the Hurons, with whom Groseilliers had traded before the Iroquois had forced them to abandon their homes east of Georgian Bay.⁴

Why did Campbell retreat from the position taken in that paper? Was it because he feared the torrent of denunciation that Brower poured out upon Dr. Upham?

It is hard to see how Brower could extract much comfort from Sulte's paper, for that writer says: "Radisson saw Pelée Island, he saw the broad Mississippi 'comparable a notre Saint-Laurent'—and probably, after-

³ Upham's claim is made in an article entitled "Groseilliers and Radisson, the First White Men in Minnesota, 1655-56, and 1659-60, and Their Discovery of the Upper Mississippi River," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 10:462-466 (part 2).

⁴ Henry Colin Campbell, "Exploration of Lake Superior: The Voyages of Radisson and Groseilliers," in *Parkman Club Publications*, no. 2, p. 25 (Milwaukee, 1896).

wards, during the winter of 1659–1660, he saw the small Mississippi of the Sioux country about Mille Lac." Sulte contends Radisson visited Prairie Island, but he thinks it was in 1659 and not 1655, as Upham claims.⁵

By the time that Brower reaches page 108 of his *Minnesota* he is ready to deny that there ever were any Hurons on Prairie Island. He greatly exaggerates the number of Hurons who are believed to have lived for a few years on the island. Instead of "a thousand or twelve hundred," as Brower asserts, about eight hundred Indians took part in the council that preceded the trip back to Montreal in 1656, and probably more than half of these were Sioux.⁶ Everything that Brower found on Prairie Island fits in perfectly with Dr. Upham's explanation of Radisson's "voyage." Brower's book is certainly not a refutation, as Dr. Kellogg intimates. In spite of its intemperate language, it is, so far as it goes, a confirmation of Upham's views.

The Huron and Ottawa bands went to Prairie Island about 1653, following their disastrous war with the Iroquois in 1649 and 1650. They remained there with the permission of the Sioux until about 1657, when the Sioux drove them away, after the Hurons had made a futile attack on the Sioux village at Centerville. The Hurons retreated to the Black River and later to Lac Court Oreilles, where Radisson found them in 1659. The Ottawa fled to Chequamegon Bay of Lake Superior. It was in 1661 that Father Menard lost his life in endeavoring to find the refuge of the Hurons.

Let us hasten to correct Campbell's statement that Radisson says his snowshoe journey ended at the mouth of a river. Radisson does not say that. Radisson says that the snowshoe journey ended *beside* a river and not at the

⁵ Brower, *Minnesota*, 79, 84.

⁶ *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson, Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences among the North American Indians, from 1652 to 1684*, 160 (Boston, 1885).

mouth of a river, which puts an entirely different face upon the statement immediately following that his party built boats and ascended the river.⁷

Dr. William W. Folwell and other writers are disturbed by the fact that Radisson makes no adequate mention of the Mississippi River. That is one of the exasperating things about the Radisson narrative, and one which makes it very difficult to follow his itinerary. He can pass some of the most stupendous phenomena of nature, without giving them so much as a passing remark. He makes no mention of Mille Lacs, although he must have been near it several times, and possibly at the lake itself. To the Sioux Mille Lacs was an awesome thing. Beneath its waters dwelt a capricious god, who was prone to sudden fits of anger. A warrior could start out upon its glassy surface with every indication of a calm and uneventful passage, and before he could reach the farther shore the waves might be running high enough to swamp his canoe. Other bands of Sioux called the Indians living at Mille Lacs Isanti, but members of the Mille Lacs band seldom or never called themselves by that name. To themselves they were Mdewakanton, "dwellers at Spirit Lake." They persistently clung to this name more than a hundred years after they had been driven away from the lake by the Chippewa. If Radisson ever acquired a smattering of the Dakota language, he must have known the Dakota name for this magnificent lake. He speaks of a lake somewhere in the region, the newly frozen surface of which caused him to become snow blind when he returned from a visit to the Cree. But he gives the lake no name. To him it was just another lake, as the Mississippi was just another river. He speaks of a stream that must have been the Mississippi as "ye great river," but he also speaks of the Canadian river that he says he followed to Hudson Bay as "ye great river."

⁷ Radisson, *Voyages*, 157.

