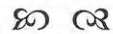


# AMERICAN JOURNEYS COLLECTION



The Pageant of 1671

DOCUMENT NO. AJ-050



WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
DIGITAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES



|| [www.americanjourneys.org](http://www.americanjourneys.org) || [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org) ||  
© Wisconsin Historical Society 2003

## The Pageant of 1671

### CONTENTS

Introduction .....	213
Talon's Plans; the Sieur de St. Luson .....	217
The Pageant at the Sault.....	218

AMERICAN JOURNEYS COLLECTION

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
DIGITAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

## INTRODUCTION

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY France had imperial ambitions. Louis XIV. and his great minister Colbert aimed not only at domination in Europe, but at empire in North America. At the instigation of the intendant, Jean Talon, the royal court determined to lay claim to all the territory discovered by French enterprise and all the valleys traversed by French priests or traders, and to assert supremacy over all the aborigines dwelling therein. In the summer of 1670 plans were set on foot for a pageant of possession to impress the Indian tribesmen, and to proclaim to the world the right of France to the great interior of the North American Continent.

The site chosen was the Jesuit mission of Sault Ste. Marie, the centre of missionary enterprise in the Northwest, whose location at the head of the Great Lakes made it appropriate and commanding. Talon, newly returned from a visit to France, brought orders for the arrangement of the pageant. The titular head of the expedition was a French soldier of fortune who had crossed to Canada on the same vessel with the intendant. Simon François Daumont, Sieur de St. Lussou, owes his place in history to the memory of this one event. Upon its conclusion he was sent with dispatches to the King, and never returned to the New World.

The other chief actors in the pageant, however, were men of experience in Western exploration, and of skill in the management of Indians. Nicolas Perrot, lately arrived at Quebec (1670) after five years among the tribes around Green Bay, was chosen translator and Indian agent for the expedition; Louis Jolliet, soon to start on his famed voyage of dis-

covery, likewise accompanied *Sieur de St. Lussou*; while at Sault Ste. Marie four Jesuits of great experience in Indian affairs awaited the cortège. Contrary to the usual custom of inland voyaging the expedition left Montreal in the autumn; therefore the winter was passed at Manitoulin Islands, and in the early spring runners were sent out to notify the Northern tribes to come and participate in the proposed ceremony. Perrot himself went to Green Bay, whence he accompanied to the designated place chiefs of the Potawatomi, Menominee, Winnebago, and Sauk Indians—those of the other bay tribes attending only by proxy. Upon Perrot's arrival early in June at the Jesuits' house at the Sault, he found delegates from fourteen different tribes assembled, awaiting the pleasure of the King's ambassador.

In solemn conclave the ceremony took place in the lovely mid-June of the Northern lakes, beside the foaming waters of the straits, with dark pines and hemlocks standing attentive. *St. Lussou*, clad in the gorgeous uniform of a French officer of the seventeenth century, ascended a small height on which the cross and the arms of New France had been planted. Jesuits and voyageurs gathered around him while with bared head and flashing sword he announced the purpose of the concourse, amidst the hymns of the missionaries, the whoops of the savages, and the salvos of musketry from all assembled. With quaint old mediæval rites of twig and turf, the King's representative proclaimed thrice in a loud voice the annexation by the "Most High, Most Mighty and Most Redoubtable Monarch Louis the XIV. of the Name, Most Christian King of France and Navarre" of all countries discovered or to be discovered between the Northern, Western, and Southern Seas—a realm that in all its length and breadth included an empire many times the size and richness of the home land of France and Navarre. After the ceremony had been carefully explained to the assembled Indians papers were

drawn up and signed by all the white men present. Father Allouez then arose and in fitting phrase adapted to Indian understanding declared to the assembled chieftains the greatness and power of the sovereign under whose dominion they had passed. St. Lusson followed with a martial address, and the ceremony terminated with a huge bonfire, which lighted the depths of the dark wilderness with its fitful gleams—strange emblem of the brief sovereignty of France in the New World, that flamed so brightly for a time, and so quickly died away.

There are three contemporaneous accounts of the great pageant at Sault Ste. Marie. Of these the first is the official state paper or minutes of the ceremony. This was published in Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, I. 96–99. It appeared in English form in the *New York Colonial Documents*, IX. 803–804, from which it was reprinted in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XI. 26–28. This records the names of the tribes whose representatives were present, and gives a résumé of St. Lusson's speech and the signatures of the participants—the Jesuits, Perrot, and Jolliet, and the fifteen voyageurs and soldiers who accompanied the expedition.

