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Topic: Fort St. Charles.

Research made and notes taken by:

Christian A. Rienecke.

Essay written by:

C. A. Rienecke. (Completed January 7, 1942.)

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Essay.

Christian A. Rimecke

FORT ST. CHARLES

Foreword and Introduction

There are two main purposes in writing history concerning the northernmost outpost of this country. One is to recall the memories of two illustrious names, that today are too frequently ignored, even by those who enjoy the fruits of their labors, and to justify them against the calumnies of their contemporaries; and secondly to disabuse the public mind of certain false impressions regarding events of great importance which occurred in the Northwest at a time when exact information was difficult to obtain. History at best, scarcely approaches impartiality.

To be swayed by emotions rather than reason, has always been easy, and so it happens that even though one gleans from tradition, questions the older ones of the countryside, and visits the places where all the facts occurred, and has every item written, still the chances for error or accuracy are about equal, and moreover it is likewise customary to allow the ordinary presumptions to prevail for lack of definite information regarding the subject in hand.

Fairly certain it is that La Verendrye and Selkirk are the most interesting figures on the historical canvas of the Northwest;- The former as a discoverer; the latter as the colonizer and civilizer of those wild regions, for it was he who carried there the first seeds of real civilization by assisting in conducting to there the earliest missionaries.

It would be a praiseworthy deed were a monument erected in honor of these two heroes of the northwest; for their contribution

to posterity. (a)

The northernmost point in the United States, outside of Alaska is the northernmost tip of Minnesota known as the Northwest Angle.

Why this peculiar curve should exist in the northern boundary has aroused considerable speculation concerning the formation of the Angle, which results in a geographical puzzle, as it were, and requires a great deal of research work to solve.

Instead of continuing east along the 49th. parrallel which formed the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase, the boundary line takes a right angle north at a point in the Lake of the Woods about five miles from its western shore. From here it runs due north between twenty-five and thirty miles until it hits an arm of the lake again; thence in a westerly direction for about fourteen miles, when it turns south and slightly east to where the Rainy river and the Minnesota Canadian boundary, enters the Lake of the Woods about twelve miles northwest of Baudette.

In this Angle is more than half of the large and picturesque Lake of the Woods, while the extreme northwest part of it comprises a small area of the mainland. East of this, and in the extreme northeast corner are a few small islands.

Because there are no roads in the Canadian region surrounding the Northwest Angle, there are two seasons of the year, spring and fall, in which it has no contact whatever with the rest of the world except by radio. In summer it is reached by motor-boats and seaplanes, and in winter on the ice, by dog teams, motor vehicles and airplanes.

Moreover, even with such handicaps, the Angle has a United States post office, a public school, a commercial fishing establishment, a combination dock and other improvements. Fishing is

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of course the main industry and the source of a livelihood for its population, which is less than a hundred souls, all of whom live in the little village of Penasse in the extreme northwestern corner of the Angle.

This peculiar boundary line and isolation of this area happened through the gross and abnormal geographical ignorance of the diplomats who jumped before they looked.

But it was not only in the explorers era that this region loomed large in Minnesota history. Even before La Verendrye came there, it had figured prominently in Indian history and lore, since during the early explorations era, it was common ground for the Chippewa and the Sioux. The old Indian "war road" from which the thriving little city at the extreme southwest corner of Lake of the Woods got its name; and some little distance east of this city appears a huge black rock or promintory, which the Indians named Gull rock or Rock of the Gods, which is regdrd in awe and reverence by them, as also they have legends concerning it.

Warroad is about forty miles from Penasse and seventy-five to Baudette; and at the northern peak of the Angle, leading northwest from Harrison Creek, runs the old Dawson road. This historic overland route to Winnipeg and the Northwest carried the traffic of the eastern seaboard from the terminus of the water route. The old highway is well defined yet for almost nine miles from Penasse. These roads are still important, especially because Canada builds no railroads anywhere near the Angle, and this accounts for the isolation.

Two miles across open water from the Point on the Angle mainland is one noted land-mark, the feldspar mine. This was operated

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until 1934, when the water in the lake dropped so low it interfered with barge movements and forced its abandonment. The Angle feldspar dike is one of the largest in North America, with an estimated possible volume of sixteen thousand to eighteen thousand tons. In bright sunlight the feldspar, strewn about with fragments of dynamited rock, glows like fire, an extraordinarily interesting sight, and there is some speculation as to its effects on the aurora borealis.

Fishing and hunting is usually very good. Practically every kind of fish and animals are found there in abundance.

Then too, the scenery is excellent the year around, because of its natural beauty in the way of trees and water and rock formations.

In the somewhat exceptional year of 1895 - 1,300,000 sturgeons, besides other kinds of fish were caught in the United States waters alone in the Lake of the Woods.

Travel is exceedingly beset with dangerous hazards and extreme difficulties in this Northwest Angle region by reason of the usual heavy snow fall, which often attains a depth of twelve to eighteen feet in the woods and somewhat less on the level or open spaces, but it appears that birds and animals are not so greatly inconvenienced thereby.

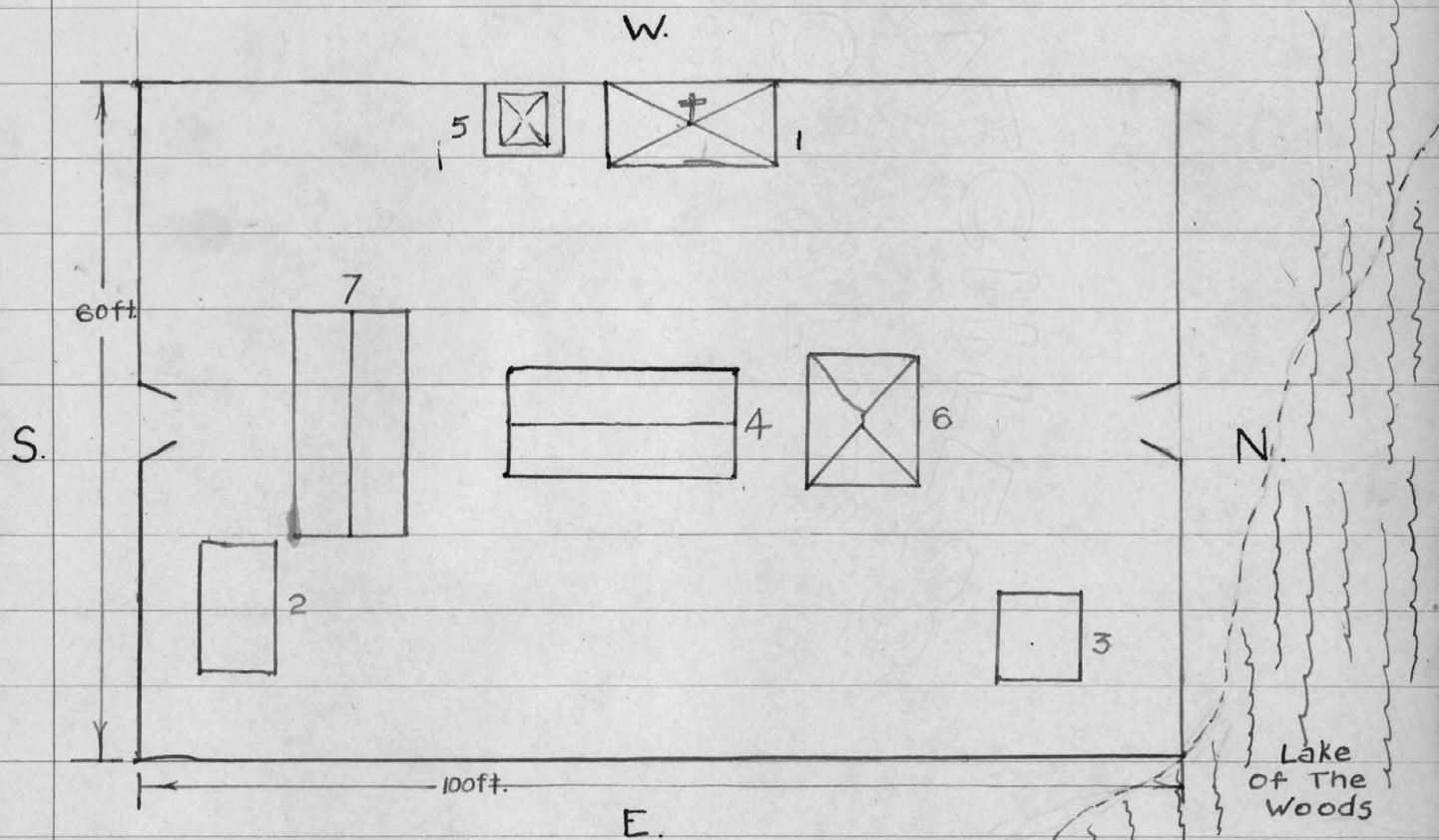
Also, a considerable area is covered with floating-log and tundra, and on this basis it is necessary to have Indian guides who know the safe roads, trails and treacherous passages in this vicinity, and whose services are therefore indispensable whenever travel is contemplated.

(1-a)

~ Fort St. Charles ~

Buildings in 1732

Angle River



1. Chapel
2. Commandant and Missionary
3. Powder Magazine
4. Warehouse and Quarters for men.
5. Watch Tower
6. Priest's House
7. Main Housing Building

Recorded by Acta et Dicta - by Prof. Francis Schaefer
Volume 2 p.117

FORT SAINT CHARLES

CAR



FRENCH POSTS
IN
THE NORTH COUNTRY

TWP 168

The site is close to the southern shore line of the North-West Angle Inlet, Lake of the Woods, and about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles off of American Point. By land survey it lies in the northwestern part of section 24 Twp 168-N, Range 34-W of 5th Meridian. -- Section 24 having an irregular water front, and for this reason the surveyor has marked the quarter mile square on which the fort stands as No 4 -- Had Section 24 been regular in shape, this quarter of a mile square should have been marked as No 5.

See map of St Charles Township, on back of
Book No F 1030.8 A 8 & 7

FORT ST.CHARLES

The site of Fort St. Charles is close to the southern shore line of the Northwest Angle Inlet, Lake of the Woods, and about one and one-fourth miles off of American Point. By land survey it lies in the northwestern part of section 24, Township 168-N, Range 34 W of 5th. Meridian --Section 24 having an irregular water-front, and for this reason the surveyor has marked the quarter mile square on which the fort stands as # 4 - - Had section 24 been regular in shape this quarter of a mile square should have been marked as # 5.

Geographically the site may be located as on the north shore of Magnuson's Island, which is also described as a peninsula, extending far into the Lake of the Woods, the presumption being that the island spoken of is not definitely separate from the mainland, however there is no controversy concerning this. Near the northwest corner of the site flows the Angle River. To the west and south is heavy timber, which in fact covers the whole area, except where the surface is too stony, in which case there are scrubby trees, brush and vines. (1)

Fort St Charles was built in honor of Governor Charles de Beauharnois, and according to Father Oulnean^u, who arrived at the fort in 1735, the new establishment was an enclosure made with four rows of posts, from twelve to fifteen feet in height, in the form of an oblong square, within which were a few rough cabins constructed of logs and clay, and covered with bark. A few more details^a are found in a memoir written on the subject the 28th. of September, 1733, where it is said: "the interior side of the Fort has one hundred feet with four bastions. There is a house for the missionary, a church, another house for the

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commandant, four corners of a building with chimneys, a powder-magazine, and a warehouse. There are also two gates opposite each other, and an observation tower, and the posts are doubled and have fifteen feet above the ground. (2)

A more explicit and comprehensive description of the interior of the Fort is, that it was surrounded by palisades, a double row of spruce, aspen, and oak stakes from twelve to fifteen feet high. The east and west sides of the enclosure^m measured one hundred feet long; the other two sides sixty - There were two gates, one on the north side, which faced the lake, the other on the south, giving access to the neighboring forests; and there was also a watchtower. Inside the enclosure were houses for the commandant and the missionary, a chapel, four main buildings, a powder magazine, and a storehouse. La Verendrye's lodgings and the quarters for his men were evidently toward the rear of the fort, away from the lake. The chapel seems to have occupied much of the west side, with the priest's house in front of and to the north of it. The storehouse probably was near the gate leading to the lake. (3)

The history of the Forts on the large lakes to the west of Lake Superior is instinctively linked to that of Fort Beauharnois. In both cases the discovery of the western sea was the ultimate object; and the simultaneous existence of posts in the different localities was considered a prime necessity. A colonial officer, by the name of Pachot, suggested in a letter written October 27, 1722, that an establishment be made at Tekamamiouen or Rainy Lake and at the same time one in the country of the Sioux. For,

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he said, as the Sioux are constantly at war with the Indians in the neighborhood of Rainy Lake, the French would certainly make enemies to themselves if they went only to one of these regions. The route from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods was explored by Jacques de Noyon as early as 1688.