The Sioux spoke often of the Falls of St. Anthony and of the vast cavern beneath it. Therein dwelt Onktehi, the greatest god in all the upper Mississippi region, believed by many of the Sioux to be the creator of the earth and all living things. If Radisson ever heard of the falls, he does not mention the fact. One would suppose that Niagara Falls, in the vicinity of which Radisson was on numerous occasions, would call for some sort of description. But this great cataract does not draw from him the slightest mention.

Radisson's unsatisfactory references to the Mississippi are fully counterbalanced by a source that has been overlooked or insufficiently noticed by many writers. Father Jerome Lalemant, in the *Jesuit Relation* of 1659-60, gives a description of the hitherto almost unknown Hudson Bay country. This information he obtained while stationed on the Saguenay River from Awatanik, a Christian Indian, who had recently traversed the region north of the Great Lakes. But Father Lalemant had scarcely returned to Quebec when he encountered Groseilliers and Radisson, from whom he obtained much information about the western country. His interview appears to have been mainly with Groseilliers, whom he questioned with a skill which any modern newspaper reporter might envy. Father Lalemant writes:

During their winter season, our two Frenchmen made divers excursions to the surrounding tribes. Among other things they saw, six days' journey beyond the lake toward the Southwest, a tribe composed of the remnants of the Hurons of the Tobacco Nation, who have been compelled by the Iroquois to forsake their native land, and bury themselves so deep in the forests that they cannot be found by their enemies. These poor people — fleeing and pushing their way over mountains and rocks, through these vast unknown forests — fortunately encountered a beautiful River, large, wide, deep, and worthy of comparison, they say, with our great river St. Lawrence.⁸

⁸ Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 45:235 (Cleveland, 1899).

There is the Mississippi, described in language which leaves no room for mistake. Some of the information which Father Lalemant obtained from Groseilliers pertains to his earlier western trip, but the account of the severe famine in northern Wisconsin or Minnesota confirms the description given by Radisson. Groseilliers had been a lay helper for several years in the Jesuit missions, and it cheered the heart of Father Lalemant to know that the poor children who died from starvation had received the rite of baptism at his hands. The priest writes:

They passed the winter on the shores of Lake Superior, and were fortunate enough to baptize there two hundred little children of the Algonkin Nation with whom they first made their abode. These children were the victims of disease and famine; and forty went straight to Heaven, dying soon after Baptism.⁹

The punishment for adultery among the Tetons, consisting of cutting off the nose and sometimes the scalp of the culprit, as noted by Radisson, is commented on by Father Lalemant, in recording his interview with Groseilliers, as follows:

Continuing their circuit, they were much surprised, on visiting the Nadwechiwec, to see women disfigured by having the ends of their noses cut off down to the cartilage; in that part of the face, then, they resemble death's heads. Moreover, they have a round portion of the skin on the top of their heads torn away. Making inquiry as to the cause of this ill treatment, they learned, to their admiration, that it is the law of the country which condemns to this punishment all women guilty of adultery, in order that they may bear, graven on their faces, the penalty and shame of their sin.¹⁰

The date of the arrival at Montreal of the two French explorers is noted in the "journal of the Jesuit Fathers" for August, 1660, as follows:

On the 17th, monseigneur of petraea set out for his Visitation to 3 rivers and Montreal with Monsieur de Charny and others, and with the 4 oiochronons [*Cayuga*]. He arrived at Montreal on the 21st, at about 5 o'clock in the evening. The Outawats had arrived

⁹ *Jesuit Relations*, 45: 235; Radisson, *Voyages*, 202-206.

¹⁰ *Jesuit Relations*, 45: 235; Radisson, *Voyages*, 220.

there on the 19th, and left on the following day, the 22nd, reaching 3 rivers on the 24th, whence they started on the 27th. They were 300 in number. Des grosilleres was in their Company; he had gone to their country the previous year. . . . Des grosillers wintered with the nation of the ox [*Teton*], which he says consists of 4 thousand men; they are sedentary Nadwesserons.¹¹

Reuben G. Thwaites declares that Radisson "writes, by way of reminiscence, the words commencing with: 'We weare 4 moneths in our voyage without doeing any thing but goe from river to river.' In this paragraph,—apparently quite unconscious of the great historic importance of the discovery,—he alludes to the fact that his companion and himself accompanied some Indians 'into ye great river,' which from his description was undoubtedly the Upper Mississippi."¹² Thwaites, like several other writers, is misled by the transposition of the second and third voyages in the printed edition of Radisson, and places the date of the discovery of the Mississippi by him in 1659, instead of 1655, as Upham has it.

