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The Golden Horseshoe of the Holy Grail

From the top of the Niagara Escarpment all of Ontario's famed "Golden Horseshoe" is spread out below you like a gigantic map or a satellite poster. Looking eastwards, the view is spectacular.

The angular western end of Lake Ontario is clearly evident. The steel town of Hamilton emits a haze of smog to your left. Even further to your left, Toronto's massive jumble of buildings makes a confused and indistinct smudge at the limit of visibility on the northern side of the lake, a smudge that is punctuated by the pin-like spire of the CN Tower. To your right, to the south, the long shoreline of upper New York State curves green into the east, looking downright pastoral compared with the giant metropolis of the Golden Horseshoe.



But appearances, of course, can be deceptive. Buffalo with its factories at the terminus of the New York State Barge Canal – once much better known as the nation-building "Erie Canal" of the young United States – is behind you. Buffalo is out of sight,

hidden by the Escarpment. But anyway, the Niagara Frontier is but one small part of mighty industrial America and is now even something of a backwater whereas the Golden Horseshoe remains virtually the heart and soul of industrial Canada.

As if to emphasise this proud if nearly unique conglomeration of Canadian hustle, bustle and wealth, traffic streams along the Queen Elizabeth Way between the U.S.A. and Toronto like an animated computer graphic of blood flow in a body politic. Each 18-wheeler represents some crucial kind of cell carrying economic oxygen. Cars scurry among the trucks like busy enzymes – commuting factory workers, executives, office workers, store clerks and salespeople all working hard to, well, make things work.

Lake Ontario disappears into the eastern distance in a cobalt blue panorama so vast that one can see the curvature of the earth. And this invitingly arched horizon of our beautiful azure planet will sometimes lead readers of *Swords at Sunset* seemingly over its edge. We will have intellectual journeys, at least, that will explore interrelated facts about the biblical Exodus, early Christianity, Ancient Egypt and even the last “Ice Age.” And they have the greatest possible significance to our discoveries on the Niagara Escarpment. A surprising world of intimately connected concepts lies just over the beckoning horizon when you view it from high above the Golden Horseshoe in search of the Holy Grail.

If you happen to be looking eastwards from atop the Niagara Escarpment on a mid-August day in the late afternoon, this curving cyan arc of the earth’s horizon is blurred with evaporation haze. The CN Tower wriggles in heat waves. And the windshields of cars and trucks wink and sparkle along the QEW as flashy as the jewels in one of Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s more sycophantic court paintings.

Towards late afternoon, the many apartment blocks of the Golden Horseshoe resemble hundreds of sugar cubes scattered around the coast, all of them glowing dusty rose in the late light with crystallised icing reflecting off a myriad of windows. From the height of the Niagara Escarpment, they give the great lakeshore metropolis an almost Mediterranean look.

If the year were 2003 and you had been enjoying a Sunday drive somewhere west of Vineland and north of Grimsby in Ontario’s Niagara Peninsula, you might have seen three people

digging in a field near Highway 24.¹ Well, you might have seen two people working at archaeological excavation and one standing near the abrupt edge of the Escarpment trying to get some cooling breeze coming off Lake Ontario. My justification for laziness was that I had been on the trail of Grail-related evidence for almost a quarter of a century and in 2003 I was just barely on the sunny side of sixty. And, let's face it, excavating for late medieval artifacts in the August heat was getting to me.

That, at least, was my excuse for taking a long break to admire the view over the Golden Horseshoe. Within minutes, the stiff breeze coming over the rocky lip of the Escarpment had dried my sweat-drenched shirt in a fluttering and frenzied demonstration of textbook refrigeration through heat exchange. I was actually starting to get cold. My head and heart had stopped pounding.



Respectable publications have described me as an amateur historian, archaeologist and anthropologist.² But the bald truth of the matter is that I'm really only a curious romantic with embarrassingly threadbare credentials. And not only the truth is becoming bald.

Who else but a romantic would have answered the December 1981 letter from a highly articulate Englishwoman who described with eccentric charm part of a ruined castle in her backyard in the middle of Nova Scotia? Unfortunately for conventional Canadian history, after a careful investigation there did appear to be the ruins of some sort of pre-colonial stone-built construction on her property.

A three-year investigation of the site undertaken at the request of Nova Scotia's Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Fitness indicated that the structure had most probably been built by religious refugees in AD 1398. This colony of religious refugees had been established by "Prince" Henry Sinclair, Baron of Rosslyn in Scotland. Henry was also Earl of Orkney, a title and domain he held in fief to the king of Norway.

A long train of fairly convincing circumstantial evidence argued that these religious refugees had believed in a heretical form of Christianity much better known to almost everyone as the "Holy Grail". *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* (Hounslow

Publishing, Toronto, 1988) was my account of the Nova Scotia investigation.

This book was well received by ordinary readers, even if it was not always welcomed enthusiastically by professional academics and government officials. *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* went through several printings and it inspired a virtual flood of letters. Over fifty pre-colonial – but obviously European – artifacts, sites and inscriptions were reported to me by informed and literate people. Some of these people were even professional academics, which is to say, they were university professors. However, it is also true to say that most of these academics were either retired and thus beyond the reach of retribution, or else they kept their traitorous letters to me carefully secret from their colleagues.

Not all of the reported artifacts and sites dated from late medieval or Renaissance times, however, and so they had little bearing on the fate of Henry Sinclair's colonists of AD 1398. These artifacts and inscriptions mostly dated from much earlier periods of history and even prehistory. Most of them had nothing to do with belief in the specific heresy of the Holy Grail.

But this deluge of letters did contribute to the rapidly accumulating data proving that Ancient Egyptians, Ancient Celts from Ireland, Ancient Celtiberians from North Africa and Iberia (Spain and Portugal), Phoenicians and Carthaginians had all conquered the Atlantic. Further, it seemed that even Ancient Hebrews from the Holy Land, Black Africans from south of the Sahara, Mycenaens, Greeks and Romans had also all crossed the Atlantic a thousand years and more before Columbus in AD 1492.

Then there were medieval Irish monks seeking solitude, medieval Moors seeking riches (of course) and safety from El Cid, medieval Norsemen seeking walrus hide, timber and grapes, medieval Spaniards and Portuguese seeking codfish, medieval Welsh³ seeking relief from Norman-Plantagenet incursions and medieval Basques seeking whales. It is this latter group of motley medieval mariners that must be the focus of our attention for among them were medieval Grail Refugees seeking a transatlantic haven from their implacable foe, the Inquisition.