The establishment of three posts; one at the mouth of the Kaministiquia river, one on Rainy Lake, and one on the Lake of the Woods, was recommended in 1716 by de Vaudreuil, the Governor of New France; and the first fort was actually erected in 1717 by the Lieutenant de la ^{Ne}None, who occupied it up to the year 1721 - Nothing further was done in those regions until the advent of the brave and intelligent explorer de la Verendrye.

The Marquis de Vaudreuil gave him the rank of an ensign in the colonial army, and in 1726 appointed him commandant of the trading post of Nipigon, to the north of Lake Superior. It was at this distant post that de la Verendrye matured his plans of exploring the vast extent of the West in order to land, if possible, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. He gathered all possible information concerning the Western Country from the Indians and others in a position to help him. In 1728 an Indian by the name of Ochagech gave him an account of a large lake to the West, out of which flowed a river discharging itself, as he believed, into a great salt water. It seems altogether likely, that what the Indian described was nothing else than the Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg river and Lake Winnipeg. But de la Verendrye believed that the information thus furnished might lead to the discovery of the Western Sea; and he sent a report of all this to the Mar-

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quis de Beauharnois of New France.

The report was taken to Quebec by Father de Gonner who happened to be at Michelimickinac on his return from the Sioux Country. The missionary was convinced that little was to be expected from the post at Lake Pepin as to the discovery of the Western Sea; and hence he agreed with de La Verendrye that the northern route might prove more successful. Shortly afterwards de La Verendrye went to Quebec, and discussed his plans with de Beauharnois, who heartily approved of them.

The government of Louis XV declined to furnish any means for the equipment of a company required for such an undertaking, and thus de la Verendrye was left to his own resources. He obtained a monopoly of the fur trade in the country he was to explore, and on the strength of this he formed an association with several leading merchants of Montreal, who were to advance to him the means to conduct the trade and to push his journey of exploration. (4)

The northern boundary of Minnesota from Lake Superior westward runs through a tangle of lakes, rivers and portages. When it reaches the largest of all the lakes separating the state from Canada it suddenly leaps northwestward. Through the Lake of the Woods it threads its way past numerous islands graciously leaving some on the American side and others on the Canadian, until it approaches a long narrow inlet, where it veers westward dividing the inlet in two. At the innermost point on the inlet, the boundary line, abandoning a course that is determined in some fashion by topography and water routes, turns southward and runs straight down to the forty ninth parallel. Having reached

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that famous line, it abruptly swings west and follows it to the Pacific Ocean.

To return to the inlet in the Lake of the Woods, the land on its north side is Canadian while on the south side is American. The American territory is separated from the rest of the United States by Buffalo Bay, a southwestern projection of the lake. This isolated bit of land, comprising about a hundred and fifty square miles, is the Northwest Angle. That this Angle should be American rather than Canadian, provokes endless curiosity ^{g✓}among those who scan the map of Minnesota, but the explanation is simple. It goes back to the treaty of 1783, which provided that the boundary from Lake Superior was to follow the line of water communication to the Lake of the Woods, run through that lake to its northwestern point, and then follow a course due west to the Mississippi River.

It was on the south side of the inlet separating Canada from the United States, on what is now American and Minnesota soil, that La Verendrye and his associates built Fort St Charles more than two hundred years ago. The Northwest Angle is no mere geographic curiosity; it has deep historical interest and will always occupy an important place in the story of the early Northwest. (5)

Here was a central point for vast plans, a depot on a pre-pioneer route of trade and travel; with this fort are intertwined the dreams and hopes of a great French explorer and fur-trader; from this spot were projected a series of far-flung posts; was the base for ambitious expeditions toward the un-

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known West; on these waters sped the canoes of hardy voyageurs; to this fort came courageous wilderness priests; on an island of this lake occurred one of the darkest tragedies of French-Canadian history; in this region were enacted the last scenes in the drama of the French regime in the American Northwest.

There is no more fascinating story in the annals of French exploration in North America than that of the westward push of La Verendrye and his sons along the northern boundary of what is now Minnesota and into the farther West on both sides of the present international line, with the great Sea of the West as its ultimate objectives.

One outcome was the establishment of Fort St Charles on the detached part of Minnesota that lies west of the lake of the Woods and north of the 49th parallel, the longest occupied French post on Minnesota soil; and another was the opening up of a route to the great Northwest that was destined to be an important highway of commerce for nearly a century. (6)

Fort St Charles, which was on what is now Minnesota soil, was La Verendrye's headquarters during the first period of his work of exploration.

About the year 1687 and to Jacques de Noyon, a French Canadian voyageur, belongs the honor of being the first white man who is known to have traversed a part of the northern boundary of Minnesota.

More than forty years later, in 1732, Verendrye and his sons with a party of soldiers and voyageurs built a trading post, named Fort St Charles, on the south side of the narrow western bay or inlet of the Lake later known as the Northwest Angle, and thus set up the first habitation of white men on its shores. (7)

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On May 21, 1733 La Verendrye writes of his establishment at Fort St Charles: "There is good fishing and hunting, great abundance of wild oats, and excellent land cleared by fire which I am now putting in seed" Four days later he reported that "the great chief of the Cree - - told me - - that he was going to raise corn as we do." In the fall however the Indians "had nothing to eat. In this extreme need of theirs I made over to them the field of Indian corn which I had sown in the spring, and which was not yet entirely ripe---the sowing of a bushel of peas after we had been eating them green for a long time gave us ten bushels, which I had sown the following spring with some Indian Corn. I had by entreaty induced two families of savages to sow corn, and I hope that the comfort that they derived from it will lead others to follow their example. They will be better off and we less bothered." (8)

The impression of the elder La Verendrye that one gets from the reading of these documents is that he was a true explorer imbued with curiosity and the love of adventure and eager to extend the dominions of France. There remains to be mentioned one other and the last effort of the French to extend explorations and domination; if not settlement to the west of the Great Lakes, and to gain the shores of the ocean which converging traditions located in the sunset land. La Verendrye, was a native of Canada. He entered the military service, went to France in 1707, became a member of a Brittany regiment, and fought with distinction at the battle of Malplaquet, September 11, 1709. He returned soon afterwards to Canada and later proceeded to the Lake Superior Country, here he speculated on the problem,

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still unsolved, of gaining the Pacific. Natives assured him that there was an almost unbroken waterway to there.

With regard to the explorations to be made the Canadian governor was very much impressed with the intelligence and talents of this officer that he urged the French king to lend his aid to equip an expedition. The king was not willing to go any further than to authorize La Verendrye to embark on the venture at his own expense, granting him a monopoly of the fur trade in the territory to be explored. (9)

The following year La Verendrye and his company spent the winter of 1732-1733 at Fort St Charles. In the spring of the year 1733, he sent his nephew La Jimmeraye, to Quebec in order to make a report to the Governor de Beauharnois, of what he had accomplished and to obtain fresh supplies of ammunition and merchandise from his partners and creditors.

An interlude of more than a quarter of a century separates Le Suer, and when La Verendrye made his bold plunge into the hinterland of Lake Superior. It was a period of revived French interest in exploration, and both men were looking for a way to the shores washed by the Pacific.

It is beyond peradventure of a doubt that La Verendrye received his inspirations from tales of western rivers told him by Indians at his Lake Nipigon post, where he listened to rumors of a river that emptied its waters into a great salt sea, and of armour-clad men who rode on horses. (10)

Several good descriptions have been made concerning the site of St Charles as well as the surrounding country. One Bougan-

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ville in his memoir on the State of Canada, 1757, writes "La Mer d'ouest is a post that includes the Forts of St. Pierre, St Charles, Bourbon, de la Reine, and Dauphin, Poskoyac, and des Prairies, all of which are built with palisades that can give protection only against Indians."

Fort St Pierre is described as on Rainy Lake; Fort St Charles as on a peninsula that goes far into the Lake of the Woods; Fort Bourbon, one hundred and fifty leagues from Fort St Charles, at the entrance of the Poskoyac or Saskatchewan into Lake Winnipeg. Fort La Reine was on the right bank of the asseneboine river, sixty leagues from Fort Bourbon; Fort Douphin eighty leagues from La Reine, Fort Poskoyac was built on the river of that name one hundred eighty leagues from Dauphin. The Fort des Prairies is eighty leagues from Paskoyac on the banks of the same river. The distance covered by these forts is one thousand five hundred and two miles. (11)

It required considerable time and effort to travel these great distances, usually about two months were required to make the trip, and sometimes longer, especially whenever they had heavy loads, and to traverse the intricate chain of small lakes and streams, with their many portages, connecting Lake Superior and Rainy Lake.

After a short rest at Fort St Pierre, La Verendrye pushed on rapidly, escorted in state by fifty canoes of Indians to the Lake of the Woods, and where Fort St Charles was built on a peninsula running out far into the lake on the southwest side - an admirable situation both for trading purposes and for defence.

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While in the East completing arrangements for another expedition. La Verendrye took steps to ensure that his youngest son, Louis, now eighteen years of age, should join the other members of the family engaged in the work. He was to be taught how to prepare maps and plans, so that, when he came west in the following year, he might be of material assistance to the expedition. The explorer would then have his four sons and his nephew in the enterprise.

Following the advice of Father Messaiger he went along the western shore, entered into a narrow bay, known as the Northwest Angle Inlet. (12)

A very informative description is given by the natives concerning the immediate region around the Lake of the Woods. They say, "For eight days we go down that (Rainy River) river for a distance of two hundred and forty miles, without meeting any rapids. Six miles from the entrance to this river, however, a little portage of about an acre must be made. On coming out of this river we enter the Lake of the Islands (Lac de Iles) otherwise called, by the Blackstone people, Lake of the Asseniboines.

This lake, on the south side, is lined with barren expanses, while on the north side it is covered with all kinds of wood and fringed with islands. At the end of this lake that flows into the Western sea, according to the Indian reports.

The Indians had offered de Noyon to take him with them to the Western Sea. The names those early explorers gave to the rivers and portages have been almost all retained down to our time.

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It was in the month of August 1734 when the explorers arrived at Fort St Charles and it was De la Verendrye's plan to constitute that place as his base of operations between the East and the West. His son whom he had sent to Michilimacinac, did not return until the 12th of November. The lake had now frozen over, and his escort had to leave the canoes thirty miles from the Fort, and to carry the provisions and merchandise for trading purposes. ~~1734~~

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On their backs. This first disappointment experienced at Fort St Charles was destined to be followed by many others. De La Verendrye had selected that Fort as the center of his operations between the East and the West, and, in the designs of Providence, it was to be the scene of his most bitter sorrows and most cruel trials.