In an article published in 1922 Dr. Kellogg writes:

In the summer Groseilliers fell ill, and Radisson wandered off with a group of natives. He speaks in this connection of a "great river which divides itself in 2." This phrase has been thought to be a reference to the Mississippi River; but the account he gives is too indefinite to establish the claim that Radisson was the discoverer of that great waterway.

Perhaps she is right in considering that this and other allusions to the "great river" in Radisson's narrative are insufficient to establish the claim that he saw the Mississippi, although Thwaites apparently considered them sufficient, and Francis Parkman wrote that "as Radisson declares, they reached what was called the Forked River, 'because it has two branches, the one towards the west, the

¹¹ *Jesuit Relations*, 45: 161.

¹² Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., "Radisson and Groseilliers in Wisconsin," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11: 66 n. Thwaites quotes the portion of Radisson's narrative in which the explorer interrupts his account of the return journey to Montreal to give some details of a hunting trip of the previous summer. *Voyages*, 167.

other towards the south, which, we believe, runs towards Mexico,' — which seems to point to the Mississippi and its great confluent the Missouri."¹³

But, when read in connection with Father Lalemant's interview with Groseilliers, Radisson's allusions are considered to be conclusive by a formidable array of writers, including James H. Coyne, "Exploration of the Great Lakes," in Ontario Historical Society, *Papers and Records*, 4:xvii (Toronto, 1903); Narcisse E. Dionne, in Royal Society of Canada, *Proceedings and Transactions*, vols. 11 and 12 (1893, 1894); S. S. Hebbard, *History of Wisconsin under the Dominion of France*, 20 (Madison, 1890); James K. Hosmer, *A Short History of the Mississippi Valley*, 34, 42 (Boston, 1901); Robert F. Kerr, "The Voyages of Groseilliers and Radisson," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 1:177; Benjamin Sulte, in his *Histoire des Canadiens-Français* (Montreal, 1882-84); Brower, *Minnesota*, 79, 84; and Newton H. Winchell, in *Aborigines of Minnesota*, 519 (St. Paul, 1911). Indeed, I have been unable to find a writer who mentions Father Lalemant's interview with Groseilliers who does not express the opinion that the two travelers saw the Mississippi.

Jean Nicolet was very close to the discovery of the Mississippi in 1634, when he visited the Mascoutens on the Fox River in Wisconsin. The Mascoutens told him of a great water only three days' journey to the west; and Father Vimont, to whom he related incidents of his journey after his return to Quebec, came to the conclusion that this "great water" was the long-sought Western Sea. If Nicolet at any time thought it was the sea, he would hardly have allowed a three days' journey to stand between him and a visit to it. It is evident that Nicolet satisfied himself before leaving the Mascoutens that the "great water"

¹³ Louise P. Kellogg, "The First Traders in Wisconsin," in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 5:353 (1921-22); Thwaites, in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11:66 n.; Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, 5 (Boston, 1907).

was only another river; he had seen many others, and consequently he made his return trip the following spring without penetrating farther toward the west. He had, however, learned of the existence of the great Sioux nation and of their kindred, the Assiniboin.¹⁴ But whatever Nicolet may have thought about the "great water," the Jesuit fathers understood, and the public generally who read their *Relations* understood, that the "great water" meant the western sea.

The interview of Father Lalemant with Groseilliers in 1660 brought to white men their first knowledge that there was such a river as the Mississippi. Up to this time the Jesuits believed, and all Europe believed, that the "great water" which the Indians described to Nicolet was the Western Sea, which the commercial world was so anxious to reach. The great river was henceforth known to exist, but as yet it was nameless. Neither Groseilliers in the interview of 1660, nor Radisson in his journal, written in 1665, but not published until two hundred years later, gave a name to the river they had seen. After 1660 Groseilliers and Radisson were too much concerned with the injustice of the governor of Canada, who sought to rob them of their hard-earned profits, to give further thought to the Mississippi Valley. Groseilliers went to France in a vain endeavor to obtain redress, and thereafter all their thoughts were turned toward Hudson Bay.

The first mention of the name Mississippi, as applied to the great river, occurs in the journal of Father Allouez, in the *Relation* of 1666. Father Allouez got his information partly from the *Relations* and partly from Algonquian Indians, perhaps Mascoutens; and it was mainly because of that information that Father Dablon, superior of the Ottawa mission, determined to send Father Marquette to the Mississippi. This he did in 1673. The significance of the discovery of the Mississippi by Marquette and Joliet

¹⁴ *Jesuit Relations*, 18:231, 237.

in 1673 is not impaired in the least by the fact that Groseilliers and Radisson saw it eighteen years earlier, nor is it impaired by the fact that De Soto saw it much farther south in 1541.

