

CHAMPLAIN AND THE PETUN

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Abstract

Samuel de Champlain's account of his visit to the Petun is examined, and reconciled with the archaeology of the Petun Archaeological Zone of Ontario.

La visite de Samuel de Champlain chez les Petun est examinée, et reconciliée avec l'archeologie de la Zone Petun Archeologique de l'Ontario.

Figure and Maps following:

Figure 1: Second Title-Page of the 1619 edition of Champlain's "Voyages"

Figure 2: Part of Champlain's "Carte de la Nouvelle France" 1632, showing areas of varying accuracy

Figure 3: Champlain's Route through the *Gens de Petun* in 1616 a.d.

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On Sources

Champlain's account of his visit to the Petun was first published as "*Voyages et Descouvertvres faites en la Nouvelle France, depuis l'année 1615, iufques à la fin de l'année 1618*", Paris 1619 (Figure 1). This work was reprinted in 1620 and 1627 with variants of uncertain origin and reliability. In 1632, republished with variants in 1640, the account was substantially repeated in a composite historical summary covering the period 1603 to 1629, "*Les Voyages de la Nouvelle France occidentale, dicte canada, faits par le Sr. de Champlain ..*", Paris 1632, supposedly the work of Champlain at least in part (J. Home Cameron (in) Champlain III:xi-xii, IV:viii). The controversy as to the authorship of the variants, changes, and side-notes, and the motive for them, particularly the deletion of references to the Recollets from the 1632 work, is yet unresolved, but need not be investigated here. It is sufficient that Champlain unexpectedly spent the whole of the year 1619 in France, and "During this enforced leisure" (Trudel 1966:194) he there wrote his "*Voyages ...*", for the period 1615 to 1618, and saw the book published in 1619 while he was still there (Figure 1). Consequently, the 1619 work is most certainly wholly his, whereas the variants in the subsequent editions are not. Any departure from the original 1619 text in later editions, and especially in the 1632 composite summary, are suspect, and must necessarily be disregarded as not certainly the work of Champlain.

The 1619 work in the original French was most recently collated by J. Home Cameron for the Champlain Society, who republished all of Champlain's writings, some previously unpublished, under the general title "The Works of Samuel de Champlain", (six volumes, folio of maps, University of Toronto Press 1922-1936), in which the 1619 work is found in Volume III:1-230, published in 1929. The pages concerning the Petun commence on page 94. The corresponding page for the 1632 version is found in Volume IV:278, published in 1932, and the Identification Table to the map "*Carte de la nouvelle france ..*", which accompanied the 1632 edition, is in Volume VI:224-252, published in 1936, with the rejected description of the Petun on page 248.

The original French texts as published by the Champlain Society are accompanied by translations into English, the 1619 work by H. H. Langton, and the 1632 work and the Identification Table by W. F. Ganong. A number of other translations into English are available for consultation, made both before and after the Champlain Society publication, including by Charles Pomeroy Otis (Slafter 1878; Grant 1907); by Annie Nettleton Bourne (Bourne 1922); and by Michael Macklem (1970). Otis and Langton are substantially similar, Bourne has followed and defended the 1632 text, and Macklem is "designed for the ordinary reader" (1970:17). H. H. Langton's translation for the Champlain Society emerges as the most scholarly, and is used in the following paper, in which the Champlain Society publications is cited as (Champlain volume:page number).

The 1619 work was not accompanied by a map, although a map, endorsed "*fait par le Sr. de Champlain, 1616*", was commenced but not finished or even titled. A print from the unfinished plate shows the "Gens de petum" south-west of a recognizable Penetanguishene Peninsula (Garrad 1997b:1,9; Wroth 1956). This same information, in a more finished state, with ten huts added (to represent ten villages ?), is repeated on the map, "*Carte de la nouvelle france ..*", Paris, 1632, which accompanied the composite historical summary published that year. The Petun area of this map (Fig. 2, following) is accepted because of its similarity to the 1616 original, but the description of the Petun in the accompanying Identification Table is rejected because it deviates so substantially from Champlain's observations made sixteen years earlier that it cannot be accepted as authoritatively his.

