The Expansion of Ojibway and French Place-names into the Lake Superior Region in the Seventeenth Century[1]

ALAN H. HARTLEY

DESPITE ITS LOCATION in the remote interior of North America, Lake Superior has a written history of almost 350 years. It owes its early exploration and settlement to its position on the ancient transcontinental water-route which extends from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, through the Ottawa River, Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River, to the Rocky Mountains. It was the westward expansion of Ojibway-speaking Indians[2] and the French, their customers in the fur trade, which made this vast area known to Europe. The early toponymy of Lake Superior and its eastern approaches reflects this partnership in its mixture of Ojibway and French names.

For the purposes of this study, the westward expansion of the French can be considered to have occurred in three stages. I. 1608–1641, from Samuel de Champlain's establishment of a trading post at Québec, through Jean Nicolet's explorations around Green Bay in 1634, to the visit of Fathers Jogues and Raymbault to Sault Ste. Marie. Lake Superior lay in unexplored country. II. 1659–1684, from Radisson and Des Groseillers' explorations in western Lake Superior and the Sioux country, to Sieur Dulhut's establishment of posts on Lake Nipigon, Thunder Bay and possibly the headwaters of the St. Croix River in Wisconsin. This was the period during which the Lake Superior basin

[1]I am grateful to the following for their constructive reviews of this paper: Alan Rayburn, Secretariat of Geographical Names, Ottawa; William Cowan, Carleton University, Ottawa; Edith Hols, University of Minnesota, Duluth; Donald Lawrence, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. My thanks also to my wife Susan for her careful reading and typing of the manuscript.

[2]The French used the names "Algonquin," "Ottawa," and "Saulteur" rather indiscriminately for bands speaking various dialects of what is now usually called "Ojibway."

became well known and received many of its French and Ojibway place-names, and during which the Mississippi was discovered by the French and explored to its mouth. III. 1730–1760, from la Vérendrye's opening of the route west from Lake Superior, to the end of the French régime in the Great Lakes. This was the beginning of the heyday of the western fur trade which was carried on into the 1880s by the French-Canadian *voyageurs* under their new British management.

This study is concerned primarily with the period before 1700, because in 1696–98 the King of France revoked all western fur-trade licenses, the western posts were abandoned, and all traders were called in. For the next 20 years, Lake Superior was the domain of the outlaw traders or *coureurs de bois* whose place-names are of the greatest interest but for whom documentary evidence is sparse. Until 1730, Lake Superior and the Mississippi represented the western frontier of New France.

To understand the distribution of native place-names during this period, one must reconstruct the historical ethnography of the region. The Ojibway language is a member of the widespread Algonquian language family which dominated northeastern North America. The only major non-Algonquian groups in the Great Lakes area were the speakers of Iroquoian languages around Lakes Erie and Ontario—including the Hurons northwest of Lake Ontario—and those of Siouan languages, including the Sioux west and southwest of Lake Superior and the Winnebagoes on Green Bay. The locations of these groups changed little during the French régime, though the Sioux were pushed gradually westward by the Ojibway. The Assiniboin, another Siouan people, traded frequently on the northwestern shore, but their homeland at that time is not known with any certainty.[3]

Of the many Algonquian languages, only Cree and Ojibway are important to this study. Speakers of various Cree dialects occupied vast areas north of the Great Lakes, centered more or less on James Bay. Some Cree were at least seasonally resident on the north shore of Lake Superior, and the Cree traded extensively with their Ojibway neighbors to the south. Cree bears considerable similarity to Ojibway but is a distinct language. Along their mutual boundary, considerable linguis-

---

[3]See K.A.C. Dawson, "Historic Populations of Northwestern Ontario," in W. Cowan, ed., *Papers of the 7th Algonquian Conference* (Ottawa, 1976), pp. 157–174; A.J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto, 1974); C.J. Wheeler, "The Historic Assiniboin: a Territorial Dispute in the Ethnohistoric Literature," in W. Cowan, ed., *Actes du Huitième Congrès des Algonquinistes* (Ottawa, 1977), pp. 115–123.

tic mixing gives northern Ojibway dialects their own distinct character.[4] These were probably the bands referred to in the older literature as the *Gens de(s) Terre(s)* or by their Ojibway name *no·ppimink-taš-ininiwak* 'forest (or inland) people.' On maps of the late 1600s, they are shown northeast of Lake Superior, and Alexander Henry says (1767)[5] that the group "is scattered over all the country between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay. Its language is a mixture of its neighbours, the Chipeways and Christinaux [Cree]."

From early sources, we learn that the area occupied by Ojibway bands at the time of their initial contacts with the French consisted essentially of the valleys of the Ottawa River and its tributaries, the shores of Georgian Bay, the north shore of Lake Huron and the shores of Lake Superior around its mouth at Sault Ste. Marie. The availability of fish and, especially, the ease of transportation by water dictated the littoral character of Ojibway settlement patterns.

The fur trade was largely responsible for the subsequent expansion of Ojibway territory and place-names. The Iroquois' intense desire to control the fur trade and divert it to the Dutch and English in New York led them to destroy the Huron confederation south of Georgian Bay in the late 1640s, thus forcing the surviving Hurons and their Ottawa neighbors to seek refuge south of Lake Superior. At the same time, the band from Lake Nipissing moved 400 miles to the northwest and settled on Lake Nipigon. These are but two of the better documented examples of the westward and northwestward population movements which caught up the Ojibway after the destruction of Huronia: there were doubtless many others. The case of the Atchiligouan band is an example: Hodge[6] notes that the Jesuit Relations report them living on Lake Huron from 1640 to 1670 but implies that they disappear from the records after that. The Jesuit map of 1682,[7] however, shows a band called the "Chiligouek" located northeast of Lake Superior. Though the present evidence is purely onomastic, we can hypothesize that the Atchiligouans did not disappear but migrated northwestward on a path almost parallel to that taken by the better

---

[4]See H. C. Wolfart and S.M. Shrofel, "Aspects of Cree Interference in Island Lake Ojibway," in Cowan, *Actes* (1977), pp. 156–167.

[5]Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories* (1809, reprinted 1901, Toronto), p. 208.

[6]F.W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (Washington, 1907–10); reprinted 1971), Pt. I, p. 8.

[7]Reproduced in W.J. Eccles, *Canada Under Louis XIV 1663–1701* (London, 1964), fol. p. 100.

documented Nipissing migration and were assimilated by the mobile, ill-defined *gens de terre.*

By 1660, then, Ojibway bands had settled in the Lake Superior basin westward to Chequamegon Bay and northwest to Lake Nipigon. The Thunder Bay area of the northwest shore was probably Cree territory, while what is now northeastern Minnesota was a sparsely inhabited area contested by the Cree and the Sioux. While the north shore saw a poorly documented but probably gradual increase in Ojibway population, the south shore underwent an apparently abrupt change about 1670 when the Ottawa were driven back to the east from Chequamegon Bay by the Sioux. In 1679, under the aegis of Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Dulhut, the Sioux and the Ojibway arranged a peace which was to last—not without breaches—until the 1730s, and the Ojibway proceeded to resettle the south shore.

Though the Ojibway migrations may have been precipitated by the Iroquois disturbances, they were encouraged by the position the Ojibway attained as middlemen in the trade with the French, and the close association of French and Ojibway place-names throughout the area of expansion reflects this partnership. It is important to bear in mind the nature of the Indian and French populations responsible for these place-names: both were very thinly spread and very mobile. Ojibway population densities are difficult to determine. During the summer, the Sault attracted as many as 2,000 people from the surrounding region (1640),[8] and the Chequamegon Bay villages held more than 1,500 Ottawa and Huron in 1670 (JR 54, p. 166). But Baron de Lahontan avers[9] that when he visited the Sault in 1688, there were no permanent Indian villages on Lake Superior. The census of 1736[10] lists 40 Sauteur warriors at Keweenaw Bay, 150 at Chequamegon and 30 at the Sault, which suggests a south shore Ojibway population of at least 1,000. The same census suggests 500 *gens de terre* and Ojibway on the north shore. Populations fluctuated strongly with disease, war and the fortunes of the fur trade.