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It was soon clear that La Verendrye had again to meet trials which should try his mettle still more severely. Shortly after his return to Fort St Charles on the Lake of the Woods, his son Jean arrived from Fort Maurepas, with real sad and enervating news - La Jemurage, his nephew and chief lieutenant, whose knowledge of the western tribes was invaluable, whose enthusiasm for the great project was only second to his own, whose patience and resourcefulness had helped the expedition out of many a tight corner - La Jemurage was dead.

Meanwhile the little garrison at Fort St Charles was almost at the point of starvation. La Verendrye had travelled ahead at such rapid speed that his supplies were still a long way in the rear when he reached the fort. In face of the pressing need, it was decided to send a party down to meet the boats at Kanimistiquia and to fetch back at once the supplies which were most urgently required, so Jean, who is now 23 years of age, was placed in charge of the expedition, and with him went the Jesuit missionary, Father Aulneau, on his way down to Michilimackinac. The day for departure was named, and on this fateful mission all were mercilessly murdered by the Sioux Indians.

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The rulers of Canada labored without ceasing in their perplexing task of engrassing the fur-trade of the West and controlling the western tribes to the exclusion of the English. Every day made it clearer that to these ends the western wilderness must be held by forts and trading posts; and this policy of extension prevailed more and more, in spite of the league of merchants, who wished to draw the fur-trade to Montreal, in spite of the Jesuits, who felt that their influence over the remoter tribes would be compromised by the presence among them of officers, soldiers, and traders; and in spite of the king himself, who feared that the diffusion of the colony would breed disorder and insubordination. (15)

The savages being very numerous, there was reason to expect that they should get a large quantity of furs to exchange with the English at Hudson Bay. Provided now going to the English at Hudson Bay. Provided there are Frenchmen on the road they travel, the savages will not go to the English, whom they do not like, and even despise, since they are not men like the French and they are afraid of them (the Indians) only allowing a few of their old men to enter the fort; "the French, they say, are very different as they fear nothing and are friendly".

In those days probably the first good neighbor policy was inaugurated, as per a letter from Verendrye.

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to the governor, and he says "I have the honor to send you two collars on behalf of the Cree, one of which is to assure you that they submit entirely to become obedient to you, and that they will obey you in all things; they beg you to keep it as a pledge of their submission and fidelity. The other is to represent to you the fort where you are and the joy they feel of having the French upon their lands, and that now they make one and the same body with us; that they hope that their allies the Assiniboin will soon act in the same way; and that they beg of you to admit them to the number of your children, and to maintain the fort in perpetuity in order that they may be able to obtain what they need there, and that their families may be in safety. The chief of the Cree message is from the entire nation. They will be near the Fort all summer to defend it, and are going to raise corn same as we do."

(16)

Norndyne had more zeal for crossing the continent and reaching the Pacific than for the wealth to be gained by the fur-trade. His expenditures far exceeded his income, and it was difficult for him to meet current expenses, and there were rivals who sought to displace him from the patronage of the governor and the King.

(17)

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It is interesting to note how the Indians enjoy telling stories - One Indian chief from the western regions, told of a certain great lake which discharged itself by a river flowing westward. The Indian further declared that he had descended this river till he reached water that ebbed and flowed, and, terrified by the strange phenomenon, had turned back, though not till he had heard of a great salt lake, bordered with many villages. Other Indians confirmed and improved the story "These people" said La Verendrye to the Jesuit Degonnor "are great liars, but now and then they tell the truth." It seemed to him likely that their stories of a western river flowing to a western sea were not totally groundless, and that the true way to the Pacific was, not through the country of the Sioux, but farther northward, in other words, through the region now called Manitoba.

Now to reiterate, La Verendrye was authorized to find a way to the Pacific at his own expense, as stated before, to gain the entire fur trade in the regions north and west of Lake Superior. This vast and remote country was held by tribes who were doubtful friends of the French, and perpetual enemies of each other. The risks of the trade were as great as its possible profits, and, to reap these, vast outlays must first be made; forts must be built, manned, provisioned, and stocked with goods brought through two thousand miles of difficult and perilous wilderness.

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There were other dangers, more insidious, and perhaps greater. The exclusive privileges granted to La Verendrye would inevitably arouse the intensest jealousy of the Canadian merchants, and they would spare no efforts to ruin him. Intrigue and calumny would be busy in his absence. If, as was likely, his patron, Beauharnois, should be recalled, the new governor might be turned against him, his privileges might be suddenly revoked, the forts he had built passed over to his rivals, and all his outlays turned to their profits, as had happened to La Salle on the recall of his patron, Frontenac.

On the other hand, the country was full of the choicest furs, which the Indians had hitherto carried to the English at Hudson Bay, but which the proposed trading-posts would secure to the French. La Verendrye's enemies pretended that he thought of nothing but beaver skins, and slighted the discovery which he had bound himself to undertake; but his conduct proves that he was true to his engagements, and that ambition to gain honorable distinction in the service of the King had a large place among the motives that impelled him.

Twice the governor appealed to the court to give La Verendrye some little aid, urging that he was at the end of his resources, and that a grant of 30,000 francs or 6,000, would enable him to find a way to the Pacific. All help was refused, but La Verendrye was told that he might

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let out his forts to other traders, and so raise means to pursue the discovery. The envy and jealousy of various persons impelled them to write letters to the Court insinuating that he thought of nothing but making his fortune.

Meanwhile, under all difficulties, he had explored a vast region hitherto unknown, diverted a great and lucrative fur-trade from the English at Hudson Bay, and secured possession of it by six fortified posts; chief among which was Fort St Charles, on the Lake of the Woods. These various forts were difficult to build and the cost of maintaining them in this remote wilderness was incalculable.

These various western forts, slight as they were, their establishment was costly; and the King, to whom Canada was a yearly loss, begrudged every franc spent upon it, means were contrived to make them self-supporting. Each of them was a station of the fur-trade, and the position of most of them had been determined more or less with a view to that traffic. Hence they had no small commercial value. Even though these forts were self-sustaining, they were nevertheless under great and specific obligations. These methods of keeping up forts and garrisons were of course open to prodigious abuses, and aroused endless jealousies and rivalries.

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It appears to have been quite a regular affair that the fort was the scene of much bustle and activity. In the spring of 1733 La Jonquiere got ready to journey to Quebec to report upon the progress that had been made and to obtain fresh supplies. Three canoes were filled with furs collected during the winter and were sent to Lake Superior. These canoes returned in August laden with merchandise. As many as a hundred and fifty canoes arrived in one day at the fort, each carrying two or three Indians and loaded with meat, buffalo fat, bear oil, wild rice, and other things to trade. One day some 300 warriors stopped on their way to attack the Chippawa of Madeline Island, and the next day 500 more came on an expedition against the prairie Sioux. After forts were established to the west and north, men were despatched from Fort St Charles with supplies and merchandise for these newer posts, or returned with furs to be packed for the journey eastward to Montreal.

Here is an illustration of a trading council held at Fort St Charles with a party of Cree and Assiniboin Indians in the winter of 1733-34. When the Indians arrived they saluted with three volleys the French flag that was flying

Fort St Charles

over the fort, to which La Verendrye and the twenty Frenchmen who were with him replied.

Then the chiefs were allowed to enter the fort, where mutual compliments were paid and they were given tobacco and provisions. The next day the Indians presented the Frenchmen with beaver skins and about a hundred pounds of buffalo meat, and they in turn were given a sack of corn and a large supply of tobacco. "My children" the white leader said to them, "I will tell you tomorrow what are our Father's orders to me regarding you, and shall let you know his will." On the next day, New Years Day, 1734, the Indians thronged into the fort at ten o'clock in the morning. The Frenchmen had placed at the center of the grounds thirty pounds of tobacco, forty pounds of bullets, two hundred gun-flints, twenty axes, sixty knives, sixty ramrods, sixty awls, and supplies of glass beads, needles, and vermilion. Before distributing their gifts, however, La Verendrye made a speech. "The great chief of the Frenchman, he said would be glad to learn of the Indian visit. The French were numerous, there was no land unknown to them they had only one chief and La Verendrye was his mouthpiece. If the Indians obeyed this chief, he would send many Frenchmen

Fort St Charles

each year to satisfy their needs; but they in turn must bring in plenty of skins in exchange."

This scene portrays La Verendrye in the fashion of a negotiator and trader. But ^{he} was also a farmer, perhaps the first white farmer in Minnesota. The fort has been established with ~~with~~ ^{the} plans for trade not only, but also for fishing and hunting, supply of wild rice and acquiring of good land. The Frenchman clears the land by burning. A plentiful wild rice harvest allowed them to save considerable corn for seedling. They planted corn and peas, and the latter La Verendrye reported a yield of ten bushels for one of seed. He also made some effort to teach the Indians to sow corn. But with all his care, life at the fort was precarious. Heavy rains in 1733 damaged the wild rice crop and that autumn La Verendrye sent ten men to the other side of the lake with tools to build a shelter at the mouth of a river and with nets for fishing. The fishing was excellent. That fall they caught more than 4000 white-fish, not to speak of trout, sturgeon, and other varieties of fish. They returned to Fort St Charles on May 2 - 1734, after the ice had melted. The food problem was only one of the many that troubled the white man in this northern region, for it seems that fires were quite frequent and covered much territory.

Fort St Charles

Pierre Aulneau, a young Jesuit missionary who went out to Fort St Charles in 1735 to take the place of Father Mesaiger, thus described his trip from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods: "I journeyed nearly all the way through fire and a thick stifling smoke, which prevented us from even once catching a glimpse of the sun". To be exact - In the spring of 1735 Father Aulneau was appointed to the distant mission of Fort St Charles to replace Father Mesaiger. After having spent a short time at Montreal, he started for his destination June 21st, the feast of Aloysius, and reached Fort St Charles Oct 23rd. During the following winter he learned enough of the Cree language to be able to systemize it; and in this manner he hoped to do much good.

In 1734 La Poudre, worried over his debts and the demands of his creditors, journeyed the long way to Montreal and Quebec to re-enlist their support and to report to the governor. He returned to Fort St Charles with his youngest son, Louis Joseph, the following year.

Fort St Charles

As already stated, early in 1736 La Verendrye suffered a great loss in the death from exposure of his nephew La Jemeraie, and before the year was over, an even heavier blow came to him.

Provisions, goods, and powder ordered by La Verendrye in Montreal the previous year had not yet arrived at the fort. They were badly needed, and the commander decided to send them by three well-manned canoes to meet the outfit on its way west. The plan was to secure some of the supplies and to hurry back to the fort with them. Jean, the explorer's eldest son, was selected to lead this relief expedition. With him went Father Aulneau and nineteen voyageurs. Shortly after leaving the fort all the members of this party beached their canoes on an island in the Lake of the Woods. At this place a large party of Sioux warriors made ^a surprise attack for revenge upon the French for maintaining friendly relations with their own bitter enemies, the Cree and Assiniboine, and all the white men were killed and beheaded. Some time later La Verendrye learned what had happened and he was grief stricken, and he cried out, "I have lost my son, the Rev. Aulneau, and my Frenchmen, misfortunes which I shall lament all my life." Not long after this discovery he had the bodies of his son and the priest and the skulls of the voyageurs buried beneath the chapel of Fort

Fort St Charles

St Charles. At this time he had the fort itself rebuilt and "put in such a condition that four men could defend it against a hundred". (21)

Many names and descriptions have been applied to Fort St Charles, such as the western Capital; the central point of activity, ^{head quarters for this fur-trade} a depot for shipping; it being so to speak, a collection point of furs and local for exchange of merchandise; - but of far greater importance is the guiding influence concerning the spiritual and intellectual life in that region. In many respects this fort served as the supreme seat of government for La Verendrye's other posts, which were located to the east and west of there, and further, to serve as a beacon in the ^{expansive} wilderness.