Introduction

On October 15, 1612, Champlain received a Commission giving him extensive powers and responsibilities in New France, among them "to bring into subjection, submission and full obedience all the people of the said land .. to trade and traffic amiably and peacefully; to have carried out to this end .. the discoveries and reconnaissance of the said lands, and notably from the said place called Quebec to and as far as he shall be able, to extend upwards from this place, in the interior of the lands and rivers which discharge into the said Saint Lawrence river, to try to find the easy route to pass through the said country to the country of China and the East Indies .." (Jaenen 1996:54-55). Because both the Commission and the post in France to grant it, at first styled Lieutenant General, then Viceroy, resulted from Champlain's petitions (Champlain II:241-247), it is possible that he actually wrote the Commission document, and therefore that it reflects what he thought he was most likely to be able to achieve.

Accordingly, in 1613 he set off up the Ottawa River to locate the reported northern Sea, and the Nipissing Indians to guide him to it, but aborted the expedition after meeting Algonquin people who were opposed to it. However he successfully solicited trade for French ships on the St. Lawrence (Champlain II:277-297, Trudel 1966:192). He remained convinced that the Nipissings knew the way to a foreign land (Champlain III:104-105). The results of this journey would be echoed by his later visit to the Petun. Both were motivated by the search for the route to China, and the promotion of trade. Both would fail in the first objective, but find justification in the second.

In France he published his story, made a new map, and promoted a new company of merchants. Returning to Canada in 1615 with Father Joseph Le Caron and three other Recollets, he prepared for another attempt to fulfil his Commission. His going to the Hurons, and his accompanying them on their attack against the Iroquois, were steps towards the larger goals of reaching other tribes, increasing trade, and finding the way to China.

Preceded by the Recollet Father Joseph Le Caron and twelve Frenchmen, four of five of whom could handle fire-arms, Champlain set off in July 1615 with two other Frenchmen, and ten Indians, in two

canoes (Champlain III:34-36), to go to the land of the Hurons on Georgian Bay to assist them in their war. On the way he at last met the Nipissing Indians, but omits to mention the agreement inferentially made with them at this time for a the joint expedition to the north, of which there are details later (Champlain III:104-105). Further west along the French River near Lake Huron he met the "*Cheveux relevés*, or "High Hairs". These people he would meet again early the next year, wintering near or among the Petun. Crossing Lake Huron, which on his maps he styles "*mer douce*" (Freshwater Sea, a name perhaps suggesting an earlier realization that it was not the saltwater sea leading to China), he reached the Huron country, and found Father Joseph Le Caron residing at the village named *Carhagouha*. After visiting other villages, and *Cahiagué*, the principal village, Champlain and the armed Frenchmen accompanied the Hurons on an attack on the Onondaga, during which he was wounded. By December, he was back at *Cahiagué*, to find "*le Capitaine Yroquet*" and his Algonquins wintering there (Champlain III:45-94). By January, healed and rested, he was ready to resume fulfilling his Commission to find new peoples, promote trade, and find the way to China.

The text of Champlain's visit to the Petun

(In the following, the Champlain Society text (Champlain III:94-101) is given for clarity in ***bold italics***, with comments by the writer in [square parentheses]. The name "Petun" applied to the people is both singular and plural, except in a quotation).

(p.94) "***Having rested a few days, I decided to go and see Father Joseph [at Carhagouha] and thence, during the winter, those tribes [plural, certainly more than one tribe] whom the summer and the war had prevented me from visiting. I set out from that village [Cahiagué] on the fourteenth [Champlain's chronology of the trip is confused, and this date is questioned. See later] of January following, after thanking my host for his kind treatment of me, not expecting to see him again for three months [an intended journey of three months was presumably to find distant tribes who knew the route to China, certainly far beyond the Petun and Cheveux-relevés who were only two days away], and took my leave of him.***

