

FRENCH AND INDIAN FOOTPRINTS AT THREE RIVERS ON
THE ST. JOSEPHBY BLANCHE M. HAINES, M. D.¹

The St. Joseph river, now "vexed in all its seaward course with bridges, dams and mills," no longer a navigable stream, (except in the eyes of the law), was in the time of the first American settlers in the region, in the early 1830's, the shipping medium for Three Rivers and a considerable territory in St. Joseph and neighboring counties. Three Rivers was practically the head of navigation for the larger crafts. Steamboats came to Knapp's ripples at the southern edge of the city, but found difficulty in crossing the shallow water at that point. The first merchants shipped the products of the country by flatboats and

¹Read at the annual meeting, June 7, 1910.

rafts to St. Joseph on Lake Michigan, received there a return cargo of merchandise, which had come around the lakes, then poled the load up the "St. Joe" to Three Rivers, where it was discharged.

Before the American settler came, in the era of the earliest French explorers and even before the Gallic foot had left its imprint on our territory; while yet the aboriginal tribes, alone, traversed this country, the River St. Joseph was the highway, the medium of rapid transit, the short cut, the "Air Line" across southern Michigan. The favored route from Detroit to Chicago and the Illinois.²

Primitive modes of travel and transportation were walking and canoeing. Hence it is small wonder that canoeing, being easier and quicker, should have been preferred and the waterways of the new world assumed great importance. Among these waterways, the St. Joseph though only one hundred and eighty miles long, must be reckoned as important. The character of its watershed made it particularly rich in portages.³ The St. Joseph-Kankakee,⁴ portage connecting the waters of the St. Lawrence with the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, became a much used portage by both the French and Indians, after La Salle had made it famous in his trips to the land of the Illinois and the Mississippi River. The Wabash-St. Joseph⁵ portage established a quick communication between Fort St. Joseph and Fort Vincennes, also between the Great Lakes and the Ohio. Short portages, from the head waters of the St. Joseph connected with the Maumee and the Raisin rivers, cutting the long way from Detroit to Chicago or from Montreal to Fort St. Joseph, a more important point than Chicago in the time of the French occupation. Another portage to the Kalamazoo river gave the name Portage to the lake and river of that name, which flows into the St. Joseph at Three Rivers.

It scarcely needs emphasis that at the confluence of the three rivers, the Rocky, the St. Joseph and Portage, where Three Rivers City is located was a natural point of advantage and interest when waterways were highways.

From the point, where the three streams merge into one, a branch led off to a portage. The head of navigation for large crafts was there also. The three streams with their branches gave rich returns to the

²*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* Vol. XXXIV, p. 67.

³Reuben Gold Thwaites; *France in America*.—"From Lake Michigan, the river St. Joseph might be ascended to its source, and a carrying trail found, by which the Maumee could be reached and descended to Lake Erie, thus cutting across the base of the great Michigan peninsula; or, at the great bend of St. Joseph (South Bend, Indiana), a marshy trail led over to the Kankakee, which pours into the Illinois, itself an affluent of the Mississippi."

⁴Francis Parkman; *La Salle*. Page 151.

⁵*Michigan as Province, Territory and State*. Page 162, Vol. 2. "This was a portage of considerable importance between the most southerly bend of the St. Joseph and the most northerly bend of the Wabash."

hunter of furs. Now that the beaver are gone, the "oldest inhabitant"⁸ still tells of a large beaver dam, in pioneer times, on the Portage in the northern limits of the city. The modern fur buyer recognizes Three Rivers as a good market, in which to purchase raw furs and many Three Rivers muskrats furnish the pelts for my lady's coat of "River mink" or furs of "River sable" and still the Three Rivers "Enfants du diable" of the French (skunks) yield up their skins to form the garniture of "marten" on my lady's gown of brocade. This region, still interesting to the fur buyer, was much more so, when the aristocrats, among the fur bearing animals, dwelt in our marshes, rivers, and forests. The Indians, certainly knew of these furry denizens of early Three Rivers. La Salle⁷ bore testimony to the abundance of game in the locality and Father Marest⁸ to the abundance of animals in the valley of the St. Joseph. The probabilities are that French traders bartered for furs at this point very soon after 1679.

