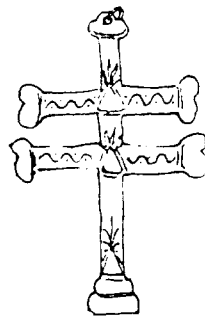
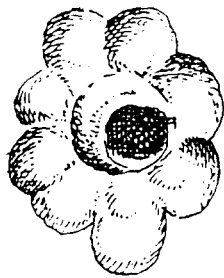


INDIAN CULTURE AND EUROPEAN TRADE GOODS

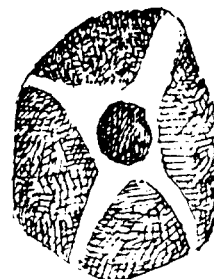


GEORGE IRVING QIMBY

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**THE ARCHAEOLOGY
OF THE HISTORIC PERIOD
IN THE WESTERN GREAT LAKES REGION**

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CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST EUROPEAN TRADE SHIP ON THE WESTERN GREAT LAKES

By the end of the seventeenth century French explorers, traders, and missionaries had spread their efforts into all parts of the western Great Lakes region. Fortunes could be made in the fur trade, and there were great numbers of heathens potentially available for conversion to Christianity. One of the most interesting trading ventures of the period was that of René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, who in 1679 had built for him a sailing ship designed to carry cargoes of trade goods to the Indians of the western or upper Great Lakes and to return laden with large quantities of furs to the eastern or lower Great Lakes.

Although the venture miscarried and consequently failed to establish a pattern of shipping in the fur trade, it is worth recounting here in some detail. The story of the *Griffin* is intriguing as an unsolved mystery and as a unique vignette in the annals of the historic period in the Great Lakes region. La Salle's vessel was the first European trade ship to sail on Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Within one year—1679—she was built, rigged, and sailed to an unknown destination from which she departed and subsequently disappeared, apparently for all time. What the *Griffin*

looked like, her size, where she went, and what happened to her are not known with certainty to this day. However, in this chapter I intend to try to answer these questions by means of ethnohistorical analysis and the kinds of insights used by archaeologists for cultural and historical reconstructions.

The *Griffin* often has been depicted as a large three-masted ship, the typical man-of-war and freighter of the seventeenth century. Such a ship shown in Lake Michigan and also in Lake Huron on the Franquelin map of 1688 (see Tucker, 1942, Plate 11-B) is probably meant to represent the *Griffin*. Some museum exhibits and book illustrations also portray the *Griffin* as a large seventeenth-century freighter with three masts and elaborate rigging. In reality La Salle's vessel was a much more modest boat and not at all like the magnificent freighters or men-of-war that usually have been the basis for pictorial reconstructions of the *Griffin*.

Father Louis Hennepin, the Recollect missionary quoted in Chapter 1, witnessed the building of the *Griffin* and was a passenger on the vessel during part of the voyage. From his written account of it and from various other sources of information it has been possible to find out in a general way what kind of vessel the *Griffin* really was and where she sailed to in the upper Great Lakes.

THE BUILDING OF THE GRIFFIN

The *Griffin* was built in the late winter and the spring of 1679, above Niagara Falls, probably at the mouth of Cayuga Creek. Of the building of this vessel Father Hennepin (1698, Chap. 16, pp. 62-65) wrote:

On the 22d of the said Month [January], we went two leagues above the great Fall of Niagara, where we made a Dock for building the Ship we wanted for our Voyage. This was the most convenient place we could pitch upon, being upon a River which falls into the Streight between the Lake Erie and the great Fall of Niagara. The 26th [January], the Keel of the Ship and some other Pieces being ready, Mr. la Salle sent the Master-Carpenter to desire me to drive in the first Pin; but my Profession obliging me to decline that Honour, he did it himself, and promis'd Ten Louis d'Or, to encourage the Carpenter and further the Work.

. . . our Men continued with great application to build our Ship; for the Iroquois who were left behind, being but a small number, were not so insolent as before, tho' they came now and then to our Dock, and expressed some Discontent at what we were doing. One of them in particular, feign-

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ing himself drunk, attempted to kill our Smith. but was vigorously repuls'd by him with a red-hot Iron-barr, which, together with the Reprimand he receiv'd from me, oblig'd him to be gone. Some few Days after, a Savage Woman gave us notice that the [Indians] had resolv'd to burn our Ship in the Dock, and had certainly done it, had we not been always on our guard.

These frequent alarms from the Natives, together with the Fears we were in of wanting Provisions, . . . were a great Discouragement to our Carpenters. whom, on the other hand, a Villain amongst us endeavour'd to seduce: That pitiful Fellow had several times attempted to run away from us into New-York. and would have likely perverted our Carpenters, had I not confirm'd them in their Good Resolution. . . .

The two Savages we had taken into our Service, went all this while a Hunting, and supply'd us with Wild-Goats [deer] and other Beasts for our subsistence; which encourag'd our Workmen to go on with their Work more briskly than before, insomuch that in a short time our Ship was in a readiness to be launch'd; which we did. after having Bless'd the same according to the use of the Romish Church. We made all the haste we could to get it a-float, tho' not altogether finish'd to prevent the Designs of the Natives, who had resolv'd to burn it

The Ship was call'd the Griffin, alluding to the Arms of Count Frontenac, which have two Griffins for Supporters: and besides, M. la Salle us'd to say of this Ship, while yet up-on the Stocks, That he would make the Griffin fly above the Ravens. We fir'd three Guns, and sung Te Deum, which was attended with loud Acclamations of Joy: of which those of the Iroquois who were accidentally [*sic*] present at this Ceremony, were also Partakers; for we gave them some Brandy to drink, as well as to our Men, who immediately quitted their Cabins of Rinds of Trees, and hang'd their Hammocks under the Deck of the Ship, there to lie with more security than a-shoar. We did the like, insomuch that the very same Day we were all on board and thereby out of the reach of the Insults of the Savages.

The Iroquois being return'd from Hunting Beavers, were mightily surpriz'd to see our Ship a-float, and call'd us Otkon, that is in their Language, Most penetrating Wits: For they could not apprehend how in so short a time we had been able to build so great a Ship, tho' it was but [45 or] 60 Tuns. It might have been indeed call'd a moving Fortress for all the Savages inhabiting the Banks of those Lakes and Rivers I have mention'd. for five hundred Leagues together, were fill'd with Fear as well as Admiration when they saw it.

A master carpenter, a blacksmith, and fewer than ten other carpenters and workmen built and launched the *Griffin* in the period between January 22 and May 27, 1679. When one considers that the wood came from trees felled near-by and that of the ship's timbers and planking had to be cut and shaped *in situ*, then fitted

into place and fastened, it does not seem possible that so few men could have built a ship of any great size in a period of approximately four months.

THE SIZE OF THE GRIFFIN

Although there are no direct statements concerning the dimensions of the *Griffin* there are statements of her burden or cargo capacity. Hennepin (1698, Chap. 16, p. 66) says the *Griffin* "was but 60 Tuns" burden. In earlier editions of his work he said the ship was about 45 tons burden (see Parkman, 1894, p. 135). It is thus a fair conclusion that the *Griffin* was of 45 to 60 tons burden. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even now in some cases, such a ton was not a unit of weight but a unit of space, specifically 40 cubic feet, which can be encompassed in a block 4 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. If the *Griffin* was of 60 tons burden, she had a capacity of 2,400 cubic feet (60×40), which is the equivalent of a box 40 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 6 feet deep. If the *Griffin* was of 45 tons burden, she had a capacity of 1,800 cubic feet (45×40), which is the equivalent of a box 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 6 feet deep.

The formula for computing tonnage in Colonial times, according to Samuel Eliot Morison (1925, p. 14), was the length of the ship on deck, minus three-fifths of the greatest breadth, multiplied by the greatest breadth, multiplied by the depth of the hold, divided by 95. With this formula, the tonnage of the *Griffin*, and some additional clues, one can approximate the probable dimensions of the vessel.