The next day, I saw Father Joseph in his little cabin [at Carhagouha] to (p.95) which he had retired, as I mentioned above. I spent some days with him [because "some days" is inconsistent with him arriving from Cahiagué late on the fourteenth and departing for the Petun on the fifteenth, as is stated or deduced, the Champlain Society editors suggest he meant the "fourth" rather than the "fourteenth", following Jones 1909:273, and others], finding he was contemplating a journey to the Petun people ["aux gens du Petun", tobacco people. This is Champlain's only mention of tobacco in connection with the Petun people, and the first of only two uses of the word *petun* as the name of a people rather than the plant. He provides no explanation. If an invitation to visit the Petun had been given to Champlain or Le Caron accompanied by a gift of tobacco, this was not so exceptional to justify naming them for it, being simply "the manner of the country" (JR15:27). Perhaps Champlain really meant the Neutrals, who did grow tobacco, and where he intended to go. This is in accord with his expected three months absence (Champlain III:94, 100). Instead, he got no further than an area two days away where "maize, which is called by us Turkey corn" was the principal staple. The prolific assurances in the literature by prominent historians that the Petun extensively grew and traded tobacco, based on an unacceptable entry in the Identification Table to the map "*Carte de la nouvelle france .. 1632*" (Champlain VI:248), find no justification in Champlain's observations. The association of the Petun people and the tobacco plant was probably from its sacred use by Petun shamans in "tobacco shamanism" (Garrad 1997d)], as I had thought of doing, although travelling is very troublesome in winter; [in similar conditions, Chabanel achieved less than eighteen miles (six leagues) a day (Jones 1909:236,260)] and we [Champlain, Le Caron, and possibly all but "two or three" of the other fourteen Frenchmen who were with them (Champlain III:35, 36; Le Clercq 1881 I:105)] set off together on February 15 [An example of Champlain's confused chronology. He gives February 15 as the date he