It appears certain that Fort St Charles was the longest occupied French post on Minnesota soil. There were other posts established later, and farther to the west and north, for these in particular Fort St Charles became necessary as a supply depot as well as a point of departure for furs to be sent to Montreal. In spite of some important newer posts, it continued to be a scene of activity until shortly before the British conquest of New France.

For many years the palisades, chapel and the other buildings of the fort were occupied by fur-trading Companies and warriors who remained there, a few days at a time, while marauding through the country.

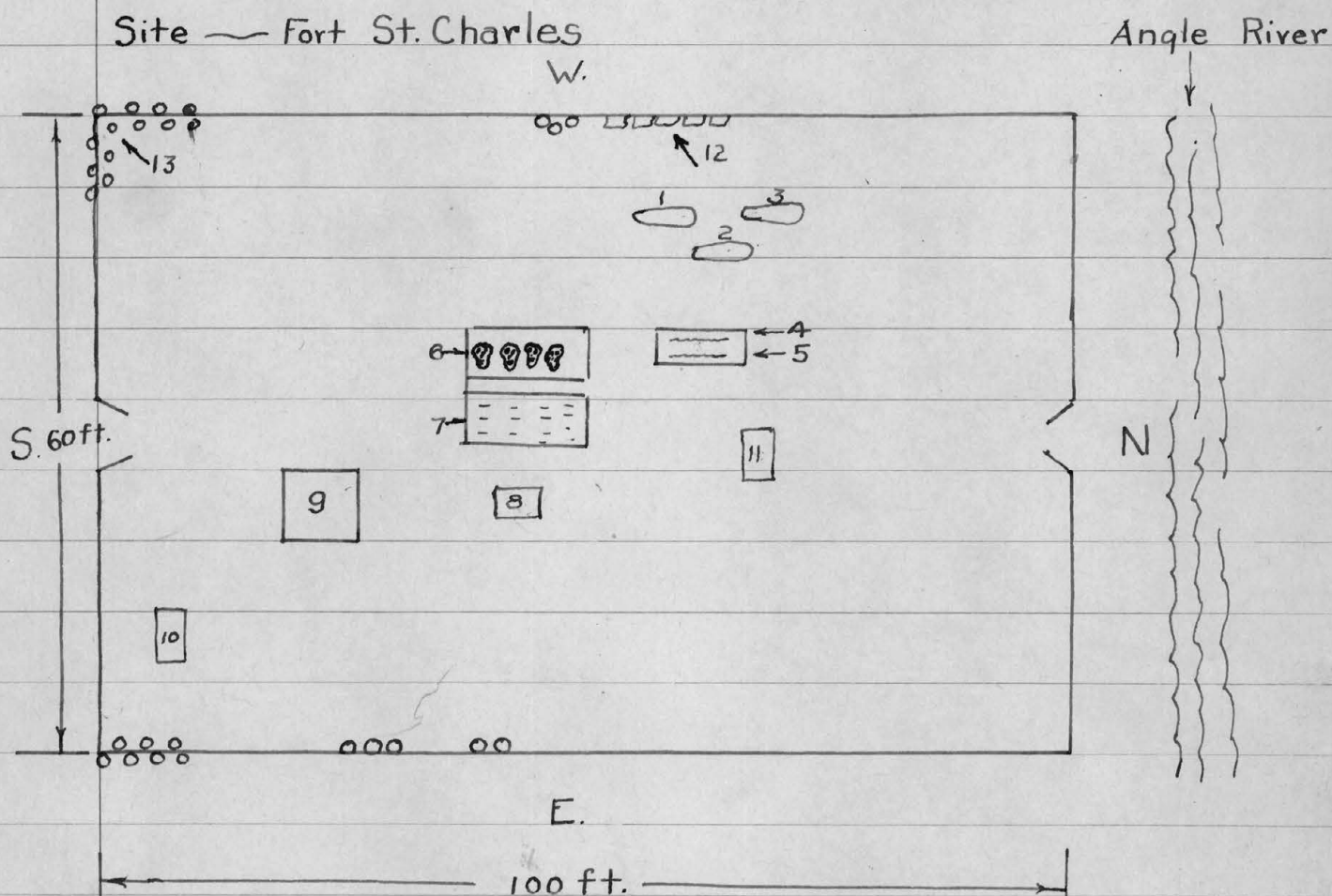
Fort St Charles

Ultimately forest fires swept through that region, and destroyed all of the buildings and palisades, so that in the course of over two centuries, all trace of the fort-site was obliterated and forgotten.

In more recent times, moreover, the story of Fort St Charles, and other affairs connected therewith, have aroused considerable and widespread interest. La Verendrye himself has been accorded a high place in the history of Canada and the American Northwest: monuments in honor of his achievements have been erected in Quebec, Three Rivers, Winnipeg, and other Canadian cities; as well as at the North Dakota village that bears his name. His writings, such as his journals and letters are being examined carefully for any information concerning his day, and in this manner, through these vivid records the old fort comes to life again, the voyageurs ride the western waters, and La Verendrye himself lives and breathes.

The Commandant, the chaplain, and the storekeeper, the triumvirate who ruled these forest outposts, and stood respectively for their three vital principles, - war, religion and trade.

Fort St. Charles



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. 1st. Skeleton | 10-11 Other Chimneys |
| 2. 2nd " | 12. Stones, probably outside wall |
| 3. 3rd " | of Chapel |
| 4. JB Lo. Verendrye | |
| 4+5 Skeletons | 5. Rev. Father Aulneau |
| 6. Nineteen Skulls | 13. Remains of Stakes |
| 7. Bones probably belonging to Skulls | |
| 8. Fireplace | |
| 9. 1st. Chimney place found | |

(1908)

The excavations at Fort St. Charles
7:229 (Sept. 15, 1908)
This plan is based upon a sketch by
father J. Blain, in Cloches de Saint-Boniface

FORT ST CHARLES

95° 49° 21' 26" Lat No
 95° 4' Long W
 Acta et Dicta Vol 2 p 132



Fort St Charles

The war of 1752 between England and France converted New France into a British possession, the French voyageurs rushed to the defense of their country on the St Lawrence, and the west was deserted. The Northwest Company, which reigned supreme over that country toward the close of the eighteenth century, no doubt occupied Fort St Charles as a trading post; and then at some later date fire ravaged the premises and destroyed every vestige of this once important post: a new and luxuriant vegetation grew over its ruins, until no one knew where the site was, and it so remained a dark secret ^{for} centuries. However, ^{several} ^{expeditions} between the years 1902 to 1908 [↑] explorations [↑] were made, guided by Indian stories and several maps of that area. Opinions were based on such information as could be ascertained from old maps, by La Ferendrye (1737) Bellin (1755) Thomas Jefferys (1762) and others. Also, a letter written by Father Aulneau from Fort St Charles described it as on a bay on the southwest side of the Lake, which was a rather vague description, since bays and other irregular shorelines exist, only adding to the confusion, albeit, in 1890 the Jesuit Father renewed their interest, and in July of that year visited Massacre Island. On one of the elevated rocks they inscribed words to the

Fort St Charles

memory of Father Aulneau. They were likewise anxious to ascertain his burial place. The members of the party visited Massacre Island on the 2nd of Sept; on the 3^d they entered the narrow bay of Northwest Angle Inlet and landed on the North shore some distance to the west from the entrance. At a point about two miles up the bay, close to the water's edge, they found the foundations of three chimneys, pieces of wooden posts, a number of human bones and nails, and other implements. By further digging they were able to trace the entire line of posts that surrounded a square. In the places where the posts had stood the ground was still loose. On a later expedition the explorers excavated within the enclosure, 19 skulls, 3 entire skeletons placed close together, and two other skeletons without heads, placed together in a wooden case, the remnants of which were decayed, yet still visible. With one skeleton were found a key and various other smaller objects; with the other were found 3 points of arrows, 14 grains of beads, several keys, a buckle,

Fort St Charles

a small hook or robe-fastener and various smaller articles. Apart from all that, they found a number of things, such as balls, nails, knives, scissors, fragments of glass and others.

Proceeding from the unknown to the known, there is only one conclusion, viz: - that the discoveries tally and is positive proof of the claims made.

The confessions of the Sioux to this act of cruelty is further corroboration.

All the objects and remains found by the discoverers were removed to St Boniface, Manitoba, where they are kept with all the honors due the intrepid heroes, for deeds of valour in the services to their country and their religion. Before the explorers departed from the memorable spot they transferred the cross erected on the north shore to the new site and corrected the inscription, which now reads, "Fort St Charles, founded 1732, discovered 1908".

The story of the old French post is of vital interest to every Minnesotan. It is ^a significant and dramatic epoch for the Nation and the Canadian Northwest, as well.

Fort St Charles

The Fathers of the Catholic Church have bedecked themselves with praise by their pioneer service to history in making known and acquiring the site. There are those ^{who} would have excavations carried on more extensively and gain all possible knowledge attainable concerning the men, buildings and activities.

There still is to be included as of vital interest, the international boundary, and of the water-route strategic in the days of the fur trade and in the more modern times of the Dawson land and water route from Fort Garry to Port Arthur. Then too, there is the scenic and recreational point of view. The region is in fact ^a natural park region, for Fort St Charles ^{is} situate near the edge of a great international lake, inhabited by ^{a labyrinth of} ~~many~~ picturesque islands, and an abundance ^{and variety} of fish, enhanced by the beauty of nature's peculiar shore-line. The primitive, wild charm of this region beggars description, and appeals to Americans and Canadians as it did to the sons and daughters of France. In the central and northern areas of the lake ^{numerous} ~~in~~ rocky and barren islands appear as warning sentinels of the wilderness, and yet there is a certain mysterious beauty even in the sternness of the ^{rockpile}.

Fort St Charles

About 12 miles to the east, one mound of rock and pine, was known as Massacre Island, where La Verendrye's eldest son, Father Aulneau, and 19 voyageurs were killed by Indians in 1736.

It appears that fishing is practically the only commerce of any great importance in that area. Even though more than 2 centuries have elapsed, the wilderness, where once the voyageurs sang the waltzes, has not changed in the least. In spite of all that has happened in that region, it is still ^a primitive wilderness, but as in the days of yore Fort St Charles is a logical and natural cross-road for travel from and to all points of the compass. The land area included in ^{the} site as ^a park is approximately 200 acres, which by historical conventions, has received proposals and recommendations for additional territory and necessary improvements, especially the forbidding north shore of Magnuson's island, where the fort is located. By the testimony of visitors, it is clearly evident that the need for further excavations and discovery of the site is essential. Likewise, travel should be made easier without destroying the natural beauty. Fort St Charles - as a State Memorial Park, located in the Northwest Angle is vitally important in the historical background of Minnesota.

Fort St Charles

A comprehensive view is taken with respect to New France and its actors by a noted historian, and he reflects upon it thus:—

"The French dominion is a memory of the past; and when we evoke its departed shades, they rise upon us from their graves in strange romantic guise. Again their ghostly campfires seem to burn, and the fitful light is cast around on lord and vassal and black-robed priest, mingled with wild forms of savage warriors, knit in close fellowship on the same stern errand, a boundless vision grows upon us: an untamed continent; vast wastes of forest verdure, mountains silent in primeval sleep; river, lake and glimmering pool; wilderness oceans mingling with the sky. Such was the domain which France conquered for civilization. Plumed helmets gleamed in the shade of its forests, priestly vestments in its dens and fastnesses of ancient barbarism. Men steeped in antique learning, pale with the close breath of the cloister, here spent the noon and evening of their lives, ruled savage hordes with mild parental sway, and stood serene before the direst shapes of death. Men of courtly nurture, heirs to the polish of a far-reaching ancestry, here with their dauntless hardihood put to shame the boldest sons of toil."