The French were far fewer and still more mobile than the Indians. Though the population of the St. Lawrence River valley grew rapidly in the second half of the 17th century, French colonial policy and the

---

[8]R.G. Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Chicago, 1896–1901), v. 23, p. 244. (Hereafter cited in the text as "JR.")

[9]W.W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation* (St. Paul, 1885; reprinted 1970), pp. 416–17.

[10]R.G. Thwaites, *The French Régime in Wisconsin,* Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, v. 16–18, 1902–1908; v. 17, pp. 246–47.

nature of the fur trade discouraged settlement of the Northwest. In a letter of April 12, 1684,[11] Dulhut writes that 18 Frenchmen had wintered at Keweenaw and that, for the execution of two Indians at Sault, he could muster 43 Frenchmen (no doubt including some from Keweenaw). There were probably fewer than 100 Frenchmen in the Lake Superior basin in 1683–84. A document of 1692[12] mentions the 200 Frenchmen dispersed among the "upper tribes," a term which usually encompasses all the native groups of the western Great Lakes.

These few Frenchmen wielded a toponymic power far out of proportion to their numbers: it is fortunate for our place-name heritage that they were accurate and sympathetic recorders of the Ojibway names. The selective catalog which follows illustrates the manner in which Ojibway and French place-names were given and the relationships between the two toponymic systems. The entries are arranged in order from east to west, and counterclockwise around Lake Superior.

Orthography

The orthographic system used in the Ojibway forms is essentially that of Leonard Bloomfield.[13] Short vowels /a/, /i/, /o/. Long vowels /a·/, /e·/, /i·/, /o·/. Stops /p/, /t/, /k/, /ʔ/ (glottal; as in "oh-oh"). Affricate /č/ (as in "*ch*urch" or "*j*udge"). Spirants /s/, /š/ (as in "*sh*ip" or "a*z*ure"); /h/. Nasals /m/, /n/. Semivowels /w/, /y/. Single stops, affricate and spirants are short and are voiced between vowels and in word-medial consonant clusters when preceded by a nasal or followed by a semivowel. They are otherwise unaspirated and voiceless. Double stops, affricate and spirants never occur in the initial position and are always voiceless, vigorous and long. /pp/, /tt/, /kk/, /čč/ are often preceded by slight aspiration. In French names, "ou" and "8" both represent Ojibway /o/ and /w/, and 'ch' is used for /š/. Other orthographies used in cited forms should present few problems. In northern Ojibway dialects, doubled obstruents are often replaced by /h/ + obstruent, and Jones represents this /h/ with '. Cuoq uses "c" for /š/.

Word Formation

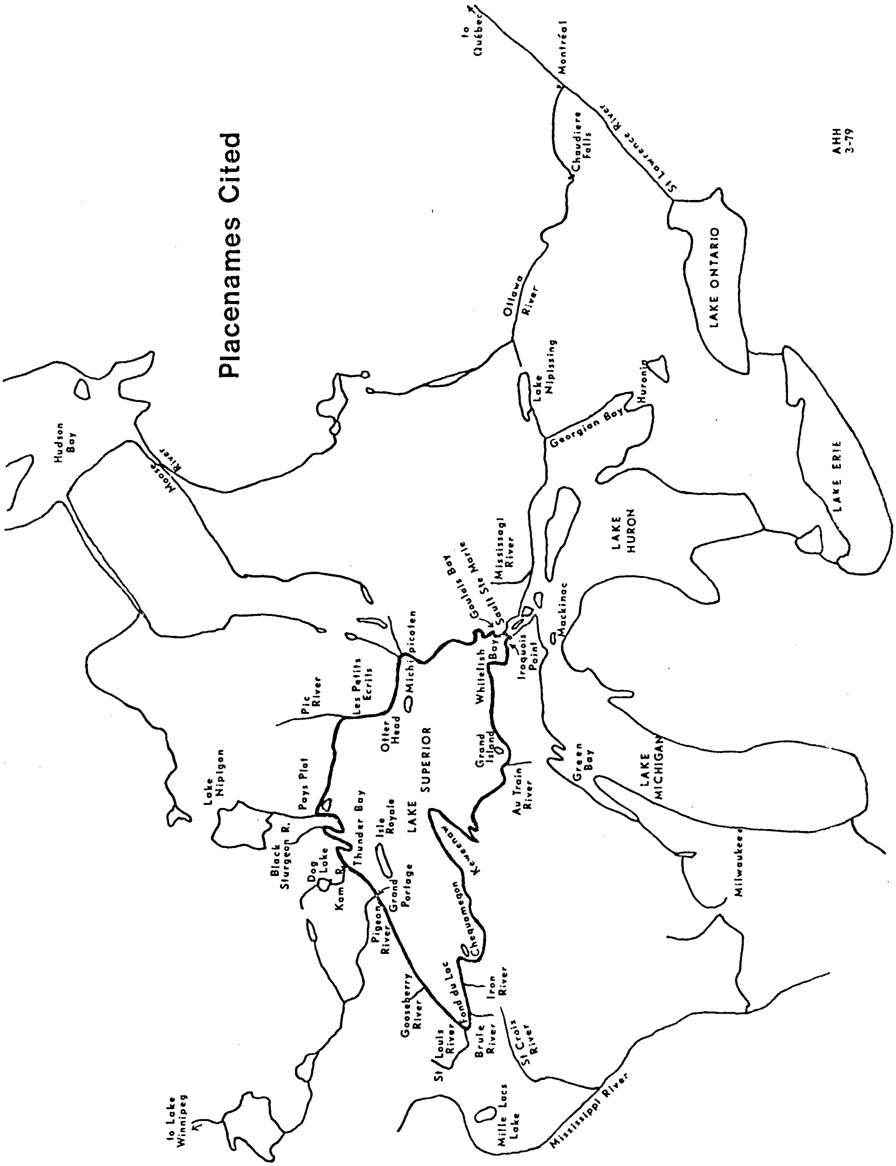
Ojibway names are formed from roots, medial suffixes, finals (which

---

[11]Thwaites, *The French Régime,* v. 16, pp. 114–25.

[12]Warren, *History,* p. 418.

[13]Leonard Bloomfield, *Eastern Ojibwa: Grammatical Sketch, Text and Word List* (Ann Arbor, 1956).


Placenames Cited
Hudson Bay
Moose River
Ottawa River
Montréal
to Québec
Chaudiere Falls
St Lawrence River
LAKE ONTARIO
Lake Nipissing
Huronia
Georgian Bay
LAKE ERIE
LAKE HURON
Mississagi River
Goulais Bay
Sault Ste Marie
Mackinac
Iroquois Point
Whitefish Bay
Michipicoten
Pic River
Les Petits Ecrits
Otter Head
LAKE SUPERIOR
Grand Island
Au Train River
Green Bay
LAKE MICHIGAN
Milwaukee
Lake Nipigon
Pays Plat
Thunder Bay
Isle Royale
Black Sturgeon R.
Dog Lake
Kam R.
Grand Portage
Pigeon River
Keweenaw
Chequamegon
Fond du Lac
Iron River
Gooseberry River
St Louis River
Brule River
St Croix River
Mille Lacs Lake
Mississippi River
to Lake Winnipeg
AHH 3-79

indicate parts of speech), and inflectional prefixes and suffixes. "Michipicoten" exemplifies one common way in which a place-name can be constructed: *missi-* (prefix 'big') + *pikkw-* (root 'rounded') + *-atin* (medial 'hill'). The locative suffix */-ink/* is very common. Noun-noun compounding is common. The symbols * and # are used for "unattested proto form" and "deduced Ojibway form," respectively.