When Jacob McInterfer's family came to Three Rivers in 1829, and George Buck's in 1830, they found a French trading post,⁹ consisting of a double log house, on the west side of the St. Joseph River in what is now known as Third ward, and about where the Hike Millard property is located, now owned and occupied by Don Wolf. This post continued to do business, until about the time the mill was built on the Rocky River which was in 1836 when the traders disappeared.

The only other family here at that time, when these first settlers came was Cushaway, who lived also in third ward near Knapp's ripples, just south of the Michigan Central Railroad and near the site of the house now owned and occupied by Sidney Boyer. Cushaway also went away about the time the post did, possibly finding advancing civilization not to his liking. Cushaway was a white man, but dark. It is thought that he was a Frenchman or possibly a half-breed. We are unable to decide that he, himself, was Cush-ee-wee or that he was related to Cush-ee-wee,¹⁰ the hereditary Indian chief of the Potawatamies of the Nottawa-seepe reservation, whom Pierre Morrean, a Frenchman, supplanted as chief of that tribe after his marriage with an Indian woman

⁸Mr. George Buck, son of George Buck, a settler who came in 1830, to Three Rivers, tells of this beaver dam.

⁷Parkman; *La Salle*. Description of La Salle's trip across southern Michigan in March, 1680. Page 180. "On the twenty-eighth, we began to fare better, meeting a good deal of game, which after this rarely failed us."

⁸*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls. (Cadillac Papers)* Vol. XXXIII. Father Marest wrote to the Marquis de Vaudreuil, on the 4th of June, 1708. "The men who arrived today from the Bay, (Green Bay) say that the Poutouatamis who remained there, and with them several Sakis, were to go and rejoin at the St. Joseph River with Ouilamez, where the land is excellent and *there are animals in abundance.*"

⁹Testimony of George Buck (see above) and Mrs. Lewis Salsig, daughter of Jacob McInterfer, who was the first American settler in Three Rivers, date of settlement 1829.

¹⁰*St. Joseph Co. History.*

of the tribe. Like the Arab, these early Frenchmen folded their tents and stole away at the approach of civilization. No descendants remain to tell the tale of their lives at Three Rivers. No old settler can give us even their names. They were the "Frenchman" or the "French Traders." So far as local history is concerned, they came from and returned to the unknown. They were here in 1829. They were gone in 1836. We are unable to say definitely, how many years the French had made Three Rivers a rendezvous, but certainly many years before 1829. Tradition¹¹ says that an Indian mission was established by the Jesuits, near the present concrete bridge on Flint ave. and St. Joe street over the St. Joseph River, probably as early as 1680 and that Father Allouez may have been the founder. Nothing of chronological significance or certitude was known about these early French until within five years. August 25th, 1905, some men who were digging in the King gravel pit, which is situated on the west bank of the St. Joe, midway between the sites of the old French trading post and the Cushaway's, unearthed a skeleton and three crescent shaped silver pieces. Later Mr. David C. Beerstecher of Three Rivers made some excavations near the pit. He found six skeletons and many interesting objects. The following is his *Account of his Excavations*:

"The first discovery of the Indian burying ground was made August 25, 1905, by H. B. King, near the St. Joe river. Place known as the King Bros. gravel pit, which was once a beautiful bluff. The skeleton of the body found, was supposed to be that of the miner as there was a lamp and a metal shade to cap found with same. On a portion of the lamp the word "Montreal" is engraved. A deer and bird are engraved on the shade of the cap which is solid silver. This was all found six feet deep.

"July 5, 1908, I went to the said gravel pit and made several discoveries myself. After laboring hard for some time, I found an old brass kettle with copper ears, which had been made in a very crude way. A few days later, H. B. King found cover for same—that was made of brass with iron fastening on top to handle. This was five feet under ground.

"The next discovery I made was August 5, 1908. I unearthed two skeletons, one of which must have been a very large man, perhaps a chief, I found by laying the bones out, it to be a little over six feet.