In fact, by Year 2000 so much evidence had been swept under the rug by conventional historians trying desperately to hang on to their world view that the carpet of our cosy historical living room had become unsightly with humps, bumps and lumps. As a sign of the times, the prestigious U.S. magazine *Atlantic Monthly* kicked

off the new millennium with its January 2000 cover article “The Diffusionists Are Coming!” This piece gave an overview of all those who had crossed the Atlantic before Columbus. It also served notice on serious popular writers that toeing the conventional historical line would no longer be acceptable to informed American readers.

The same thing was true about informed Canadian readers too, of course, except that no Canadian magazine of prestige similar to *Atlantic Monthly* has yet dared to announce the truth. And the truth is that our conventionally woven carpet of Canada’s history is so threadbare, and so worn with holes where awkward evidence lurks under the rug, that it has become embarrassing for informed, urbane and sophisticated people who are yet expected to accept the conventional version of our national past and national identity.

The *Canadian Geographic Magazine*, for example, has never dared to publish any of the new data about the Lake Memphremagog complex of artifacts even though the magazine was offered a detailed photo-feature. It isn’t surprising, therefore, that Canadians eagerly grabbed *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* when it became available in bookstores.

By 1991 I had received letters from people in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York State and Pennsylvania about seemingly genuine Grail-related evidence. It became possible to plot the explorations of Henry Sinclair’s 1398 colonists and their descendants on a map. This evidence formed a pattern, or at least it seemed to. The original Nova Scotia religious refugees had probed inland along five major river routes between AD 1398 and about AD 1550 and these routes all converged on the Great Lakes.

It was easy enough to figure out a plausible reason for this. Henry Sinclair’s late medieval colonists, whom I chose to call “Grail Refugees” for lack of a better term, required metal for the maintenance of their medieval lifestyle. The Great Lakes were, and are, the continent’s metallic heartland. Copper nuggets had been mined by native people from about 3000 BC, while iron also abounds in the region. Much of this iron ore is easy to get at, too, because it lies near the surface and can be dug out of open pit mines that were within the capability of medieval technology.

That haze over Hamilton is mostly due these days to the smelting of Mesabi iron shipped from Minnesota on distinctive long-hulled lake freighters, but that wasn’t always the case. The

Niagara Escarpment once had its own rich veins of iron ore that were visible at the surface. These Niagara Escarpment iron deposits fed the first generation of colonial smelters and smithies. These Niagara Escarpment iron deposits had first established Hamilton as Canada's acknowledged steel town.

Grail Knights of North America (Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1998) traced the explorations of Sinclair's colonists and their descendants according to Grail-related evidence including a coin⁴, a radiocarbon-dated dam⁵, several sculptures⁶ and some rock inscriptions.⁷

It became obvious from the geographic pattern of reported artifacts that, in addition to the original Nova Scotia settlement of 1398, these medieval Grail Refugees had established at least two inland concentrations of their population. One colony was in the Green Mountains on the present border of Quebec and Vermont in the immediate vicinity of Lake Memphremagog.

The other settlement was somewhere in the region I called "Niagara". It seemed reasonable to me that once they had discovered the St. Lawrence River, only one hundred kilometres or sixty miles from Lake Memphremagog, and shortly thereafter discovered Lake Ontario, then the Grail Refugees must also have discovered Niagara Falls fairly quickly. They would have realised immediately that they had to establish a settlement above the falls if they were to navigate on the upper Great Lakes. And these lakes were the keys to the treasures of a continent.

The French empire-builder, René-Robert de La Salle, had realised this when he built his full-rigged little ship, *Griffon*, in 1679 just above the falls beside a creek near Buffalo. The Americans realised this when they went to the immense labour of building the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, from New York Harbor to Lake Erie. In fact, the original termination of the Erie Canal may have been the very same stream in which the *Griffon* had been constructed 142 years earlier. Once on Lake Erie, it is possible to navigate to the western end of Lake Superior and, if you count Newfoundland as part of North America, this is more than halfway to the Pacific Ocean.

In *Grail Knights of North America*, I was unfortunately not able to say precisely where this "Niagara" settlement had been located. My best guess, on the basis of reported artifacts, was that this Niagara settlement had been on the southern shore of Lake Erie. It had probably been in New York State near modern

Jamestown on Lake Chautauqua, or so I thought – and in error, as it turned out.

I presented somewhat more definite evidence that, wherever it had once been located, the settlement had been called “Seguna” at the time of Jacques Cartier’s visit to the future site of Montreal in AD 1535. The people of “Hachelaga” (Montreal) told Cartier that in the city of Seguna, which was some distance south-west of Hachelaga on the shore of a great waterway, the population dressed in woven cloth like Cartier himself.

Although I knew at the time (1991-1995) that “Seguna” was the first usage of later words like *Saguenay*, *Saginaw*, etc., it wasn’t until after April 1997 when I met Joëlle Lauriol that I learned what this curious word could once have meant. Although there are towns named Saginaw and Saguenay all over north-eastern North America, this word, like Hachelaga, doesn’t seem to have been an originally native Indian one. The possible or probable meaning of “Hochelaga” and “Seguna” has a great deal of relevance to the medieval legend of the Holy Grail.



The accumulated evidence in *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* and advance photocopied proofs of *Grail Knights of North America* may not have convinced most Canadian historians, but they did at least intrigue some American television producers and fascinate some Quebec politicians. The interest of these two disparate and unlikely groups resulted in the filming of an Arts & Entertainment Network television documentary during October 31 to November 2, 1998.⁸

This hour-long documentary featured the C-14 dated dam near Lake Memphremagog that was constructed about AD 1500 or earlier and a carved granite medieval “gargoyle” found in the stream bed where the dam had been built. This gargoyle is of exquisite workmanship and artistry that was stylistically assigned to “Norse-Scottish” masonry and dated to about AD 1550. Both the dam and the sculpture were illustrated in *Grail Knights of North America*.

Obviously, only an established and relatively populous community needs a dam for a mill. And this particular dam is an ambitious sixty-foot span composed of roughly squared blocks of stone weighing up to a ton or more. Certainly, it had taken a

couple of years to build. So, if the dam was radiocarbon dated at the University of Toronto's Isotech Labs to about AD 1500 (plus or minus) by hemlock-wood surveyor's stakes recovered by professional Quebec archaeologists, then the pioneer community that had built the dam must have been founded some years previously. Which is to say that there was a sizeable existing European community on the Vermont-Quebec border in the Green Mountain foothills before Columbus set sail in AD 1492 or John Cabot left Bristol in AD 1497.

As for the granite gargoyle, it at least argues a European community with trained artisans who had hard iron or steel tools. The gargoyle's mouth, eyes and teeth could not have been shaped without sharp metal chisels and good metal files. The detail is superb.

