

"It is equally a passion among Canadians to burn gunpowder, but I think we win it back on the day of action by the accuracy with which they shoot."

-Vaudreuil, 1758

They might have been just Canadiens or habitants to some, voyageurs or engages to others and yet many times they were called coureur des bois as they traveled the Pays d'en Haut in search of adventure.

The trader from Fort Rouillé was at Fort Niagara in early July to inspect the many fusils that were ordered and delivered from Saint-Étienne to this fort for trade to the sauvage. Many trade guns came from this far away factory town in France to be delivered in North America for the trade. He had been studying these arms for many years and had a reputation as one who knew these sorts of guns and was consulted by many to be sure of their quality and craftsmanship.

The Boulanger moved his goods throughout the day and talked of the many fine hunting grounds in between his home at Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit and his place of rendezvous Fort Michilimackinac.

The summer months were a fine time to meet and plan and dream of the many opportunities that these waterways provided. Sitting at the fort at Niagara one could gaze across the lake to see ones home and yet see beyond to new voyages.



The land in between the forts was open to explore, the peoples of the lakes traveled through, but did not stay.



Map by Sieur D'Anville. Greatly Improved by Mr. Bolton. Engrav'd by R.W. Seale. MDCCLII

Upon arriving to our destination many loud gunshots could be heard. The engage who had grown up in Québec but had been many years in at Fort Rouillé had not heard so much gunfire without a battle going on, but I assured him that it was late on Sunday and there must be some local habitants who were also traveling this area and were practicing their marksmanship. This Canadien was not used to the miliciens firing so many rounds, but I assured him in was the usual custome in our territory. I pulled a map from my slit pouch of this region and we began our découverte.



It had not rained much on our way north, but rain must soaked the place we stayed for dry wood and tinder was hard to find in the place we decided to rest. We cursed ourselves and the many birch trees we passed on our way. Their bark was peeling and waiting for us to take it, and yet we continued walking by without a care in the world. Oh, how that fire would of started so much simpler with even a hand full of bark that we carelessly passed by. Yet the shelter was secure and the beaver provided much enjoyment, jumping into and out of the lake with their loud splashing. The morning came soon and we realized that our load would be lessened since we consumed much of the weight.



We ate a simple meal of lyed corn and some dried berries, cleaned our kettles and were on our way.



The lake we had come to seek was only a few miles away, and the trail was easy to walk. Upon arriving we found an abundance of dry wood, good tinder and many beavers. The shore was mucky and I sank into the lake trying to get water, spilling all the good water I had found, but the laugh I had was worth it.



Dark and grey skies hung all day but it never smelled of rain. It was the sort of day the makes grown men want to nap like infants. The animals thought the same and never showed themselves and so we took to a large dead tree and practiced our skills with our fusils. After many rounds we thought ourselves good at making the mark and wander back to camp. Night fell quickly.



I had brought some local peas that the habitants grow at the fort, mixed in with some of the food of the sauvage- beans, corn and wild rice. All mixed together with some pork lard and onions and bread that I made before the journey made for well-spirited meal!



The full moon rose and the animals came out, except for us who under our prelat went fast asleep..... until something much larger then a beaver began splashing in the lake! “wake up Boulanger, it is a bear” said the engage. “Load your fusil, I am going back to bed” said Boulanger.

Thank Ste. Anne they were both alive in the morning to cook up the rest of their lard. Having watched the women cook at the fort the baker knew a few tricks to make for a delicious meal. A hot kettle with lard starting to melt would go faster if you added a touch of brandy to the pot and then once heated set the alcohol on fire. They called it flambé. The fat melted quickly and to this they add a handful of maple sugar. The sauce was perfect to soak the bits of bread into.





Packed up, the pair found large birch trees to peel to bring home pieces to make mukuks and searched out tinder fungus to make fires on their further voyages.



On the trail back they stared at their first nights camping ground from the opposite side of the lake. What fantastic land! Traveling a bit further they met some of the local habitants who had resided in these grounds for a generation. The father was armed with a pistol strapped to his side and the son seemed that he had been born not quite right. They inquired about our travels and were happy to see fellow traveling in this land. I told him that I had been here before and had a map and he felt comfortable then to ask how many bear we had seen. “We thought we heard one last night” we said, and he chuckled saying that there so many bear out here that you were sure to of have heard them. Then he asked if we saw any large cats, as he had in the past. We told him no, we did not, but the land was sure to be big enough for cats to hide. And then he asked if we had seen anything strange. “Strange, like what?” we asked. “Once I was walking just north of where you stayed and I saw a track, but only one, of an animal or something that left a print this long with claws or toes or something” and he held his hand out so that it was 16 pounces long. I said the sauvage talk of such an animal. “I don’t know if I believe, but I can’t say I don’t believe” he said, “I can’t say, but I am sure of what I saw, and that creature only left one track, I tried to find more all over the area that day and it only left that one track.” We wandered back down the trail, keeping our eyes open. The pays den haute is always open for a new découverte.