¹¹Father Kaufmann, in St. Edward's Parish, Mendon, Mich. and missions. "The Chicago Historical Society claims that the Recollect Father, Louis Hennepin, the companion of La Salle, came up the St. Joseph river as far as where Three Rivers is now situated. Tradition has it that an Indian mission was established and for a long time flourished close by the concrete bridge in Three Rivers. This mission may have been founded by Father Allouez, who came to Niles in 1680 and labored along the St. Joseph river till his death in 1690."

The present Catholic church at Three Rivers is a mission belonging to St. Edward's Parish in Mendon of which Father Kaufmann is the pastor.

In one hand was found a pipe made of red clay which is in a very good state of preservation. Two daggers, several French arrow-heads and a piece of glass in the other. On each arm were found two bands $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide on which the word "Montreal" was engraved. A belt buckle with the letters "J. O." engraved on it, also a set of earrings, all of which are of silver. The skull has around it a band of cloth about one inch in width, which is ornamented with two rows of little silver rings; a braid of hair ornamented with the same kind of rings was attached in back.

"Now perhaps you would like to know how this great chief was buried. The grave was about six feet deep and nine feet long and two feet wide. After the grave was dug, clay about two inches thick was placed around inside, then fire was put in until the clay was baked hard. The body was then placed in it with the head to the West. Then there was black dirt and charcoal mixed together, then clay about six inches thick. Then fire was built on top and this was all baked so the grave was water proof and no animal could dig into it.

"Skeleton No. 2 was buried about the same way. A pipe, knives, French arrow-heads, glass bottle, beads, brass bell and a number of pieces of brass and copper were found with this. Since that time I have dug in several graves, but always find different animal bones—sometimes knives, arrow heads, and pieces of brass and copper. These were found from four to six feet deep and in black dirt and charcoal. I also found a number of fireplaces two and one-half to three feet across top and from three to six feet deep, built of stone and clay inside and baked very hard, all containing a great amount of charcoal. My work is nicely commenced, but not finished."

The skeletons were buried in gravelly soil in a bank which rises twenty or thirty feet abruptly above the stream, a most sightly place giving a beautiful view up and down the river. They were buried in sitting position in clay cavities, with bits of charcoal in the bottom of the receptacles with rounding domes of clay over them. The first discovery was, as Mr. Beerstecher suggests, thought to be the skeleton of a miner with the visors of the miner's cap. But, the three crescent shaped pieces of silver were not, of course, visors, but the ornaments much affected by the Indians and sold to them by the French and English traders.¹² The skeletons vary in type, most of them are rather short and squat, with the round or bullet type of head. But the one described by Mr. Beerstecher as a chief, is that of a very tall person with rather a long head. This skeleton must have been that of a man

¹²*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* (Vol. X, page 579. Invoice of goods sent to Michillmackinac addressed to Lieut. Govr. Sinclair the 24th May, 1782. "50 Gorglets" are included in the list.

six or more feet tall. The findings with it were rather the most interesting.

The mode of burial, the place of burial, and the objects found with them, tell a story of these people and Three Rivers before the American settler, a story of Frenchmen and Indians. That these dead were Indians is indicated by the character of the spot and soil, high and gravelly. The mode indicates it also. Neither French nor English bury their dead in the sitting position in fire-baked clay cavities. The American Indian did so bury his dead. The Alaskan Indians¹³ of to-day bury their dead in this position, and place them in wooden receptacles above the earth. The objects with the skeletons tell more of their history. They were the trinkets and utensils commonly used in the barter between the white man and Indian. The English and French traders received the furs of the Indians in exchange for the silver crescents, buckles, bracelets, brass kettles, knives and scissors. The three crescent shaped silver pieces, first discovered are etched with figures. One has a deer etched on its face. Another a bird with the word "Montreal" in the corner, while the third has a bird which was never on sea or land. It has the barb pointed tail attributed to his Satanic majesty. Silver earrings accompanied one skeleton, an armlet or silver bracelet was found with the letters "P. H." on one end and "Montreal" on the other. A silver buckle with "J. O." in four or five places on it, several steel knives, beads of garnet and white glass, and beads of tiny black and white shells accompanied them. With the large skeleton was a headdress made of a band of woven cloth of a coarse texture, not unlike horse hair. This was strung with numerous small buckles, not much larger than a small coin. This encircled the brow and head. With this skeleton were many of the richest ornaments, showing the wearer to have been a man of property, at least. We do not pretend to place this person, either in his tribal relation or in his tribal name, but he was different from the others. His rich adornment indicates a man of importance, possibly a chief. The size of the skeleton and shape of the skull suggests the Iroquois or Sioux. The shorter more squat skeletons remind us of the Potawatamie type.

