INDIAN NAMES AND HISTORY OF THE SAULT STE. MARIE CANAL

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649248490

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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DWIGHT H. KELTON

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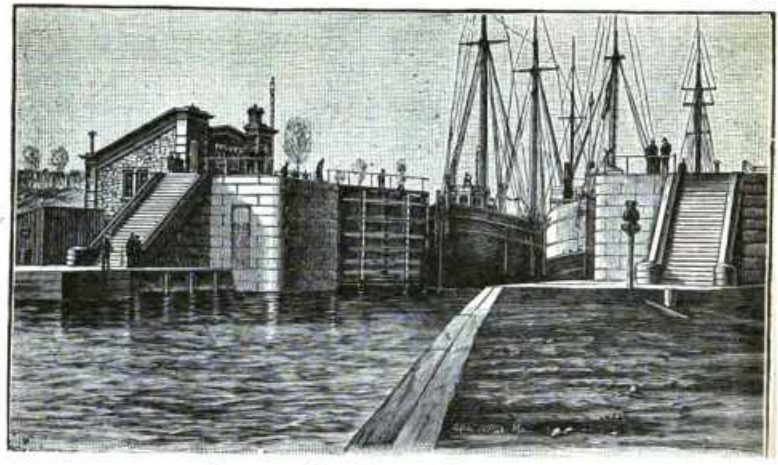
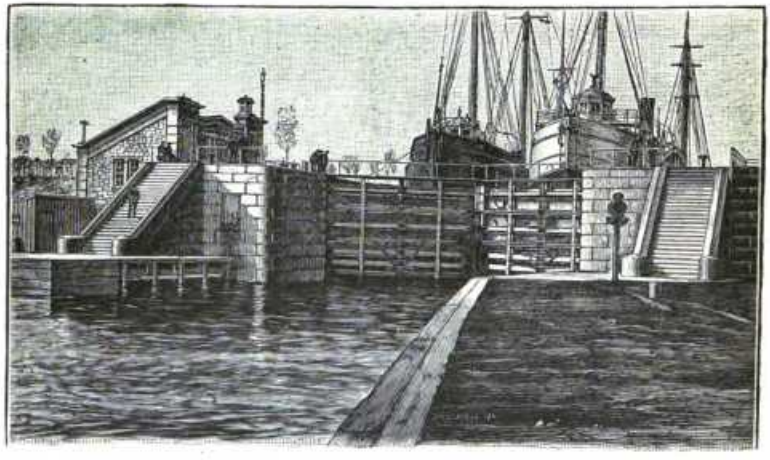


LOCK OF 1881.—LOWER GATES OPEN.



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Indian Names

AND

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OF THE

Sault Ste. Marie Canal

BY

DWIGHT H. KELTON, A. M.,

CAPTAIN U. S. ARMY.

AUTHOR OF ANNALS OF FORT MACKINAC. INDIAN NAMES OF PLACES NEAR THE GREAT LAKES.

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE WISCONSIN STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN FOLK-LORE SOCIETY.

DETROIT, MICH.
1889.

Printed by
Detroit Free Press Printing Co.

SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN.

Latitude 46° 30′ 10″ North.
Longitude 84° 22′ West of Greenwich.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Father Dablon named the mission established by him at the foot of the rapids in 1668, *Sainte Marie du Sault*, "Saint Mary's of the Rapids." *Saut*, is the modern spelling; "*Soo*," the popular pronunciation.

From the word *Saut*, "falls," or "rapids," the Ojibwa tribe obtained its French name, *Sauteux*. At first, those only whose home was at the "Soo" were called by that name; but by degrees it passed to all Indians of the same speech. The spelling "*Sauteur*," though very common, is wrong; this word is pronounced differently and denotes "a springer," or "a jumper."

The Indian name of the town or rapids is *Bawiting*, from *bawitig*, "rapids." This is an abbreviation of *bawitigweya*, "the river is beaten into spray." (Some Indians pronounce it *bagwiting*, "where the river is shallow.")

The Ojibwa band residing at the *Saut* were called *Bawitigówininiwag*, or *Bawiting-dázhi-ininiwag*, "Men of the Rapids."

The Indians have no general name for St. Mary's River; but have for the lakes into which it expands. The mouth of the river is called *Giwideoonaning*, "where they sail around a point."

Pawtucket, *Powatan*, *Pawcatuck*, *Pawtuxet* (Ojibwa *Bawitigosing*, "at the little falls"), and many other similar names in different dialects, are of the same root as *bawitig*, and denote a fall or rapids. The root is *baw*, "to scatter by striking."

Lake Superior is 602 feet above the level of the sea.