One of these additional clues concerns the draught (depth below water line) of the *Griffin*. On August 24, 1679, the *Griffin* was in Lake Huron, according to Hennepin (1698, Chap. 21, p. 83), "becalm'd between some Islands, where we found but two Fathoms Water, which oblig'd us to make an easie sail part of the Night." Thus the *Griffin* could navigate satisfactorily though cautiously in 12 feet of water. To do this the ship would have had to have a draught of much less than 12 feet. Even a draught of 6 feet would require extreme caution in sailing through uncharted waters of 2 fathoms. Some additional evidence that the *Griffin* was of no great draught is suggested by the fact that in the autumn of 1679, when La Salle was still ignorant of the loss of his vessel,

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he was expecting the *Griffin* to arrive at an anchorage in the St. Joseph River near its mouth. In the days before man-made breakwaters and dredging of channels, all rivers such as the St. Joseph had shoals and sand bars beneath their waters where they entered Lake Michigan. The depth at the entrance to the St. Joseph River probably was not more than 6 feet in 1679, and possibly less than that. For instance, the Grand River, flowing into Lake Michigan 60 miles to the north, was more than twice the size of the St. Joseph River, yet the Grand River had only 12 feet of water over the sand bar at its entrance, according to the log book of the British sloop *Felicity*, which entered the river on October 31, 1779. It seems unreasonable to suppose that the entrance to the St. Joseph River, even a hundred years earlier, could have in any way matched the depth at the mouth of the Grand River.

Another clue involves proportions of seventeenth-century vessels, which were more box-like than nineteenth-century sailing ships. For instance, it is stated in "A Treatise on Shipbuilding, 1620-1625" (see Glasgow, 1964, p. 179) that in building ships, "the depth must never be greater than half the breadth nor less [than] one-third and the length never less than double nor more than treble the breadth." Writing at a somewhat earlier date (*circa* 1600), William Borough stated that "Merchant ships for most profit" should be built so as "to have the length of the keel double the breadth amidship and the depth in hold half that breadth" (Glasgow, 1964, p. 179). On this basis a vessel with a keel 40 feet long would have had a breadth amidship of 20 feet and a depth of hold of 10 feet. This would have been a vessel of at least 58 tons, and about the maximum size of the *Griffin*.

Another one of William Borough's ideal vessel types was "Shipping for merchandise likewise very serviceable for all purposes." Such shipping should be constructed so as to have the "length of the keel two or two and a quarter that of the beam" and "depth of hold eleven twenty-fourths that of beam" (Glasgow, 1964, p. 179). If the *Griffin* had been built according to these specifications and was of 47 or 48 tons burden, she would have been about 40.5 feet long and 18 feet wide with a hold 8.5 feet deep. But whatever system of proportions was used in the building of the *Griffin*, she probably was designed for cargo capacity rather than speed and maneuverability. Moreover, she probably was of 45 tons burden

rather than 60 tons. In either case, the *Griffin* was a small vessel somewhat similar to the British ships of the same period, the *Nonesuch* and the *Eaglet*. The *Eaglet*, of the British South Seas Fleet, was 40 feet long and 16 feet wide. The *Nonesuch*, which sailed from England to Hudson's Bay and back again in 1668-69, had a keel 36 feet long, a beam of 15 feet, and was of 43 tons burden.

The available evidence indicates to me that the *Griffin* was a small vessel, probably of 45 tons burden and between 35 and 45 feet in length. It seems likely that her greatest width was between 16 and 20 feet and her depth of hold was 7.5 to 10 feet. She probably had a draught of 4 or 5 feet.

THE RIGGING OF THE GRIFFIN

The anchors, cables, ropes, sails, rigging, and other fittings for the *Griffin* were shipped from Fort Frontenac by sailing vessels to the head of Lake Ontario, then carried on foot to the temporary shipyard above Niagara Falls. Father Hennepin noted that the *Griffin* was completely finished and rigged by July 4 of 1679 (Hennepin, 1698, Chap. 18, p. 73).

Father Hennepin wrote very little about the rigging of the *Griffin*. He mentions a vessel rigged as a brigantine (his use of the term "bark" referred to a small vessel and not a type of rig) on Lake Ontario and should have said so had the *Griffin* been thus rigged. Hennepin did say (1698, Chap. 18, p. 73) of the *Griffin* that she was "well Rigg'd, and ready fitted out with all the Necessaries for Sailing." With reference to a storm on Lake Huron, Hennepin (1698, Chap. 21, p. 84) wrote: ". . . we brought down our Main Yards and Top-Mast, and let the Ship drive to the Mercy of the Wind." When the storm was over, ". . . we hoisted up our Sail. . . ." With these few simple but positive statements it is possible to make some observations about the rigging of the *Griffin*.

The mention of a "Top-Mast" and "Main Yards" suggests that the *Griffin* was not rigged as a ketch. The ketch of this period was rigged with lateen sails and did not need topmasts. Moreover, the ketch rig would have had only one main yard (set diagonally), and Hennepin's use of "Yards" implies that there was more than one yard on the mainmast. Had the *Griffin* been rigged as a ship or a

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brig there would have been more than one topmast to bring down during a storm such as he describes. Also in such an instance there would have been only one main yard and a number of other yards to bring down. And, finally, ship or brig or brigantine rigging unless unusually modified would have been too complicated for a pilot and five men to handle on the return voyage to Niagara. (This was the number dispatched by La Salle, according to Hennepin.)

The only direct evidence from Hennepin's account of it suggests that the *Griffin* had a main mast, a main topmast, and two yards for square sails that were set on this compound mast. In short, the driving sails of the *Griffin* were on the mainmast and by implication any other sails used must have been very small and set on a mast or masts that could have been removed from the deck by one or two persons and did not require shrouds for their support. Such small sails, if present, were used for balance and ease of steering. The only driving sails were on the mainmast.

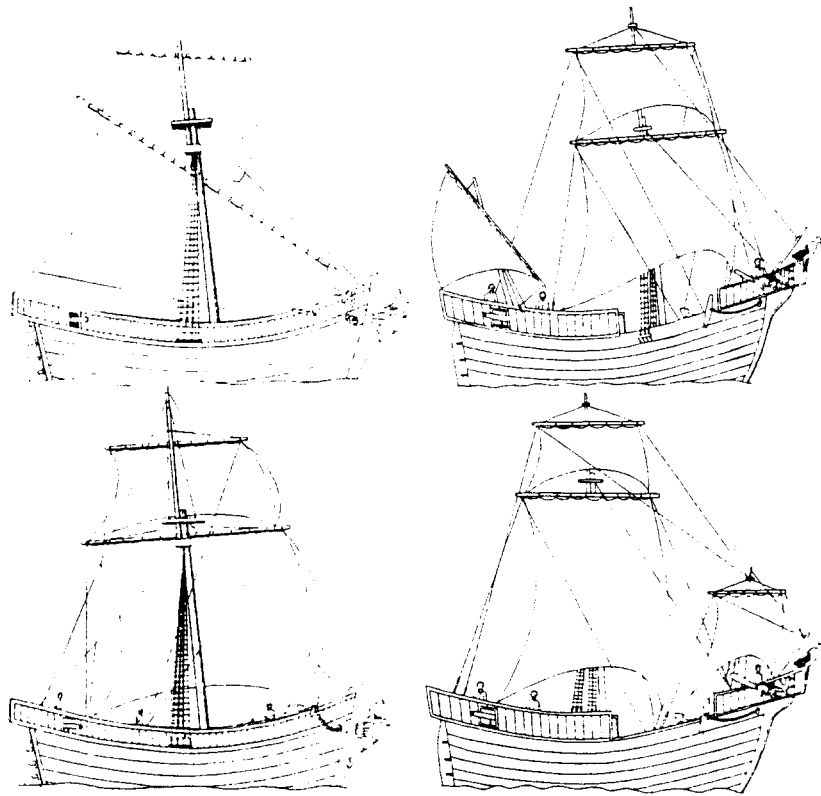
That such rigging was known in the seventeenth century is demonstrated by the pictorial embellishments on the Franquelin map of 1689 (see Griffin, 1943, map 10). On that map in the area of the Gulf of Mexico there are pictured two small sailing vessels 30 to 40 feet long, each with a large mainmast and a small foremast stepped close to the bow and tilted forward. The large driving sails, two of them, both square in outline, and each with its own yard, are set on the mainmast. A small sail, as much for balance as drive, is set on the short foremast. This style of rigging would correlate perfectly with Father Hennepin's statements about the rigging on the *Griffin* and how she was handled during the storm on Lake Huron in late August of 1679.