In its important features Radisson's narrative can be checked by statements in the *Jesuit Relations*, in the "Journal of the Jesuit Fathers," and in Nicolas Perrot's *Memoire*. Radisson is very careless about dates. He gives very few, and some of those he does give are wrong. He included in his narrative, as every traveler in a new country must, many statements made to him by those he met, some of which might be true and some false. Occasionally he warns the reader in some such way as this: "This I have not seene, therefore you may believe as you please." On the whole, his narrative appears to be as reliable as those of most of the other travelers of a time when strict accuracy was not considered of the greatest importance. His most serious misstatement would seem to be that relating to an alleged expedition to Hudson Bay; but we must admit that the temptation to exaggerate his knowledge of the bay was very great, because he was trying to promote a British expedition thither and helping to organize the Hudson's Bay Company.

Until further evidence is produced, Dr. Upham's carefully thought out monograph will, in my judgment, stand as the best explanation of Radisson's western explorations.

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ANOTHER INTERPRETATION

The mystery of Radisson's narrative maintains its perennial lure, as one may judge by the number of studies that have appeared since its publication in 1885. Several persons, among whom is Mr. Goodrich, are known to be especially interested in determining the route followed by Radisson and Groseilliers in the Lake Superior country.

From time to time I, too, have had occasion to attempt to interpret Radisson's quaint seventeenth-century English, which is made a hundred times more difficult by its Gallisms. The results of my investigations have been quite different from Mr. Goodrich's conclusions, and I hereby offer them for what they are worth.

In the first place let us dispose of the question of whether the printed form of the *Voyages* is adequate. I have compared the Prince Society's edition with clear photostatic copies of the manuscript sheets in the Bodleian Library and have found in the main only slight inaccuracies. Whether the handwriting is that of Radisson, or of a stenographer, or of someone else, remains to be determined. But whether the handwriting is Radisson's or not, the phrasing of the earlier accounts could be no one's but Radisson's, or possibly Groseilliers'. The influence of the French language is felt on every page. In fact, a knowledge of that language is essential to the proper understanding of what the author is saying. Some of the curious mistakes of students of the manuscript are caused by inadequate or total lack of comprehension of what a Frenchman with an imperfect knowledge of English would have said in a given instance.

As for the interpretation of the manuscript, it must be said that in general, from all the known facts and the confused sequence of the narrative, it is apparent that Radisson, though using the first person, singular and plural, is telling the story now of himself, now of his brother-in-law, now of the savages, and, occasionally, of an individual Indian. Because of well-established facts in the history of New Holland and New France, as pointed out by Miss Kellogg, it is almost certain that the two men returned from a trip to the upper lakes region in or before the end of 1657.¹ It is also almost certain that at least one of them

¹ Louise P. Kellogg, *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*, 100-114 (Madison, 1925); Kellogg, in *Wisconsin Magazine of*

had gone up in 1656. Accordingly, the only obvious conclusion, if we accept the apparent statement that the third voyage lasted three years, is that Radisson when writing was using his brother-in-law's notes for the first two years, when he was not with Groseilliers, and his own memory or notes for the last. Groseilliers' notes for the last year were lost on the return trip.

But I think there is another possible explanation. The title of this portion of Radisson's narrative reads: "Now followeth the Auxoticiat Voyage into the Great and filthy Lake of the Hurrons, Upper Sea of the East, and Bay of the North."² Yet it is the fourth voyage that covers the travels in Lake Superior and Hudson Bay. That trip probably lasted two years. Thus together the two trips may have been considered to have lasted three years. Radisson places in sequence the two trips to the Iroquois, though separated in time by several years; he also places in sequence the two trips to the upper lakes. Perhaps he considered them a unit. This explanation seems to be borne out by several statements. For instance, having accounted for a year in the country, he makes a definite break with the statement, "In the last voyage that wee made I will lett you onely know what cours we runned in 3 years' time. We desired them to lett us know their neighboring nations. They gave us the names, w^{ch} I hope to describe their names in the end of this most imperfect discours." The names appear *after* the account of the so-

History, 5:348-359 (1921-22). I find Miss Kellogg's argument strengthened by the Jesuits' reference to the Matonenock, which I discuss *post*, p. 261.