Catalog

QUEBEC

The estuary of the St. Lawrence narrows abruptly at the Île d'Orléans. From the Montagnais, an Algonquian group, Champlain adopted the name *Quebecq* (1608)[14] which is formed on the root **kep-* 'closed, blocked.'[15] Existing alongside *#kepek* is an old name which did not come into French but which has persisted in the modern Algonquian languages: *oubichtigoueiakhi* (1634; JR 7, p. 204). This has corresponding in modern Montagnais, *uāpishtukueiats,*[16] and in modern Ojibway, *wăbitikweiang.*[17] The latter is derived from *wap-* 'strait' + *-ttikwe* 'river' + *-a·* (verb final) + *-nk* (locative suffix).

MONTREAL

Cartier's name *Mont Royal* (1535)[18] was revived by Champlain as *montreal* (1612).[19]

OTTAWA RIVER

The channel of the Ottawa which separates Île Jésus on the north from the Île de Montréal is still known by the name Champlain used:

---

[14]Samuel de Champlain, *Les Voyages de Sieur Champlain* (Ann Arbor, 1966), p. 173.

[15]C.F. Hockett, "Central Algonquian Vocabulary: Stems in /k-/," *Internat. Jour. Amer. Linguistics,* v. 23, 1957, p. 257.

[16]G. Lemoine, *Dictionnaire Français-Montagnais* (Boston, 1901).

[17]J.A. Cuoq, *Lexique de la Langue Algonquine* (Montreal, 1886). (Hereafter cited in text as *Lexique.*)

[18]Jacques Cartier, *Brief recit, & succinct narration, de la navigation faicte es ysles de Canada, Hochelage & Saguenay . . .* (Paris, 1545), cited by S.E. Morrison, *The European Discovery of America—The Northern Voyages AD 500–1600* (New York, 1971), p. 413. (A brief summary of Montréal names is given by J. Poirier, "Island of Montréal," CANOMA, v. 5, no. 2, 1979, p. 6–8.)

[19]Champlain, *Carte Geographique de la Nouvelle France . . .* (1612), in *Les Voyages,* frontispiece.

Rivière des Prairies 'Meadow River' (1615).[20] As the fur trade developed, the river took on the name of the Algonquins, the natives just upstream on whom the French depended for their furs: *Rivière des Algoummequins.*[21] Further expansion brought the French into contact with the Ottawa who were, until the middle of the 1600s, the most important middlemen in the trade: e.g. *R. des ßta8acs* (1680).[22] "Ottawa," as the name of a band, appears originally to have been applied to a group living on the Bruce Peninsula and nearby areas on Lake Huron. The band was first referred to as the "Cheveux Releves" ('raised hair'; 1615).[23] Father Paul le Jeune makes the connection between the two in 1640 (JR 18, p. 228): "Outaouan . . . sont peuples venus de la nation des cheveux relevez." The name soon lost its specificity, however, and came to signify *any* of the thirty or so bands from "up country" who traded with the French, because "les premiers qui sont décendus vers nos Habitations Françoises, ont esté les Outaoüks" (1669–70; JR 54, p. 126). This makes it very difficult to trace the movements of the Ottawa band *sensu stricto.*

The Ojibway name for the river can be deduced from an entry in an early enumeration of Algonquin bands (1640; JR 18, p. 228): the *Kichesipirini* were a band living on the Ottawa in the vicinity of present-day Pembroke, Ontario, and their name is clearly derived from *kičči-* 'big' + *si·pi* 'river' + *irini* 'man' (an archaic Ojibway form). The modern Algonquin name is *Kitci sipi* (Cuoq, *Lexique*).

Though Champlain's guides up the Ottawa were most Algonquin, there is toponymic evidence that at least one was Montagnais. Champlain refers to the boiling Chaudière Rapids at the city of Ottawa as *Asticou* (1613).[24] The /st/ sets this name off as Montagnais[25] and distinguishes it from Ojibway forms such as *Akikodjiwan* 'Saut de la Chaudière' (Cuoq, *Lexique*), and *akkikkw-* 'kettle' + *-i-* (connective) + *čiw* 'current' + *-an* (final).

---

[20]W.L. Grant, ed., *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain 1604–1618* (New York, 1907), p. 274.

[21]JR 2, p. 303 (note). Because the early Algonquin and Montagnais dialects along the St. Lawrence lacked /l/, Gordon Day believes that we owe the name "Algonquin" to the Malecite, the third native group present at Champlain's landing at Tadoussac in 1603: from *ɛlægómogwik* 'they are our relative, allies.' ("The Name 'Algonquin,'" *Internat. Jour. Amer. Linguistics,* v. 38, 1972, pp. 226–228.)

[22]Dollier and Galinée, (map of Great Lakes), (1680; reproduced in *Atlas of Canada* [Ottawa, 1957]).

[23]Grant, *Voyages,* p. 281.

[24]Grant, *Voyages,* p. 240.

[25]cf. *astik8* 'chaudière,' about 1680. W. Cowan, "xk/θk proto-algonquien dans le Montagnais du 17e siècle," in Cowan, *Actes* (1977), p. 148.

LAKE NIPISSING

As we have seen, the first records of place-names are sometimes to be found disguised in the names of Indian bands occupying the places. At the very left margin of Champlain's 1612 map,[26] for example, is written *nebiserenis* from *nipiss* 'lake' + *irini* 'man.' By 1640, the name of the lake itself has emerged clearly: *Lac Nipisin* (JR 18, p. 228). And by 1685, its form can be completely analyzed: *Nippissingue,*[27] from *nipiss* + *-ink* (locative suffix). In other words, Lake Nipissing was *the* lake on the Ottawa River route to Lake Huron. The lake must at one time have had another Ojibway name as is attested by the name *Outiskouagami* (1670–71; JR 55, p. 148) used for the Nipissing band, from *o-* 'they' + *-t-* (connective) + *iskw-* 'last' + *-a·kam* 'lake,' i.e. 'those of the furthest lake.'

LAKE HURON

At the time of its discovery, Lake Huron was the largest body of fresh water in the world and so deserved the name *la Mer Douce* 'fresh-water sea,' given to it by Champlain (1615).[28] That year, Champlain wintered with the Hurons southeast of Georgian Bay, and the lake came to be named for them: *lac des Hurons* (1642; JR 24, p. 266. Huron is French for 'ruffian.')

MISSISSAGI RIVER

The first recorded reference to this river is in the name of a band listed as the *Oumisagai* (1640; JR 18, p. 228). Disguised by the third-person prefix *o-* and by the elision of a syllable, its basic form is not made clear until a later enumeration: *Michisaguek* (1647; JR 33, p. 149). The "expanded" version is *Missisakingdachirinouek,*[29] from *missi-* 'big' + *sa·ki* 'river mouth' + *-ink* (locative suffix) + *tăsi-* 'source' + *irini* 'man' + *-k* (plural), i.e. 'the people of the big river-mouth.'

MACKINAC ISLAND

This island and the adjacent peninsula on which St. Ignace is located

---

[26] *Carte Geographique.*

[27] Dulhut's report to de Seignelay, in N.H. Winchell, *Geology of Minnesota,* v. 1, Final Rept. Minn. Geol. and Nat. Hist. Survey (Minneapolis, 1884), p. 5.

[28] Grant, Voyages, p. 282.

[29] Jesuit map of about 1682, in Eccles, *Canada,* facing p. 101.

command the strait between lakes Michigan and Huron. The Mackinac post thrived on its strategic position, controlling all traffic from the Wisconsin and Illinois River routes to the Mississippi valley, and it gradually eclipsed the post at Sault Ste. Marie. It was a stopping place for the Ottawa and Huron on their flight west from the Iroquois and again later when they fled eastward from the Sioux. It was probably the Ottawa who named the island *Michilimakinak* (1669; JR 54, p. 200).