Near the burying ground, Mr. Beerstecher found six or more "fire-places" four to six feet deep and two to three feet across the top. These were made of clay and contained charcoal. Usually there was a hole near the bottom about the size of an egg. The walls of clay were from an inch to an inch and a half in thickness. They were from eighteen to twenty inches under the ground. Similar pits¹⁴ have been described,

¹³*Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*. Page 311.

¹⁴*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* Vol. XXVII. Mr. Frank Little in "*Early Recollections of the Indians about Gull Prairie*," says: "Remains and signs (of Indians) of large permanent villages were abundant. In the vicinity of these were numerous caches—circular pits about three feet deep dug in the ground, lined and covered with bark for the storage of corn, dried and smoked meat, etc."

used by the Indians as caches in which to store corn, meat and other provisions, and the same sort of constructions was in use for sacrificial fireplaces. The contents of charcoal and large quantities of animal bones, near these pits, incline us to the opinion that these were used in some ceremonial.

Undoubtedly, this was an Indian¹⁵ burying ground, probably of the Potawatamies, antedating the American settlers and American traders' yielding to our eyes the merchandise of Montreal, showing us a glimpse of white men bartering with red men probably fifty years or more before the old French post vanished. The inscriptions on the ornaments with the word "Montreal"¹⁶ indicate that they were made subsequent to the French and Indian war or a date later than 1760, as prior to that time and date, Montreal was known as Ville Marie. On the other hand the Indian trade of this region passed out of the hands of the British after they evacuated Detroit in 1796 and Montreal would scarcely furnish the objects of trade for the American trader. Indeed there is much to suggest that American traders controlled the trade on the St. Joseph after 1780 (as we shall note later). A coin, bearing the date 1825 and "to facillitate trade" around the edge, was found a few inches below the surface of the ground and but a short distance away from the old cemetery. It comes from a later period, and has no relation with the old Indian burying ground. No tradition existed in Three Rivers of such a burial place. The first American settlers, who found the Indians in this country knew nothing of this cemetery in the city limits. Hence we must go back, beyond the first white settler who came in 1829, back beyond the American trader, before the evacuation of Detroit in 1796, back at least to the British occupation of Michigan and the Indian trader under English dominance with the cargoes of goods from Montreal. That trade was most active about the time of the Revolutionary war. We place the acquisition of the ornaments between 1760 and 1796 and the date of interments not much later than 1800.

Where did the Indians acquire these objects? Did the old French trading post at Three Rivers date back to that time? Were they received in trade at Three Rivers, or did they come from the trading

¹⁵Harlan I. Smith, in a letter, says: "Judging from the photographs I am inclined to think that the skulls are those of Indians, although in the case of one or two I think it is difficult to tell from the photographs; however, the objects found with them make it almost certain that they are Indians."

¹⁶Mr. C. M. Burton, in a letter, says: "I hardly believe a Frenchman or a white man would be buried with a crown upon his head. The fact that the crown or headdress is there, indicates to me that the person was an Indian of some importance." Further, he says: "The inscription of 'Montreal' on some of the silver-work indicates a date subsequent to 1760, and even a much later date in all probability. The French name for Montreal was 'Ville Marie' and I think that this was the name usually employed, so long as the French dominated."

posts at Fort St. Joseph or Detroit? What was the early history of the French in Three Rivers?

In the spring of 1675, Father Marquette,¹⁷ on his return from the Illinois, passed up the east coast of Lake Michigan on his way to Michilimackinac. It is possible, that he entered the St. Joseph River, but if so, he could not have explored it far, for he was then a dying man, and did die near Ludington,¹⁸ before he reached his destination.