It is possible that the *Griffin* had also a small lateen (triangular) sail, primarily for balance, set on a short mizzenmast directly behind the mainmast, somewhat like an eighteenth-century snow; or it is possible that the *Griffin* was rigged only with a conventional mizzen sail and mainsails. Whatever the case, it seems most probable that the mainmast with its topmast was the only important mast on the *Griffin* and that the mainsail and main topsail were the most important sails. All other sails and masts were small and could be handled completely from the deck of the *Griffin*.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE GRIFFIN

The *Griffin*, then, let us assume, was a sailing vessel between 35 and 40 feet in length and 45 tons burden, rigged with a mainmast, main topmast, mainsail and topsail and possibly a small foresail set on a stumpy foremast. She was heavily built, a floating fortress as she was called by Father Hennepin and some of the Indians who saw her. According to Hennepin (1698, Chap. 18, p. 73). "She carry'd Five small Guns [cannon], two whereof were Brass, and three Harquebrize a-crock [swivel guns for rampart defense]. The Beak-head [a beak-like projection of the bow fastened to the stem and supported by the main knee] was adorn'd with a Flying Griffin, and an Eagle above it; and the rest of the ship had the same Ornaments as Men of War used to have." There were at

Fig. 9. — Reconstructions of the *Griffin*, built in 1679. Courtesy of Chicago Natural History Museum.



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least two anchors so big, according to Hennepin (1698, Chap. 18, p. 75) "that four Men had much ado to carry one." Although Hennepin did not mention it, the *Griffin* probably carried one or more birchbark canoes in place of longboats for passage between ship and shore. In Figure 9 there are presented four drawings of the *Griffin* based on the factual statements and inferences that have been presented here.

THE VOYAGE OF THE GRIFFIN

The ship with provisions, tools, ammunition, and commodities for trade left its anchorage near the Niagara River on August 7, 1679. On board were Father Hennepin, La Salle, Henri de Tonti (his lieutenant), the pilot, and thirty other men, including two missionaries. By modern standards the *Griffin* might seem somewhat crowded, but it is elsewhere on record that the *Eaglet*, a ship of the same dimensions I have attributed to the *Griffin*, carried a war complement of thirty-five men on much longer voyages than that of La Salle's ship.

The *Griffin* reached the mouth of the Detroit River on August 10, 1679. It took four days of sailing to run the length of Lake Erie, a distance of about 240 miles. On this leg of the voyage the longest daily run mentioned by Hennepin was 45 leagues (124.38 miles).

Although Hennepin's statements are not clear on the matter, it looks as if the *Griffin* passed up the Detroit River through Lake St. Clair and up the St. Clair River between August 11 and August 21. On August 22, 1679 (see Hennepin, 1698, Chap. 21, pp. 83-84), the *Griffin* began the Lake Huron leg of her voyage and completed it on August 27, a period of six days in which she sailed more than 240 miles. The vessel anchored in a bay at Michilimackinac (which would be East Moran Bay at present-day St. Ignace, Michigan) in "six Fathoms Water upon a slimy white Bottom." In 36 feet of water the *Griffin* was either some distance from the shore or else closer to the shore off Graham Point at the southeast extremity of the bay. Hennepin's observation about the lake bottom in this area is correct. At Michilimackinac in 1679 there was a Huron village, an Ottawa village, a Jesuit mission, and an establishment of Frenchmen who traded with the Indians of the region.

On September 2, 1679, the *Griffin* left Michilimackinac and, according to Father Hennepin (1698, Chap. 22, p. 88),

sailed into the Lake of the Illinois [Lake Michigan]; and came to an Island just at the Mouth of the Bay of the Pauns [Green Bay], lying about forty Leagues [110.56 miles] from Missilimakinak [Michilimackinac, or St. Ignace]: It is inhabit'd by some Savages of the Nation call'd Poutouatamis, with whom some of the Men M. la Salle had sent the Year before had barter'd a great quantity of Furs [sic] and Skins.

Hennepin wrote very little about this island, but he went on to say (1698, Chap. 22, p. 89):

Our Ship was riding in the Bay, about thirty Paces [75 feet] from the furthest Point of the Land, upon a pretty good Anchorage, where we rode safely, notwithstanding a violent Storm which lasted four Days. [The chief of the Potawatomis] seeing our Ship toss'd up by the Waves, and not knowing it was able to resist, ventur'd himself in his little Canow, and came to our assistance. He had the good Luck to get safe on board.

ANALYSIS OF THE VOYAGE

The first legs or segments of the voyage of the *Griffin* seem reasonably clear and are not particularly interesting from my point of view except for details concerning the vessel itself and how it sailed under different conditions, the pattern of the navigation of La Salle's pilot, and what distances were traversed in a given time. Except at Michilimackinac there were no Indian tribes encountered on the first portions of the voyage of the *Griffin*. The last leg of the upbound journey and the events immediately following are the most uncertain and the most interesting to me at this time.

In early September of 1679, as stated just above, the *Griffin* left Michilimackinac on Lake Huron and sailed westward through the Straits of Mackinac across northern Lake Michigan for about 40 leagues, or 110 miles, to an island lying just at the opening into Green Bay and inhabited by Potawatomi Indians. There are seven islands between Lake Michigan and Green Bay, any one of which might be considered to be about 40 leagues from Michilimackinac depending upon the course one sailed to reach them (see Charts 7 and 702, War Department, Corps of Engineers, *Survey of the Northern and Northwestern Lakes*, U.S. Lake Survey Office). From north to south, these islands are Summer, Poverty, St. Martin, Rock, Washington, Detroit, and Plum. It would be of great archaeological and historical interest to know which of these

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islands was inhabited by Potawatomi Indians and was visited by the *Griffin* in September of 1679.

The pilot of the *Griffin*, in the absence of marine charts and modern navigation aids, should have coasted the north shore of Lake Michigan to reach Green Bay. Any available information the pilot could have had in 1679 would have come from those who made the trip by canoe and any course other than one that kept the coast in view was loaded with potential dangers in terms of passages and landfalls at the Green Bay end of the voyage. Moreover, in the earlier trip through Lakes Erie and Huron, the pilot had manifested a pattern of following the shore line. He also had established the pattern of sounding (measuring the depth of the water) probably at frequent intervals. In brief, what little evidence does exist suggests that the pilot would have sailed a course parallel to but considerably offshore of the established canoe route from Michilimackinac to Green Bay. This was essentially the same procedure I witnessed in 1939 when the pilot of an auxiliary ketch traveling the then uncharted waters of the east coast of Hudson's Bay followed a course that kept the shore in sight, did not sail at night, and made frequent soundings. This course was parallel to but outside of the course I had previously taken through the same area by canoe. If in 1679 the pilot of the *Griffin* followed the north shore of Lake Michigan for about 40 leagues, he would have come to Summer Island in Delta County, Michigan.

Summer Island is the first island "lying just at the mouth" of Green Bay, if one is approaching from the north. Summer Island is the second largest of the seven islands previously mentioned. At its northeast extremity there is a bay that affords good anchorage for a ship the size or even twice the size of the *Griffin*. Moreover, in this bay it is possible to anchor within "thirty paces" (75 feet) of the "furthermost point of the land"; in fact, I have done it in a 60-foot sailing vessel with a draught of 8 feet. If the *Griffin* had been anchored in this bay in 1679, the storm that tossed her for four days must have come from the northeast, because this anchorage is protected from all other directions by land, shoals, and the mainland. Adjoining this bay there is an Indian village site, on a more or less level sandy area. Artifacts collected from this site indicate occupancies representing Middle Woodland,

Late Woodland, Upper Mississippi, and perhaps historic cultures (Quimby, field notes, 1959). Summer Island could have been the Green Bay terminus of the voyage of the *Griffin*, and it is my first choice in this reconstruction of history.