The second account is that of Nicolas Perrot in his *Mémoire*, first published in France in 1868, first translated in full in E. H. Blair, *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi and the Great Lakes Region* (Cleveland, 1911). Perrot relates how Talon enlisted his services for the expedition in the summer of 1670, and describes the winter passed on Manitoulin Island where the Chippewa of the vicinity snared more than two thousand four hundred moose. He tells of his spring journey to the Bay of Puans (Green Bay) partly by sledge and partly by canoe, describes the summoning of the tribes, and the departure of the delegation for Sault Ste. Marie, gives a brief notice of the ceremony, and concludes in story-tellers' fashion, "After that, all those peoples returned to their re-

spective abodes, and lived many years without any trouble in that quarter.”

The third contemporary account, which we have chosen to present here, is given by the Jesuit missionaries in part third of the *Relation* of 1670–1671. This was published in Paris at the Cramoisy shop in 1672; the English translation that we reproduce is from Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, IV. 105–115.

## THE PAGEANT OF 1671

*Taking Possession, in the King's Name, of all the Countries Commonly Included under the Designation Outaouac.*

It is not our present purpose to describe this ceremony in detail, but merely to touch on matters relating to Christianity and the welfare of our missions, which are going to be more flourishing than ever after what occurred to their advantage on this occasion.

When Monsieur Talon, our intendant, returned from Portugal, and after his shipwreck, he was commanded by the King to return to this country; and at the same time received his Majesty's orders to exert himself strenuously for the establishment of Christianity here, by aiding our missions, and to cause the name and the sovereignty of our invincible monarch to be acknowledged by even the least known and the most remote nations. These commands, reinforced by the designs of the minister, who is ever equally alert to extend God's glory, and to promote that of his King in every land, were obeyed as speedily as possible. Monsieur Talon had no sooner landed than he considered means for insuring the success of these plans, choosing, to that end, Sieur de Saint Luson, whom he commissioned to take possession, in his place and in his Majesty's name, of the territories lying between the east and the west, from Montreal as far as the South Sea, covering the utmost extent and range possible.

For this purpose, after wintering on the Lake of the Hurons, Monsieur de Saint Luson repaired to Sainte Marie du Sault early in May of this year, 1671. First, he summoned the surrounding tribes living within a radius of a hundred leagues, and even more; and they responded through their ambassadors, to the number of fourteen nations. After making all necessary preparations for the successful issue of the whole undertaking to the honor of France, he began, on June fourth<sup>1</sup> of the same year, with the most solemn ceremony ever observed in these regions.

<sup>1</sup> This day is incorrect; according to the official minutes the ceremony occurred on June 14, 1671.

For, when all had assembled in a great public council, and a height had been chosen well adapted to his purpose, overlooking, as it did, the village of the people of the Sault, he caused the Cross to be planted there, and then the King's standard to be raised, with all the pomp that he could devise.

The Cross was publicly blessed, with all the ceremonies of the Church, by the superior of these missions; and then, when it had been raised from the ground for the purpose of planting it, the *Vexilla*<sup>1</sup> was sung. Many Frenchmen there present at the time joined in this hymn, to the wonder and delight of the assembled savages; while the whole company was filled with a common joy at the sight of this glorious standard of Jesus Christ, which seemed to have been raised so high only to rule over the hearts of all these poor peoples.

Then the French escutcheon, fixed to a cedar pole, was also erected, above the Cross; while the *Exaudi*<sup>2</sup> was sung, and prayer for his Majesty's sacred person was offered in that far-away corner of the world. After this, Monsieur de Saint Lussan, observing all the forms customary on such occasions,<sup>3</sup> took possession of those regions, while the air resounded with repeated shouts of "Long live the King!" and with the discharge of musketry, to the delight and astonishment of all those peoples, who had never seen anything of the kind.

After this confused uproar of voices and muskets had ceased, perfect silence was imposed upon the whole assemblage; and Father Claude Allouez began to eulogize the King, in order to make all those nations understand what sort of a man he was whose standard they beheld, and to whose sover-

<sup>1</sup> This hymn, *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt*, now a part of the Roman Breviary, was written by Venantius Fortunatus in the latter part of the sixth century.