Fort St Charles

(A) Foreword + Introduction

(1-a) Midwest Motor News-Northwest Angle - May 1940

- 1 Kellogg - French Regime 336
- 2 Schaefer - Acta et Dicta Vol 2 - 117
- ✓ 3 Blegen - M H Quar Vol 18 - 236, 237.
- 4 Schaefer - Acta et Dicta Vol 2 - 114
- ✓ 5 Blegen - M H Quar Vol 18 - ~~238~~ 231, 232
- ✓ 6 Buck - M H Quar Vol 9 - 145, 146.
- ✓ 7 Upham - M H B Vol 2 - ~~572~~ 571, 572.
- ✓ 8 Buck - M H Q Vol 9 - ~~245~~ 147, 148.
- ✓ 9 Folwell - Hist Minn Vol 1 - ~~48~~ 47
- 10 Schaefer - Acta et Dicta Vol 2 - 147
- 11 Upham - Hist Ojibways M H S Vol 5 - 429
- 12 Burpee - Pathfinder Gr Plains 971-Q 46 - 30
- 13 Dugas - Canadian West P 34 +
- 14 Burpee - Pathfinder Gr Plains P 36
- 15 Parkman - Fur Trade Vol IX 326
- 16 Burpee - Journals + Letters P-100, p. 98
- 17 Upham - Miss Valley P-46
- 18 Parkman - Final Conflict Vol X 14 +
- ✓ 19 Blegen - Fort St Charles M H S 18 - ~~235~~ + 237-239
- 20 Dugas - Canadian West P-42 +
- ✓ 21 Blegen - Fort St Charles Vol 18 - 239 + 240.
- 22 Legislative Manual Minnesota 1941 P-143
- 23 Schaefer - Acta et Dicta Vol 2 - 125 +
- 24 Parkman - New France Vol XIV 342

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MH 2 - Vol 12 - P 307 - 1688 - 1732

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Hist of Qitways

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MHS - Vol 13 - 1908 No Report

MH 2 - Vol 17 - 1936 - P 224

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MHS - Vol 15 - 1909-1914 - a citation.

MHB - Vol 4 P 345 Hist Soc Resolution

MH 2 - Vol 9 - 145 - 410

MH 2 - Vol 19 - No Special information

- (+ used) (Own Records)
 (- Look up) Fort St Charles
 + R 920 AL 49 a Minn + Northwest
 + R 920 - 80 56 49 Hist of Am Biog. Vol 18
 - Jones - The Auburn collection - 70-80
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 + L J Burpee - Search for the Western Bears
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(Fort St Charles by Rev. (D. D.) Schaefer)
Francis

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✓ A E Jones - The Aulman Coll

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The discovery of the site of Arendrye's Fort St Charles, on the Minn Area west of the Lake of the Woods. - By Prof Francis J Schaefer → Title Fort St Charles, Massacre and Discoveries - Catholic Hist Soc of St Paul

Vol 2 pp 114-133 - July 1909 - 2 maps pp 240-1
acta & dicta 282.0 A-18 (2:114

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History Fort St. Charles - Jerry Vessels in Conservation Volunteer, March 1941.

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Notes.

Notes used in essay have been eliminated, as they have been used
verbatim.

Fort St Charles

① H. Leincker

M H 2
Vol 17
1936
p 224

① In 1736 on an island in the Lake of the Woods, Indians murdered Jean Baptiste la Verendrye, Father Aulneau, and nineteen voyageurs. They were members of a French trading explorers who had been occupying Fort St Charles, on what is now the North-west Angle of the lake, for about four years under the leadership of Jean Baptiste's father, the Sieur de la Verendrye.

S. B. M. 1 x 1, 7

20 21 22 23 24 25 26

M H 2nd Mag
Vol 21 p 328

Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye

The NW Angle of the L. of Woods is a "Geographic Puzzle" is brought out in the title of an article about this interesting feature of Minn's Nor boundary appearing in the Midwest Motor News for May. It contains some information about La Verendrye, about Indian legends relating to the region, and about diplomatic negotiations relating to the boundary. Mention is made also of the old Dawson Road and of a feldspar mine in the vicinity.

Dict Am Hist Vol 5 F T Adams 1940 p 515

Several important + applicable articles

Father Pagnin

①

FORT SAINT CHARLES

2

May 24-1823-24
MHS Vol 8-P136-140

¹³⁶ J C Beltrami, his Italian name
was Giacomo Constantino Beltrami.
It appears he took upon himself the
task of geographical discoveries in
America, proceeding to Philadelphia, thence
to St Louis and to Ft Snelling, where he
remained until July 1823 and secured
permission to accompany Maj Long, who
was in charge of an expedition for the
U S Govt, on a journey up the Minnesota
river to Big Stone lake and down the Red
river of the north to Pembina.

M H 2
Vol 12-1931
Page 307

1688

1685

Names

NICHOLAS PERROT on his journey
to the Sioux

Below Names of his companions

LOUIS HEURTERIZE engaged himself
to CLAUDE GREYSOLON, sieur de la
TOURETTE

1694

DU LUTH's companions

1702

CHARLES JUCHEREAU de St Denys'
voyageurs on the Mississippi

1726

RENE GAUTHIER's men at Kaministiquia

Fort St Charles

64X ³ ~~in~~ necke

MN2
Vol 12
1931
p. 307

1727
to
1740

LA VEREN DRYE
BOUCHER and MARIN

~~NAMES~~

2

① Sieur de la Verendrye has dispatched the
Sieur de la Jemeraye with three medium-sized
canoes, and that he himself had gone with three
others that followed him to the outlet of Lake
Pecamamionen at the entrance of the river
which flows into the Lake of the Woods, where
he wintered in a fort which he caused to
be constructed and which is in latitude
47° 15'.

Page 36

1732

On Jun 8th we left, the Missionary Father,
my nephew and two of my sons with seven
canoes, to proceed with my discovery. I took
great care to improve all the portages
by which we had to pass, and we finally
arrived on the 14th of July at Fort St Pierre
at the outlet of Rainy Lake, which our
Frenchmen had built the previous autumn.
More than fifty canoes of savages accom-
panied us and conducted us to Fort
St Charles.

1731

Winter at last wore away and with the opening of navigation he set out for Montreal. On the 13th of June he left the latter town, to spend a few days at Saint St. Louis; and finally, on the 21st of the same month, three weeks after Pentecost, he began his long journey towards Fort St. Charles and the Lake of the Woods. On July 27, 1735 he wrote to Father Naud from Michilimackinac but the letter is missing from the Collection. He reached Fort St. Charles on Oct. 23, whence he wrote his last letter to Father Bonin, in France, and in it he sets forth his projected plans for the exploration of the region still further west. They were never carried out; God had ordained it otherwise.

Father Aulneau wrote a letter to his mother Oct 10-1734 informing her of whatever took place during his journey. That was his first letter since his arrival to Canada.

"It took 47 days to reach New Foundland."

a letter by Rev A.E. Jones, on page 72.

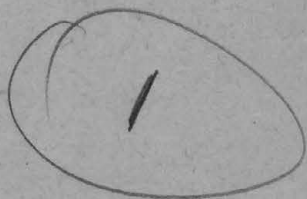
The true position of Fort St. Charles is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east of the site ground at in the note p. 73. On July 11, 1908 the ruins of the Fort were discovered within the boundaries of the State of Minnesota.

The site is close to the southern shore line of the North-West Angle Inlet, Lake of the Woods and about $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the eastern extremity of American Point. By land survey it lies in the North-Western part of section 24 in Township No. 168 N. Range No. 34 West of 5th meridian.

This section No. 24 having a waterfront is irregular and for this reason the surveyor has marked the quarter mile square on which the fort stands as No. 4. Had the section 24 been regular in shape this quarter of a mile square should have been marked as No. 5.

See map of St Charles Township on back of this book. Book No. F1030.8

A887.



Legislative
Manual
Minn
1941

Page 143

② Fort St Charles

5

Toward the end of the last century interest was aroused in the early parts of the West, and in 1890,

1902, 1905, and 1907 investigations and excavations were made at the

Northwest Angle, the results of which led investigators to believe that Fort St Charles had been on the north, or Canadian, side of the inlet. In 1908 a new ex-

pedition, under the auspices of the Historical Society of St Boniface, unearthed definite evidence that Fort St Charles had stood, not on the north side of the inlet, but on the south, or American side.

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the Northwest Angle area, and in 1940 a movement was under way to create there a state park commemorating the site of Fort St Charles.

Finis

22

①

Fort St Charles

6

Folwell's
A History of Minn.
Vol 1 P 48

Fort St Charles was erected on the
Lake of the Woods. "This fort was on
the southern shore of the Northwest
Angle Lake, about 2 miles west of
American Point" - in Minn.

①

Catholic Missionary
Activities In The
Northwest 1818-64
Page 16

A description of Fort St Charles,
which was reached on Oct 23-1735,
is then given: "It is merely an
enclosure made with four rows
of posts, from 12 to 15 feet in height,
in the form of an oblong square,
within which are a few rough
cabins constructed of logs and clay
and covered with bark."

MHB
Vol 4
P. 345
1732

①

In Hist Convention held at
Duluth July 1922

Resolved: - That this convention
indorse the proposition that the new
county to be formed out of the northern
part of Beltrami County be named
Varendrye County in honor of Pierre
Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de la
Vieuvendrye, who laid the foundations
of the fur trade in the region west
of Lake Superior and who in 1732
established Fort St Charles within
the boundaries proposed for the new
county.

... stores in

Folwell,
Hist. of Minn.
1:48

ing him a monopoly ~~in the territory to be explored.~~ With a
company of some fifty men La Visson-
dreye left Montreal on June 8-1731, accom-
panied by three of his four sons and
his nephew, La Jemeraye. The party
proceeded to the mouth of the Pidgeon
River, whence a detachment under
Jemeraye pushed on along the chain
of lakes and rivers which later became
part of the boundary between the United
States and Canada until, toward the

Folwell
Hist Minn
P- 48
1732
Vol 1

Fort St Charles

Winecke

13

- ③ Close of the year, it reached the foot of Rainy Lake. Fort St Pierre was built there on the north bank during the ensuing winter. The main body under La Verendrye resumed its journey westward in June, 1732 and arrived in early fall at the Lake of the Woods, where, on the southern shore of the Northwest Angle Inlet, about two miles west of American Point, was erected Fort St Charles. The occupation of this post on Minnesota soil during a period of twenty years may perhaps justify the mention of La Verendrye explorations.

③

The friendly Indians were indignant at the treacherous massacre of the white men by the Sioux and urged war against this enemy.

La Verendrye, however, disregarding his personal feelings, knew that it would be fatal to all his plans to let the friendly Indians have their way.

At length, in the summer of 1738, La Verendrye felt that he could carry out his plan of visiting the Mandans. He left one of his sons, Pierre, in charge of Fort St Charles, and with the other two, Francois and Louis, set forth on his journey to the West. Travelling down the Winnipeg river in canoes, they stopped for a few hours at Fort Maurepas, then crossed Lake Winnipeg and paddled up the muddy waters of Red River to the mouth of the Assiniboine, the site of the present city of Winnipeg, then seen by white men for the first time.