Of the six remaining islands previously mentioned as possibilities, I would reject Poverty, St. Martin, Detroit, and Plum because they provide no anchorage in a bay within 75 feet of a point of land. Furthermore, these islands are either too swampy or rocky or barren. But Rock and Washington islands are possibilities even though they are more than 40 leagues from Michilimackinac. Heretofore Washington Island (Door County, Wisconsin) has been considered to be the island that the *Griffin* sailed to in Green Bay. It is the largest island in Green Bay. On its northwest end there is a beautiful narrow bay open to the north. Although there is no "furthermost point of the land" a ship could anchor anywhere in this bay within 75 feet of land and still be in water 30 to 80 feet deep. At the northwest entrance to this harbor there are white stone cliffs more than 100 feet high. The shore line is composed of cliffs, rocks, or boulder and cobble beaches. About one-half mile west of this harbor there is an Indian village site and cemetery that has produced trade materials indicative of some time between 1670 and 1760.

Although Washington Harbor on Washington Island would have been a good anchorage for the *Griffin*, it does not fit Father Hennepin's limited observations as well as does the bay on Summer Island. Furthermore, any storm that would have "tossed" the *Griffin* in Washington Harbor would have come from a northern quadrant. Under such conditions (field observations, 1958) huge waves crash over the rocky shores of this bay and it would seem virtually impossible for the Potawatomi chief to have launched a canoe without pounding out its bottom. Other bays and harbors on Washington Island, prior to dredging in modern times, would not have provided suitable anchorage for the *Griffin*. However, either side of a sandy hook off the southwest end of Rock Island would fulfill the requirements of Father Hennepin's observations and at the same time would provide a place from which a canoe might be launched in a storm. But Rock Island almost connects with Washington Island, and I would have expected Father Hennepin to make some further observation about two islands in such

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close proximity. Thus after considering all seven of the islands lying at the opening from Lake Michigan into Green Bay, I favor Summer Island. There is, however, some additional evidence in favor of this choice and against the other islands.

On September 18, 1679, La Salle and his men parted company with the *Griffin*, which, manned by a small crew, set sail for Niagara to deliver her cargo of furs, after which she was expected to return to the upper lakes and rejoin La Salle in the St. Joseph River of southwest Michigan. When the four canoes carrying Hennepin, La Salle, and twelve of his men left the Island of the Potawatomis, on September 19, to begin a trip down the western shore of Lake Michigan, they encountered a storm at night and did not get ashore until the morning of September 20. If La Salle's group had departed from Washington, Detroit, Rock, or Plum Island such a situation would have been impossible. It is only about 4 miles from Washington or Detroit Island to Door Peninsula, where the western shore of Lake Michigan begins. It is even less from there to Plum Island. However, the canoe route from Summer Island bay to this part of Lake Michigan shore is about 30 miles, and a voyage by canoe from Summer Island to the mainland in Door County, Wisconsin, would very well fit Hennepin's description of events on the night of September 19, 1679. Consequently, considering all of the lines of evidence known to me, I would choose Summer Island as the Island of the Potawatomis which was visited by La Salle and Hennepin in the *Griffin* in early September of 1679.

THE FATE OF THE GRIFFIN

The *Griffin*, loaded with furs for the European markets, set sail from the Island of the Potawatomis on September 18, 1679, downward bound for the east end of Lake Erie. En route she disappeared and was never seen again. Hennepin said the *Griffin* was lost in a storm on northern Lake Michigan. Writing at a later time, Bacqueville de la Potherie (Blair, 1911, I, 353) stated that the *Griffin*, driven by a storm "into a small bay, five or six leagues from the anchorage which it had left," was boarded by a party of Ottawa Indians who killed the crew and burned the ship. This statement, made so long after the fact, might have been based on knowledge of a letter written by La Salle to La Barre on June 4,

1683 (see Parkman, 1894, p. 301). In the letter La Salle expresses the belief that the *Griffin* was destroyed by the pilot and some of the crew, who then attempted to join Du Lhut, but were captured by Indians. If Bacqueville de la Potherie's account is correct, the *Griffin* met its end in northern Lake Michigan in one of the bays south of Point aux Barques, probably in Delta County, Michigan. Just which of these bays it might have been depends in part on the exact identification of the Island of the Potawatomis from which the *Griffin* sailed. Since I favor the identification of Summer Island as the Island of the Potawatomis, I would expect the Portage Bay area to be the place where the *Griffin* disappeared, if I accepted the account of Bacqueville de la Potherie. However, I accept Father Hennepin's account of the matter and will therefore reach a somewhat different conclusion.

Hennepin was in the region for several years after the disappearance of the *Griffin* and should have had a chance to pick up any information, rumors, or gossip about the vessel in the French establishments near Green Bay or at Michilimackinac. In March of 1680, according to Parkman (1894, p. 179), the two men La Salle had sent in search of the missing vessel reported to him that they had made a circuit of Lake Michigan and "had neither seen her nor heard tidings of her." Hennepin spent the winter of 1680-81 among the Indians and Frenchmen at Michilimackinac, where he might have acquired some of the information he relates, but of many of the events of 1679 he was an eye witness. According to Hennepin (1698, Chap. 22, pp. 89-90):

M. la Salle, without asking anybody's Advice, resolv'd to send back his Ship to Niagara, laden with Furs [sic] and Skins to discharge his Debts; our Pilot and five Men with him were therefore sent back, and order'd to return with all imaginable speed, to join us toward the Southern Parts of the Lake, where we should stay for them among the Illinois. They sailed the 18th of September with a Westerly Wind, and fir'd a Gun [cannon] to take their leave. Tho' the Wind was favorable [blowing from a direction that would enable them to steer a direct course without tacking], it was never known what Course they steer'd, nor how they perished; for after all the Enquiries we have been able to make, we could never learn any thing else but the following Particulars.

The Ship came to an Anchor to the North of the Lake of the Illinois [Lake Michigan], where he [sic] was seen by some Savages, who told us that they advised our Men to sail along the Coast, and not towards the middle of the Lake, because of the Sands [shoals, bars, islands] that

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make the Navigation dangerous when there is any high Wind. Our Pilot, as I said before, was dissatisfy'd and would steer as he pleas'd, without hearkning to the Advice of the Savages, who, generally speaking, have more Sense than the Europeans think at first; but the Ship was hardly a League from the Coast, when it was toss'd up by a violent Storm in such a manner, that our Men were never heard of since; and it is suppos'd that the Ship struck upon a Sand was there bury'd.

When the *Griffin* left the Island of the Potawatomis on September 18, 1679, the wind was westerly; that is to say it was blowing from a direction somewhere between northwest and southwest, but not directly from the west. The wind was also favorable, which is to say it was a following or near following wind in relation to the course the *Griffin* had to sail, and since the *Griffin's* course should have been northeasterly the favorable westerly wind on September 18, 1679, must have been blowing from a point between west and southwest or from the southwest.

Additional information about the wind and weather for September 19-25, 1679, in northern Lake Michigan, can be gleaned from Father Hennepin's account of the beginning of his canoe journey from the Island of the Potawatomis southward down the Wisconsin shore of Lake Michigan. On September 19 the weather was mild, but the wind increased during the night and it was stormy for the next four days (Hennepin, 1698. Chap. 22, pp. 91-92) — from September 20 through September 24. The wind and waves were so great that Hennepin and La Salle's party had to remain on shore during this period. Their position in relation to the Lake Michigan shore of Wisconsin's Door Peninsula would have protected them from winds blowing from due north, northwest, west, and southwest; therefore, the winds that kept La Salle's group storm-bound on the shore must have come from the south, southeast, east, or northeast. Moreover, the weather conditions that prevailed for four days near the southern entrance into Green Bay would have been general over the whole northern Lake Michigan area. And whether the wind was from the south, southeast, east, or northeast, the *Griffin* was in potential trouble, for there were no harbors or protected anchorages along the northern shore of Lake Michigan. Sooner or later she would be helpless either on a lee shore or on rocks and shoals offshore.