The on-camera hosts of this documentary were Dr. Gérard Leduc and me. Leduc is a retired professor of biology from Concordia University in Montreal. For some odd reason, professors of biology often turn to archaeology in later life. The famous (or infamous) Dr. Barry Fell of Harvard University is another example of this phenomenon. Gérard Leduc was one of my earliest Quebec correspondents. He'd read *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* and it had inspired him to look for Grail-related artifacts along the St. Lawrence and to write his privately published *Templars in New France*. And, as irony would have it, it was during this A&E film shoot, while we stayed at Gérard's comfortable home in Mansonville, Quebec that dramatic new artifacts came to light.

First, almost indisputable evidence came from a Lake Memphremagog cottage owner that the dam and gargoyle must have been remains from a community that was, indeed, closely associated with Henry Sinclair. Second, new evidence of the Niagara community's exact location also became available during those few days of the film shoot.

But *Grail Knights of North America* was already on the press. It was too late to revise the book to include the new data.

Within two weeks after this A&E Network film shoot we had made three quick trips to the Niagara Peninsula in order to check out clues to the location of the Grail Refugees' settlement above the falls. By December 19, 1998, we were holding a summit meeting (of sorts, anyway) with several other maverick historical researchers at the Best Western hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Between one thing and another, the two regions of Niagara and Lake Memphremagog, some four hundred miles apart (about 600 kilometres), were to obsess our thoughts and drain much of our physical and financial resources from late 1998 until August 2003.

But maybe I should clarify this use of words like “we”, “us” and “our” before going any further.

Readers of *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* will know that in 1980 I travelled to Nova Scotia with Deanna Theilman-Bean, an old friend from my days doing perceptual research for the advertising industry. My marriage had broken up and my ex-wife had decided to remain in the Maritimes with our son, Jason. I’d promised to spend two years in Nova Scotia with Jason in order to help him over a difficult time of transition. But I didn’t know how I was going to cope financially in the Maritimes. All my writing contacts were in Toronto and Los Angeles. Deanna had always liked Jason and so she threw in her lot with me to help *me* over a difficult time of transition and to be a sort of surrogate mother to Jason during our legally scheduled visits.

I have already recounted at length how, through a series of truly uncanny events and circumstances, our initially uncertain relocation to Nova Scotia became a fruitful, profitable and nearly magical experience. Almost immediately upon arrival I received the letter from the eccentric Englishwoman about her ridiculous ruined castle. The basic decision to respond to this letter, in spite of other seemingly much more serious concerns at the time introduced us to the reality of the Holy Grail. It may seem fanciful, but I tend to attribute everything that happened afterward to the mysterious power of the Grail.

Arriving with \$500 and staying in a vacationing friend’s apartment because we had no place of our own and couldn’t afford one, within six weeks Deanna and I had not only registered a boat-building company called CanTraid Export but had a \$98,000 contract with the Canadian International Development Agency. This contract was for building and testing prototypes of one of my boat designs intended to help impoverished, starving Third World fishermen.

Within two months of our arrival, Nova Scotia’s Department of Development wanted to relocate our fledgling company out of Halifax to a place called Kentville. We had never heard of the town. When we consulted a map to find out where exactly this Kentville was, we discovered that it was equidistant between

Halifax (Jason, lawyers, business), New Ross (the absurd ruined castle) and Cape D'Or where, we were to discover, Henry Sinclair (a.k.a. "Glooscap") had spent the winter of AD 1398-1399.

And by the way, we relocated our meagre belongings to Kentville on the very day that our friend was scheduled to return to Halifax and reclaim his apartment. As Deanna remarked, it was lucky for us that we had *not* been able to rent a place of our own in Halifax.

In short, some unknown faith beyond our fears, wisdom beyond our ignorance and certainly governmental powers (and red tape) beyond our control had conspired to place Deanna and me in the only place where we could do every single thing on our two-year Nova Scotia agenda. We immediately bought a house trailer in Kentville, sold it two years later, and made a net profit, after taxes and lawyers, of \$9.95. The Grail had given us everything we actually needed, with very little left over. When we left Nova Scotia, we were almost as poor as when we had arrived, but also immeasurably richer.

Deanna was so much help with the boat-building business, with Jason, with my initial emotional upset and with the castle research that I offered her a junior co-authorship of *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* and a share of the book's income paid directly to her. It was no more, but no less either, than she deserved.

By the early 1990s, Deanna and I were inevitably, but very amicably, starting to have thoughts about returning to our separate life paths. She had learned a lot, thanks to me. I had learned a lot more, thanks to her. Jason was fast growing up and that time of transition was long past. Deanna and I structured our parting slowly and finally separated in an equitable and civilised fashion.

My next ten years were mainly occupied with writing novels, screenplays and newspaper articles punctuated by lengthy trips to check out Grail-related artifacts that had been reported to me in the many letters that had resulted from the book. I virtually lived in my B200 Dodge factory-built camper van and it took me into the Green Mountains on the Quebec-Vermont border, along the St. Lawrence and St. John Rivers, into New York State's Adirondack Mountains, to Lake Champlain and along the upper Hudson River, and into Pennsylvania's Tuscarora Mountains.

It was a time of camping during chilly mountain nights with the sole comfort of "the rough male kiss of blankets" as the British

poet, Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), once put it just before he died of blood poisoning in the World War I Aegean campaign.

It was a time of seeing medieval coins found in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Maine, dams and gargoyles in Quebec and Templar-inspired sculptures and petroglyphs in New York State and Pennsylvania. I walked steep logging road with good friends like Mike Twose of Toronto, Don Eckler of Houghton, New York, Bob Williams of Emporium, Pennsylvania and Gérard Leduc of Mansonville, Quebec. I recounted all this in *Grail Knights of North America*.

But I had also begun to suspect that there might be a final chapter to be written about the Grail Refugees in Canada and that this story had much to do with the Green Mountains and “Niagara”.

And by 1996, I suddenly realised something else. I was getting fairly medieval or middle aged myself. The logging roads seemed a bit steeper, their ruts a little deeper, rough camping blankets seemed scratchier and the nights certainly seemed cooler. I knew what I wanted to do with my golden years and also knew that I didn’t want to do it alone. And I didn’t want to do it with bearded male companions either, however compatible they might be.



I wanted to finish this “Grail in North America” story if I could. And after that, if I could manage to live long enough, I wanted to go to Europe in order to uncover the deepest level of the Holy Grail – “The Legend which reaches back to the prime source of all legends”, as Wolfram von Eschenbach had written in the greatest of all Grail epics, *Parzival*.

In early 1997, I advertised for a “Companion of the Grail”, honestly stating my age, my already iffy health and at least most of my foibles, and listed my own requirements for a female research associate and domestic partner. This advertisement was discreetly distributed within certain circles that had come to my knowledge over many years of Grail-related research.