Acta et Dicta
Vol 2 p 114
1731-32

In May, 1732, de la Verendrye received the news of what had been done at Rainy Lake together with a cargo of furs, which he sent at once to Michilimackinac for shipment to his partners at Montreal. On the 8th of June following, he himself, the missionary priest, and the entire party set out for the Fort St Pierre, following the chain of rivers and lakes that stretch from the mouth of the Pigeon river on Lake Superior to Rainy Lake. They arrived at their destination on the 14th of July. After a brief rest at the Fort St Pierre, de la Verendrye set out again. Accompanied by 50 Canoes of Indians he descended the Rainy river, and during the month of August he sailed into the Lake of the Woods. Following the advice of Father Messaiger he went along the western shore, entered into a narrow bay, known as the Northwest Angle Inlet, and on its southern shore erected a second fort, which

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2 : 117

10^m

Gouveneur.
De la Verendrye and his company
spent the winter of 1732-33 at Fort
St Charles. In the spring of the year,
1733, he sent his nephew, la Jonneraye,
to Quebec in order to make a report to
the Governor de Beauharnois, of what
he had accomplished, and to obtain fresh
supplies of ammunition and merchandise
from $\frac{1}{2}$ his partners and creditors.

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Reference of Opinion
without prejudice (2)
20

In the Spring of 1735 Father Aulneau was appointed to the distant mission off Fort St Charles to replace Father Messaiger. After having spent a short time at Montreal and at Vault St Louis (Caughnawaga) he started for his destination the 21st of June, the feast of St Aloysius, and reached Fort St Charles October 23-1735. During the following winter he learned enough of the Cree language to be able to systemize it; and in this manner he hoped to do much good.

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22800
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In regard to the site of Fort St Charles the knowledge up to the year 1908 was rather uncertain. Prof Hinchell of St Paul, in the article quoted among the references, says that it was at the Southwest corner of the Lake of the Woods, and almost exactly where the Minnesota boundary was later established, i.e., on the 49th parallel of latitude. His opinion was based on such ancient maps as those of de la Verendrye (1737) of Bellin (1755) of Thomas Jefferys (1762) and others. In the letter written by Father Aulneau from Fort St Charles it was said to be on a bay on the Southwest side of the Lake; a rather vague indication, since the indentations of this body of water in the shore-line are very numerous.

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(23)
Interest in the historic localities of these regions was reawakened with the discovery of the Aulneau letters. As early as the year 1890, in the month of July, some Jesuit Fathers from St Joseph's College, St Boniface, Man.; visited Massacre Island. On one of the more elevated rocks they erected a cross with an inscription in French commemorating the massacre of Father Aulneau. S.F. 1736. Monseigneur Langeron, Archbishop of St Boniface, Man., desired for a long time to recover the remains of Father Aulneau and his companions, and thus to ascertain the exact location of Fort St Charles. In the summer of 1902 he organized an expedition, in which he himself took part. The members of the party visited Massacre Island on the 2nd of Sept; on the 3^d they entered the narrow bay of Northwest (Angle) Angle Inlet and landed on the North Shore some distance to the West from the entrance. They were guided by two Indian Chiefs, Powassin and Andakamigowinimi, who told them that there ~~was~~ were the ruins of an Ancient French fort. In fact they found the remnants of a

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Chimney, and believing themselves to be on the site of Fort St Charles, they erected a cross with an inscription in French: "Fort St Charles, erected in 1732, visited in 1902". During the summer of 1905 another expedition was organized, headed again by Monseigneur Langerin. A visit was made to Massacre Island and a small frame chapel, dedicated to the Queen of Martyrs, was built on the Western shore. In the summer of 1907 the North shore of Northwest Angle Inlet was revisited; remnants of two more chimneys were found, and a new cross was put up in the place of the former destroyed by fire.

However, a complete success in the enterprise was reserved to the expedition of 1908. With the consent of Monseigneur Langerin and of the previous expeditions the Jesuits Fathers of the College of St Boniface, Man., were to continue the search for the Fort St Charles in the summer of 1908. During the second and third week in July a delegation from said College revisited the spot on the North

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shore of Northwest Angle Gulet and resumed the work of exploring. But soon they gave it up, because it dawned upon them, that they might be on the wrong track. In one of the previous expeditions the Indian Chief Andakamigowinini said that on the South shore, but a little further West, there were likewise remnants of Chimneys. The Fathers decided to follow these indications. At a point about two miles up the bay, close to the water's edge, they found the foundations of three Chimneys, pieces of wooden posts, a number of human bones, nails, and other implements. By further digging they were able to trace the entire line of posts that surrounded a square; in the spots where the posts had stood, it was easy to plunge a wooden stick, which was impossible in places immediately adjoining. The posts had been in double rows all around in such a way that the one of either row corresponded to the empty space between two of the other row. Further investigations were made during the following month, from the 6th to the 11th of August; and this time the Jesuits Fathers had with them the Rev. A. Beliveau, chancellor and

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Representative of Mousigneur Langerin, and Judge L A Prud'homme of St Boniface, Man. The latter took part in previous expeditions, and wrote the account of the discoveries made in 1908. In these memorable days the explorers excavated within the enclosure of the above line 19 skulls, 3 entire skeletons (1, 2, 3) placed close together, and 2 other skeletons (4, 5) without heads placed together in a wooden case, the remnants of which although decomposed were still visible. With the skeleton 4 were found a key and various other smaller articles objects; with the skeleton 5 were found 3 points of arrows, 14 grains of beads, several keys, a buckle, a small hook or robe-fastener, and various smaller objects. Apart from all that, they found a number of things, such as balls, nails, knives, scissors, fragments of glass and others.

The discoveries square so well with all that we know of Fort St Charles and its history, that the conclusion can scarcely be withheld: the site determined upon by the explorers of 1908 to be really the location of the former French post. According to Father Aulneau the Fort was an oblong square surrounded on all sides by posts; according to the memoir of 1733, written by de la Verendrye or on indications furnished by him, it was 100 feet long

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and had a double row of posts all around. The oblong square traced by the discoverers is 100 feet long from North to South by 60 feet wide; and the line of posts is doubled. The three chimneys evidently served to heat the larger house - used probably for the garrison of the Fort - the house of the commandant, and that of the missionary, all found within the enclosure. The 19 skulls to all appearances are the 19 heads of the companions of Father Aulneau and young de la Verendrye, which were taken from Massacre Island and buried under the Chapel of the Fort. The skeletons 4 and 5 correspond visibly to the bodies of de la Verendrye and Father Aulneau, taken likewise from Massacre Island and interred in the Fort. First they were found without heads, because, at the massacre all the heads were severed from their bodies. Probably at the time of removing the remains neither the head of de la Verendrye nor that of Father Aulneau could be found or identified. It is quite likely that the Sioux took along that of de la Verendrye, the chief a hostile tribe. Perhaps that of Father Aulneau was decomposed more quickly on account of the blows received

3
2

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Vol 2 - p 132
1908

(3)
v

All the objects and remains found by the discoverers were transferred to St Boniface Man., where they are kept with all the honours due to the intrepid heroes, who distinguished themselves in the services rendered to their country and to their religion. Before the explorers departed from the memorable spot they transferred the cross erected on the North shore to the new site and corrected the inscription, which now reads: - "Fort St Charles, founded 1732, discovered 1908,"

For the people of Minnesota it is interesting to know, that the Fort St Charles was located in what is now territory of the State of Minnesota. It was built on the southern shore of Northwest Angle Islet, about two miles West of the Northeastern extremity of American territory, known as American Point. According to the estimate of Father Jones, S.J. its latitude is about $49^{\circ} 24' 26''$, and its longitude West of Greenwich about $95^{\circ} 4'$ or a few minutes farther West. And that locality is in the extreme Northern part of Beltrami County, which stretches into the Lake of the Woods and beyond the 49^{th} degree of latitude, the boundary line between the United States and Canada. West of the Lake of the Woods,

St Boniface
Les Cloches

971.27

S o l

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Deep

{ The lake of the Woods lies partly in Canadian and partly in American territory. The international boundary line, leaving Rainy River, runs through the lake, skirting the islands, up to the bottom of the bay of the Northwest Angle, thence back again directly south to the 49° parallel, thus cutting out from the Dominion of Canada a triangular corner inaccessible from the United States except by water. It is well to note this bit of territory, for there were found the ruins of the old Fort St Charles, with the precious remains of the martyred missionary, the Rev. Father Aulneau of the Society of Jesus and of his companions in misfortune.

St. Boniface
Les Cloches
p. 58



This was but one link in the chain of posts built by Laverendrye, and his successors, from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, to prevent the various tribes of the Northwest from carrying their furs to the English who were established on Hudson Bay. It appears to have served the purpose for about twenty years. But when, in 1752 the war broke out between England and France that was to convert New France into a British possession, the French voyageurs rushed to the defence of their country on the St Lawrence, and the west was

St Boniface
Les Choches

971.27

S 01

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(13)

deserted. The Northwest Company, which reigned supreme over that country toward the close of the eighteenth century, may have occupied Fort St Charles as a trading post. The condition of the ground when disturbed by our searching party showed signs of a fire that, at some time unknown to us, must have swept away the last vestige of this once important post: a new and luxuriant vegetation grew over its ruins, until at last no one could answer the question: Where did old Fort St Charles stand?"

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The 10th of July, 1908, found us, a party of nine determined explorers, well provided with tools and provisions, en route for the Northwest Angle, on board the gasoline launch Laverendrye, equipped for the purpose. The members of this expedition were the Rector of the College, the Rev J Dugas, S. J.; the Rev. J Blain, S. J., Professor of Physical Sciences; the Rev. J Paquin, S. J., Prefect of Studies; four scholastics of the

Fort St Charles CTR 27

St Boniface
Les Cloches

971.27

S 01

P-64

Society of Jesus & Leclair, & Filion,
A Leveillé, a A Dugre, professors at the
College; and two lay Brothers, H Garvais
and E Pagnin. I had the honor of com-
manding the expedition, having been
fitted for this kind of work by a long
experience on the mission of Lake Huron.

Our route lay off Kenora to the south-
westward through a veritable labyrinth of
islands, a distance of about forty miles.
We landed toward evening on American
Point, and pitched our tent in an open
spot, to guard as much as possible
against the swarms of mosquitoes
that ^{infect} those shores and makes life
almost unbearable to tourists at that
season. After a critical survey of a
few hours and some animated discus-
sion, we all agreed that it was time
to look elsewhere for the ruins of Fort
St Charles.

St Boniface
Les Cloches

971.27

Bo 1

P-65

Meanwhile I was lying prostrate under the tent nursing an injured foot; for the night before, whilst raising the tent, I had seriously hurt myself by a misdirected stroke of my axe and consequently I was unfit for work for several days. To while away the time, I was reviewing all the literature relating to Fort St Charles and Massacre Island, when my attention was drawn to a very precise declaration of Chief Powassan, made to the Archbishop in 1902 and thus describing the spot on the south shore of the bay, where ruins of chimneys had been seen in his youth: "They lay close to the shore, on a small cove, amid a bush of poplars a little to the west of the site on the north shore."

bloches

de

Saint

Boniface

Documents

publies

par la

Societe

his. de

St Boniface

Vol 1

Page 58

In 1731. Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de
Laurerendrye, a French Canadian, was
Commissioned by the Governor of New France,
M. de Beauharnois, in the name of his
Majesty, the King of France, to go and secure
for his country the fur trade of the territories
west of the Great Lakes, and meantime to
search for a passage by water to the
western sea. He reached the bay now called
the Northwest Angle, on the western shore of
the Lake of the Woods, in the summer 1732,
with his three sons, a Jesuit missionary, the
Reverend Charles Messaiger, and a company
of about fifty men, servants and soldiers.
On the south shore of bay. On a spot about
two miles west of American point, he erected
Fort St. Charles, to serve as a trading post
for the Cree Indians inhabiting the surrounding
country, and also as a defence against
possible attacks from hostile natives.