On the basis of my own experience in uncharted waters I would

expect that after the *Griffin* departed from the Island of the Potawatomis on September 18, 1679, the pilot would have steered a northeasterly course following the shore. The favorable westerly wind probably died with the setting of the sun, which would have been fairly early at this time of year, but even if the wind had continued during the night it would have been very dangerous to continue the voyage blindly through the uncharted waters of northern Lake Michigan. I would believe Hennepin's statement that the *Griffin* anchored in the northern end of Lake Michigan. This anchorage most likely would have been in the vicinity of Manistique, Michigan, or between Manistique and Seul Choix Point. On September 19, according to Hennepin, the weather was calm and the *Griffin* may have remained at anchor or may have been able to move a short distance, but was still west of Seul Choix Point. In such a position the vessel was safe in a northeasterly gale but hopelessly lost in a southerly storm. If the *Griffin* had ventured out past the protection of Seul Choix Point and had been caught in a northeasterly gale she would have been blown southwestward and wrecked in the vicinity of Point Aux Barques.

If by the night of September 19, 1679, the *Griffin* had been coasting as far east as Epoufette, Michigan, she would have been wrecked on a lee shore with a storm from the south or wrecked at sea or in the Beaver Islands in a storm from the north or northeast. If we ignore Hennepin's statement about the *Griffin* reaching an anchorage in northern Lake Michigan, we would then assume that when the vessel departed from the Island of the Potawatomis she headed directly to sea in an easterly direction. The *Griffin*, a slow sailor to judge from her performance on Lake Erie and Lake Huron, might have reached the Beaver Islands by nightfall but would have become hopelessly enmeshed in shoals and islands if she tried to proceed in the dark. The lack of wind on September 19 and the complicated nature of the passage through or around the Beaver Islands would suggest that had the *Griffin* taken the easterly course from the Island of the Potawatomis she would have been somewhere in the vicinity of the Beaver Islands at the beginning of the storm in northern Lake Michigan the night of September 19, 1679. In such a position the *Griffin* would probably have been wrecked somewhere among the Beaver Islands. If the storm was from the south and the *Griffin* was north of the Beavers

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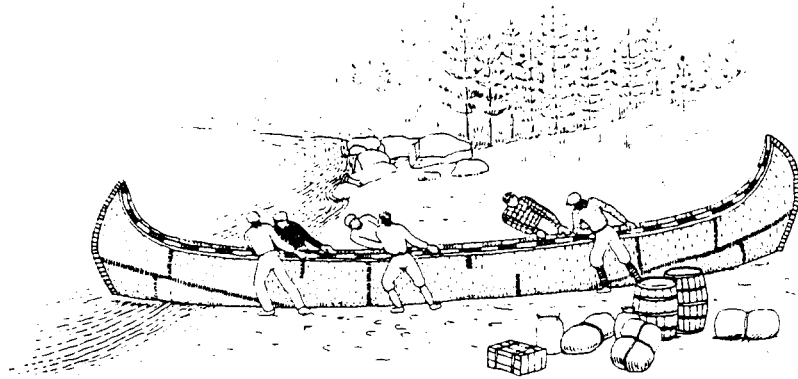
she might have been blown northward and wrecked somewhere between Seul Choix Point and Epoufette, perhaps at Mille Couquins. With the *Griffin* in the same position a storm from any other direction would have wrecked her among the Beaver Islands.

Whatever happened to the *Griffin* it seems almost certain that she never got as far east as St. Ignace after leaving the Island of the Potawatomis. And, regardless of what else might have taken place, it seems unreasonable to believe that the *Griffin* could have survived the storm on northern Lake Michigan that lasted from the night of September 19 through September 24, 1679. Just how terrible a storm can be on northern Lake Michigan is exemplified by the loss of the freighter, *Carl D. Bradley*, in November of 1958. Many, many times larger than the *Griffin*, the *Bradley* was 640 feet long and capable of carrying 18,000 tons of cargo. Nonetheless, she was no match for the 20 to 30 foot waves pushed by southwest winds of 65 miles an hour velocity. She broke in half and sank in 365 feet of water off the western edge of the Beaver Island archipelago. The force of wind and waves was so great that it took the 250-foot German freighter, *Christian Sartori*, two hours to cover the four miles between their position and the place where the *Bradley* sank (Ratigan, 1960, pp. 16-35). To imagine the plight of the *Griffin* in September of 1679 one need only look at a detailed maritime chart of northern Lake Michigan and think of the magnitude of the autumnal storm that sank the *Bradley* in 1958.

If I were to search for possible remains of the *Griffin*, I would first look beneath the coastal waters of Delta and Schoolcraft counties in Michigan between Point Detour and Seul Choix Point, particularly around Point Aux Barques and the site of the old settlement at Seul Choix. I would next check the coastal waters eastward as far as Epoufette in Mackinac County, Michigan, and, finally, I would search all the shoals in the Beaver Island archipelago.

That the *Griffin* disappeared without trace is no surprise if she was destroyed in the storm of September 19-24, 1679. Nor is it surprising that ships like the *Griffin* did not replace canoes as cargo carriers on the upper Great Lakes during the major part of the fur trade era. The only advantages that a boat like the *Griffin* had over a large freight canoe or a brigade of such canoes

Fig. 10. — Canoe freighter of about 1820 on northern Lake Huron. Courtesy of Chicago Natural History Museum.



was that the boat was a floating fortress and required fewer men for the amount of freight handled. These advantages, however, were far outweighed by the lack of harbors, the numerous hazards to navigation, and the lack of marine charts. Whereas a boat like the *Griffin* was always at the mercy of a storm, a freight canoe could put ashore almost anywhere. The large Montreal canoes (Fig. 10) that became the real freighters of the fur trade era were never replaced by sailing ships. Such a canoe 35 to 40 feet long could carry 5 tons of crew and freight and, with fourteen men, could make 4 to 6 miles an hour in calm weather and 8 to 10 miles per hour with a favorable wind and sail plus paddles (see Nute, 1931, pp. 23-28). Thus an Indian invention, the birch-bark canoe, became, with some French modification, the ideal commercial vessel during the era of the fur trade on the upper Great Lakes.

REFERENCES

Blair, 1911; Glasgow, 1964; Griffin, 1943; Hennepin, 1698; Morison, 1925; Nute, 1931; Parkman, 1894; Ratigan, 1960; Tucker, 1942.

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CAVELIER DE LA SALLE.

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hundred livres, which he owed to various persons. He caused four of the worst offenders to be arrested, but abstained from any further punishment; and learning that Hunaut and la Rousselière were at Sault Sainte-Marie, he sent M. de Tonty with a detachment of six men, who arrested them and seized all the effects they had in possession. From the rest he was able to obtain no reparation. The high winds prevalent at this season long delayed the return of M. de Tonty,—in fact, he did not get back to Missilimakinak until the month of November,—and M. de La Salle, dreading the approach of winter, determined to set out without awaiting his arrival.


September,
1679.

*Tonty does
not return.*

On the 12th of September he left Missilimakinak; entering Lake Illinois, he arrived at an island situated at the opening of Green Bay (or lake); this island, forty leagues from Missilimakinak, is inhabited by Savages of the Pottawattamie nation. Here he found some of his men sent by him in previous years among the Illinois, whence they were bringing back peltry to the value of more than twelve thousand livres. On account of the approach of winter, he decided to send back the vessel from this place, and to continue his journey in canoes; but having only four canoes, he was compelled to leave in the vessel much merchandise and a quantity

*La Salle
sends back
his ship.*

000103

tity of utensils and tools of all kinds. All ^{September,} these things he ordered the pilot to unlade ^{1679.} as Missilimakinak, where he would get  them on his return. He also put on board all the peltry, in charge of a supercargo, and manned the vessel with five good sailors. They had orders to repair immediately to the storehouse which he had built at the end of Lake Erie, where they were to leave the peltry and take on a load of merchandise and other things, to be brought from Fort Frontenac by a vessel which would be awaiting them at Niagara. They were then to sail directly for Missilimakinak, where they would find instructions as to the place for wintering the ship.