<sup>2</sup> The twentieth Psalm.

<sup>3</sup> According to the official minutes these customary ceremonies consisted in shouting aloud three times, "In the name of the Most High, Most Mighty and Most Redoubtable Monarch Louis, the Fourteenth of the Name, Most Christian King of France and Navarre, we take possession of the said place of St. Marie of the Falls as well as of Lakes Huron and Superior, the island of Caientonon (Manitoulin) and of all other countries, rivers, lakes and tributaries, contiguous and adjacent thereunto, as well discovered as to be discovered, which are bounded on the one side by the Northern and Western Seas and on the other side by the South Sea including all its length and breadth; Raising at each of the said three times a sod of earth whilst crying *Vive le Roy*."



eignty they were that day submitting. Being well versed in their tongue and in their ways, he was so successful in adapting himself to their comprehension as to give them such an opinion of our incomparable monarch's greatness that they have no words with which to express their thoughts upon the subject.

"Here is an excellent matter brought to your attention, my brothers," said he to them, "a great and important matter, which is the cause of this council. Cast your eyes upon the Cross raised so high above your heads: there it was that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, making himself man for the love of men, was pleased to be fastened and to die, in atonement to his Eternal Father for our sins. He is the master of our lives, of Heaven, of Earth, and of Hell. Of Him I have always spoken to you, and His name and word I have borne into all these countries. But look likewise at that other post, to which are affixed the armorial bearings of the great captain of France whom we call King. He lives beyond the sea; he is the captain of the greatest captains, and has not his equal in the world. All the captains you have ever seen, or of whom you have ever heard, are mere children compared with him. He is like a great tree, and they, only like little plants that we tread under foot in walking. You know about Onnontio, that famous captain of Quebec. You know and feel that he is the terror of the Iroquois, and that his very name makes them tremble, now that he has laid waste their country and set fire to their villages. Beyond the sea there are ten thousand Onnontios like him, who are only the soldiers of that great captain, our Great King, of whom I am speaking. When he says, 'I am going to war,' all obey him; and those ten thousand captains raise companies of a hundred soldiers each, both on sea and on land. Some embark in ships, one or two hundred in number, like those that you have seen at Quebec. Your canoes hold only four or five men, or, at the very most, ten or twelve. Our ships in France hold four or five hundred, and even as many as a thousand. Other men make war by land, but in such vast numbers that, if drawn up in a double file, they would extend farther than from here to Mississaugenk,<sup>1</sup> although the distance exceeds

<sup>1</sup> The present island of Mackinac.

twenty leagues. When he attacks, he is more terrible than the thunder: the earth trembles, the air and the sea are set on fire by the discharge of his cannon; while he has been seen amid his squadrons, all covered with the blood of his foes, of whom he has slain so many with his sword that he does not count their scalps, but the rivers of blood which he sets flowing. So many prisoners of war does he lead away that he makes no account of them, letting them go about whither they will, to show that he does not fear them. No one now dares make war upon him, all nations beyond the sea having most submissively sued for peace. From all parts of the world people go to listen to his words and to admire him, and he alone decides all the affairs of the world. What shall I say of his wealth? You count yourselves rich when you have ten or twelve sacks of corn, some hatchets, glass beads, kettles, or other things of that sort. He has towns of his own, more in number than you have people in all these countries five hundred leagues around; while in each town there are warehouses containing enough hatchets to cut down all your forests, kettles to cook all your moose, and glass beads to fill all your cabins. His house is longer than from here to the head of the Sault," that is, more than half a league, "and higher than the tallest of your trees; and it contains more families than the largest of your villages can hold."

The Father added much more of this sort, which was received with wonder by those people, who were all astonished to hear that there was any man on earth so great, rich, and powerful.

Following this speech, Monsieur de Saint Lusson took the word, and stated to them in martial and eloquent language the reasons for which he had summoned them, and especially that he was sent to take possession of that region, to receive them under the protection of the great King whose panegyric they had just heard, and to form thenceforth but one land of their territories and ours. The whole ceremony was closed with a fine bonfire, which was lighted toward evening, and around which the *Te Deum* was sung to thank God, on behalf of those poor peoples, that they were now the subjects of so great and powerful a monarch.