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In 1902 - the Archbishop of St. Boniface
interviewed two old Indian chiefs, Powassin
and Andagamigowinini, whose reserves
lie on the shores of the N. West Angle Bay, and they
very kindly gave all information they possessed

in regard to the site of the old Fort St. Charles. They declared that there were some mounds, with ³² square stones showing on the surface, on both shores of the bay, and that according to their traditions, these mounds were the ruins of fire places built by the French before the English had come in the country. ~~Also~~

Page
63.

The site lay on a slope, near the shore, with rock close to the surface, offering but little advantage for the building of a fort, yet, in a first moment of enthusiasm, Eureka was the prevalent verdict and a cross was erected on the spot, bearing the very premature inscription: "Fort St. Charles, built in 1732: discovered in 1902."

In 1907 the Archbishop again devoting a few days of relaxation to the search of this historical spot. Our work, however, was confined to a more thorough search of the site visited before in 1905. Another fireplace was unearthed close to the one already mentioned together with a few metallic articles, such as steel file, some iron nails, and the blade of a knife.

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In a letter written by Father Aulneau from Fort St. Charles, in 1736. We read "Fort St is about one league. (here are several words impossible to decipher) sixty to seventy leagues to the south. West on Lake of the woods. If Fort St. Charles is merely an enclosure made with four rows

of posts, from twelve to fifteen feet in height, in the form of an oblong square within which are a few rough cabins constructed of logs and clay and covered with bark, and we may gather from them both that the fort consisted of four double rows of posts, in the form of an oblong square, two sides at least measuring one hundred feet in length, that three of its buildings had chimneys: the four apartment bldg probably devoted to the soldiers and servants, the missionary's house, and the commander's house. ✕

Our efforts had been crowned with all possible success: we had finished our task. Before leaving the scene of our labors. We thought proper to mark the spot hallowed by the presence of a martyr's relics for over a century and a half. We therefore fetched the cross which had been placed on the supposed site of the fort on the North side, and raised it on the site of the Chapel with this inscription, Fort St. Charles, erected in 1732, discovered in 1908. Then we piled up all around it, in the form of a cone, the scattered stones of the main chimney. Finally the party was photographed at the foot of the cross, and after singing the Magnificat in thanksgiving, left for home, carrying along their treasures.

Arthur
Edward
Jones.

The Aulneau
Letter
Page 3.

The Aulneau Letter. (Fort St. Charles.) 34

Until 1890 little or nothing was known of Father Aulneau, even among the few who devote their time to Canadian or American Historical researches, save that a Jesuit of the name of Aulneau was massacred in company with Dr La Verandrye's son, at the Lake of the Woods in the beginning of June 1736.

Page 4

The present representative of the Aulneau family & possessor of these letters resides at his County seat at Bournezeau, Vendee, ^{France}. The historical treasure escaped destruction during the Vendean wars, when so many other historical relics were pillaged or destroyed by the revolutionary hordes, owing to the fact that the Aulneau manor was the headquarters of the Vendean staff.

Father Aulneau was born April 21, 1705 at Montier-sur-le-Hay in Vendee. His brother Charles was also a Jesuit, and his sister Therese was a nun of the "Union Chretienne de Fontenoy." He had still another brother whose health was always ^{poorly} weak. He became a Sulpician and entered at Angers in 1734. Several other ^{Jesuit} missionaries sailed for Canada with Father Aulneau. Besides the priest's there was a large number of sailors and soldiers - for the "Ruby" was a man of war. One hundred new recruits for the King's post in the Colony, and 80 smugglers, who had already languished a year in prison, but of whom no doubt, the colonial authorities were expected

Page 5, to make honest citizens. The latters were in a semi-nude and filthy condition. The boat was over crowded and an epidemic broke out.

He escaped, however, serious illness until he reached Quebec. Brother Jean Jod Boispineau came down as far as Cape Maillard in a launch to meet the ship, and took on Father Aulneau, who already showed the premonitory symptoms of the dread disease. After three days he was prostrated with the fever, and twice was at the point of death. God reserved him, however for a different kind of sacrifice. Father Boispineau, the skillful infirmarian, who according to the

Page 6

records of the time saved on different occasions so many other precious lives, treated him successfully, by careful nursing restored him to perfect health. Father Aulneau had landed on the 12th of August. The man of war with other passengers on board, reached Quebec only on the 16th, after a disastrous passage of eighty days, twenty men having been carried off by the contagion. As soon as he regained sufficient strength he began his fourth year of theology.))

The site of Fort St. Charles, built in 1732, named probably for Governor de Beauharnois has recently (1902) been identified. It was on the North bank of the Inlet of the Northwest Angle, just west of Famine (or Buckett) Island, in the lake of the woods. The remains of the party massacred on an island in the lake in 1736 that were transferred to Fort St. Charles were here discovered."

Minn. Archeological + Hist. Research survey project
Div. of State Parks of the Dept. of Conservation
Roadside Development Dept. of State Hwy. Dept.
Dept. of Anthropology of the Univ. of Minn.
I Hill-Lewis Archeological materials
II Historic sites
III Research + preparation of manuscript

The Canadian
West
by
Dugas
971.2
D878 OE
P. 34

1371

For 8 days we go down that (Rainy River) river for a distance of 240 miles, without meeting any rapids.

"Six miles from the entrance to this river, however, a little portage of about an acre must be made. On coming out of this River we enter the Lake of the Islands (Lac des Isles) otherwise called, by the Blackstone people, Lake of the Assiniboines.

~~This lake, on the south side, is lined with barren expanses, while on the north side it is covered with all kinds of wood and fringed with islands. At the end of this lake that flows into the Western Sea, according to the Indian reports?~~

~~The Indians had offered de Noyon to take him with them to the Western Sea.~~

The above memorandum proves, in the first place, that the route from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods, and even to the Winnipeg river had been explored long before the voyage of de la Verendrye. Moreover, it was the route which he, himself, followed on his way to the place where he built Fort St Charles and it was exactly the route taken, later on, by all the explorers in the service of the fur-trading companies.

The names which those early explorers gave

The Canadian

West
by
Dugas

P-34

P-43

T3M

Fort St Charles

CHR

38

to the rivers and portages have been almost all retained down to our time.

In the month of August, the explorers entered the great Lake of the Woods, which the Indians called the Lake of the Islands, on account of the multitude of islands that it contains. They coasted along the south shore of the lake, then turned westward towards the mouth of a small river that flows into the lake at a point known today as the North-West Angle.

De la Verendrye considered that a spot a suitable place for the construction of a Fort.

According to a letter of Father Auneau, who spent the winter of 1735 at the Fort, it was built on that little river, three miles from its mouth. That second Fort was called St Charles. De la Verendrye's plan was to constitute that place his base of operations between the East and the West.

P-44

40

Rainy R 49 N. as nearly on the line between Minnesota and
Manitoba: it is occupied by the Canadian Indian
reserves called Oyashawash and Powawassan;
it is also historically interesting as the site of
the old French Post built by Verendrye in 1732,
Fort St. Charles in honor of Charles de Beauharnois,
Governor of Canada, and abandoned before 1763.

West Dakota
County
E D Neill
976.8 D14
§ H 62

In the autumn of 1731, the party reached Rainy Lake, by the Nantonagan, or Groselliers river, now called Pidgeon. Father Messayer, who had been stationed on Lake Superior, at the Groselliers river, was taken as a spiritual guide. At the foot of Rainy Lake a post was erected and called Fort St Pierre, and the next year, having crossed Minnietie, or Lake of the Woods, they established Fort St Charles on its southwestern bank. Five leagues from Lake Wrennipeg they established a post on the Assinaboine. An unpublished map of these discoveries by De la Jemeraye still exists in Paris. The river Wrennipeg, called by them Maurepas, in honor of the minister of France in 1734, was protected by a fort of the same name.

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Fort St Charles

Ct Lincke 425

The holding of a state historical convention under the auspices of the Minn H Soc in Duluth on July 28 + 29 - 1922, was an unprecedented event, for no meeting outside Mpls or St Paul had been called previously by the Society in all the years since 1849, when the institution was founded.

The convention at Duluth was held upon the invitation of the Duluth Chamber of Commerce and members of the Society in that city.

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Resolved, That this convention indorse the proposition that the new county to be formed out of the northern part of Beltrami County be named Verendrye County in honor of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de la Verendrye, who laid the foundation of the fur trade in the region west of Lake Superior and who in 1732 established Fort St Charles within the boundaries proposed for the new county.

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After the adoption of the resolutions, Mr Shirk read an account of a visit to Old Fort Charlotte and announced that a preliminary examination already had been made of the remains of this historic post and that the Minn H Soc was planning to make a thorough examination and survey of the site in the near future.

Marc Lescarbot - reflects upon man; thus -
"Those men are indeed to be pitied who, having it in their power to live a quiet life in the country, cultivating the soil which yields such a good return, pass their lives in cities, bowing and scraping to each other, seeking excuses to go to law, worrying over this and over that, endeavoring to get the better of their neighbors, racking their brains until the day of their death how to pay the rent, how to dress in silk, and how to buy rich furniture; in short, how to cut a figure and feast on a little vanity, in which there never is any satisfaction. 'Poor fool,' says Hesiod, 'who little realize that half of these things possessed in peace and quietness is worth more than all of them together accompanied by so much vexation of spirit.'

Talmudists say to duration of world: -

" 2000 yrs of Chass
2000 " " Law
2000 " " of Messiah

Journals + Letters of Fort St Charles CTR
La Verendrye-Burpee

P-9- (Leaving Montreal on June 8, with three of his sons, Jean Baptiste,
1731 { Pierre, and Francois, and his nephew La Jemuraye, the explorer
1732 { reached Michilimackinac, where he was joined by Father
Mesurier, who was to act as Chaplain and missionary.
Coasting around Lake Superior, the party arrived at Grand
Portage on August 26, without misadventure. Here, however,
La Verendrye had trouble with his men, who showed a
mutinous spirit when confronted with the long series of
portages into the interior. Finally, as a compromise,
he sent La Jemuraye with a small party to build a
fort on Rainy Lake, while the remainder wintered at
Kaministiquia.

In the spring of 1732 La Verendrye rejoined La Jemuraye
at the new post, fort St Pierre, and the united expedition
pushed on to Lake of the Woods, where fort St Charles
was built, on the south shore ^{at the mouth of a river} of what many years later
was to become famous as the North-west Angle. Beauhar-
nois describes this fort as measuring one hundred feet
square with four bastions; there was a house for the
missionary, a chapel, a house for the commandant,
four main buildings with chimneys, a powder magazine,
and a store house. The fort was surrounded with a
double row of stakes, 15 ft high, and had 2 gates and
a watch-tower. Having completed his fort, La Verendrye
cleared the land near it and sowed it with wheat. Wild
rice grew in abundance, and fish + game were plentiful, so that
there was no anxiety as to provisioning the expedition while it
remained at fort St Charles.

Diet Am Hist

Fort St Charles

Oct

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1728

973.03

055

In 1728 Verendrye was stationed by the French government

of Canada at a small outpost on Lake Nipigon, here he heard from the Indians of a river flowing west into a salt sea. He knew nothing of the Rocky Mts and he conceived the idea of an overland commerce between Lake Superior and the Pacific Ocean to bring the goods of the Far East to France by way of Montreal. The cost of this route could, he was sure, be defrayed from the profits of his fur trade.

In his westward travels from Fort Pierre in 1738 La Verendrye first encountered Star Mound in Canada, then he also passed by Turtle Mts to the north of them, and continued westward to Antlers Creek, then due south to Minot ND + the Butte Hills and there are those who scoff at the idea that his sons ever saw the Missouri river, nor the Rockies.

Interwoven with such diverse interest as colonization, conquest and the fur trade.