They set sail on the 18th of September, with a light but very favorable west wind. What route they took has never been ascertained; and although there is no doubt they were lost, it has been impossible to learn any circumstances of their shipwreck, ^{*A far worse shipwreck.*} except the following.

The vessel having cast anchor in the northern part of Lake Illinois, the pilot, against the advice of some Savages who warned him there was a great storm outside, persisted in setting sail, without considering that the sheltered position of the ship prevented him from perceiving the violence of the wind. Scarcely was the ship a quarter-league

league from land, when the Savages saw it September, 1679. tossing frightfully, unable to make head against the storm, although all the sails had been struck; a short time after, they lost it from sight, and think it to have been driven upon shallows near the Huron Islands, where it has been buried in the sand. It was not until the following year that M. de La Salle learned all these things. Certain it is that the loss of this vessel cost him more than forty thousand livres, counting not only goods, tools, and peltry, but also the men and the rigging which he had brought from France to Canada, and had transported from Montreal to Fort Frontenac in bark canoes,—a feat seeming impossible to those acquainted with the fragility of such craft, considering the weight of anchors and cables.

On the following day, the 19th of September, he pushed forward with fourteen persons in four canoes laden with a forge, with all the tools of house and ship carpenters, cabinet-makers, and sawyers, and with arms and merchandise.

He took his course toward the mainland, distant forty long leagues from the island of the Pottawattamies. In the middle of the passage, there suddenly sprang up out of the deepest calm a dangerous storm, which made him fear for his vessel, inas-
much

*Hardships
and
dangers.*



CAVELIER DE LA SALLE.

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much as it raged during four days with a fury equal to that of the severest ocean storms. Nevertheless he reached land, where he stayed six days, until the storm was spent.

October,
1679.

On the 25th he continued his course along the coast all day and a part of the night, being favored by the moon; but the wind rising, he landed with his whole party. They found themselves upon a naked rock, where they bore rain and snow for two days, wrapped in their blankets and hovering near a little fire of driftwood.

On the 28th, about noon, they again pushed off their canoes and sailed on far into the night, until an eddy of wind forced them to land upon a point of rock covered with brushwood. Here they stayed two days and consumed the rest of their provisions,—namely, the Indian corn and the pumpkins they had bought of the Pottawattamies, not having brought a greater supply for the reason that their canoes were already overladen and they hoped to procure more food on the way.

On the 1st of October they pushed on, and having made ten leagues, fasting, arrived near another Pottawattamie village. The high, steep coast was exposed to the north-east wind, which was then blowing and
increasing

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Septembre, que les Sauvages virent la barque agitée
 1679. d'une manière si extraordinaire que, ne
 pouvant résister à la tempeste quoiqu'on
 eust abattu toutes les voiles, peu de tems
 après ils la perdirent de veue, et ils croyent
 qu'elle fut poussée contre les battures qui
 sont près des isles, Huronnes, où elle est
 demeurée ensevelie. Le sieur de La Salle
 n'apprit toutes ces choses que l'année sui-
 vante, et il est certain que la perte de cette
 barque luy couste plus de quarante mille
 livres tant en marchandises, outils et pelle-
 teries qu'en hommes et agrès qu'il avoit
 fait venir de France en Canada, et voiturer
 de Montréal au fort de Frontenac dans des
 canots d'escorce, ce qui paraissoit impos-
 sible à ceux qui connoissoient la foiblesse
 de ces sortes de bastimens et la pesanteur
 des ancrs et des câbles.

Il partit le jour suivant, 19 Septembre,
 avec quatorze personnes en quatre canots
 chargez d'une forge avec toutes les fourni-
 tures d'outils de charpentiers de maison et
 de navire, de menuisiers et scieurs de long,
 d'armes et de marchandises.

Il prit sa route au sud vers la terre ferme,
 esloignée de quatre grandes lieues de l'isle
 de Pouteatamis. Au milieu de la traversée
 et du plus beau calme du monde, il s'éleva
 un orage qui le mit en danger et qui luy
 fit craindre pour sa barque, parce qu'il dura
 quatre

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Septembre, 1679. quantité d'ustensiles et d'outils de toutes sortes, et il ordonna au pilote de descharger toutes ces choses à Missilimakinak, où il les reprendroit à son retour. Il mit aussi toutes ses pelleteries dans la barque avec un commis et cinq bons matelots. Ils avoient ordre de se rendre incessamment au magasin qu'il avoit fait bastir au bout du lac Érié où ils laisseroient les pelleteries et se chargeroient de beaucoup de marchandises et d'autres choses qu'une barque du fort de Frontenac, qui les attendoit à Niagara, devoit leur apporter, et qu'aussitost après ils reprissent la route de Missilimakinak, où ils trouveroient une instruction du lieu où ils mèneroient hyverner la barque.

Ils mirent à la voile le 18 Septembre avec un petit vent d'ouest très-favorable. On n'a pu sçavoir depuis la route qu'ils avoient tenue, et quoyqu'on ne doute pas qu'ils n'ayent péri, on n'a jamais pu apprendre d'autres circonstances de leur naufrage que les suivantes.

La barque ayant mouillé au nord du lac des Illinois, le pilote, contre l'advis de quelques Sauvages qui l'assuroient qu'il y avoit une grande tempeste au milieu du lac, voulut continuer sa navigation sans considérer que l'abry où il estoit l'empeschoit de connoistre la force du vent. Il fut à peine à un quart de lieue de la coste que

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MICHAEL F. KERGIN AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Michael Kergin presented his Letters of Credence to President Clinton on October 19, 2000, becoming the nineteenth representative of Canada to the United States.

Ambassador Kergin's career in the Public Service began when he joined the Department of External Affairs (now the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) in 1967 as a Foreign Service Officer. His postings abroad included New York (the Canadian Mission to the United Nations), Cameroon, and Chile. He served as Ambassador to Cuba from 1986 to 1989 and was posted in Washington twice prior to his appointment as Ambassador.

During his years in Ottawa, Mr. Kergin held various positions at the Foreign Affairs Department. From 1984 to 1986, he was the Senior Departmental Assistant to then

Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark. In 1994, he became Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Political and International Security Affairs. After two years, Mr. Kergin became the Assistant Deputy Minister with responsibility for the Americas and Security/Intelligence Affairs. He held that position until 1999, when the Prime Minister asked him to serve as his Foreign Policy Advisor as well as Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet for Foreign and Defence Policy (the Canadian equivalent to the National Security Adviser in the U.S. government).

Mr. Kergin graduated from the University of Toronto in 1965 with an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in history and languages and, in 1967, received a Masters in Arts (Economics) from Magdalen College at Oxford University.

Ambassador Kergin was born in a Canadian military hospital in Bramshott, England, on April 26th, 1942. He is married to Margarita Fuentes Kergin, and they have three sons: Patrick, Christopher and Andrew. He enjoys playing tennis.

- [Ambassador Kergin's letter to Rep. Rubén Hinojosa, 14 September 2004](#)
"None of the September 11th hijackers entered the United States through Canada."

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- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to Sen. Thomas A. Daschle, 16 April 2004**
"No animal born in Canada after the feed ban has ever tested positive for BSE."
- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to Sen. Charles E. Grassley and Sen. Max Baucus, 7 April 2004**
"Canada and the United States have a strong, extensive, highly integrated energy relationship."
- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to James H. Billington, The Librarian of Congress, 18 February 2004**
"Canada is part of the solution to the global problem. Our Smart Border Accord, deep law enforcement cooperation, and the latest technology at the disposal of both our nations, means having Canada to your north makes the US more, not less secure."
- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert, 16 December 2003**
"Canada has refrained from taking a position on the highly contentious United States domestic debate on prescription drug imports, but Canada does take issue with the suggestion that our drug prices are subsidized by American consumers."
- **Ambassador Kergin's op-ed in *The Washington Times*, 16 January 2003**
"Simply put, Canadians will not tolerate terrorism and terrorists are not welcome in our country."
- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to the editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 July 2002**
"We have declared war against terrorism, not immigration."
- **Ambassador Kergin's op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 May 2002**
Proposed energy legislation currently before Congress includes two substantial intrusions into gas markets. Canada, the largest foreign energy supplier to the U.S., urges Congress to refrain from distorting the North American energy market.
- **Ambassador Kergin's op-ed in *The Washington Times*, 24 December 2001**
"It has been a cause of considerable frustration to Canadians to see themselves portrayed by some public figures in the US as being 'soft on terrorism' and 'a weak link.' None of the 19 hijackers came into the United States from Canada, as has been confirmed by Attorney General John Ashcroft."
- **Ambassador Kergin's letter to the Editor of *The New York Times*, 30 March 2001**
"Protectionism has a price. Restrictions on Canadian softwood lumber imports are like a \$1,000 tax on each home built in America."