returned to Cahigué (III:105-6). Here, he means January (Jones 1909:273) **to go to that tribe, where we arrived on the seventeenth of that month** [a two-day journey of thirty-six miles maximum, the same time required by the later Jesuits from Ste. Marie (Garrad 1997c). Father Jones' proposal that the Petun were 90 to 120 miles distant at the mouth of the Saugeen and throughout the Bruce Peninsula (Jones 1909:219, 220) is impossible]. **"These Petun people ("Ces peuples du Petun") plant maize** [this is the only crop mentioned. Notably, tobacco is not mentioned] **which is called by us** [the French, in France] **Turkey corn, and have a fixed abode like the rest** [ont leur demeure arrêtée comme les autres'. The Petun had only a (one) village, in the Huron style]. **We visited seven other villages of their neighbours and allies** [Champlain did not regard the "seven other villages" as Petun, but did not explain why they were not or whose they were. He later mentions Neutrals, Nipissings (see later) and 'Cheveux relevés'. Father Jones thought all seven were 'Cheveux relevés' (Jones 1909:273). The later Jesuits mentioned "Algonquins" (see later) but extended the name "Petun" to include all the villages], **with whom we made friends. A good number of them promised to come down to our settlement** [in response to Champlain's evident invitation to trade at Quebec. Their acceptance was supposedly prevented by the Hurons, "those who claim the trade for themselves not permitting it" (JR21:177), although permission could be obtained with presents (JR10:225). While there is no record of Petun and Petun canoes at Quebec, this may be because the French there could not distinguish them from Hurons. The Petun certainly had French goods in abundance, and they knew the way to Quebec in 1650 (JR36:181)]. **They gave us very good cheer, with presents of meat and fish for a feast as is their custom** [Possibly this gesture was one of adoption of a metaphorical "father". It became usual to make French officials into fictional "fathers" (White 1991:95,104,112)]. **All the people hastened from every side to see us, giving us a thousand signs (p.96) of friendly feeling, and accompanied us the most part of our way** [at this point Champlain's account diverges widely from that of his companion Father Le Caron, who recorded only ill-treatment, and to whom the experience was entirely negative (Le Clercq 1881 I:106; Le Tac 1888:99; Sagard, cited and translated by Jones 1909:275). It is notable that Le Caron's most recent biographer favours Champlain's version over Le Caron's, and concludes "the natives received them with the most cordial hospitality" (Gingras 1966:437)]. **The country is full of hill-slopes and little level stretches which make it a pleasant country** [this description best applies to the south end of the Petun homeland, and the vicinity of the Melville BbHa-7 archaeological site. Later Jesuit references to Mountains imply a shift northward to the Blue Mountain]. **They were beginning to build two villages where we passed, in the midst of the woods, on account of the convenience of building and enclosing their towns there** [Champlain does not say if he regards these two towns as Petun or Allies. Sagard implies these towns were of the *Cheveux-relevés* (Sagard 1939:67fn1)]. **These people live like the Attignouaaitans ('Attignouaaitās')** [the Bear Nation, closest of the Huron tribes] **and have the same customs; they are near the Neutral nation** [stated elsewhere by Champlain as two days journey in a southerly direction (III:99), but actually further] **which is powerful and occupies a great extent of country. After visiting these people** [the Petun] **we set out from that place** ["that place" is singular, referring to the one village ? of the Petun], **and went to a tribe of savages that we named Cheveux-relevés, who were very glad to see us again** [Champlain had met the *Cheveux-relevés* men the previous July on the French River during their seasonal round (III:43-45)]. **We swore friendship with them also, and they likewise promised (p.97) to come and see us and to pay us a visit at our said settlement** [this was the same invitation Champlain had extended to the Petun. It is not known if they went to Quebec. Eight years later they were still intercepting Huron canoe brigades on the French River to trade (Sagard 1939:66)]. **.. They are hunters who go in bands into various regions and districts where they trade with other tribes distant more than four or five hundred (p.98) leagues** [the seasonal round of the nomadic *Cheveux-relevés* supplied the Petun with distant exotic goods, and with a route of escape from the Iroquois in 1650 a.d. Much of Champlain's description of the *Cheveux-relevés* (Champlain III:94-97) is not relevant to the Petun and is not repeated here] **.. (p.99) At two days' journey from them** [who the "them" is in this statement is not clear. The reference is made in the context of the *Cheveux-relevés*, but logically applies to the Petun] **in a southerly direction, there**

is also another tribe of savages [the Neutrals, as already mentioned], *who produce a great quantity of tobacco* [this is not an acceptable translation of "qui font grand nombre de Petun", and neither is "who make a great deal of tobacco" (Bourne 1922:100, 102). It clearly means "who are (a) great number of Tobacco (people)" likely referring to the practice of tobacco shamanism the Neutrals evidently shared with the Petun (Garrad 1997d). *These are called the Neutral nation; .. (and) assist the Cheveux-relevés against the Fire people ..* [The Mascouten. This statement reveals that the *Cheveux-relevés* were the senior in an alliance with the largest and most powerful of the Ontario Iroquois Confederacies, and conducting complex distant wars cooperatively with them. Such a relationship probably resulted in a number of Neutral delegates, advisors and ambassadors being resident among or near the *Cheveux-relevés*. This combines with the numerous references to Neutrals being among the Petun, and the Petun being on the route to the Neutrals, to suggest they all, Petun, resident and visiting Neutrals, and the *Cheveux-relevés*, and any other Algonquin and Iroquoian allies, were together in the villages of the "Gens de petun", and in turn suggests the purpose of Champlain's visit to the Petun was to proceed on to the Neutrals. There is no mention of the Petun taking part in the war against the Mascouten, but an elderly Mascouten prisoner "taken captive in his early years .. and came to be at home among them" (JR20:61) is mentioned twenty-three years later. As he lived in a Petun town with Neutrals, he may have arrived with them (Garrad 1995)] (p.100) *I should have liked very much to visit this tribe* [the Neutrals, through whom he could reach further tribes and the way to China] *but the people where we were* [the Petun ? or the *Cheveux-relevés* ?] *dissuaded me .. This prevented me from going there at that time, although some of that tribe* [the Neutrals, present among the *Cheveux-relevés* in the Petun area] *assured us they would do us no harm ..* (p.101) *Continuing my journey I went in search of the Pisierinij tribe* [This statement seems to imply the Nipissings were in the Petun country, but is not in its proper sequential place. After failing to reach them at Lake Nipissing in 1613, Champlain met them on his way to the Hurons in 1615. They wintered with the Hurons, and Champlain found them in their winter quarters on his way back to Cahiagué] *who had promised to take me farther afield in the prosecution of my plans and explorations* [i.e. to find a route to China. This promise must have been made during the 1615 visit at Lake Nipissing]; *but I was turned aside by news that reached me from our large village.* [Champlain's tour was interrupted when he was recalled to Cahiagué, his host Huron village, to mediate a dispute between the Hurons and Algonquins] (p.105) *I set out towards our village on the fifteenth day of* (p.106) *February ..* [where he would have arrived on the sixteenth or seventeenth. Accepting this date, and modifying the earlier confused chronology accordingly, indicates he spent a month among the Petun and *Cheveux-relevés*. His intended three month exploration had ended prematurely. He remained among the Hurons until May and returned to Quebec (III:168-170). Thereafter he undertook no more explorations to the upper Lakes, and left to others the search for the route to China].