²Radisson, *Voyages*, 134. Such a curious word as "Auxoticiat" has needed, and received, much comment. One suggestion has been the French phrase, "Aux Otaucac," meaning "to the Ottawa." See Edward C. Gale, "The Radisson Manuscript," *ante*, 7:341. I believe the word means Ottawa, but it seems more likely to me that Radisson was spelling, with French phonetics in mind, "Ondataouaouat," one of the many forms of the savage word now shortened to Ottawa. See *Jesuit Relations*, 41:77, for an example of the use of the word "Ondataouaouat."

called "fourth voyage." Incidentally, there is no title for what is usually called the fourth voyage, that heading having been supplied by the editor.³

The title of the third voyage coincides exactly with the course followed by Radisson as I make it out from the accounts of the third and fourth voyages. According to that caption, he went to the Ondataouaouats, or Ottawa, if I interpret "Auxoticiat" correctly; and to the "filthy Lake," which is a translation, through the French, of the Indian name Winnipeg. This is derived from the name of the tribe of the Winnebago, who were living at the time in Wisconsin near Green Bay. "Of the Hurrons" may belong with "filthy Lake," but it may mean Lake of the Hurons, Radisson using the French order in a series of names. "Upper Sea" is a translation of the French expression for Lake Superior, *mer supérieure*; and "of the East" may or may not belong with it. "Bay of the North" is, of course, Hudson Bay, as Radisson shows in his discussion of it. If Radisson meant us to understand the word "sea" with the phrase "of the East" in his series, as I strongly suspect, there may have been a misreading of the expression. Instead of sea "of the East" it could easily be sea "of the Cat," the contemporary name for Lake Erie. As there is so much conjecture about this last point, however, I shall make nothing of it in my discussion; nevertheless it is odd, to say the least, that the phrase "of the East" should be attached to Lake Superior, which was east from nothing that Radisson knew. Incidentally, many translators have misunderstood the use by the French of the word "*mer*," meaning "sea," in speaking of the

³Radisson, *Voyages*, 148. Another statement in favor of my interpretation appears on page 155, where the explorer refers to "some french men y^t came up wth us." Yet he states explicitly that there were but two, Radisson and Groseilliers, who went on after the defection of traders and missionaries. How explain this statement unless another voyage has occurred meantime, or unless, to be sure, Hurons are speaking, "us" meaning savages and the "french" referring to Radisson and Groseilliers?

Great Lakes, especially when the form "*mer douce*," meaning "sweet sea," or "fresh-water sea," is used. The regular French expression for fresh-water lake was then *mer douce*. It must be remembered that there are practically no large bodies of fresh water in France and so Frenchmen in describing such an almost unknown phenomenon would use the familiar word "*mer*."

Let us follow Radisson in this "Auxoticiat Voyage." First he traversed the ordinary route that French, English, and American traders used for centuries when wishing to enter the interior from Montreal. That is, he followed the Ottawa to the Mattawa, then went up that stream and by portage to Lake Nipissing, down that lake's outlet, French River, and into Georgian Bay. There, as was customary throughout the fur-trade period, those of the company bound for Lake Superior passed "west norwest"; and those for Lake Michigan and Green Bay "to the South." The Frenchmen went with the latter group. They passed "the place where the ffathers⁴ Jesuits had heretofore lived." Perhaps this was Manitoulin Island, where Grosseilliers had been with the Jesuits about 1645;⁵ or perhaps it was Huronia, along the southern shore of Georgian Bay. "After we travelled many dayes," writes Radisson, "we arrived att a large island where we found their [*Huron and Ottawa Indians*'] village, their wives & children. You must know that we passed a strait some 3 leagues beyond that place. . . . It is another lake, but not so bigg as that we passed before."⁶

Now this island, being the key to the entire remainder of the trip, should be located as exactly as possible. It so happens that in the French archives in Paris, in the library of the hydrographic service, is a map, number 4044B50, that was drawn apparently by Jolliet, or at least based on

⁴The double initial, used so much by Radisson, is merely the old form of the capital letter.

⁵Kellogg, *French Régime*, 90.