And once again, the power of the Grail apparently went to work.

A reply to my advertisement came almost immediately on one small sheet of quietly ostentatious cream-coloured stationery. The

thick, heavy and expensive linen-based paper was adorned with a not-so-discreet blood red Templar cross. The writer was a mature woman at the top of a Rosicrucian Order (AMORC) CIRCES. She wrote briefly that she knew of a young woman, one who might just be a suitable “Companion of the Grail” as per the advertisement’s description. She had already given this young woman my contact information. A *young* woman? How young?

Joëlle Lauriol drove a fair distance to meet with me for the first time in April 1997. I was naturally a bit apprehensive and more than a bit curious. I had never advertised for a companion before and didn’t know what to expect.

Joëlle Lauriol was like nothing and no one I had ever imagined. Physically, she proved to be a somewhat mischievous brunette about five-foot-two with eyes of blue. But her eyes could change disconcertingly to a smoky blue-green when she became angry. Thankfully, Joëlle became angry only infrequently and never for long.

She was somewhat sturdily built with a more than generous bosom, definite hips and a ready smile. I was more or less managing to deal with all these curves that Joëlle was throwing when I was stunned to discover that she was almost twenty years my junior. Did this young woman know what she was getting herself into?

She explained that she could remember virtually nothing of her childhood or adolescence until the age of thirteen. This was possibly due to some trauma or abuse in infancy. She didn’t know. She said that she was now more than ready for an intimate relationship, that she had been told about my age and health and that it didn’t matter.

Joëlle had been born in Tonneins, France, a riverside town along the Garonne River. This Garonne River corridor across southern France was the very place I had earmarked to look for evidence of the Grail’s deepest layer of meaning back in “Ice Age” times. Was this mere coincidence? Of course it was. Joëlle was a natural Francophone with an elegant French accent. But she’d been educated mostly in Canada and was therefore perfectly bilingual in English. She had degrees in Business Administration and Journalism. So she knew about both accounting and writing.

Her family name, Lauriol (i.e. “L’Auriol”) meant “Halo” in English. Her family’s publicly available genealogies went back to the seventh century of the Christian Era as reprinted in the 1982

international best seller *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*.⁹ These genealogical records are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but they were once kept carefully hidden in the Bastille. France's national "Independence Day" is called "Bastille Day".

On July 14, 1789 a mob of revolutionaries stormed and took the fortress-like prison called the Bastille, an event that more or less officially marks the beginning of the French Revolution. However, according to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, some obscure documents of the Revolution indicate that the real purpose of attacking the Bastille wasn't so much the immediate establishment of Libert , Egalit  and Fraternit , but to get at the secret genealogies that were kept there. These genealogies included those of the Lauriols. Godfroi de Bouillon himself, whom we will meet soon, had sprung from Lauriol ancestors. There is a great deal of evidence that the French Revolution and the birth of most modern democratic ideals was, in fact, a democratic revolt engineered by believers in the Holy Grail heresy.

So much for the Lauriol family's publicly available genealogies going back to the seventh century, Godfroi de Bouillon, the French Revolution and all that. The Lauriol family's private genealogies, however, go back much further than the seventh century. These genealogies have never been published anywhere. And they never will be.

Jo lle had had a chequered religious past. Born the usual nominal Roman Catholic of southern France – and Roman Catholicism is much more "nominal" there than elsewhere, she had once become a Mormon and had spent eighteen months as a missionary in Haiti. There, she had added Intermediate Level Creole to her linguistic accomplishments.

Not much of all this was believable, of course. It was much too good to be true. Either that, or else somebody, somewhere was into kidnapping French girls, erasing their childhood memories, somehow programming them with a very definite personality and also providing them with a good education. Were Rosicrucians into that sort of thing? And, if so, why? I shuddered to speculate.

What bothered me the most was Jo lle's stint as a Mormon missionary in Haiti.

For some time I had been starting to suspect that the Book of Mormon wasn't just the ridiculous blasphemy that most non-Mormons thought it was, if and when they thought about it at all. Joseph Smith's history of the "Nephites" paralleled too closely the

actual history of the Grail Refugees that I had managed to piece together over almost twenty years, from 1980 to 1997.

I doubted strongly that the “Prophet Smith” had been led by the angel Moroni to a record inscribed on golden plates, a record which Smith was then able to translate with the aid of divinely given spectacles. On the other hand, it seemed almost certain that Joseph Smith had found a genuine record of some sort, and it seemed to be suspiciously like the actual history of the Grail Refugees insofar as I had been able to reconstruct it. Perhaps this record had really been inscribed on *golden looking* copper plates, possibly old sheathing from a ship’s hull. If this record had been written in a late medieval Scottish-English-Scandinavian dialect¹⁰, as I was already beginning to think, then Joseph Smith could have got the bare gist of it.

Me, although I was fascinated with the general story, I had always lacked the sheer courage to wade through the Book of Mormon’s 561 pages of pseudo-biblical prose. But I was virtually certain that there would be crucial clues buried in that massive text that might shed some light on the more detailed history of the Grail Refugees and their ultimate fate in North America.

And here was a person – and a well-endowed young woman at that, who presumably knew the Book of Mormon, of all things, backwards and forwards. After all, she had been a Mormon missionary. Was this also mere coincidence? Well, of course it was. What else could it have been?

But I generally distrust coincidences, especially so many of them. Was Joëlle the Mormon idea of a honey trap? And what man wants to be stuck with a *Mormon* idea of a honey trap? Maybe such a contradiction in terms could only tempt another Mormon, which I wasn’t. However, I did have another thought. And it was disturbing.

I had already been threatened with the Mormon death rite of “blood atonement”, twice before 1997, by two separate Utah correspondents. They had both been outraged by the argument of *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic*. According to Mormons and their genealogies, Jesus had been married to at least two women: a woman named Anna and Mary Magdalene. Mormons believe that Anna and her children were and are “Israelite” and blessed, while Mary Magdalene and her children were and are “Canaanite” and forever cursed by blood taint.

Modern Mormons like to assure people that “The Church” has given up embarrassing customs like racial discrimination, “multiple marriage” and “blood atonement” but anyone who knows anything about the higher levels of the Mormon Church suspects that such progressiveness would be impossible for the truest believers. These practices are regarded as *divine injunctions*, and they definitely supersede mere man-made civil law. Ordinary Mormons have been given official Church dispensation to abide by civil law – under great pressure from the United States government, it should be added – but Elders of the Church still answer to what they consider to be a much higher authority. As Brigham Young once put it in an 1878 speech to the Utah State Legislature, “there is no higher service that a Canaanite can perform than to be killed and thus perform ‘blood atonement.’”