The evidence of Champlain's maps (see Figure 2, following)

Champlain's two maps (1616 and 1632) identically place the legend "*Gens de Petun*" south-west of a recognizable Penetanguishene Peninsula. The 1632 map adds drawings of ten huts, presumably representing the ten villages he visited, extending due west from a recognizable Nottawasaga River. This placement might be distorted in order to fit the space available. The conclusion is that the villages extend westerly, but not necessarily due west.

Champlain's rendering of the Georgian Bay shoreline falls observably into two extremes of accuracy, reasonably accurate, and not-at-all accurate. In the area of highest accuracy, modern features such as Wasaga Beach, the Nottawasaga River, Christian Island, the Penetanguishene Peninsula and Lake Simcoe may easily be recognised, but further west the shoreline as given on the map bears no recognisable resemblance to the modern shore (Fig. 2). Logically, the accurate areas on the map are those Champlain actually saw himself, and the inaccurate portions are of areas he was only told about,

or had to hypothesise to fill the space, and did not see for himself. By this test, the recognizably accurate portrayal of the Penetang peninsula shoreline south to Wasaga Beach indicates he was actually there and saw the shoreline. The inaccuracy of the shoreline west of Wasaga Beach indicates he did not (could not ?) see the shoreline further west. In turn, this implies that to reach the Petun he had turned inland and south from the shore at a point no further west than Wasaga Beach, probably as soon as he crossed the Nottawasaga River, and that during his entire western tour among the Petun and the *Cheveux-relevés* people he did not reach any point where the shoreline at Craigeith, or further west, could be seen.

His placement of the villages in line, whether geographically accurate or not, is of potential importance if the sequence of villages on the map corresponds to the sequence Champlain gave in his text - the Petun village - seven other villages of neighbours and allies - two more villages under construction - the (village of ?) the *Cheveux-relevés*. The possibility arises that the Petun (principal) village was at the end of the line nearest to the Nottawasaga river, and the *Cheveux-relevés* at the other end of the line, to the west.

The 1616 map was not finished. The *Gens de Petun* area as it appeared on the published 1632 finished version is reproduced in part as Figure 2, following, and as it is currently interpreted as Figure 3.

Algonquins among the Petun

In 1640 Father Pierre Pijart reported "I have been on a Mission to the tobacco Nation; I found two villages where Algonquin was spoken, in one of which then men go entirely nude" (JR21:125). Male nudity was a characteristic of the *Cheveux-relevés* Odawa (Champlain III:43,98; Sagard 1939:66), and identifies them as the occupants of one of the two villages. The second Algonquin group is not identified, but the presence of other Algonquins among the Petun is not unreasonable.