In the myriad of orthographic variations on this theme, the only phonetically significant one is the variation between /ss/ and /*šš*/, e.g. *Missilimakinak* (1683; JR 62, p. 192). The final /kk/ in the name probably represents the locative suffix /nk/ with the loss of the nasal which is common in northern Ojibway dialects.[30] The modern Ojibway forms all have /nk/, e.g. *Mishinimakinang.*[31]

The diachronic change from /l/ to /n/ is a regular one and characterizes all modern Ojibway dialects. It did not occur until the second half of the 18th century. In 1763, Henry[32] recognized a "Chipeway" dialect with /n/ coexisting with an "Algonquin" dialect with /l/ in which the change had not yet occurred. The /l/ variant of the name probably became "fossilized" at an early date: the importance of the post required its name to be entered repeatedly in *written* records, thus preventing its further evolution, at least in the European languages. Schoolcraft,[33] for instance, writes *Michilimackinac* in 1832, 30–40 years after the disappearance of /l/ from Ojibway. The /n/ form has never, in fact, been used in documents; eventually the *Michili-* was simply dropped to shorten the name.

The origin of the name is obscure, but the American Heritage Dictionary (1969) suggests that it means "at the territory of the Mishinimaki," an extinct division of the Ojibway formerly living there. We can, at any rate, confidently gloss the final /nank/ ~ /nakk/ as a regional locative suffix meaning something like 'in the country of.'[34]

---

[30]cf. D. Daviault, et al., "L'Algonquin du Nord," in W. Cowan, ed., *Papers of the Ninth Algonquian Conference* (Ottawa, 1978), p. 55; D.H. Pentland, "A Historical Overview of Cree Dialects," in Cowan, *Papers* (1978), p. 118.

[31]Bishop Frederick Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* (1879; reprinted 1966, Minneapolis). This admirable work of a scholarly missionary is still a *sine qua non* in any study of Lake Superior Ojibway. (Hereafter cited in text as *Dictionary.*)

[32]Henry, *Travels,* p. 105.

[33]P.P. Mason, ed., *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca* (East Lansing, 1958), p. 10.

[34]Cuoq, *Lexique:* on p. 138, he says that the suffix *-nang* represents "le locatif régional," and on p. 258, he glosses it as 'au pays de.'

SAULT STE. MARIE[35]

Champlain knew that the *Grand lac* west of Lake Huron drained into the latter through rapids which he denoted on his map simply by the generic term *Sault* (1632).[36] Father Superior Claude Dablon says "Ce qu'on appelle communément le Sault, n'est proprement un Sault, ou une chute d'eau bien elevée; mais un courant tres-violent des eaux du Lac Superieur" (116–70; JR 54, p. 128); i.e. it is a rapids rather than a waterfall. General usage of this period suggests, however, that *sault* meant 'rapids,' not 'waterfall.'

By 1640, the boundary of detailed geographic and ethnologic knowledge had advanced to the eastern end of Lake Superior, and the native name for the Sault appeared in the Jesuit Relations: *Baouichtigouian* (JR 18, p. 230). As usual, the Jesuits' phonetic transcription is very accurate, and the underlying form is easily reconstructed as *#pa·wišti-kwiya·nk* 'at the rapids.' From this, Pentland[37] deduces an underlying Cree form *#pāwistikwēyāw* 'the rapids' and on the basis of this form alone claims that the Sault was Cree territory in 1640, because the Ojibway form would have had /tt/, not /st/. But there is in northern Ojibway dialects a rule which replaces /tt/ with /ht/,[38] and the glottal fricative /h/ might reasonably have been represented by "ch" in French. Pentland's theory is further weakened by Father Lalemant's description of the first recorded meeting of the French with "les Habitans du Sault" just two years later, in 1642 (JR 23, p. 222): The place-name *Paoüitigou-* can be extracted from the name of the resident band *les Paoüitigoueieuhak.* The stem is obviously *#pa·wittikw-*, including the medial *-ttikw-* 'river.' This is Ojibway, not Cree. Lalemant adds that the inhabitants are "une Nation de la langue Algonquine" which is synonymous with our term "Ojibway." By 1670, the name appears in its fully modern Ojibway form *Pahouiting* (JR 54, p. 132), phonetically identical to *Pāwi'ting* (1919).[39]

In the summer of 1668, only two years after his arrival in New France,

---

[35]The present pronunciation of *Sault* is [su], not the "correct" French [so].

[36]*Carte de la Nouvelle France,* in *Les Voyages de la Nouvelle France Occidentale, dicte Canada* (Paris, 1632), in C.O. Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (New York, 1932), Plate 19B.

[37]Pentland, "A Historical Overview," p. 104.

[38]cf. J.H. Rogers, "Survey of Round Lake Ojibwa Phonology and Morphology," *Natl. Mus. Canada Bull.* 194, Anthropol. Ser. No. 62, Contrib. to Anthropol. 1961–62, Pt. II, 1964, p. 99.

[39]William Jones, *Ojibwa Texts,* ed. T. Michelson, Publications Amer. Ethnolog. Soc., v. 7, Pt. II, 1919, p. 260. (Hereafter cited in the text as *Texts.*)

Father Jacques Marquette built a small chapel and house surrounded by a stockade and gave the place the name from which its present name is directly descended: *Mission Saint Marie du Sault* (JR 54, p. 126), perhaps transferring it from the mission previously located in Huronia. Dollier and Galinée visited Marquette and Dablon at the mission in May 1670, and mapped the place as *Saut S. Marie.*[40]

The Sault gave its name to various Ojibway groups migrating west along both shores of Lake Superior, and as early as 1666–68 this derived name was used as equivalent to "Ojibway": *Outchibouec . . . Sauteurs* (JR 51, p. 60). The term *sauteux* or some variant (usually pronounced [soto]) has persisted as a name for the northwestern Ojibway of Ontario and Manitoba but is no longer used to the south and east.

The coexistence of the French name *sault* with the synonymous Ojibway name *pa·wittik* illustrates the difficulty of trying to impute a native source to a French name. It is likely that neither form was the source of the other, but that the same physical feature, the rapids, was sufficiently important to the speakers of both languages to be made the key element in both names.

LAKE SUPERIOR

The reliability of reports to the French about the size of Lake Superior varied considerably: in 1632, it was the *Grand lac,*[41] and in 1640, it was *le petit lac* (JR 18, p. 228). By 1642, the size of the lake had been established, and its western shores were known to be inhabited by the Sioux: Boisseau's map (1643; JR 23, p. 234) shows the *Grand lac des Nadouessiou.* Because Lake Superior lies higher and further to the west than Lakes Huron and Michigan, and thus in the direction of advance of French exploration, it came naturally to be referred to as the "upper lake," or *Lac superieur* (1647–48; JR 33, p. 149. This is the first use of the name *supérieur* in the Relations.)

Only one serious attempt was made to supplant this fitting name. On June 30, 1665, the Marquis de Tracy arrived at Québec in his capacity as lieutenant-general for French America with orders to subdue the raiding Iroquois. To commemorate this auspicious event, Father Claude Allouez renamed the greatest of the lakes (JR 50, p. 264): on September 2, 1665, "nous entrâmes dans le lac Superieur, qui portera

[40] Dollier and Galinée, (1680 map).

[41] Champlain, *Carte de la Nouvelle France.*

desormais le nom de Monsieur de Tracy." The name crops up occasionally in 17th-century maps, but it probably existed only in print. The *coureurs de bois* preferred concrete names.

I have found no reference to the Ojibway name for the lake prior to the 1700s, but there is little doubt that it was the same as that cited by Baraga (*Dictionary*): *Kitchigami,* from *kičči-* 'big' + *-kami* 'lake.' The same name is used locally for Lakes Michigan and Huron.