Now, as it happened, one of my correspondents *was* a prominent Elder of the Mormon Church. Even I recognised his famous Mormon family name.¹¹ He was thus in a position to “suggest” a ritual killing and have it carried out without question by at least some Mormons even in 1997 (or in 2004, for that matter). Had Joëlle Lauriol been sent as curvaceously padded bait whose job it was to tempt me, somehow, into taking that final trip to Utah – for it would be *final*, I had been assured of *that*.

Canadian readers may choose to ridicule such suspicions. I can only say that it is a lot easier to nurture such ridicule in Canada than in Utah. Maybe readers who would blithely attribute my misgivings to paranoia should read the chillingly non-fiction book *The Mormon Murders* by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, New York, 1988). The Arts & Entertainment Network chose the three pipe bombing “blood atonements” for a 1994 one-hour television documentary on *City Confidential*.

We all tend to forget, especially those of us most “educated” in our contemporary universities, that three centuries ago *in Western Europe* people were still being burned at the stake because of religious conflict. And people were still being subjected to religious torture in New England. Religiously motivated murder and torture remain the rule, not the exception, everywhere else in the world today except Western Europe and North America. If nothing else, I hope that *Swords at Sunset* will show how shallow and vulnerable our cherished veneer of civil law and democracy really is because we very dangerously take it for granted. In fact,

the more I have researched this book, the more I fear that the real religious war still raging beneath our thin layer of democracy is the actual cause of most of those humps, bumps and lumps under our threadbare carpet of history.

But I rather doubted that Joëlle Lauriol could still be a Mormon that first evening in April 1997 because she was smoking a cigarette and eyeing my beer. On the other hand, it was always just barely possible that even instructors of Mormon missionaries at the Church school in Provo, Utah had lowered themselves to read John Le Carré. Maybe they had picked up contemporary ideas about what a proper honey trap should be. Did this smiling and too-comfortably built young woman have “blood atonement” planned for me at some time in the future, especially since two other Mormons had failed previously?

But coincidences abound in Grail Country – and, besides, I trusted the higher levels of the Rosicrucians’ security screenings. I also remembered those Lauriol genealogies and I had even greater faith in the ethical integrity of the Holy Blood. I decided to live dangerously. Since time was going by, I would let the fundamental things apply in order to enrich my remaining golden years: five-foot-two, eyes of blue, Joëlle’s relative youth and, well, her other accoutrements.

I was also to learn fairly soon that some of Joëlle’s proclivities regarding appropriate attire for dancing, swimming, sunbathing and archaeological digging reflected – sometimes rather shockingly for some people – extreme southern French values rather than extreme Mormon ones. I accepted this as the Mormon Church’s loss and my gain.

So, Joëlle and I together constituted the “we” that discovered new evidence during the A&E film shoot, the “we” that visited the Niagara region several times in late 1998 and the “we” who arranged a summit meeting of some maverick researchers at the Niagara Falls, Ontario hotel.



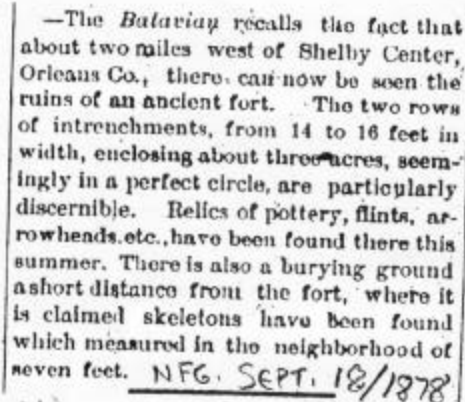
Joëlle and I had cello-taped the large-scale government topographical maps to the top of the large banquet-sized table that the hotel staff had brought into our room. They showed the Niagara Peninsula in various degrees of magnification, as it were. One map had a scale small enough to show Lakes Ontario and Erie

to either side. One map of a certain area had a scale large enough to depict individual houses and buildings.

Four, five and sometimes six people had pored over these maps during the course of the past two days. A carafe of coffee had always been close by and many cups had been thoughtfully drunk and distractedly cleared away after much musing. Besides the maps, the table was littered with notes, photos, newspaper clippings, a magnifying glass and a copy of the Book of Mormon.

Don Eckler, a tall and stolid microscope technician from Houghton, New York and friend of several previous adventures in New York State and Pennsylvania, dwarfed Joëlle as he stood beside her at the table pointing down at a mid-scale map. Don had, two days before, brought photographs and microphotographs of a bronze axe head that had been discovered along the banks of the Genesee River. Crystallography indicated that this axe had most probably been cast in a mould, an indication of European technology.¹²

“Bert Wheeler” – I will not give his real name here because he is employed by the Niagara Parks Commission – looked where Don was pointing. Bert had contributed his special collection of newspaper clippings from the Niagara Frontier to our amateur historical symposium. These clippings ranged from an article in a New York State newspaper of 1823 called *The Western Farmer* to



—The *Bataviay* recalls the fact that about two miles west of Shelby Center, Orleans Co., there can now be seen the ruins of an ancient fort. The two rows of intrenchments, from 14 to 16 feet in width, enclosing about three acres, seemingly in a perfect circle, are particularly discernible. Relics of pottery, flints, arrowheads, etc., have been found there this summer. There is also a burying ground a short distance from the fort, where it is claimed skeletons have been found which measured in the neighborhood of seven feet. NFG. SEPT. 18/1878

Niagara Falls Gazette. (NY)

the St. Catharines, Ontario *The Standard* newspaper of 1988, but all the clippings had one thing in common. They were all about discoveries of metal artifacts, house sites, stone foundations and

The Golden Horseshoe of the Holy Grail

puzzling human remains that had been found along both sides of the Niagara Frontier. Here's a sample of over sixty clippings.



A Battle of the Remote Past.

To Editor of the Democrat and Chronicle:

Sir: The late Judge Arad Thomas, of Albion, N. Y., in his "Pioneer History of Orleans County," mentions the fact that when the first white settlers discovered the mound or combined mound and fortress near the present village of Shelby Center and learned that it contained human skeletons they could obtain no information from the Indians then living and roaming in the vicinity in regard to the people who had supposedly been victims of a general massacre.

The condition of the skeletons at that date, a century or more ago, seemed to prove that they had lain underground at least a century then. Inquiry among the Indians in various parts of the country was in every case fruitless. Those whose remains lay covered there left no record whatever except the remnants of their tools and weapons, which were similar to those used by most if not all Indian tribes. In all probability their history will be an unsolved problem for all time to come, and the extreme antiquity of the battle and massacre effectually does away with any supposition that they were the victims of white settlers or soldiers. The general public, where not ignorant of the existence of the remains, has never seemed very much interested.