Miss Valley
Fort Assiniboine
Narman Aphon
1908

46-8

Fort St Charles West of L Sup, which they
~~took~~ left by the route of Pigeon River and
the series of lakes & streams continuing west-
wardly, as rudely mapped by Ochagash, along
the present northern boundary of Minn.
Fort St Pierre, a trading post, was built
at the mouth of Rainy Lake; Fort St
Charles west of the L of N, on the southern
or Minn side of the bay or inlet leading
to its N W Angle, a point of great importance
later in treaties; and other forts or trading
posts on L Winnipeg and the Assiniboine
& Sask Rivers

M.H.

18:2336

In order to understand those who came,
one should recall, if only for a moment,
the larger story of the French in the West,
a story which for Minnesota alone has a
sweep of more than a century.

An interlude of more than a quarter of a
century separates Le Sueur, and when La
Verendrye made his bold plunge into the
hinterland of Lake Superior. It was a per-
iod of revived French interest in explora-
tion, and both men were looking for a way
to the shores washed by the Pacific.

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M H

Fort St Charles

C&R

52

Laur May

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Indeed, La Verendrye seems to have derived his inspiration from tales of western rivers told him by Indians at his Lake Nipigon post, notably by a certain Anshagah, who had journeyed a considerable distance into the West and had picked up rumors of a river that emptied its waters into a great salt sea and of armour-clad men who rode on horses.

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Fort St Charles was named in honor of the Canadian governor, Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois. -- The ^{fort} on the Lake of the Woods was surrounded by palisades, a double row of spruce, aspen, and oak stakes from 12 to 15 ft high. The east and west sides of the enclosure measured a 100 ft long; the other two sides, 60. There were 2 gates, one on the north side, which faced the lake, the other on the south, giving access to the neighboring forest; and there was also a watchtower. Inside the enclosure were houses for the commandant and the missionary, a chapel, four main buildings, a powder magazine, and a storehouse. -- La Verendrye's lodgings and the quarters for his men were evidently toward the rear of the fort, away from the lake.

(3M)

M H

Fort St Charles

CR

57

Quar. Mag

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A-237

3rd

The chapel seems to have ~~been~~ occupied much of the west side, with the priest's house in front of and to the north of it. The storehouse probably was near the gate leading to the lake.

The records leave no doubt that the fort was frequently the scene of much bustle and activity.

In the spring of 1733 La Jonneraye got ready to journey to Quebec to report upon the progress that had been made and to obtain fresh supplies. Three canoes were filled with furs collected during the winter and were sent to Lake Superior. These canoes returned in August laden with merchandise. As many as a hundred and fifty canoes arrived at the fort in one day, each carrying two or three Indians and loaded with meat, buffalo fat, bear oil, wild rice, and other things to trade. - One day some 300 warriors stopped on their way to attack the ^(L)Chippewa of Madeline Island, and the next day 500 more came on an expedition against the prairie Sioux. - After forts were established to the west and north, men were dispatched from Fort St Charles with supplies and merchandise for these river forts, or returned with furs to be packed for the journey eastward to Montreal.

Quar. Mag & Fur Trade

Fort St Charles

CDR

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M State Park
+ Recreational
Area Plan
1939 P 158
+
M History

1939

Recommendations of the Minn division of state parks and the department of conservation are incorporated in the Minn State Park + Recreational Area Plan. Included is a chapter on "Minn History" with lengthy quotations from Dr. Theodore C. Blegen's study outline, Minnesota: Its History and Its People. Maps locating "Archaeological Sites in Minnesota" and "Historical Trails and Sites" in the state accompany this chapter. Brief sketches of present state parks and recommendations for their improvement and classification are presented and suggestions are made for the preservation as parks of additional areas. Included among the latter are the site of Fort St Charles on the Lake of the Woods, the home of Ignatius Donnelly at Minniger, the site of the French fort and mission at Frontenac, and Herstrand Woods in the former Big Woods area.

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Fort Charles - as a State Memorial Park. Located in the Northwest Angle and vitally important in the historical background of Minnesota.
Land Area of park 200 acres

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Social life

Let us look in on a trading council held at Fort St Charles with a party of Cree and Assiniboin Indians in the winter of 1733-34. When the Indians arrived they saluted with three volleys the French flag that was flying over the fort, to which La Verendrye and the twenty Frenchman who were with him replied. Then the chiefs were allowed to enter the fort, where mutual compliments were paid and they were given tobacco and provisions. The next day the Indians presented the Frenchmen with gifts of beaver skins and about a hundred pounds of buffalo meat, and they in turn were given a sack of corn and a large supply of tobacco. "My children" the white leader said to them, "I will tell you tomorrow what are our Father's orders to me regarding you, and shall let you know his will."

On the next day, New Year's Day, 1734, the Indians thronged into the fort at ten o'clock in the morning. The Frenchmen had placed at the center of the grounds thirty pounds of tobacco, forty pounds of bullets, two hundred gunflints, twenty axes, sixty knives, sixty ramrods, sixty awls, and supplies of glass beads, needles, and vermilion. Before distributing these gifts, however, La Verendrye made a speech. "The great chief of the Frenchmen, he said, would be glad to learn of the Indian's visit. The French were numerous, there was no land unknown to them, they had only one

1733

1734

Winter time

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Chief, and La Perendrye was his mouth piece. If the Indians obeyed this chief, he would send many Frenchmen each year to satisfy their needs; but they in turn must bring in plenty of skins in exchange.

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(melted, having lived during a northern winter on the food furnished them by Lake and country. The problem of food was not the only serious one that faced white men in the primitive West. Sometimes there must have been grave danger from forest fires. Jean-

Pierre Aulneau, a young Jesuit Missionary who went out to Fort St Charles in 1735 to take the place of Father Mesurier, thus described his trip from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods: "I journeyed nearly all the way through fire and a thick stifling smoke, which prevented us from even once catching a glimpse of the sun".

In 1734 La Verendrye, worried over his debts and the demands of his creditors, journeyed the long way to Montreal and Quebec to re-enlist their support and to report to the governor. He returned to Fort St Charles with his youngest son, Louis Joseph, the following year. Early in 1736 he suffered a great loss in the death from exposure of his nephew La Jameraye, and before the year was over an even heavier blow fell upon him. Provisions, goods, and powder ordered by La Verendrye in Montreal the previous year had not yet arrived at the fort. They were badly needed, and the commander decided to send three well-manned canoes to meet the brigade that was on its way west. The plan was to secure some of the supplies and to hurry back to the fort with them. Jean, the explorer's eldest son, was selected to lead this relief expedition

1735

1736

Forest Fires

Dangers

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He took with him Father Aulneau and 19 Voyageurs. Not long after leaving the fort the members of this party beached their canoes on an island in the Lake of the Woods.

1736

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Massacre

Here they were surprised by a large Sioux war party, looking for revenge upon the French for maintaining friendly relations with their own bitter enemies, the Cree + Assiniboin, and all the white men were killed and beheaded. Eventually La Verendrye learned what had happened, and his heart was heavy with grief. "I have lost my son, the Red Father, and my Frenchmen, misfortunes which I shall lament all my life," he said. Later he had the bodies of his son and the priest and the skulls of the voyageurs buried beneath the chapel of Fort St Charles. He had the fort itself rebuilt and put in such a condition that four men could defend it against a hundred.

Burial

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Fort St Charles had been at first the western capital of the empire that La Verendrye was carrying out in the interior Northwest. After some years it seems to have yielded priority of importance to the newer posts established in the more strategic centers of the Canadian Northwest but it continued to be a scene of activity until the ~~early~~

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the British conquest, when it fades from the records. It was undoubtedly the longest occupied French post on Minnesota soil. For how many years the palisades and chapel and other buildings of the fort escaped the ravages of fire we do not know, but we do know that ultimately they were destroyed. As long ages passed the very site was forgotten. In more modern times, however, the story of Fort St Charles and other posts of the West began to arouse interest. La Verendrye himself has been accorded a high place in the history of Canada and the American Northwest; monuments in honor of his achievements have been erected in Quebec, Three Rivers, Winnipeg, and other Canadian Cities, as well as at the North Dakota village that bears his name; and his journals and letters have been studied by scholars with great care. In these vivid records the old fort comes to life again, the voyageurs ride western waters, and La Verendrye himself lives and breathes.

It is chastening to be obliged to add that all the material found by the excavators at Fort St Charles was stored in the old St Boniface College and lost or destroyed when that building was swept by a devastating fire 15 years ago.

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A few bones were indeed found after the fire, but even these could not certainly be identified with the relics from Fort St Charles, for nine students and one Jesuit Father were buried to death in the fire. Fortunately, however, the finds were recorded in pictures before this disaster occurred, and these pictures, together with a sketch plan of the fort drawn by the Rev Father Blain, S.J. are reproduced in a valuable bulletin issued by the Historical Society of St Boniface, supplementing a full report upon the excavation.

Such, in broad outline, is the story of the old French post at the Northwest Angle. Fort St Charles constitutes a significant and dramatic chapter not only in the history of Minnesota but in that of the entire American and Canadian Northwest, and the post commander is a major figure in the epic of the continent as the discoverer of the vast interior Northwest. It is time for American interest—local, state, and national, perhaps with Canadian co-operation—to express itself through the erection of a permanent historical marker on the site,

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Supplementing the wooden cross very appropriately placed there by the emissaries of the Historical Society of St Boniface. The area of the site should be re-excavated with a view to acquiring additional detailed information and to building at some future time a replica of the original fort. The fathers of the Catholic Church have done a pioneer service to history in making known and acquiring the site. I believe that either the United States or the State of Minnesota, in co-operation with local historical interests, should reserve this spot and an adjacent area for posterity as a permanent park set aside by virtue of its international historical importance. To the central interest of the old French fort is added that of the international boundary and of the water route itself, strategic in the days of the fur trade and in the more modern period of the Dawson land-and-water road from Fort Garry to Fort Arthur. Nor must we neglect the scenic and recreational point of view. The region is in fact a natural park, for Fort St Charles stood by the waters of a majestic international lake, studded with picturesque islands, its waters teeming with pike, whitefish, and the royal muskellunge, its irregular shores entrancing in their wild beauty. The primordial northern charm of the Lake of the Woods appeals today to Americans and Canadians as, long years ago, it stirred the sons of New France, whose chansons floated across its waves.

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June 1937 about 175 tourists embarked on the steamboat "Scout" and the launch "Resolute" for a voyage to the Northwest Angle and the site of Fort St Charles. Across Muskeg Bay and into the wide, ocean-like reaches of the south section of the lake they sailed, now and again catching a glimpse of a forested shore that might be either Canadian or American soil. It was almost noon before the rocky islands that are characteristic of the central and northern sections of the lake began to appear. Then the boats followed the international boundary, and the tourists could see American islands to the left and Canadian islands to the right. One mound of rock and pine to the east proved to be Massacre Island, where La Verendrye's eldest son, Father Aulneau, and 19 voyageurs were killed by Indians in 1736.

An occasional fishing station is the only sign of human life in this northern lake land, which has changed little since its shores echoed to the songs of La Verendrye's voyageurs. The tourists found that, despite the lapse of more than 2 centuries, the wilderness that the daring Frenchman penetrated is still a wilderness. Eventually a group of buildings and a

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Long dock that made landing possible came into sight. This was American Point on an island near the entrance to the North-west Angle Inlet, where Penasse, the Northernmost post office in the United States, is located. There the tourists paused for lunch. A high wind that rose in the late morning and continued through most of the afternoon made impossible the landing of the large boats on the inhospitable north shore of Magnuson's Island, where La Verendrye built Fort St Charles in 1732. In two small motor boats, about 25 of the tourists made the trip. Over rocks and through underbrush they pushed their way for a glimpse of the crude cross erected by members of the Historical Society of St Boniface who discovered and excavated the site in 1908. The experience of these few tourists made still more evident the need for a thorough re-excavation of the site.

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