The only water-way between Lake Superior and the lower lakes is the Saint Mary's River, which flows from Lake Superior at its eastern extremity, and empties into Lake Huron 37 miles east of Mackinac Island. The channel between the two lakes is about 75 miles long, and was, before improvement, obstructed in many places, but especially at the Rapids of Saint Mary, 15 miles from the head of the river. In their natural state these rapids formed a barrier to transportation by water, and made a portage necessary.

The fall of the river from Lake Superior to the rapids of St. Mary is one tenth of a foot; in the half-mile stretch of these rapids the fall is 18 feet; and from the foot of the rapids to the Lake Huron level, which is reached at Mud Lake, 35 miles below, the fall is 2.3 feet.

In 1837, the governor of the newly admitted State of Michigan called the attention of the State legislature to the advisability of constructing a canal around the rapids at Sault Ste. Marie, and three years later the subject was brought up in the United States Senate. In spite of violent opposition a survey was ordered, which was made by officers of the Topographical Engineers, U. S. Army. In 1852, a grant of 750,000 acres of public land was made to the State of Michigan, from the proceeds of which the canal was to be built.

The grant was attended with the conditions that the canal be at least 100 feet wide and 12 feet deep; the locks at least 250 feet long and 60 feet wide; that work be begun within three years and finished within ten; that tolls be limited to the amount necessary to keep the canal in repair, after the expenses of construction had been paid; that Government vessels be free of tolls; and that the donated land should not be sold until the location had been established and filed.

The State accepted the conditions and the grant, and handed the latter over to a private company, which undertook to build the canal for the proceeds of the land.

OLD CANAL AND LOCKS.

(1855.)

Ground was broken for the work on June 4, 1853. The certificate of its completion was signed by the commissioners on May 21, 1855. The first boat, the steamer Illinois, Captain Jack Wilson, was locked through on June 18, 1855.

The canal was 5,400 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 12 feet deep at an average stage of water. The banks had a slope of 1 vertical to 2 horizontal, and were revetted with stone except in rock cuttings.

The locks were at the eastern or lower end, and were two in number, placed one in immediate prolongation of the other. Each lock was rectangular in plan, 350 feet long by 70 feet wide and 24 feet 8 inches deep, with a depth of 11½ feet of water over the miter-sills, and a lift of 9 feet. The capacity of each lock was 281,750 cubic feet.

The walls were of cut limestone from Marblehead, Ohio, and Malden, Ontario, backed with stone from Drummond's Island, Saint Mary's River.

Water was admitted to the locks through openings in the leaves of the upper gates, by means of butterfly valves. The valves were worked with a rack and pinion. Seven minutes were required to fill the upper lock-chamber, and fourteen to fill the lower. The volume of water in the upper lock when filled to the level of the canal above, amounted to 3,757,000 gallons. The water was let out of the locks by means of valves in the lower lock-gates. Fourteen minutes were required to empty each lock-chamber. Five minutes were required to open or close the lock-gates. The gates were operated by means of a boom, worked by a hand-capstan.

The dimensions of the locks permitted the passage at one time of a tug and three vessels of the size then usual.

There was a guard-gate of the ordinary mitering pattern 2,100 feet above the upper lock-gates.

The original survey was made by Capt. Augustus Canfield, Topographical Engineers, U. S. A.

The entire cost of the canal was $999,802.46.

The last boat, the steam tug Annie Clark, Captain Edward Martin, was locked through Nov. 2, 1886.

CANAL IMPROVEMENTS AND NEW LOCK.

(1881.)

The first contract for the improvement of the canal, which resulted in its enlargement and the building of the lock of 1881, was dated October 20, 1870; the first stone of the lock (the largest ship canal lock in the world) was laid July 25, 1876, and the first boat, the steamer City of Cleveland (now City of Alpena), Captain Albert Stewart, locked through on September 1, 1881.

The length of the canal is 7,000 feet. Its width is variable. The least width is 108 feet, at the movable dam. The depth of water is 16 feet. Vessels are protected against injury from the rocky sides of the canal by a revetment of pier work, the general height of which is 4 feet above mean water level. The material is pine timber 1 foot square. There are 12,000 linear feet of wooden piers, and 3,100 linear feet of masonry connected with the canal.

LOCK.

The chamber of the lock is 515 feet long between the gates, 80 feet wide, narrowed to 60 feet at the gates; the depth is 39½ feet. Its capacity is 1,500,000 cubic feet. The depth of the water on the miter-sills is 17 feet; the lift of the lock is 18 feet. The volume of water in the lock chamber when filled to the level of the canal above, amounts to 9,888,000 gallons. The