Local interest in the matter was heightened, however, when Dr. Cushing, of the town of Barre, settled in and began the practice of his profession in Medina in the late seventies. With him came his son Frank, a slim, high-browed young man not yet out of his teens, who was a born naturalist and student of antiques. That mound or demolished fort in Shelby drew him like a powerful magnet, and many a night, accompanied by George Kennan, the Siberian explorer and author, who then lived in Medina, the pair built brush and bark fires by the mound and industriously dug after long-buried bones and weapons and tools of the forgotten race. Frank investigated industriously, made frequent visits to the Tonawanda reservation, picked up an amazing knowledge of their legends and language, and in the end learned no more of the beginning or ending of the burial tribe than when he started. It is not altogether unlikely that in the experience just mentioned he received the impulses that later led to his visit to and adoption by the Zuni Indians and his long connection with the Smithsonian Institute.

J. B. SWEET.

Rochester, N. Y. June 5, 1909.

DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE

Thousands of Bodies Found.

5/28/09
The gruesome spectacle which confronted Mr. Sweeney of Orangeport, in unearthing the skeletons of a large number of Indians, while in the act of digging a peach tree from his farm, an account of which appeared in this paper last week, has attracted the attention of the government officials at Washington, and it is expected they will visit the place in a few days. Large numbers of visitors are daily flocking to the place. But as yet no one has given any valuable data as to the origin of the mass of human bones.

It can be readily seen upon examination of the position of the skeletons that they were all placed there after the flesh had been removed from the body. In what manner this came about is undetermined by the vast number of curious people who have made a personal visit to the scene the horrible grave-like trench.

It was discovered that the bodies lie in tiers and are composed of infants and adults. Male and female are also buried in the heap. It appears very much as if many of them were tied together in bundle fashion and pitched in the large hole which was prepared for them.

While some theories have been advanced as to a pre-historic existence, others aver a historical knowledge of a race of Indians inhabiting these parts in the year 1639. Many contradictory statements are made and it is yet a mystery. Perhaps a great naturalist might possibly throw some light on the subject and probably solve the perplexing problem.

Adjoining one section of the pit is a semblance of charred bones and ash-

es which give rise to the belief that cremation was the means used in destroying the bodies. As this is not a custom with the Indians, another important question arises in regard to the probable nationality or type of human being living in that day.

There is about one thousand skeletons in all in the trench, as every available space has been used in storing the bodies away. The surface of the hole covers an area of thirty-two feet and it is estimated to be approximately five feet deep.

What is believed to be the cause of death of such a large number is that

a war must have ensued between two tribes living at that time, and men, women and children were massacred relentlessly. After the affray was over the bodies were pitched in the pit in a heap.

Many visitors have gathered relics in the shape of skulls and bones for souvenirs. It is expected that the entire space may be dug up and all of the bones taken away.

May 28, 1909
Rochester Democrat
AND CHRONICLE ?

The clippings had another thing in common. Almost invariably the discoverers had pleaded for some expert to come and have a look at the artifacts and to explain what they were. And almost invariably, too, no expert had investigated and the artifacts were simply ignored. Sometimes there were follow-up articles showing that some of the discoveries had been ignored for years.



Don Eckler's axe would have fitted right into this collection except that its discovery had never been reported to any newspaper. This had been a purposeful lapse. The experts now have yet another way of getting rid of awkward artifacts besides just ignoring them until they are lost or forgotten. They are "repatriated" to a local Indian Reservation because today's dogma of political correctness insists they *must* be of Aboriginal origin. And the Aboriginals are quick to get rid of any artifact that is pre-Columbus and European.

The most recent example, which actually did cause something of a public and media outcry in spite of the dogma of political correctness, was the "repatriation" of Kennewick Man's entire 9500-year-old Caucasoid skeleton. The bones have now been decently buried according to ancient tribal rites in a secret location known only to Washington State Indian elders. Kennewick Man's embarrassing Caucasian racial traits can no longer puzzle anthropologists or challenge Indian myths. A very detailed account of the Kennewick Man saga and its implications can be found in Elaine Dewar's *Bones*.



Bones



Reconstruction

Kennewick Man

Using Bert's newspaper clippings, Don's personal stories, Bob William's careful notes, archaeologist Ron Williamson's book *Legacy of Stone*¹³, archaeologist Bill Fitzgerald's work at Neutral Indian sites, and my own bibliographic research and personal discoveries, we had plotted all the Niagara Frontier artifacts we'd ever heard about on the maps.

I had created two major categories of artifacts: "Aboriginal" and "European". Mind you, I had not always agreed with the archaeologists, including Ron Williamson and Bill Fitzgerald, as to which artifacts belonged in which category. But every artifact was presumably pre-colonial.

There were also several sub-categories each represented by different coloured little sticky discs that we had bought from a nearby Grand & Toy office supply store. The resulting splotches and corridors of colour formed a distinct pattern.

The vast majority of the reported "European" artifacts clustered along the line of the Welland Feeder Canal in the Niagara Peninsula of Canada, crossed the mouth of the Niagara River and straggled along the southern shore of Lake Ontario before petering out.

The vast majority of artifacts assigned to the "Aboriginal" category were more randomly distributed on both the American and Canadian sides of the Niagara Frontier. There was, however, a notable statistical increase in the Aboriginal artifacts at the Kingsport condominium site and along the line of the Niagara River, especially on Grand Island and both sides of it just above the falls.

Eckler picked up the magnifying glass for the umpteenth time. Maybe it helped focus his thoughts, no pun intended. After all, he was a microscope technician. But this time he actually peered through it.

All along the line of the dead-straight Welland Feeder Canal, in addition to the coloured discs representing European artifacts, there were also curious little lakes. Joëlle had first spotted them.

They were like little doughnuts about two hundred to four hundred metres in diameter, according to the scale. Some were complete circles. Some were deteriorated but had clearly once been nearly circular before being eroded so that the map showed them as tiny horseshoes. They were little circles of water each with an island in the middle.

“Homesteads protected by moats,” Eckler mumbled.

“And they correlate with the European things.” Wheeler.

“And they are all connected to the feeder canal,” contributed Joëlle. “Or, at least they once were. That or the Beaver River.”

“We call it Beaver Creek,” Bert grinned. “Have you actually seen these lakes?” Bert asked me.

“Not yet. Joey only noticed them on the map last month up in Mansonville at Gérard’s place.” Then I paused, remembering. “But, you know, I did see one back in 1995 when Zoë Nickerson and I made a quick day trip from Welland just to get the feel of the land. Only back then I didn’t know what I was looking at,” I added. I paused again. “And I didn’t know what I was looking for, either.”