WHITEFISH BAY

Two factors dictated the geographical importance of the Sault: first, it is a transportation and communication "bottleneck," and second, it was the site of a huge whitefish fishery which easily supported 2,000 natives in the summer (JR 23, p. 224; JR 54, pp. 129–131). That this important fishery was not confined to the St. Marys River is attested by *Ance a la Pesche* (1688),[42] now Goulais Bay,[43] and by *Pointe aux Poissons Blancs* (1688),[44] now Whitefish Point, which, with Coppermine Point opposite, constricts the lake to form Whitefish Bay.

The economic importance of whitefish to the Ojibway is symbolized in their name for it: *atikkamek* is a compound of *atikkw-* 'caribou,' a prime source of meat, and *-amekw* 'fish.' This word occurs in a placename somewhat further west, in the vicinity of Grand Island, where Franquelin (1688)[45] shows a *R. Atiquamepec* flowing into Lake Superior, though he might have mislocated what is today the Whitefish River which flows south into Lake Michigan in the same area. The meaning of the name is not entirely clear, though it may be *atikkamek* 'whitefish' + *-ipi·k* 'water.'

MICHIPICOTEN

Because much of the northeast coast of Lake Superior was rockbound and lacked important routes to the interior, its places long remained nameless. The prominent island and sharply indented bay now known as Michipicoten were a notable exception, being referred to in the Relation of 1669–70 (JR 54, p. 152) as "une Isle . . . vis à vis

---

[42]P. Coronelli, *America Settentrionale* (loose map, 1688; reproduced by Rand McNally).

[43]*goulet* (Fr.) 'narrow entrance, as to a harbor'; cf. Eng. *gullet, gulley.*

[44]J.B. Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte de L'Amerique Septentrionale* (reproduced, very poorly, in Winchell, *Geology,* Plate 2). (Hereafter cited in text as *Partie d'une Carte.*)

[45]Franquelin, (unidentified map reproduced photographically) in L.P. Kellogg, *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (1925; reprinted New York, 1968). This is probably the same map as in footnote 44.

d'un endroit qu'on appele *Missipicoüatong,*" probably representing *#missi-pikkwatin,* from *missi-* 'big' + *pikkw-* 'rounded' + *-atin* 'hill' + *-nk* (locative).

The Michipicoten River and the nearby Magpie River provided the only practical route from the northeast shore to Hudson Bay, *via* the Missinaibi and Moose Rivers, making this the only economically important spot between the Sault and Nipigon.

LES PETITS ECRITS

After passing Otter Head (*Teste de Loutre,* 1688; Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte*) where the shoreline turns north, the early traveler encountered a landmark notable in a landscape so devoid of lasting signs of human occupancy: "The Smaller Written Rocks are, in a sandy cove, defended by islets fourteen miles southeast from the Peek River. They here are smooth and coated with tripe de roche and other lichens. Various names and figures of animals have been traced on them, both long ago and recently."[46]

On Coronelli's map of 1688,[47] the place is called *Massinaigan ou La ecriture,* the *ou* implying that the French name was a translation of the Ojibway form *#masina?ikan,* from *masina-* 'markings' and *-ike* (verb final) with noun final *-n.* (In modern Ojibway, *masina?ikan* has come to mean 'book.')

PIC RIVER

Sometimes the simplest explanation of a place-name is the least readily accepted. For 300 years, the name of this river has remained unchanged but for minor variations: *Le Pick* (1688; Franqueline, *Partie d'une Carte*). And its meaning seems quite clear: the French word *pic* means the 'peak' of a hill or mountain.[48] But Steinhacker and Karlen[49] try to make it "an Indian word signifying mud," and Louis Agassiz,[50] the great naturalist here perhaps the victim of insistent local folk-

---

[46]J. Bigsby, *The Shoe and Canoe* (London, 1850), cited by G.L. Nute, *Lake Superior* (Indianapolis, 1944), p. 64.

[47]*Partie Occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France, 1688,* reproduced in A.J. Ray, *The Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto, 1974), p. 10. (Hereafter cited in text as *Partie Occidentale.*)

[48]The original reference might have been to either Pic Island or to the land near the river mouth. Note that *pic* is masculine and that whenever the definite article occurs as part of the name, it is *le.* If the article referred to an understood *rivière,* it would be *la.*

[49]C. Steinhacker and A. Karlen, *Superior: Portrait of a Living Lake* (New York, no date), p. 90.

[50]L. Agassiz, *Lake Superior: Its Physical Character, Vegetation, and Animals, Compared with Those of other and Similar Regions* (Boston, 1850; reprinted 1970), p. 71.

etymologists, refuses to credit his own first impressions, concluding that "the name is derived not as we first supposed, from the pointed hills across the river, but from an Indian word, *Peek* or *Neepeek,* signifying, I believe, 'dirty water.'" (Gordon Day[51] points out the danger of "appropriating words or even arbitrary parts of words from dictionaries" for an etymology. I know of no case in which the French made a new name from a meaningless fragment of a complete Ojibway name.)

PAYS PLAT

This voyager's term for the low country around Nipigon Bay offers a useful illustration of the way in which a place-name history can be reconstructed. The name *Bagouache* (1688; Coronelli, *Partie Occidentale*) strongly suggests an Ojibway word for 'shallow.' This suspicion is confirmed by a name cited for the town of Rossport (on Nipigon Bay) in a modern collection of Ojibway texts (Jones, *Texts,* Pt. II, p. 258): *pāgwācing* 'at the shallows,' from *pa·kwa·* 'it is shallow' + *-išš* (noun final).[52] A reasonable etymological explanation is offered by Alexander Henry (1775):[53] "the Pays Plat, or Flat Country, [is] a name borrowed from the Indians, and occasioned by the shoal-water which extends far into the lake, and by the flat and low lands which lie between the water and the mountains." The name *Pays Plat* is still used for an Indian reservation near Rossport.

LAKE NIPIGON

After Lake Superior itself and Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Nipigon was the first place to be named in the Lake Superior basin, probably because it was the destination of the Nipissing band in their migration northwest after the destruction of Huronia. It is first cited as *Alimibeg* (1657–58; JR 44, p. 242). Then Father Allouez, the first Frenchman known to have visited Nipigon (in 1667) gives the name in its locative form, *Alimibegong* (JR 52, p. 62). Though undergoing the usual orthographic contortions—including metathesis, e.g. *Alepimigon* (1688; Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte*)—the name remained essentially unchanged un-

---

[51] "Indian Place-names as Ethnohistoric Data," in Cowan, ed., *Actes* (1977), pp. 26–27.

[52] The noun final *-išš* occurs in a few other placenames, e.g. *Kawimbash* (Temperance River, Minnesota) and *Piguitigouche* (an unidentified stream east of Rossport shown on Coronelli's 1688 map).

[53] Henry, *Travels,* p. 232.

til the mid 1700s when it took on its present form, e.g. *Nepigon* (1743).[54]

The etymology of the name is not clear. The early French form is almost identical, except for the usual diachronic change of /l/ to /n/, to the modern Ojibway form of the name, *Animibīg* (Jones, *Texts,* Pt. II, p. 248). The medial *-ipi·kw*[55] 'water, lake' is obvious, but the meaning of the root *anim-* is more difficult. One obvious solution is *anim* 'dog' (with archaic form *alim*), common to all Ojibway dialects. Though there is no evidence directly supporting this hypothesis, we should note the existence nearby of a Dog Lake at the head of the Kaministiquia River on the route to Lake Winnipeg. It is not inconceivable that early reports might have confused Dog Lake with Lake Nipigon: they are close neighbors on the north shore of Lake Superior, and they occupy geographically analogous positions on their respective routes to major destinations (Lake Winnipeg and Hudson Bay) outside the Superior basin. The form *Nipigon* itself may be from *nipi* 'water' + *-ikka·n* (noun final indicating quantity).

