

1751: POST AT SAULT STE. MARIE

[Letter from La Jonquière to the French minister, dated Oct. 5, 1751. Source, same as preceding document, but folio 104.]

QUEBEC, October 5, 1751.

MONSEIGNEUR—In my letter of the 24th of August of last year, I had the honor to report to you that, in order to thwart the measures the English cease not to take to beguile the savage nations of the northern region, I had sent the Sieur Chevalier de Repentigny to Sault Ste. Marie to establish a post at his own expense⁴³ and build a stockade fort there, in order to stop the savages of the northern posts who go and come to and from the English, to break off the trade they carry on with them, to stop and forestall the consequences of the messages and presents that the English send to those nations that they may corrupt and win them completely over to their interests, and inspire them with feelings of hatred and aversion to the French.

In establishing such a post I have also had in view the securing of a refuge for all the French voyageurs,⁴⁴ especially for

⁴³ The patent was issued to the Sieur de Bonne and the Chevalier de Repentigny, June 24, 1751; it was for six leagues frontage on the river and six leagues in depth; see *Canadian Archives*, 1905, p. 154. This grant was the origin of a famous lawsuit. The heirs of De Repentigny dwelt at Guadeloupe, but those of De Bonne lived in Canada. In 1796 Pierre de Bonne sold his title to one James Caldwell at Albany. The claim passed through several hands, and congress was petitioned (1826) by the heirs of this moiety. In 1846 the Repentigny heirs likewise petitioned for title to the land in question. In 1860 congress passed a private act, referring the matter to the courts for adjudication. The Michigan court affirmed the title, but the United States supreme court reversed the decision (1868) and threw out the claim, chiefly because of lack of occupancy.—Ed.

⁴⁴ From the abandonment of the Jesuit mission at this place until the building of De Repentigny's fort there seems to have been no establishment of any sort at Sault Ste. Marie. The number of resident Indians was in 1736 reported as only thirty. In 1748 voyageurs were maltreated at this passage, but there seems to have been no attempt to occupy this important place until the time noted in the present document.—Ed.