“Gérard’s house has heated *floors*,” Joëlle remarked to no one in particular. “So civilised,” she mused. Then she shrugged. “Of course, he’s French,” she finished, as if that explained it all.

And actually, Gérard Leduc’s heated floors *had* pretty well explained it all, in a manner of speaking anyway.

Six weeks earlier Gérard and I had returned to his house after a long day filming in intermittent sleet and biting wind off the Green Mountains. We had actually been chilled to the bone by early morning, but A&E’s Producer-Director, Joshua Alper from Los Angeles, kept insisting that we walk around in mere long-sleeved lumberjack shirts as if it were early autumn in, say, northern California. We walked for about ten hours more – after we were already frozen but thankfully were beginning to get numb – often doing the same scene several times in seemingly endless replays.

“Look comfortable!” was Joshua’s constant command. He had an expensive wind-proof down-filled parka. Yeah, right.

At last, we came shivering into the living room after the season’s early nightfall. By then, the miserable weather had begun to bother even Joshua. We found Joëlle stretched out in a negligée on the (heated) floor’s shag area rug in front of a cosy fire. She looked up from maps and a confusion of file cards. A multi-coloured Accent Highlighter was poised in her hand. I habitually carried my collection of maps and my always-handy portable research kit wherever I went. Joëlle, with nothing much to do while Gérard and I were out filming in the sleet and wind, had managed to do just about the most valuable thing imaginable in terms of North American Grail-related research.

Gérard and I naturally headed straight for the fireplace and, en route, we couldn’t help but see what Joëlle was doing and had done. Using my card file of artifacts from the Niagara Region, she had plotted their locations on my maps of the area using dots of Highlighter. The file of artifacts was not nearly so complete as Bert Wheeler’s collection that we used about six weeks later and my card files referred only to “European” items. And the maps were only gas station road maps. Still, even so, the pattern was crystal clear. And while doing this careful plotting with her Highlighter, Joëlle had seen and marked the little doughnut lakes. I had never even noticed them before.

I was brought back to the present by Eckler’s comment. “Those features will be covered with snow and maybe ice within a week,” grunted Don. He was right. Snow was already swirling outside the hotel’s bay windows.

“Maybe so. But we know where to dig in the spring.” This was from Wheeler, the Niagara Parks Commission officer. Part of his job was to keep track of unauthorised archaeological excavations. I raised one eyebrow. He grinned. And shrugged.

“Why the hell hasn’t anyone done this before?” Eckler tapped the map angrily with the rim of the magnifying glass. He gestured at the little coloured discs. “This alone proves the case.”

“No one wants to know.” This came from Joëlle. And after all, perhaps she knew it best.

“You can say that again,” muttered Don, looking around for the coffee carafe.

“Something else proves the case,” I said. “Almost, anyway.” I ran a forefinger along the line of little doughnut lakes. “If this scale is accurate, these things – the moats – are only about twenty-five to fifty yards wide. Or metres. That means that the Europeans didn’t have to worry about powerful bows in the hands of potential attackers. And it means that they only had bows or crossbows themselves, but more powerful ones.”

“The Book of Mormon states specifically that the bows of the Nephites were made out of steel,” Joëlle put in.

“That’s interesting,” I said. “I never knew that. But it means that the Nephites were using crossbows, not longbows. No one has ever made a *longbow* out of steel. Not that I know about, anyway. It also means that their crossbows were based on post-Crusader technology, after the Europeans learned about Damascus steel. It was the only known medieval steel springy enough for crossbows.”

“And that possibly indicates that the second category of Templars were involved here,” said Eckler. Don Eckler and I both knew that the second rank of Knights Templar were all crossbow experts with steel-bowed weapons adopted the hard way from the Saracens in the Holy Land. That placed the indicated technology after about AD 1200, but before about AD 1600.

“Well, I don’t think we’re talking firearms here. There’s no provision in this pattern for long-range fields of fire,” I continued.

“Seems to be a valid point,” said Bert.

“Maybe,” Eckler conceded with a dubious grunt. “But based on an awful lot of suppositions.” He poured coffee.

“I think this general distribution of homestead also shows something else,” I carried on. “These homesteads, if that’s what they really are, are surrounded by moats but they’re also isolated. There’s no single concentration of European artifacts that would indicate a stronghold or a really centralised defensive strategy.” I pointed my finger at several widely separated doughnut lakes.

“That’s right,” came from Bert Wheeler as he scanned the map carefully.

Don Eckler bent over the map too. “Okay,” he said. “I’ll buy that.”

“These people had confidence in their technological superiority over their immediate Indian neighbours,” I continued, “even if it was only the relative superiority of European armour, bows,

crossbows and swords and not the absolute superiority that reliable firearms would give. I think we're talking late medieval Europeans here for sure. Before sixteen hundred."

"Maybe the Europeans were also bigger than the Indians, on average," Bert said. "There are plenty of Iroquois legends and myths about the 'stone giants' that once came into their land."

"Stone giants, Bert?" Eckler was interested. "Never heard of that."

"An old Iroquois legend, Don... Maybe not so old," Wheeler mused in a second thought. "Well, anyway, the arrows of the Indians were ineffective against them." Bert shrugged. "So the Indians concluded that these giants must have been made of stone. There's quite a few Iroquois rock drawings showing these 'stone giants' with arrows bouncing off them."

"How old are these rock drawings? Anybody know?" Don asked.

"Back in the 1930s," Bert continued, "Dr. Albert H. Hooker got interested in these legends because Hooker thought that these stories were about medieval Europeans. Hooker was a chemist, not an historian. But he was a respected amateur historian and lectured in Buffalo during 1934 and 1935. Hooker founded the company that was later involved in the Love Canal pollution scandal. Anyway, he thought that the 'stone giants' were Scandinavians from the Icelandic Republic."

"That's Sinclair's ballpark in terms of time, the 1200s to about 1390," I said. "Sinclair was a Scandinavian too, at least officially. He was a Jarl of Norway. And he came with about five hundred ex-Templar knights, or their descendants. No difference between Sinclair's people and quote Scandinavians unquote, given the terminology of the times. Six of one and half dozen of the other."

"Hooker thought that the 'stone giants' had come about 1350 and that some of their descendants were alive when Cartier came in 1534 and '35."

"Bingo," said Don Eckler, thumping the map.

"Hooker also thought that these Europeans had intermarried with the Iroquois and that political ideas of the Icelandic Republic had been transplanted into the Iroquois Confederacy," Wheeler continued. "Just like you wrote in *Grail Knights*." I'd given both Don and Bert brand new copies the day before, hot off the press.

"He said it before I did. I wish I'd known."

“Joseph Smith’s ‘Lamanites’ would have been the Iroquois,” Joëlle said.