It is also quite possible that French traders may have visited this region before that date; but no record has been preserved to tell us of their coming. The first record of the French on the St. Joseph is given in the account of the trip of La Salle by way of the St. Joseph and Kankakee rivers to Illinois in 1679.¹⁹ He reached the St. Joseph in August, 1679, built a trading post with palisades on the site of the present city of St. Joseph and called it Fort Miami, because he found the Miami Indians near there. He sounded and buoyed the channel for some distance up the stream. A few of his men remained at Fort Miami that winter, while he went on with the most of them to the Illinois. It is probable that some explorations of the St. Joseph, were made during the winter by La Salle's men who were left at Fort Miami. In March, 1680, La Salle came back to Fort Miami, went from there to Lake Erie on foot, through southern Michigan with a few of his followers. He crossed the river on a raft on March twenty-fifth, then went through thick woods, which tore their clothing. On the twenty-eighth, they found the woods more open, meeting a good deal of game, so that they no longer needed to carry their provisions with them. On the evening of the twenty-eighth, they made a fire on the edge of the prairie. This description of the journey and country on the twenty-eighth of March tallies very well with the country a short distance north of Three Rivers. When they left Fort Miami, they crossed to the north side of the river. After two days and a half in thick woods, they came to more open woods, (the oak openings of our country north of the St. Joseph). Game became more plentiful, and the evening of the twenty-eighth, they camped on a small prairie, suggestive of Prairie Ronde and the territory in northern St. Joseph and southern Kalamazoo counties. He returned in the autumn of 1680 and spent the winter of 1680 and 1681 at Fort Miami.²⁰ La Salle was a man of action and a merchant as well as an explorer. Hence it is inconceivable that knowing of the rich fur region north of the St. Joseph from his spring trip, that he should have remained at St. Joseph several months without returning to the region about Three Rivers or sending men there.

¹⁷Reuben Gold Thwaites—*Father Marquette*.

¹⁸See *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* Vol. XXVIII, p. 408.

¹⁹Francis Parkman—*La Salle*.

²⁰Francis Parkman—*La Salle*. Page 179.

The Jesuit Father Allouez who had the Miamis and Potawatamies at Green Bay in his mission there,²¹ and who had a way of following up his converts and also following La Salle came to his Miamis on the St. Joseph in 1679. He labored among the Indians there until his death which is said to have occurred at Fort St. Josephs in 1690.²²

At the time of La Salle's overland trip across Michigan, the region about the St. Joe was debatable ground claimed by several warring tribes. Shortly before this the Potawatamies had been driven out of the country and they and the Miamis had clustered about Green Bay. The Miamis had returned to the lower St. Joseph in 1679, and La Salle found a large village of them at the portage at South Bend in 1681.²³ The Potawatamies with a few Sacs returned to the St. Joseph about 1708 to 1711.²⁴ Not far from that date the Miamis moved to the Maumee and Miami rivers leaving the Potawatamies along the St. Joe.

Fort Miami was destroyed in July, 1680, by some of La Salle's disaffected followers, but was restored the same year by his men under La Forest.²⁵ Fort St. Joseph's was built not long afterward, about 1690, near Niles, Michigan.²⁶ This fort, Charlevoix described in 1721,²⁷ with a village of Miami Indians on the east side of the river and a village of Potawatamies on the west side of the river.²⁸ Fort St. Joseph's was occupied, as a military post, until its capture in the Pontiac conspiracy in 1763.²⁹ The attendant coming and going, travel and relations with the Indians, and trade through its trading post continued until the destruction of the fort by the Spaniards of St. Louis during the Revolution. In the meantime, it successively passed into the hands of the British at the close of the French and Indian war in 1759, into the hands of the Potawatamies after the conspiracy of Pontiac in

²¹Francis Parkman's—*La Salle*. Page 34. "The Potawatamies and Winnebagoes were near the borders of the bay." "The Miamis on the same river above Lake Winnebago." "The Miamis soon removed to the banks of the river St. Joseph, near Lake Michigan."