BLACK STURGEON RIVER

In his discussion of sturgeon fisheries in westen Lake Superior, Father Dablon mentions the Ontonagon River and a river at the head of the lake (presumably the St. Louis), and then says, "Et décendant par le côté du Nord, on rencontre une autre Rivière qui porte le nom des *Eturgeons noir* qui s'y pêchent." (1669–70; JR 54, pp. 149–151; emphasis added.) Later French sources shorten the name, e.g. *R. Noire* (1688; Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte*), but the full name is retained on modern maps and in modern Ojibway: *Ma'kadänamäzībīng* (Jones, *Texts,* Pt. II, p. 244), from *makkate-* 'black' + *name* 'sturgeon' + *si·pi* 'river.'

The sturgeon fishery was as important around western Lake Superior as the whitefish fishery was in the eastern end of the lake: cf. *Namekan* Lake on the Minnesota-Ontario border and *Namekagon* River in northern Wisconsin ('sturgeon bone' and 'sturgeon dam' respectively).

---

[54] "List of the officers serving in the various Posts of the Colony in the year 1743," translation in Thwaites, *The French Régime,* v. 17, p. 432.

[55] The /-w/ in this medial-suffix is reconstructed on the basis of the locative in /-onk/ which is derived from the underlying locative suffix /-ink/ by the rule that /w/ + /i/ gives /o/ (Bloomfield, *Eastern Ojibwa,* p. 20).

THUNDER BAY

Father Dablon says in his description of Lake Superior that "Avançant jusqu'à l'endroit qu'on appele *la grande ance,* on rencontre une Isle . . . qui est renommée . . . pour le nom de *Tonnerre* qu'elle porte, parce qu'on dit qu'il y tonne toûjours." (1669–70; JR 54, p. 158; emphasis added.) It seems reasonable to identify *la grande ance* with Thunder Bay and the *Isle . . . Tonnerre* with Pie Island, and to assume that *tonnerre* is a translation of Ojibway *animikki·* 'thunder.' The present Ojibway name is *Ą́nimī'kīwī'kwädunk* (Jones, *Texts,* Pt. II, p. 190), from *animikki·* + *wi·kkwet* 'bay.'

KAMINISTIQUIA RIVER

As early as 1670–71, the "Kam" River was recognized as the beginning of an important route to the west,[56] and by the mid 1680s, Dulhut had established a post on the river with the intention of intercepting trade that might otherwise have gone to the English on Hudson Bay. The name is first cited as *Kamalastigouia* (ca. 1684),[57] but Blair notes that Dulhut himself writes *Kamanastigouian* in a 1693 petition for the concession of the post.[58] /l/ occurs nowhere else in the records.

This name is the only example cited in this paper of a very productive place-name formula in Cree and Ojibway. The prefix *ka·-* is used as a relative marker meaning 'that which' or 'place where.' The other easily isolated component of the name is *-stikw-,* a Cree medial meaning 'river' (cf. Sault Ste. Marie). The name is consistently written with /st/ by early sources and does, as Pentland says,[59] suggest that the Thunder Bay region was occupied by the Cree when it was first visited by the French. By the early 1700s, however, the Cree were being displaced by Ojibway bands moving west around the north shore of Lake Superior, and a form of the name with /tt/ came to coexist with the /st/ form, e.g. *Gamanettigoya* (1736).[60]

The meaning of the root of the name is uncertain. The written variants include *mana-, mane-* and *mini-,* all apparently phonologically distinct. *mini-* would give a sensible gloss, *#ka·-ministikwiya·,* from

---

[56]"R. par ou lon va aux Assinipoulaca 120 lieues vers le nor ouest"; JR 55, p. 94.

[57]Perrot, in E.H. Blair, ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Region of the Great Lakes as Described by Nicolas Perrot, French Commandant of the Northwest; Baqueville de la Potherie, French Royal Commissioner to Canada* (Cleveland, 1911), v. 1, p. 232.

[58]Blair, *The Indian Tribes,* v. 1, p. 232.

[59]Pentland, "Historical Overview," p. 104.

[60]Government census, in Thwaites, *French Régime,* v. 17, p. 245.

ka·- + *min-* 'island' + *-stikw* 'river,' i.e. 'where there are islands in the river.' (The river divides into three major distributaries near its mouth, thus defining two large islands.)

This interpretation is not supported by reliable modern records, e.g. *Kāmānetigwäyāg* (Jones, *Texts;* Pt. II, p. 192), though forms such as *Caministigoian* (1710)[61] are common. Baraga (*Dictionary*) says "mane, in compositions signifies *want, scarcity.*—In the Otawa dialect, *mane* rather signifies the contrary . . . much." The latter seems more likely considering the geography, but whether *either* one is involved here could only be a guess at this point.

ISLE ROYALE

Because the writer has a special interest in Isle Royale, the difficulties in the etymology of its Ojibway name have been particularly frustrating. Since initial contact, it has been known as *Minong* (1669–70; JR 54, p. 158). Its form has shown no significant variation in 300 years; cf. *Minung* (1919; Jones, *Texts,* Pt. II, p. 190). The etymological problem lies in the fact that Isle Royale is 1) an island (Ojibway root *min-*), 2) well-known for its blueberries (*mi·n*), and 3) a good place (*minw-*). In other words, three semantically logical roots are coincidentally similar phonologically, and the analyst must choose among them. The second syllable /-onk/ gives us important information about the preceding root. Because the underlying form of the locative suffix is actually /-ink/, we can deduce that the preceding morpheme ends in /-w/ according to the rule that says that /w/ and /i/ combine to give /o/.[62] Because *minw-* 'good' is the only one of the three roots which ends in /-w/, it must be the root in *Minong.* Otherwise, the locative form would be *#minink.* The hypothesis is thus *#minonk* 'good place.' Isle Royale is not the only example of an Algonquian place-name based on 'good': Milwaukee also contains the proto-Algonquian root **melw-* 'good' in combination with **axkyi* 'land,' in an unidentified language, probably Sauk, Mascouten or a close relative.[63]

---

[61] A.D. Raudot, "Memoir Concerning the Different Indian Nations of North America," translation in W.V. Kinietz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615–1760* (Ann Arbor, 1940; republished 1965), Letter 50, p. 376.

[62] Bloomfield, *Eastern Ojibwa,* p. 20.

[63] cf. *Milouakik,* J.F.B. de St. Cosme, letter of 1699, in L.P. Kellogg, *Early Narratives of the Northwest 1634–1699* (New York, 1917; republished 1945), p. 345.

PIGEON RIVER and the GRAND PORTAGE

Like the Kam River, the Pigeon was soon recognized as a trade-route used by the Assiniboin: *R. des Assenipoualacs* (1688; Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte*), but it did not become important to the French until after 1731 when the Sieur de la Vérendrye used it to reach Rainy Lake. The lower reaches of the river are not navigable and were bypassed on foot for nine grueling miles over the *Grand Portage* or 'big carrying place,' so called on the map prepared about 1730 for la Vérendrye by his guide Ochagac.[64] Most of the trade with the "Posts of the Western Sea" passed over this route in the 1700s, but by 1804 the American taxmen had driven the Northwest Company to abandon its post at Grand Portage and establish Fort William on the Kam River. The present Ojibway names are *omi·mi·-si·pi* 'pigeon river,' and *kiččі-onikam* 'big portage.'[65]

GOOSEBERRY RIVER

Throughout the 17th century, this was the only stream named by the French between Grand Portage and Fond du Lac: *Riv. des Groseiliers* (1688; Coronelli, *Partie Occidentale*). Whether the name refers to an abundance of gooseberries (Fr. *groseiller*) or commemorates the visit of Radisson and des Groseillers to the north shore in 1660 is unknown. The name is given its present location by "Mr. Astronomer" Thompson on his 1813–14 map as *Gooseberry Rivulet.*[66] Its modern Ojibway name is *Shabominikani-zibi*[67] from *ša·po·min* 'gooseberry + *-ikka·n* (noun final indicating quantity) + *si·pi* 'river.' The French name is not important of itself, but its lonely presence on early maps is symbolic of French ignorance of the northwest shore of Lake Superior and suggests that the French and Indian populations of the area were almost nil, a conclusion also reached by Hickerson in his study of Indian occupancy of northeastern Minnesota.[68]

---

[64] reproduced in G.L. Nute, *The Voyager's Highway* (St. Paul, 1965), p. 18.