⁶Radisson, *Voyages*, 145, 146.

his map of 1673-74 in the same collection. At the mouth of Green Bay are shown four islands beside which is the following inscription: "Isles ou les Hurons se refugierent apres la destruction de leur nation par les Iroquois" ("Islands whither the Hurons fled after the destruction of their nation by the Iroquois"). Note, too, that the strait between Green Bay and Lake Michigan is just beyond, as Radisson says, and that the lake (Green Bay) is smaller than Lake Michigan or Lake Huron.⁷

After a stay there the brothers decided that their "minde was not to stay in an island, but to be knowne wth the remotest people." So they visited with the "Pontonatemick" or Potawatomi and "made acquaintance wth an other nation called Escotecke, w^{ch} signified fire." On the map mentioned above, the Potawatomi are shown at the western end of Green Bay and the "Masckoutens ou nation du feu" on the river at the bottom of the bay. Radisson learned of the Sioux and Christino, or Cree, Indians and formed a desire to go to the latter. He tried to persuade

⁷ Nicolas Perrot, too, states that the Hurons fled to an island, apparently after a stay at Michilimackinac. See R. P. J. Tailhan, ed., *Memoire sur les moeurs, coutumes et religion des sauvages de l'Amerique septentrionale par Nicolas Perrot*, 80, 81 (Leipzig and Paris, 1864). There is a possibility that Radisson's island was Michilimackinac Island. The *Relation* of 1671-72 states that the Hurons were able to "remain but a few years" on Michilimackinac Island, before "they . . . withdrew farther to some Islands, which still bear their name, situated at the entrance to the bay des Puans," — a statement which seems to indicate a longer period of residence than Perrot infers. See *Jesuit Relations*, 56:115. Radisson, in his *Voyages*, 158, says that the Indians were "but newly there" on their land. The fact that on page 159 of the same work Radisson says "in the beginning of spring many [*Indians*] came to our Isle" on their way to "goe downe to the french," adds some further weight to the argument that it was on Michilimackinac Island that Radisson landed and to which he returned, for the *Relation* of 1671-72 says of the island, "it is the great resort of all nations going to or coming from the North or the South." See *Jesuit Relations*, 56:117. Another interesting fact is the reference to the news of a Huron defeat in the spring. According to Tailhan, this would be the time when the Hurons fled farther west; and this defeat may have been the cause for the trek. The Minnesota Historical Society has a photographic copy of the map mentioned in the text.

some of the Hurons to "come along to see their owne nation that fled there." Apparently this is a reference to the Hurons that fled to Lake Superior and are represented there on several contemporary maps. "We came to the strait of the 2 lakes of the stinkings [*Lake Michigan and Green Bay*] and y^e upper lake." This all seems to say that they arrived at Mackinac Strait or Sault Ste. Marie. Here "y^e nation of y^e fire . . . would have us backe to their dwelling." But Radisson wanted to know the Christino. "To goe backe was out of our way," as it surely would be for men planning to return to the usual rendezvous of canoes on their way to Montreal. He was able to persuade the Ottawa to go on with him, "because we weare but 5 small fine dayes from those of late that lived in the sault [*at Sault Ste. Marie*]," who were Chippewa and were related to the Ottawa. So it was near Lake Superior that Radisson spent the winter "& learned the particularitie [*detail*] that since wee saw by Experience."⁸ Probably this is an allusion to his later sojourn in this region. Attempts were made by the Frenchmen while there to make peace between the Chippewa and the Christino.

Just before the winter broke up Radisson and Groseil-liers "thwarted a land of allmost 50 leagues before the snow was melted." Then they arrived at "a river side," where they made "boats," probably canoes. Radisson says that they ascended the river, but he may mean "descended," since he is never particular about directions on a river. The trip on the river lasted for eight days, showing that the stream was probably relatively small, "till we came to a nation called Pontonatenick & Matonenock." Now we know something about this last tribe. The Mantouek, or Makoutensak, was a tribe that in 1658 was living "about three days' journey inland, by water, from the Village of St. Michel" of the *Jesuit Relation* of 1657-58. The vil-

⁸ Radisson, *Voyages*, 147, 148, 152-155.

lage of St. Michel of the Potawatomi was, according to the best judgment of scholars, on the western shore of Green Bay, where the map mentioned earlier in this discussion shows the Potawatomi. The *Relation* of 1657-58 goes on to say relative to the Matonenock: "The two Frenchmen who have made the journey to those regions say that these people are of a very gentle disposition."⁹ Thus one of the two men—Radisson and Groseilliers—and probably both had returned from this very expedition in time for the Jesuit father to write about it in his *Relation* of 1657-58. The river used to reach them may have been any one of those numerous streams of the country lying between Lake Superior and Green Bay. There was a well-known Indian route from Lake Superior in later times that terminated at the far end of Green Bay, having followed Wolf River much of the way. Jedediah D. Stevens followed this route, at least in part, in 1830, and Schoolcraft intended to follow it in 1831, but events made him change his mind.¹⁰