That the second group were not Nipissings is concluded. Although Champlain mentioned the Nipissing as if they were near the Petun, further reading of his text reveals they were in Huron territory on the way to Cahiagué. Father Pijart, author of the above cited report, had lived with the Nipissing, and knew them well (JR21:121-123). Had he met them again in a Petun village he surely would have identified them from his old mission. Lastly, if after visiting the ten villages mentioned in his text and taking a month to acquaint himself with the Petun area, Champlain still had to "journey .. in search of" the Nipissings, they could not have been in the Petun area.

Archaeological Evidence - Recognizing where Champlain met the *Petun*

The evidence of Champlain is that there were ten related contemporary ca. 1616 a.d. village sites a two-day journey from *Carhagouha*. The lands west of the Niagara Escarpment cuesta along the Georgian Bay shore, including the Bruce Peninsula, are not only too distant but are lacking in large winter village sites (Fox 1990:458; Garrad 1970, 1997a). By contrast, the lands east of the Escarpment, and between it and the Nottawasaga River in the Townships of Nottawasaga and Collingwood, not only comply with Champlain's maps and two-day journey requirement, but have evidence of numerous suitable village sites, long identified as the historic homeland of the Petun (Garrad 1997b, 1997c) and their "neighbours and allies". Ten of these sites are interpreted as dating to 1616 a.d. When these are drawn on a map, the route by which Champlain visited them may be readily hypothesised (Fig. 3, following). As speculated above, there is a discernable linear arrangement, although not consistently east-to-west. The (principal) Petun village of the time (archaeologically the Melville BbHa-7 Site) is found to be the

most easterly but one, and the village(s) of the *Cheveux-relevé* the most westerly (the twin villages of the Haney-Cook BcHb-27 Site). Of the two most easterly sites, Melville BbHa-7 is the larger and richer. It has a demonstrable local ancestry, as well as a view complying with Champlain's description of "hill slopes and little level stretches" (III:96).

Petun archaeology is neither as sophisticated nor as simple as the map (Fig. 3, following) may make it appear. The dating of some sites is less secure than others. Several villages existed in more than one period. Although substantially GBP1, the McAllister BcHb-25 and MacMurphy BcHb-26 sites are included among those visited by Champlain (Fig. 3), as they appear to terminate at the time of Champlain's arrival, or perhaps more precisely, a short enough time after the departure of the Frenchmen for the diseases they brought with them to have taken disastrous effect.

Conclusions

The historic Petun homeland was immediately west of the Nottawasaga River, not more than thirty-six miles from Carhagouha. The Petun were never in the Bruce Peninsula or even as far west as the Beaver Valley. Champlain did not observe extensive tobacco horticulture for trade.

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VOYAGES
ET DESCOUVERTURES
FAITES EN LA NOUVELLE
France, depuis l'année 1615. iusques
à la fin de l'année 1618.

*Par le Sieur de Champlain, Cappitaine
ordinaire pour le Roy en la Mer du Ponant.*

Où sont descrits les mœurs, coustumes, habits,
façons de guerroyer, chasses, dances, festins, &
enterrements de diuers peuples Sauvages, & de
plusieurs choses remarquables qui luy sont arri-
uées audit pais, avec vne description de la beau-
té, fertilité, & temperature d'iceluy.