 Intended for U.S. audience; produced only in English.

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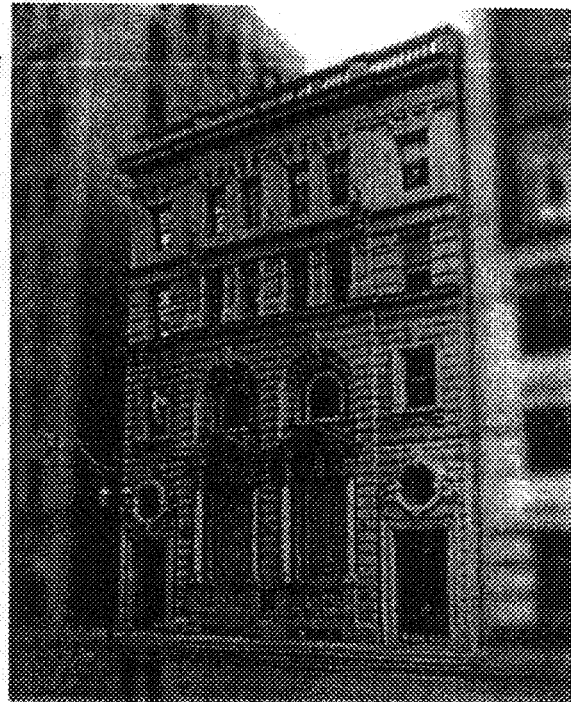
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c/o Catherine Axford

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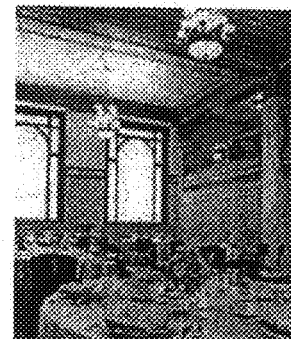
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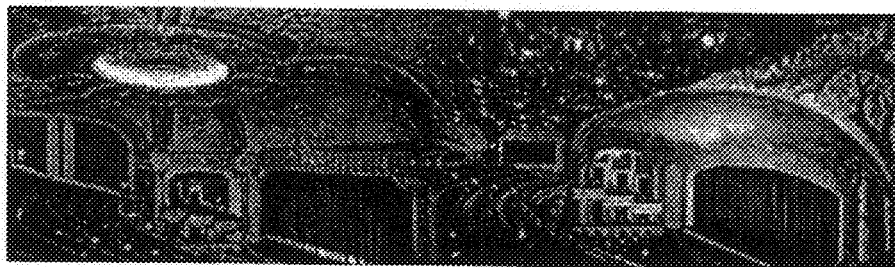


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Who we are

For more than three decades, the Ontario Heritage Foundation has identified, preserved, protected and promoted Ontario's rich and diverse heritage – celebrating the people, places and events that have influenced and that continue to shape our culture.

As the province's lead heritage agency, we have been entrusted with keeping Ontario's legacy alive and meaningful. The Foundation gives Ontario's heritage relevance for our present, and a valued place in the future. The Foundation:

- promotes the importance of heritage conservation
- preserves and protects significant heritage sites
- upholds and advocates the highest standards of conservation
- demonstrates the adaptive reuse of heritage properties
- commemorates important heritage sites and events with plaques throughout the province
- celebrates community heritage
- encourages young people to get involved in heritage activities
- raises revenue to support heritage activities



Together with our many dedicated partners across the province, we celebrate and protect Ontario's heritage.

The Foundation demonstrates its commitment to increasing the public's awareness of the importance of heritage conservation in a number of ways. We do this by:

- providing public access to many of our properties
- recognizing individuals through our annual **Heritage Community Recognition Program**
- featuring our programs and activities through **our newsletter *Heritage Matters***
- hosting special events like plaque unveilings and open houses
- recognizing youth through our annual **Young Heritage Leaders** program
- sharing our expertise through workshops, seminars, conferences and special publications
- advising others on conservation projects
- documenting significant **archaeological work** in the *Annual Archaeological Report, Ontario* and the *Ontario Archaeological Reports*
- celebrating Ontario's **Heritage Week** the third week of February each year
- discovering Ontario's heritage treasures through the popular province-wide **Doors Open**

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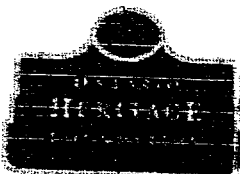
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HERITAGE PLAQUES

JULY 2000 PLAQUE

THE VOYAGE OF THE "GRIFFON" 1679

First ship to sail Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, the "Griffon", probably 40-45 feet long, was built by Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, several miles above Niagara Falls in 1679. La Salle came to New France in 1667, became seigneur of Cataracoui (Kingston), engaged in the fur trade and sought a western route to China. In August, 1679, the "Griffon" sailed from the Niagara River with La Salle and a company of about thirty-three. In this vicinity the crew had to haul the ship up the swift current of the St. Clair River. La Salle remained in the West while the "Griffon", laden with furs, vanished en route from Green Bay to Niagara.

Historical Background

The voyage of the "Griffon" on Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan in 1679, the first sailing ship to ply those upper lakes, was an integral part of the grand design of René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, to organize the fur trade on a vast scale and to create a French empire in North America extending from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico. Some historians have described La Salle as an ambitious, romantic dreamer, others picture him as a shrewd merchant, "a fur trader who hoped to revolutionize the business by large-scale methods." Probably the truth contains elements of both these opinions. He was certainly New France's greatest explorer in the latter half of the seventeenth century, a man of action and great courage, capable of enduring incredible toil and hardship.



La Salle believed that furs could be carried much more

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cheaply by ships than by canoes and his plans called for a ship on Lake Ontario, one for the lake route from the Niagara River to Lake Michigan, and one to be built on the Illinois River to explore and trade on the Mississippi. Fort Frontenac (Kingston), and other forts in strategic locations such as Niagara, Michilimackinac, the southern tip of Lake Michigan, and on the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, would gather in the furs.

La Salle found a powerful ally in Frontenac, the governor of New France. He also gained the ear of Louis XIV, and after a visit to France in 1674, the king granted him a patent of nobility and made him seigneur of Cataracoui and governor of Fort Frontenac. A second visit in 1677-78 won him permission to explore the West and to build forts in the interior, though at his own expense. He was also given a monopoly of trade in buffalo hides, though he was forbidden to trade for furs with those Indian tribes who took their pelts to Montreal.

La Salle returned to New France late in September 1678 and sprang into action at once to implement his gigantic scheme, not the least part of which was to explore the Mississippi River to its mouth. His first objective was to build a ship on the Niagara River above the Falls to engage in the fur trade on the upper lakes, and to transport to the foot of Lake Michigan the materials necessary for the building of another ship on the Illinois River with which to explore and trade on the Mississippi.

Among the company La Salle assembled on the Niagara was Father Louis Hennepin, an adventurous Recollet missionary who had been assigned to the La Salle expedition by his superiors. Hennepin spent several years in North America and after his return to Europe wrote a number of books on his explorations and experiences which achieved great popularity. Hennepin recorded the voyage of the "Griffon," the name given by La Salle to the ship built at Niagara, and it is to Hennepin's "A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America," an English version of his travels, printed in London in 1698, that we are indebted for most of our information. Hennepin was a conceited braggart, exaggerator and self-glorifier where his own achievements were concerned, and in his books published after La Salle's death, he even made a completely fraudulent claim to have descended the Mississippi before La Salle. However, except where noted, there appears to be no sound reason for doubting the essentials of his statements regarding the "Griffon" and its journey from Niagara to Green Bay.