At the villages of the Potawatomi and the Mantouek, writes Radisson, "we gott some Indian meale & corne from those 2 nations, w^{ch} lasted us till we came to the first landing Isle [*the island of first landing, or where we first landed.*] There we weare well received againe" by the Hurons and Ottawa.¹¹ From these Indians Radisson and Groseilliers had set out and to them they now returned, having traveled about Lake Michigan, Green Bay, and the region north toward Lake Superior. The great stumbling block to previous investigators has been, apparently, the

⁹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 157, 158; *Jesuit Relations*, 44:247.

¹⁰ French maps in the archives of government offices in Paris for the period of the latter half of the seventeenth century show at least two well-defined Indian trails leading south from Lake Superior. For the route mentioned in the text, see Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Narrative of an Expedition through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake in 1832* (New York, 1834); and the entries for April 1 and 2, 1830, and an entry entitled "Names of Places and Distances," in Jedediah D. Stevens' manuscript diary, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹¹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 158.

innocent expression, "the first landing Isle," than which nothing could be simpler or plainer. We must forget our modern English and put ourselves back with Radisson. The interpretation that I have given is strengthened immeasurably by the next sentence, "There we weare well received againe." Why again unless they had been there once? Thus "the first landing Isle" becomes either an island at the mouth of Green Bay, or the Island of Michilimackinac, depending upon the date of the trip. I am more and more inclined to the belief that it was Michilimackinac Island. I think part of the trouble in interpreting the expression "first landing Isle" has come about through attempts to associate Radisson with the locality of the writer or interpreter. If one comes to an historical problem with preconceived ideas and local prejudices, the result is likely to be unhistorical.

The narrative then goes on immediately to the return trip to Quebec. A contemporary map, which a mention of New Holland shows to have been drawn earlier than 1664, bears the legend at Michilimackinac: "Detroit . . . par ou passent les sauvages du midy quand ils vont a Montreal chargez de Castors" ("Strait through which the Indians of the South pass when they go to Montreal loaded with beaverskins").¹² Thus Radisson would normally pass at once to the journey that began so close to his island.

After passing the Falls of the Calumet in the Ottawa River, known by all traders and voyageurs, the travelers encountered Iroquois, and in attempting to escape, Groseil-liers' canoe overturned when he shot certain rapids that were usually portaged. Thus, writes Radisson, "My brother lost his booke of annotations of y^e last yeare of our being in these foraigne nations."¹³ Later, in his fourth

¹²The map is number 4044B44 in the library of the hydrographic service in the French archives in Paris. The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy.

¹³Radisson, *Voyages*, 167.

voyage, Radisson tells us that the rapids in question were the Long Sault.

Having brought his trip nearly to an end Radisson recapitulates, saying that four months of his experiences went to river travel: "We weare 4 moneths in our voyage wthout doeing any thing but goe from river to river." To a description of this trip he devotes two pages, till he reaches the point, already made earlier in his narrative, regarding his brother's illness, which he takes pains to say he has discussed when going over this trip in the preceding account. Then he returns to his narrative of the descent of the Ottawa, and to show that he is doing so, he uses the common expression of the time and one still used by some writers: "To our purpose."¹⁴

The question of whether Radisson or his companion ever saw the Mississippi seems to me utterly incapable of solution unless more information is secured than what Radisson offers. It was not an impossible feat by any means. All that Radisson offers regarding it, however, is some information inserted in his recapitulation about a large, forked river with branches presumably from the west and north. But since all the streams of any size,—the Wisconsin, the Illinois, the Ohio, and so forth—are forked in relation to the Mississippi and run to the south, we are no better off than before. Lalemant's statement, on which Mr. Goodrich lays so much stress, proves nothing, because it was the savages, not the Frenchmen, who saw the river and compared it with the St. Lawrence. "They say" can apply to nobody but the Tobacco Huron Indians, especially as Lalemant immediately says, "Let us return to our two Frenchmen," showing that they were not the authors of the information.