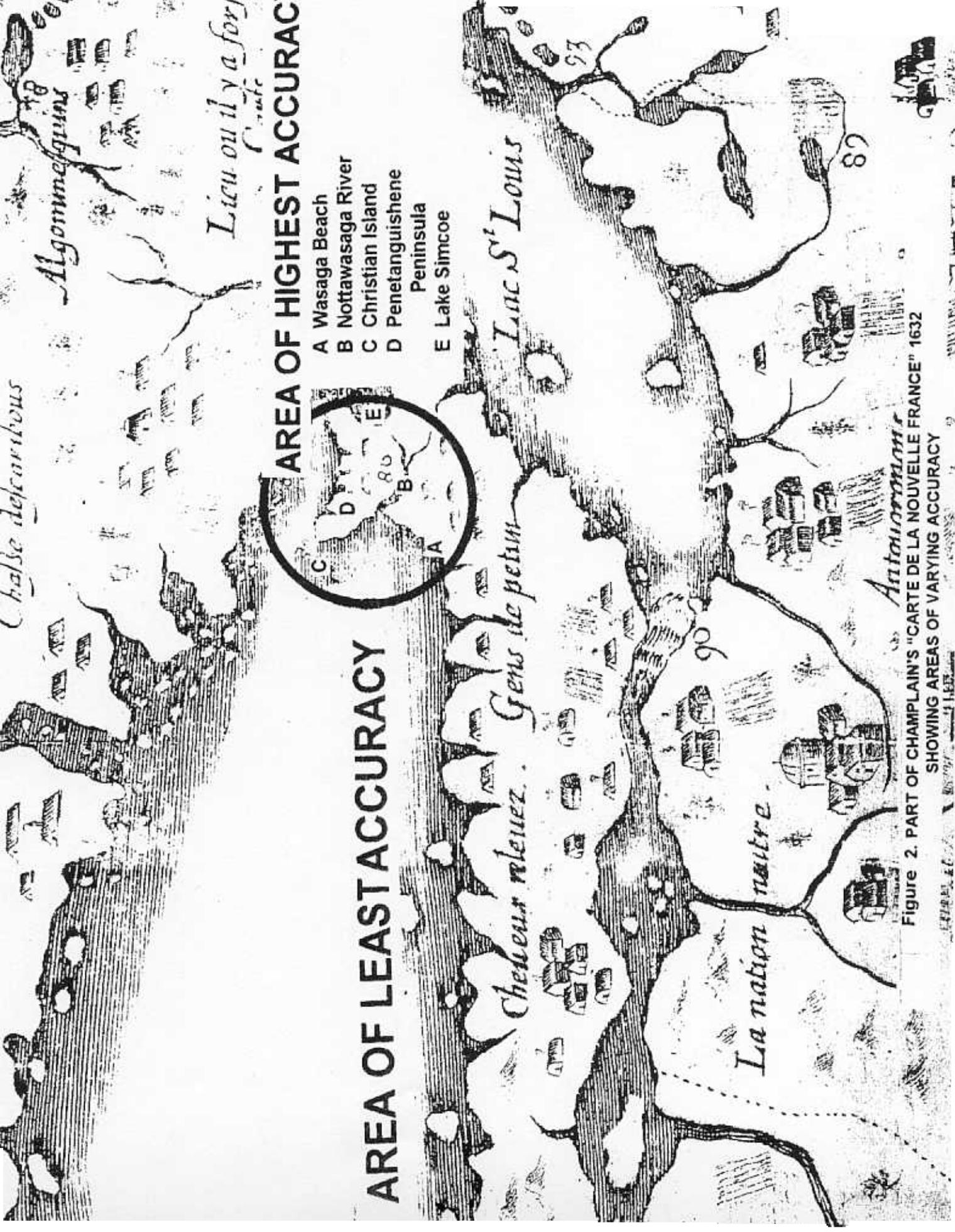


A PARIS,
Chez CLAUDE COLLET, au Palais, en la
gallerie des Prifonniers.
M. D. C. X I X.

Figure 1: SECOND TITLE-PAGE OF THE 1619 EDITION OF CHAMPLAIN'S "VOYAGES".

From Plate II of Volume III of the Champlain Society 1929 edition.

This publication was the first to mention the Petun, and has the most reliable
account of Champlain's visit to them.