[65] J.A. Gilfillan, "Minnesota Geographical Names Derived from the Chippewa Language," *The Geol. and Nat. Hist. Survey of Minn.*, 15th Ann. Rept., for the Year 1886 (St. Paul, 1887), p. 453.

[66] in Nute, *The Voyager's Highway*, facing p. 26.

[67] Gilfillan, "Minnesota Geographic Names," p. 454.

[68] H. Hickerson, *The Chippewa and Their Neighbors: a Study in Ethnohistory* (New York, 1970), p. 72.

FOND DU LAC

This name now refers to the western end of the city of Duluth at the site of the old American Fur Company post near the head of navigation of St. Louis Bay, but it referred originally to the western end of Lake Superior itself. Father Allouez was the first Frenchman to record a visit to *l'extremité du Lac Tracy* (1666; JR 51, p. 52). He met there a group of Sioux who had probably come down the St. Louis River which was labeled on the Jesuit map of 1670–71 (JR 55, facing p. 94) as *R. pour aller au Nadouessi a 60 lieues vers le couchant* 'river by which to go to the Sioux 60 leagues [150 miles] toward the west.' In later years, it was a route to the Mississippi much used by fur traders and explorers.

In a letter reporting on a treaty rendezvous at the west end of the lake in September, 1679, Dulhut refers to the *fond du lac Superieur.*[69] Almost 200 years later, in 1856, the Reverend J.G. Wilson suggested the name *Duluth* for the young village on the north shore.[70]

Fond du lac 'end of the lake' is a common generic place-name in the Great Lakes. In this case, it exists alongside an Ojibway name with the same meaning: *waiekwâkitchigami* (Baraga, *Dictionary*), from *wayekkwa·* 'it is the end' + *kiččī-* 'big' + *-kami* 'lake.'

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Though the Mississippi lies outside the geographic limits of this paper, it deserves inclusion for its historic significance and because it represents an anomalous occurrence of an Ojibway place-name in Sioux territory. There were early intimations of a great river southwest of *terra incognita,* like Champlain's *Grand riviere qui vient du midy*[71] which is shown flowing north into Lake Superior, but Father Allouez is the first to write a form of the name "Mississippi," basing his account on the reports of Illinois Indians who had come to Chequamegon Bay to trade: *Messipi* (1667; JR 51, p. 52). Father Dablon was not far off when he said the *Missisipi* must discharge into "la mer de la Floride" (1670–71; JR 55, p. 96). The usual variation of /ss/ and /šš/ does not disguise the underlying Ojibway form derived from *missi-* 'big' + *si·pi* 'river.'

---

[69]P. Margry, *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans L'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amerique Septentrionale (1614–1754): Mémoires et Documents originaux* (Paris, 1876–86), v. 6, p. 22.

[70]W. Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names—Their Origin and Historical Significance* (St. Paul, 1920; reprinted 1969), pp. 480–81.

[71]*Carte de la Nouvelle France.*

From its first mention by Allouez until the mid 1700s when the Ojibway began permanent settlements in Minnesota, the Mississippi was, with the one exception mentioned above, the only Algonquian place-name west of Lake Superior (and south of Cree territory). With these exceptions, all place-names west of the lake—in Franquelin's 1697 map, for example[72]—are in the Sioux language. On the same map, Mille Lacs Lake, which is east of the Mississippi and tributary to it through Rum River, is called *Missisacaigan ou Lac de Buade* from *missi-* + *sa·ka?ikan* 'lake.' (The "de Buade" honored the Comte de Frontenac, then governor of New France.)

BRULE RIVER

Sieur Dulhut was the first to describe the route from Lake Superior to the Mississippi *via* the Brule and St. Croix Rivers: "j'entray dans une rivière qui se descharge à 8 lieues du fond du lac Supérieur du costé du sud" (1680).[73] Throughout the rest of the French régime, the river was known by some variant of the Ojibway name *#newi·ssa·kkotesi·pi,* from *ne-* 'peninsula'+ *wi·ssa·kkote* 'burned-over forest' + *si·pi* 'river': e.g. *Neouissakouete* (1772).[74] The name presumably referred to an area visible from Lake Superior; it came into French as *Rivière Bois Brûlé,* whence the present name. (Folk etymology has persistently derived the name from the supposed visit of Champlain's apprentice Etienne Brûlé in the early 1600s. There is no evidence to support such a derivation, and, in fact, it seems doubtful that Brûlé ever saw Lake Superior.)

IRON RIVER

The present name is an incorrect, or at best approximate, translation. We can assume that the Ojibway name originally commemorated the find of a large piece of the glacially transported native copper common in the Lake Superior basin: *R. Piouabic, ou de Cuivre* (1688; Coronelli, *Partie Occidentale*). But as iron trade-goods became more common, *#pi·wa·pikk* came to refer to iron (and copper was called *#miskwa·pikk* 'red metal'). Thus is copper transmuted into iron by

---

[72]J.B. Franquelin, *Cours du grand fleuve Mesisipi,* reproduced in M. Wedel, "Le Sueur and the Dakota Sioux," in E. Johnson, ed., *Aspects of Upper Great Lakes Anthropology* (St. Paul, 1974), p. 16.

[73]Margry, *Découvertes,* v. 6, pp. 22–23.

[74]Margry, *Découvertes,* v. 6, p. 516.

linguistic alchemy: *Riviere au Fer* (1736).[75] A possible clue to the origin of the name is provided by a report of 1669–70 that a "Roche de Cuivre" weighing 700–800 pounds had been found 20–30 leagues (50–75 miles) west of Chequamegon (JR 54, p. 161). This is approximately the distance to Iron River.

CHEQUAMEGON BAY

Though Radisson and des Groseillers were here in 1659–60, the elderly Jesuit missionary René Ménard gives us the first recorded place-names. The record of his visit to Chequamegon is in the form of a rather disjointed letter written July 2, 1661, to his superior, Father Lalemant (JR 46, pp. 138–144). He apparently began the letter in March on Keweenaw Bay and finished it at *la Baie du St. Esprit,* known also as *Chassahamigon,* a village of "80 Cabanes" of Algonquins and Hurons. From the context of the letter, it appears that the bay bore the name of *St. Esprit* before Ménard's arrival there, suggesting previous occupation by the French. *Chassahamigon* is probably a variant of *Chequamegon.*

This well protected harbor had become the center of Ottawa and Jesuit activities in western Lake Superior after the destruction of Huronia, and in 1665 Father Allouez re-established the *Mission du Saint Esprit* (JR 50, p. 272). (Ménard had died in the wilderness of northern Wisconsin in 1661.) The place already bore the name *Chagoüamigon,* from *šakaw-* 'narrow' + *-a·mikk* 'shoals' + *-a·* (verb final), in reference to the long, narrow spit of sand which stretches northwest across the mouth of the bay.

Dablon's report of 1669–70 introduces a French name which has since existed alongside the Ojibway name: *la pointe du Saint Esprit Chagaouamigon* (JR 54, p. 150). *La Pointe* came later to refer to a settlement on Madeline Island opposite the tip of the spit.