According to Hennepin, "On the 22th of the said Month

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(January 1679), we went two Leagues (about 6 miles) above the great Fall of Niagara, where we made a Dock for Building the Ship we wanted for our Voyage. This was the most convenient place we could pitch upon, being upon a River which falls into the Streight between the Lake Erie and the great Fall of Niagara." Francis Parkman, the noted historian, believed the building site to be the mouth of Cayuga Creek in the state of New York.

In the same chapter Hennepin describes the "Griffon" as "a Ship of Sixty Tuns"; in an earlier work, "Description de la Louisiane," he gave the figure as "45 tuns." The "tun" was not a measure of weight but of cubic content, actually a barrel. It has been generally accepted that the "Griffon" was a vessel of about forty-five tons burden and was probably 40-45 feet long.

Though frequently termed a barque, the "Griffon" has been described as resembling "a buss" or "a bilander," or "a kind of brigantine, not unlike a Dutch galliot, with a broad elevated bow and stern, very flat in the bottom, looking much larger than she really was." This description agrees with a Hennepin drawing showing the "Griffon" being readied for launching.

On August 7, 1679, the "Griffon," after much difficulty clearing the Niagara River, sailed out into Lake Erie and began its upbound voyage to Green Bay. On board were La Salle, Hennepin and two other Recollet missionaries, La Ribourde and Membré, Henry de Tonty, La Salle's faithful lieutenant, the pilot, Luke the Dane, and twenty-eight others, thirty-four in all. Trade goods, various tools for La Salle's purposes and the company's belongings made up the cargo.

The "Griffon" reached the mouth of the Detroit River on August 10 after four days of uneventful sailing to run the length of Lake Erie, a distance of about 240 miles. The longest daily run mentioned by Hennepin was 45 leagues, some 125 miles.

The passage up the Detroit River, through Lake St. Clair and up the St. Clair River into Lake Huron took from August 11 till August 23. The strong current of the St. Clair River where it flows out of Lake Huron in the Point Edward-Sarnia area gave the "Griffon" much trouble. Hennepin says: "... the extraordinary quantity of Waters which came down from the upper Lake (Lake Huron), and that of Illinois (Lake Michigan), because of a strong North-West Wind, had so much augmented the Rapidity of the Current of this Streight, that it was as violent as that of Niagara. The Wind turning Southerly, we sail'd again; and with the help of twelve Men,

who hall'd our Ship from the Shoar, got safely the 23th of August into the Lake Huron."

The voyage on Lake Huron to Michilimackinac (some 240 miles) was accomplished by August 27. During this leg of the journey the ship survived a violent storm during which Hennepin observes: "M. la Salle, notwithstanding he was a Courageous Man, began to fear, and told us we were undone; and therefore every body fell upon his Knees to say his Prayers, and prepare himself for Death, except our Pilot, whom we could never oblige to pray; and he did nothing all that while but curse and swear against M. la Salle, who, as he said, had brought him thither to make him perish in a nasty Lake, and lose the Glory he had acquir'd by his long and happy Navigations on the Ocean." On the 27th the vessel reached Michilimackinac and anchored in East Moran Bay at present-day St. Ignace. At Michilimackinac in 1679 there was a Huron village, an Ottawa village, a Jesuit mission, and an establishment of Frenchmen who traded with the Indians of the region.

Hennepin begins his account of the last stage of the upbound journey from Michilimackinac to Green Bay as follows: "On the 2d of September we weigh'd Anchor, and sail'd into the Lake of the Illinois (Lake Michigan); and came to an Island just at the Mouth of the Bay of the Puans (Green Bay), lying forty Leagues (about 110 miles) from Missilimakinak: It is inhabited by some Savages of the Nation call'd Poutouatami's, with whom some of the Men M. la Salle had sent the Year before, had barter'd a great quantity of Furrs and Skins. We found our Men in the Island, . . . very impatient, having so long waited our arrival."

It has been generally assumed that the island referred to by Hennepin is the island formerly known as Pottawattomie Island, now Washington Island, the largest in Green Bay. In a recent scholarly article on the voyage of the "Griffon," George I. Quimby, curator of the Chicago Natural History Museum, has presented cogent arguments for the island being either Rock Island or Summer Island, particularly the latter, though he still considers Washington Island a possibility.

The "Griffon," loaded with furs, set sail from the island of the "Poutouatami's" on September 18, 1679, downward bound for the Niagara River. La Salle was in desperate financial straits and needed the quickest possible sale of the cargo of furs. He also required the "Griffon's" prompt return to the foot of Lake Michigan with the materials he required for the building of a ship on the Illinois River for his Mississippi expedition. Nevertheless, he assigned only the

pilot and five men to man the ship on its voyage back to Niagara, a mistake often blamed for its loss.

Hennepin gives us this account of the last days of the "Griffon": "M. la Salle, without asking any body's Advice, resolv'd to send back his Ship to Niagara, laden with Furrs and Skins to discharge his Debts; our Pilot and five Men with him were therefore sent back, and order'd to return with all imaginable speed, to join us toward the Southern Parts of the Lake, where we should stay for them among the Illinois. They sailed the 18th of September with a Westerly Wind, and fir'd a Gun to take their leave. Tho' the Wind was favourable, it was never known what Course they steer'd, nor how they perish'd; for after all the Enquiries we have been able to make, we could never learn anything else but the following Particulars."

"The Ship came to an Anchor to the North of the Lake of the Illinois (Lake Michigan), where she was seen by some Savages, who told us that they advised our Men to sail along the Coast, and not towards the middle of the Lake, because of the Sands (bars, rocks, shoals) that make the Navigation dangerous when there is any high Wind. Our Pilot, as I said before, was dissatisfy'd, and would steer as he pleas'd, without hearkning to the Advice of the Savages, who, generally speaking, have more Sense than the Europeans think at first; but the Ship was hardly a League from the Coast, when it was toss'd up by a violent Storm in such a manner that our Men were never heard of since; and it is suppos'd that the Ship struck upon a Sand, and was there bury'd."

Hennepin, then, believed that the "Griffon" foundered in the northern reaches of Lake Michigan. A letter written by La Salle in 1683 expressed his belief that the pilot and crew scuttled the "Griffon" after making off with its valuable cargo. Francis Parkman did not believe La Salle's evidence conclusive.

The day after the departure of the "Griffon" from the Island of the Potawatomis on September 18, La Salle, Hennepin and twelve men in four canoes started southward down the western shore of Lake Michigan for the region at the lower end of the lake. Hennepin relates, "... in the Night-time (September 19), we were surpriz'd with a sudden Storm, whereby we were in great danger . . . we got ashore the next Day, where we continu'd till the Lake grew calm again, which was four Days after."

George I. Quimby, in the article mentioned previously,

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analyzed all the information available about the storm which, according to Hennepin, lasted from the night of September 19 through September 24, 1679. His detailed discussion of storm conditions in the northern Lake Michigan region leads him to accept the opinion, expressed by Hennepin, that the "Griffon" went down in that "violent Storm" somewhere in the northern part of Lake Michigan. Quimby concludes: "Whatever happened to the 'Griffon', it seems almost certain that she never got as far east as St. Ignace after leaving the Island of the Potawatomis. And regardless of what else might have taken place, it seems unreasonable to believe that the 'Griffon' could have survived the storm on northern Lake Michigan that lasted from the night of September 19 through September 24, 1679."

Mr. C.H.J. Snider, an authority on Great Lakes shipping, remarks in his booklet, "The Griffon," that: "Since 1805 eleven discoveries of the 'Griffon's' supposed relics have been reported . . ." Recent interest in Ontario has been concentrated on two wrecks, one in the Mississagi Strait at the western end of Manitoulin Island, the other in a lagoon on Russel Island off Tobermory at the tip of Bruce Peninsula, Georgian Bay.

In 1687 La Salle died a violent death at the hands of one of his followers near the Trinity River in Texas. In 1679 the "Griffon," the first ship to sail Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, preceded her builder to an end of violent destruction, but her burial place is a marine mystery, and like her disappearance, may always remain so.

1967; 1989; 2000

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