The most that Lalemant's statement does is to confirm Perrot's account, to be mentioned later, of some of the Hurons who went to the Mississippi. But we are not

¹⁴ Radisson, *Voyages*, 169.

helped at all by that confirmation. Our problem is, did Radisson visit the Hurons there in 1656-57 or earlier, for we know that his "third" trip could not have occurred later than 1657. In the memoir of Perrot on the customs and religion of the North American Indians, written as late as 1718, if not later, he tells of the flight of the Hurons to an island, and thence *after* 1656 into the interior. Some of the Hurons went to the Mississippi, where a number of them were given "l'isle nommée Pelée" by the Sioux, "où ils furent quelques années en repos" ("the island named Pelée [*bald*] where they remained for several years in peace").¹⁵ On this statement in the main is based the theory that Radisson and Groseilliers reached Prairie Island.

If Radisson is telling of events of his own first journey, which seemingly commenced in 1656 and lasted not more than a year, it is unlikely that he visited Hurons on the Mississippi. As Father Tailhan points out concerning the flight to the Mississippi: "C'est donc entre les années 1657 et 1660 qu'ont dû s'accomplir les événements racontés par Perrot, depuis la fuite des Hurons et des Outaouais au Mississippi, jusqu'à leurs premiers démêlés avec les Sioux, suivis d'une nouvelle migration" ("It was then, between the years 1657 and 1660 that the events related by Perrot must have occurred, that is, the events of the period between the flight of the Hurons and Ottawa to the Mississippi and up to the time of their first trouble with the Sioux, which was followed by a new migration").¹⁶ This theory of Father Tailhan's is borne out by the fact that Radisson records the arrival of the Ottawa at Chequamegon in the narrative of his fourth trip, and by Lalemant's statement that Radisson and Groseilliers found the Hurons that had been on the Mississippi settled in the interior of Wisconsin in 1659-60.

¹⁵ Perrot, *Memoire*, 86.

¹⁶ Perrot, *Memoire*, 240.

Many interpreters of Radisson have confused the "first landing Isle" with Isle Pelée. From the chronology given above, it is obvious that the island that Radisson reached in 1656 could not have been Isle Pelée, and as he returned to the same island, "y^e first landing Isle," before starting back to Quebec, that island and Isle Pelée should be kept utterly distinct. Incidentally, De Lisle's manuscript map of 1702, which is based on Le Sueur's notes, or diary, of 1700, shows Isle Pelée just above the mouth of the St. Croix River.¹⁷ The junction of the two rivers is denominated on that map "Ouatesbaskou ou la Fourche."¹⁸ Thus we have still another "forked river." In fact, rivers that divided themselves in two are so numerous in the literature of this period that the term has little special significance.

It is curious that the Nassauaketon, which means the nation of the forked river, a division of the Ottawa, were probably at the time of Radisson's first trip on one of the streams flowing into Green Bay from the north.¹⁹ It is also a curious fact that Radisson in his second Iroquois journey puts into the mouth of an Indian the account of the people in "y^e upper Country of the Iroquoits neere the great river that divides it self in two."²⁰ Will Mr. Goodrich concede that the Iroquois lived as far west as the Mississippi? This Indian stated that he was on a war party "against the nation of the fire [*Mascouten*] & against the Stairing hairs [*Ottawa*], our Ennemys." These

¹⁷ This map, entitled "Carte de la Riviere de Mississipi sur les memoires de M^r le Sueur qui en a pris avec la boussole tous les tours et detours depuis la mer jusqu'a la Riviere S^t Pierre, et a pris la hauteur du pole en plusieurs endroits par Guillaume De l'Isle geographe, de l'Academie Royale des Sciences 1702," number 138 bis 3-2 (3) in the archives of the French hydrographic service in Paris. The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy.

¹⁸ "Ouatesbaskou, or the Forks" of the river.

¹⁹ Frederick W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, 2: 169 (Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletins*, no. 30 — Washington, 1910).

²⁰ Radisson, *Voyages*, 105.

tribes, the same that Radisson visited in his "Auxoticiat" voyage, were, of course, at the time of the Iroquois' expedition, either in Michigan or in eastern Wisconsin, their location depending upon the date of the trip, which is not given. Curiously, too, the Indian said that he stayed three winters away from home. Practically the same sentence occurs here as in the "Auxoticiat" trip: "The fruits of trees are as bigg as the heart of an horiniac." He goes on to say that this Indian "having an excellent memory, tould me all the circumstances of his rencounters."²¹ This is enough to arouse the suspicion that Radisson in his "third" voyage was merely repeating what an Indian had told him about the great river.

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²¹ Radisson, *Voyages*, 106, 107.



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