AREA OF HIGHEST ACCURACY

- A Wasaga Beach
- B Nottawasaga River
- C Christian Island
- D Penetanguishene Peninsula
- E Lake Simcoe

AREA OF LEAST ACCURACY

Figure 2. PART OF CHAMPLAIN'S "CARTÉ DE LA NOUVELLE FRANCE" 1632
SHOWING AREAS OF VARYING ACCURACY

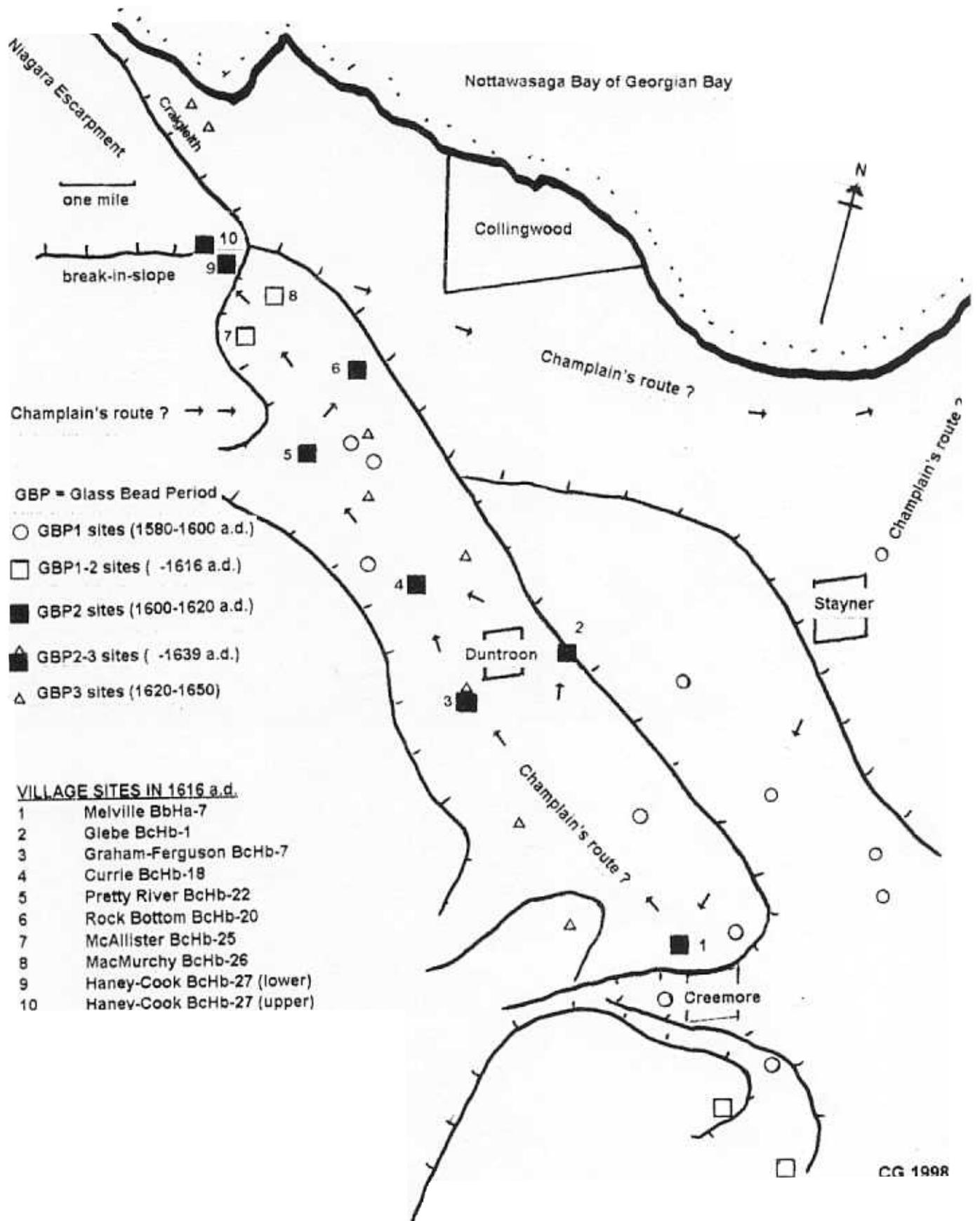


Fig. 3. Champlain's Route through the Gens de Petun in 1616 a.d.