KEWEENAW

Father Ménard, in the journal of his stay at Keweenaw Bay in 1660–61, refers to it as *nostre grande baie de Ste Therèse* and to the portage across the Keweenaw Peninsula only as *ce portage redoutable,* with no reference to an Ojibway precursor of "Keweenaw" (JR 45, p. 138). The earliest such reference occurs in the Jesuit map of 1670–71 (JR 55, facing p. 94), though it is flawed by an apparent error in the

[75] Report of Governor, cited in Warren, *History,* p. 426.

reading of the manuscript map or in the engraving of the plate, resulting in the writing of "c" for "e." I believe the name should read *Kioüehounaning,*[76] with an underlying Ojibway form *#ki·wehona·nink,* from *ki·we-* 'return by canoe' + *-ona·n* 'water route.'[77] The present-day Keweenaw Waterway merely completed the short-cut across the base of the peninsula which Nature had almost finished, leaving one portage to cross, marked today by the Onigaming Supper Club (*onikam* 'portage'). This route shortened the distance considerably and avoided the dangerously exposed headland. Warren given the name as *Kuk-ke-wa-on-an-ing,*[78] and Baraga (*Dictionary*) glosses *Kakiweonan* as 'place where they traverse a point on foot.' Whether the old French name is a shortened form of *#ka·kiwe?ona·nink*—which would be very unusual —or is based on *ki·we-* 'return by canoe' is uncertain at present. Fortunately, the *-ona·n* is ambiguous and makes it clear that the name refers to the waterway.

The Ojibway name for Keweenaw Bay has probably always been the same as *Wikwedong* recorded by Baraga (*Dictionary*), meaning simply 'at the bay.' The French used the same generic, *anse,* e.g. *Ance Quiaonam* (1699; Franquelin, *Partie d'une Carte*). Today, the village of *L'Anse* lies at the foot of the bay.

AU TRAIN RIVER

This is clearly a case of direct translation from Ojibway to French. On the Jesuit map of 1670–71 (JR 55, facing p. 94), the name *R. Mataban* appears just west of Grand Island. This is an archaic form not glossed in modern Ojibway dictionaries, but its translation into French, e.g. *Rivière la Traine,*[79] provides the solution: *une traine* is a 'sled,' for which Baraga (*Dictionary*) gives the Ojibway term *odâbân.* It remains to explain the archaic initial /m-/.

In his proto-Algonquian sketch, Leonard Bloomfield[80] reconstructs

---

[76]This interpretation is supported by the facts that: a) the "c" occurs nowhere else (except in Coronelli's 1688 map, where it has obviously been copied from the Jesuit map), b) a diaresis over a "u" is used only to indicate that the "ou" is consonantal preceding a vowel, i.e. the diaresis would not have been used had the "ou" preceded a "c."

[77]In the present south-shore dialect of Ojibway, the "h" would be replaced by a glottal stop.

[78]Warren, *History,* p. 243.

[79]J.W. Foster and J.D. Whitney, *Report on the Geology and Topography of a Portion of the Lake Superior Land District in the State of Michigan; Part I. Copper Lands* (U.S. 31st Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. 69, 1850), p. 399.

[80]"Algonquian," in H. Hoijer, ed., *Linguistic Structures of Native American* (New York, 1946), p. 96.

a prefix **me-* indicating an indefinite personal possessor of "parts of the body and a few intimate possessions." He says that the Ojibway dialect he studied has lost the *me-* form, but later (p. 121) he cites an Algonquin form *mi·kiwa·m* (where Ojibway has *wi·kiwa·m*) for 'house.' Rogers[81] found the prefix *mi-* in use among the Ojibway of northern Ontario. We thus conclude that *Mataban* means something like "one's sled."

It is possible that this name alludes to the use of the Au Train and Whitefish River valleys as a winter route between Lake Superior and Michigan. Coronelli (1688; *Partie Occidentale*) shows near the presumed location of the Au Train a "Traverse qui les Sauvages font."

POINT IROQUOIS

Though I have found no documentary evidence of this name prior to 1744,[82] it commemorates an event which took place about 1662.[83] A group of about 100 Iroquois which was camped on the shore of Lake Superior five leagues away from Sault Ste. Marie was set upon and destroyed by an Ojibway party which had been hunting in the area. The slaughter took place on "a point which the Chipeways call the grave of the Iroquois."[84] In 1827, the Ojibway name was *Na-do-we-gon-ing* or 'Place of Iroquois Bones,'[85] from *na·towe* 'Iroquois' + *-ikkan* 'bone.'

Two miles west of Point Iroquois is *Nadoway Point,* a faithful rendition of *#na·towe,* the Ojibway word for 'Iroquois' which also referred to some type of snake and conveyed the fear felt by the Ojibway for the Iroquois. The westward flight of the Ojibway to escape the Iroquois brought them into conflict with the equally bellicose Sioux, to whom the Jesuit Relations of 1640 (JR 18, p. 228) refer as *Naduesiu,* from *na·towe* + *-ssi* (noun final, diminutive); in other words, the Sioux were to the Ojibway nothing less than a new Iroquois to deal with. As Father Lalement says (JR 48, p. 240), "les Outaoüax sont attaquez d'un costé par les Iroquois, & de l'autre par les Nadoüessioüax."

---

[81] Rogers, *Survey,* p. 102.

[82] *Carte du Detroit Entre le Lac Superieur et le Lac Huron,* reproduced in Henry, *Travels and Adventures,* facing p. 40.

[83] Blair, *The Indian Tribes,* v. 1, pp. 178–181.

[84] Henry, *Travels,* p. 185.

[85] H.R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* (New York, 1851; reprinted 1975), p. 112.

Conclusions

1) The French exploration and settlement of the Lake Superior basin was carried out in a close partnership with Ojibway traders and hunters from Lake Huron and the Ottawa valley. Though the Cree at various times occupied parts of the north shore, Indian names throughout the basin are indisputably Ojibway in form. For example, the names *Minong* (1670), *Alimibegong* (1667), *Missipicoüatong* (1670) and *Pahoüiting* (1670), all on the north side of the lake have locative suffixes in Ojibway /nk/, not Cree /hk/.

2) I have found no evidence of an earlier toponymic substratum, with the exception of the Cree name *Kaministiquia.* This is in striking contrast to an area such as Scotland—so well documented by W.F.H. Nicolaisen[86]—where there are several distinct strata. A possible explanation of this difference in toponymic history is that the native populations of the northern Great Lakes region were small and mobile, and most settlements were ephemeral. The land areas involved were so immense that when one group began to move, another yielded ground; there was thus seldom a superposition of one ethnic group on another with consequent assimilation of place-names. Between two warring groups, like the Sioux and the Ojibway, the boundary was often a wide, relatively uninhabited buffer zone which made the transfer of place-names still less likely.

3) Most Ojibway place-names refer to prominent physical or biological features, with geomorphological references predominant. The names serve as convenient and informative labels for the landscape on which the Ojibway were totally dependent. As A.I. Hallowell[87] says, ". . . it is not only the direct experience of the terrain which assists the individual in building up his spatial world; language crystallizes this knowledge through the customary use of place names."

4) The most common formulae for Ojibway placenames are a) (prefix) + root + medial-suffix + final, giving an inanimate verb; e.g. *mišši-pikkw-atin-a·*, Michipicoten. b) (prenoun +) noun; e.g. *missi-sa·ki,* Mississagi. c) noun + noun; e.g. *aṇimikki·-wikket,* Thunder Bay. In names of type a), the medial refers almost invariably to a geomorphic feature, while the root expresses some attribute of that feature. The verb final in these names is usually *-a·*.

5) The French names of the region are for the most part either

---

[86] *Scottish Place-Names* (London, 1976).

[87] *Culture and Experience* New York, 1967), p. 193.

variants of the Ojibway names (e.g. *Chequamegon*) or translations of them (e.g. *Au Train River*). Or they are names which existed alongside similar Ojibway names but were not necessarily translations of them (e.g. *Sault Ste. Marie*).

Duluth, Minnesota