²²Judge Orville W. Coolidge: *History of Berrien County*.—"According to tradition Father Allouez died at this mission (St. Josephs) in 1690."

²³Bartlett and Lyon—*La Salle and the valley of the St. Joseph*. "It does, indeed seem not unlikely that Allouez, who was with the Miami Indians in 1672, should have followed them from their Wisconsin home when they emigrated to this valley." "He was certainly here at a later date, devoting the closing years of his life to the work of the mission on the St. Joseph where he died in 1690."

²⁴Parkman's—*La Salle*. Page 267. *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* Vol. XXX. Memorandum of Marquis de Vaudreuil. Date 10th March 1711. "Potawatamies and other savages settled on the St. Joseph River."

²⁵Parkman's—*La Salle*. Page 185.

²⁶*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XXVIII, page 179. L. H. Beeson—*Fort St. Joseph*.

²⁷Judge Orville W. Coolidge—*Berrien County History*. "Both (Miamis and Potawatamies) are for the greater part Christians, but have been a long time without pastors." Quotation from letter of Charlevoix, date 1721.

²⁸In 1712, Father Marest, says: "The mission at St. Joseph among the Potawatamies is in a flourishing condition second only to Michillimackinac."

²⁹Parkman. *The Pontiac conspiracy*. Vol. I, page 273. *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.* Vol. XXX, page 556, *Cadillac Papers*.

1763, back to the British two years later. Post St. Joseph remained, under these various administrations, the distributing point of Indian merchandise for the St. Joseph River and was under the management of the post at Michillimackinac and so remained until the evacuation of this country by the British, although Cadillac, shortly after founding Detroit in 1701, invited the Potawatamies to settle around Detroit. Friendly relations and trade continued between the Potawatamies of the St. Joseph River and the post at Detroit until, in the time of Commandant Sinclair of Mackinac, it became a subject of complaint to Governor Haldimand at Quebec, that the trade with Detroit was an encroachment upon the grants of privilege to Mackinac. Major De Peyster, Sinclair's predecessor at Mackinac, had been transferred to Detroit, and in reply to the complaint of Sinclair, wrote an explanatory and apologetic letter to Haldimand, stating that the Potawatamies of the St. Joseph came to Detroit, because it was nearer, and because they had known him before at Michillimackinac.²⁰ In 1762, the post at St. Joseph was paying an annual rental to Michillimackinac for the privilege of trading, of 3,000 livres or about \$600.²¹

Much of the trade of St. Joseph River and Fort St. Joseph from 1745 to 1780 passed through the management of Louis Chevalier, merchant at St. Joseph's and Indian agent of the commandants at Michillimackinac. No one knew better the Potawatamies of the St. Joseph River nor has left a clearer picture of the Indians of that time than did this French gentleman, who served under two kings, and two flags, the French and the English, and who lived there almost up to the time of Spain's²² capture of the fort and American possession of this soil. In 1780, he was ordered, by Lieutenant Governor Sinclair to leave the post at St. Joseph and proceed with the inhabitants of St. Joseph to Michillimackinac.²³

About that time, (1780) or possibly a little before, a new trader and merchant came to the mouth of the St. Joseph, now the city of St. Joseph and controlled much of the trade of the St. Joseph River. This was William Burnett²⁴ of New Jersey, an American. Burnett, also, was obliged to pay tribute to Mackinac, until the victories of the Revolution gave him courage to disregard their authority. About the time Burnett settled at the mouth of the river, Joseph Bertrand²⁵ and one Le Clare, Frenchmen, came to Bertrand near Niles. It is thought,

²⁰ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Coll.*, Vol. IX.

²¹ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XIX, page 21.

²² See *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 184 and Vol. V, p. 559 this series.

²³ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. X.

²⁴ Judge Orville W. Coolidge—*Berrien County History*, also *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XXX, p. 85. *William Burnett* by Edward S. Kelley.

