

HERITAGE DESIGNATION REPORT ON THE NEW ONTARIO SOLDIERS' REUNION AND DISCOVERY WEEK MONUMENTS AND PLAQUES.

Location:

- Jesuit Missionary Memorial - in front of Precious Blood Cathedral, Queen Street East
- Capture of Michilimackinac, 1812 - Sault Ste. Marie Museum (the Post Office in 1923), Queen Street East and East Street
- Ojibways of Pawating - at the Royal Bank, Queen Street East and Brock Street
- Jean Nicolet, Explorer, 1634 - at the Bank of Commerce, Queen Street East (at Brock Street)
- Sault Du Gaston, 1622 - Scotia Bank building (Imperial Bank), Queen Street East and Spring Street
- Champlain's Map, 1632 - Cochrane Building, Queen Street East and Elgin Street
- Simon Francis Daumont, Sieur St. Lusson, 1671 - building at west corner of Queen Street East and Gore Street
- To the Voyageurs - cairn, west side Huron Street, south of Queen Street West
- Red River Expedition, 1870 - cairn, southeast corner Huron and Queen Street West
- North West Company, 1783 - St. Marys Paper Co. office building, Huron Street
- Hudson's Bay Company, 1821 - St. Marys Paper Co. office building, Huron Street
- Map of Louis Joliet, 1674 - F.H.Clergue Generating Station
- Brule Memorial, 1622 - Sault Locks
- First Sault Ste. Marie Canal - cairn, St. Marys Paper Co. office building
- Veterans' War Memorial - Gore and Wellington Streets

Reason for Designation:

These plaques and monuments were erected during the Soldiers' Reunion and Discovery Week held in Sault Ste. Marie between August 4 and 8, 1923. Its purpose was to commemorate the contribution of soldiers from "New Ontario" as Northern Ontario was known, in World War I and to mark the city's part in the history of Canada. Inspired by James Curran, the editor of the Sault Star, the event brought back to the Sault over 1,000 men from the District of Algoma who had served in the war, as well as a large number of visitors. Two monuments and eleven 'tablets' or plaques were put up under the auspices of the Sault Historical Society, the New Ontario War Memorial was unveiled, the cornerstone of the war

memorial on the Court House grounds was laid and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada erected a plaque at the site of the first canal in Sault Ste. Marie. Collectively, these reflect significant events in the discovery and early history of Sault Ste. Marie.

Historical Value:

The plaques and monuments commemorate a series of historical events ranging from the discovery of Sault Ste. Marie by Brule in 1622 to the Red River Expedition in 1870. As such, they form a reminder to citizens of the important role played by the area in the early history of Canada and are a reflection of growing pride in the city and nation epitomised by the Soldiers' Reunion and Discovery Week celebrations.

Architectural Value: Though individually interesting and attractive, the plaques and monuments do not possess particular architectural significance. Their value lies in the context within which they were created and promoted as part of a public celebration.

Contextual Value:

It was said that the participation of Canada in the First World War and the contributions of its military led to an increase in national pride and a renewed interest in, and discovery of, the country's early history.

The Reunion and Discovery Week celebrations were clearly intended to boost civic pride and to promote the city in the eyes of a wider region, as well as to recognise the sacrifices of the soldiers of "New Ontario". As J.W.Curran commented in the Sault Star on August 6,

"Discovery Week is celebrating much beside Brule. Perhaps the discovery that the Sault is something far better than a mere community of 22,000 is not its least interesting and important development."

And again,

"Here we will build a noble city of which it will be a badge of honor to be a citizen We shall also try and build a city that in the spirit of its people shall be a model to all communities."

Sault Ste. Marie, according to contemporary accounts, supported the events with enthusiasm. For example, it was reported in the Sault Star that the 200 soldiers and the Sudbury Regimental Band who arrived on the noon train on August 4 were

met by 200 cars and 2,000 citizens and that, in all, 10,000 visitors came to the city by train, boat or car, for Discovery Week. Visitors were accommodated in private homes, commercial establishments, schools and in tent cities set up at Bellevue Park and the Exhibition Grounds. One honoured guest, making a return to the city whose industrial base he founded, was Francis H. Clergue, praised in the Star as having the “genius for finance and organization that turned a despairing little community into a prosperous city.” Funds to support the events were raised by a variety of means, including the sale of Booster Club memberships, priced at between \$1 and \$5, which included a draw for a Maxwell, with a value of \$1,650. The cost of the tablets was donated by the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Sir Garnet Wolseley Chapter of the IODE, the Lake Superior Paper Co. (two tablets), the Imperial Bank of Canada (two tablets), the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Cochrane-Dunlop Hardware, the Great Lakes Power Co., and Dr. W.A.Adams. The \$2,000 cost of the monument to the early missionaries was provided by the Roman Catholic people of the Sault. With an eye to the bottom line, the Sault Star estimated the Discovery receipts to be \$25,000 as against costs of \$18,000!

The programme for Discovery Week was interesting and varied and reflected the tenor of the times.

Sunday, August 5: Memorial Sunday:

Unveiling of the New Ontario War Memorial at the corner of Gore and Wellington Streets, laying of the cornerstone of the War Memorial at the Court House grounds and the unveiling of the monument to the Jesuit missionaries at Sacred Heart Church (now named Precious Blood Cathedral) on Queen Street were highlights of this day. It was estimated that 20,000 people saw 3,500 walk in the Memorial parade.

Monday, August 6: Amiens Day

Amiens day was marked by “a grand military spectacle”. It was advertised as “A Real Attack on the Western Front” and took place at the Fair Grounds at 7.30 pm. A replica of the Snargate trench on the Vimy Ridge sector had been constructed and spectators were promised that a battalion of overseas veterans would attack the ‘enemy’ entrenchments, complete with rifle and machine gun fire, shrapnel, high explosives and bayonet assaults. Even a tank was to make an appearance. “War is Hell” claimed the advertisements, “Come and see a corner of it.”

Tuesday, August 7: Discovery and American Day

On this day a pageant depicting the arrival of Brule was enacted at the Canal

grounds and the memorial to Brule and Grenoble and the cairn at the North West Company lock were unveiled. There were two performances of 'Hiawatha' by the Ojibway Indians from Garden River.

Wednesday, August 8: Hiawatha Day

Discovery Week concluded with 'The Pilgrimage of the Tablets' when the eleven historical plaques were unveiled. There were two further performances of 'Hiawatha'

There were concerts, sports events and parades to round out the programme; street dancing took place every night (except Sunday)

In reviewing the programme for the event, Mayor Dawson wrote in an editorial on August 4:

"Sault Ste. Marie is glad to welcome today the returned soldiers who have gathered here for the New Ontario Reunion and also the other visitors who are here for Discovery Week.

The Sault feels that it has every reason to be proud of the fact that its recorded history dates further back than that of any other community in the province of Ontario. 300 years is a short period in the history of the world but it is a long period in the history of North America.

The Sault's strategic position as a centre of commerce has been maintained ever since its discovery in 1622 by Brule. Here was the headquarters for many years, of the coureurs de bois and the adventurous traders of the Indians. Here were the posts in the later 18th Century and the early 19th Century of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. Today this is the home of the immense steel and paper industry and with the development of the natural resources of the Algoma district, its importance has been increased.

We feel we are welcoming you to no mean city and want you to enjoy its advantages to the full. The latch string is out. The city is yours. "

Summary:

The monuments and plaques:

- are reminders of the long history of the Sault Ste. Marie and of a series of significant events,
- reflect the growth of civic pride and consciousness as the city emerged from the First World War and celebrated the Soldiers' Reunion and Discovery

Week.