

1732: LA RONDE SEEKS TO EXPLOIT COPPER MINES OF LAKE SUPERIOR

[Letter from Beauharnois and Hocquart to the French Minister, dated, Oct. 11, 1732. Source, same as preceding document, but fol. 95.]

MONSEIGNEUR—You asked us in one of your despatches this year for information respecting the copper mine in Lake Superior, a specimen of the ore from which was sent you by Monsieur De Beauharnois in 1728. All the Information that we have hitherto been able to obtain consists in the continued assurance of The savages that the mine is in The Tonagaun River and in the Rivière Noire,¹ and there is a constant tradition among them that one of the islands in the Lake 25 Leagues from land, is full of this metal; That the block of this mineral lying on the shore of the Lake to The West comes from one of those islands, and was carried there by the ice.² To venture on the discovery of those islands in bark Canoes is too dangerous. Lake Superior is a sea and stronger vessels with decks would be needed to go from the main land to the said islands. Some savage Canoes attempted to cross over and were lost; probably only one succeeded in reaching there and in coming back, and this has given Rise to the tradition that is preserved among the savages that one or more of those Islands are full of a substance suitable for making kettles (this is their expression) which has been reported to us both by Monsieur de la ronde³ who spoke to the savages at The time when he commanded at Chagouamigon, and by The sieur De saint Pierre, an ensign, who lived 9 years in that quarter, and who Knows the savage Language better than the savages, as they themselves admit.⁴

¹The Ontonagon River and the Black River of the upper peninsula of Michigan, both of which are indicated by these names on Bellin's map of 1745.—Ed.

²For details of this tradition, see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, pp. 72-76.—Ed.

³For biography of Louis Denys, Sieur de la Ronde, see his own account written in 1739, *post*. He died in 1741.—Ed.

⁴Jacques le Gardeur, Sieur de St. Pierre (born in 1701), was the grandson of Jean Nicolet, and son of Paul le Gardeur, Sieur de St.