²⁵ Joseph Bertrand founded the village of Bertrand, now extinct. See Vol. XXVIII, p. 128 this series.

that, they were employed by Burnett in the trade of the region. William Burnett married a sister of Topinbee, a chief of the Potawatamies, and Joseph Bertrand married Topinbee's daughter, which doubtless had something to do with their relations. Burnett was, also, associated in a business way with such men as John Kinzie, James May and Jean Baptiste Point An Sable. With his son and successor Isaac Burnett, the names of Jean Baptiste Chardront and B. Ducharme are associated.

It is impossible to say at this time, whether the trinkets, found on the Indian dead at Three Rivers, came to us through the agents of Louis Chevalier of old Post St. Joseph, or through the agents of William Burnett or Joseph Bertrand or possibly through the post at Detroit which our St. Joseph Indians were wont to visit. Probably many posts furnished treasures to deck those roving braves in all their splendor.

Among the Bouquet papers,³⁶ is an order from Pierre François Vaudreuil, Montreal, under date of Feb. 9, 1760, saying: "You will send copies of all my letters to St. Joseph and the posts *near*, supposing that there remain some soldiers there in order that the inhabitants may conform to it." That Three Rivers was one of the "post near" is very probable. It is also probable that the wide knowledge of Louis Chevalier of the Indian character and movements was not gained without the medium of sub-agents and sub-trading posts and that, in his time, an active trade was carried on at Three Rivers with the Potawatamies.

Chevalier in 1779,³⁷ says "The Potawatamies are divided into six villages, fifteen to twenty miles apart, each village having its own chief." Three Rivers no doubt was one of these villages.

The old Indian burying ground in Three Rivers is not the only evidence of the aboriginal population. Several farms, along the St. Joseph and Rocky rivers, in the vicinity are rich in Indian treasures, flints, battle-axes of stone and other Indian objects. A branch of the Rocky River the outlet of Pleasant Lake which is one of a chain of lakes some seventy feet above the St. Joseph River, flows rapidly down to join the Rocky River near the city limits. This stream is not more than three or four miles long and it takes its descent quickly. Not far from this little stream is an old sand-pit, rich in arrowheads. Near its confluence with the Rocky is another field which has yielded many flints, battle-axes and pipes. South of Three Rivers on the St. Joe are two such fields. This series of Indian haunts, shown by localities where flints abound attests the popularity of these streams with the Indians, and suggests that more than one village of Indians was located in this vicinity.

³⁶*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XIX, p. 29.

³⁷*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XIX, p. 375.

In conclusion: The story of Three Rivers on the St. Joseph, in the time when Michigan was a province, first of France and then of England, is best told in the few traces of the French trader and his Indian customer. Mere footprints of a vanished people, nearly obliterated in the flight of time. The written history, of the period and region concerns the military operations and occupations of the forts, through which the government was administered. The traders left no written memorials of the place or people. Three Rivers' provincial history is interwoven with that of the forts at Detroit and St. Joseph; That Three Rivers, with its natural advantages, was an early point of attention and occupation by both traders²⁸ and priests²⁹ is certain. Both came soon, certainly not later than the return of the Potawatamies from Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1708 to 1711, "to this river where the hunting was good."

The word "Montreal" on the trinkets from the Indian burying ground signifies that the objects of trade still came from Montreal. We know that William Burnett did not pay license nor do business under Michillimackinac, later than 1782. Naturally, we return to the period of Louis Chevalier. The thirty-five years between 1745 and 1780 when he traded with the Potawatamies on the St. Joseph, influenced them, and kept them in friendly relations with himself and his superiors.

Dead men tell no tales! But they have told to us a story of Three Rivers on the St. Joseph in the eighteenth century. The only story of it that we can find of that time. A tale of the noiseless pad of mocassined feet, now dust for more than a century. We trust the interpreter has made no mistakes in the translation.

²⁸*Jesuit Relations*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Vol. 66, page 279. Letter of Father Gabriel Marest, dated November 9, 1712. "Therefore, I resolved to go by the river St. Joseph to the mission of the Pouteautamis, which is under the direction of Father Chardon."

²⁹*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XXXIII. Letter from Father Marest to the Marquis Vaudreuil, under date of Aug. 14, 1706. "I had spoken to some Frenchmen about taking news to the St. Joseph river and helping our priest, and getting them out of their difficulties if they are there and enabling them to leave."