Don laughed and smiled toward Joëlle. “Do you know what the word ‘Leman’ means, honey?”

I knew what it meant. But thinking seriously through her English vocabulary, which probably didn’t include many archaic Scottish and English words, Joëlle finally shook her head. She smiled prettily, but her eyes had turned that dangerous smoky blue-green colour. It had been Don’s harmless and unconscious use of the Americanism ‘honey’ – meaning any young woman – which had miffed her.

“It’s an old English and Scottish word for a lover. A companion, but not a Church-approved husband or wife,” said Don Eckler.

Joëlle’s eyes widened. “So that may be where Smith got his word ‘Lamanites’ from.” He nodded, grinning.

She paused. “And did *you* know, Don, *mon bon bougre*, that your Genesee River is an obvious corruption of the French for word the biblical Genesis, *Genèse*? I wonder how the local Iroquois learned that one?”

“Oh, I never knew that. That’s interesting... *Joëlle*.” I notice that he never asked what *mon bon bougre* might have meant, but I never doubted that he’d gotten the gist. Don and Joëlle got along fine after that.

After another few hours of discussion and rehashing all the data that confronted us, we decided to call it a night. We agreed to meet for breakfast and work out a plan of shared research and a strategy for actual fieldwork. My experience in “small group dynamics”, whether it is a meeting of advertising execs or of maverick historians, is that people feel more comfortable whenever they have a proposal in writing. At least they have something to hold in their hands, something that can be modified and changed because there’s already a structure.

While Joëlle went to bed, I stayed up most of the night on the computer writing out a proposed strategy for both research and in-the-field excavations. Occasionally, to stretch my back and when thinking about how best to phrase something, I walked over to the window to watch the snow falling. The city of Niagara Falls would have a white Christmas, but then the Niagara Frontier normally got a lot more snow than Toronto.



It was almost five years later that I turned back from the edge of the Niagara Escarpment on a hot August day in 2003.

Since 1998 we had found a lot of things along the line of the Welland Feeder Canal and among those doughnut lakes. Maybe three dozen arrowheads. A brass plate inscribed with Hebrew, Latin and Greek characters (shades of Joseph Smith!). Bert Wheeler had found part of a sword blade that *wasn't* from the War of 1812 but was much earlier. The War of 1812, I learned quickly, was the favoured expert explanation for almost any odd European artifact that was found anywhere on the Niagara Peninsula.

Ron Williamson, a professional archaeologist, had discovered *seven thousand* arrowheads at the Kingsport Condominium site. He had prudently assigned them to an “Archaic Flint Industry”. No one could argue with that. These arrowheads, no matter why they had once been shot in such great profusion at that particular place *had* once been made by an “Archaic Flint Industry”. And did Williamson’s use of *Archaic* refer to the recognised Great Lakes (Shield) Archaic Period, or did it just mean “old”. Ron told me that some of the arrowheads were “Late Woodland” (not Shield Archaic) in style, but this may have begged too many questions that were too awkward to answer.

Bert Wheeler stood up from his hole, peering around like a weary woodchuck. He stretched his back and then bent down again to retrieve his trowel, brushes, a collection of Ziploc bags holding the day’s archaeological catch – I could see that all the items were small – and finally the Glad Zipper Sandwich Bag box as well. Bert had shed his shirt and picked it up in a limp bundle. “Let’s knock off, Joey,” he called as he passed by her assigned plot.

Joëlle emerged from her excavation like a finalist in a wet T-shirt contest. She was sleek with perspiration. But she was a contender who would have been disqualified. For, like Bert, she had also shed her shirt and had its arms tied around her waist. Bert had long since become acclimatised to Joëlle. He didn’t bother to grin or even to look he was so weary. But he did wait patiently while she gathered her gear and then offered a hand to help her jiggle up out of the shallow dig.

I could see that her day's catch had been archaeological small fry too. But one of Joëlle's Ziplocs, the one bearing the neat label "8-17-03, J2" did have a scrap of five interlocked iron or crude steel rings – they were badly rusted, that seemed to have once been chain mail.

"Hey, that's interesting," said Bert with at least a spark of animation as sweat dripped off his chin. Mind if I have a look?" he asked as he reached for the sandwich bag that Joëlle then held out dangling between a dainty, dirty thumb and forefinger. He took it just as carefully and peered through the plastic. "A piece of something larger. But the rings look too delicate for armour to me." He handed the bag to me.

I peered through the slightly hazy plastic too. "That depends. The first chain mail had fairly large and heavy links. Like Crusaders' mail. Clumsy stuff. But later the work got much finer, almost decorative. Much more supple and less uncomfortable to wear. I've seen work like this before, but only from the late fourteenth century and the fifteenth."

"We could send it to the ROM," Joëlle suggested, wiping sweat from her brow. Streaks of perspiration channelled trickling down the middle of her chest.

"And have it disappeared?" We had all picked up the terminology of the Human Rights Violations in Guatemala, Panama, Rwanda, Chile, Argentina and too many other places.¹⁴ Bert glanced at me.

"Maybe Oxford or Cambridge would be safer," I said.

"Or the Sorbonne," Joëlle spoke up, forever French and always loyal.

"Or the Sorbonne." I agreed. Anywhere except a North American university, and certainly not any Canadian one. "But maybe we can do something to avoid wasting time at Oxford, Cambridge... or the Sorbonne..." I smiled at Joëlle.

"What?" This was Bert.

"Well, we can take a careful look at these rings under a microscope, especially the inside of the rods or wires. If the inside is iron and there's only a thin coating of Austenitic steel on the surface, that will roughly date this thing."

I looked up from my peering at interlocked rings to find Joëlle and Bert looking questions at me. "Real steel, steel all the way through, was only made after about AD 1500 and only in Europe –

in any quantity, that is. Before that, only a thin coating of steel over an iron core could be made.¹⁵ That coating was what is called Austenitic steel, and it has a different molecular structure from iron. It also a different colour, a kind of slivery-looking grey. There's usually a distinct boundary between the steel coating and the black iron core."

"How did they make this steel coating?"

"You don't want to know, Joey."

"Yes, I do."

"The smith would take a white hot blade of iron and plunge it into something that was rich in carbon. Something that had a lot of body fat because fat is mostly carbon and water – carbohydrates, and all that. That combination of hot iron and carbon-rich tissue added carbon molecules to the iron molecules. The ionic differences between the two elements caused a re-arrangement of both sets of molecules into a tight and rigid geometric structure. Austenitic steel. But it could be only a surface coating of steel maybe a millimetre or two thick because the iron cooled relatively quickly to a temperature where the molecular bonding couldn't take place. No one knew the chemistry back then, of course, but they knew that the technique worked."

"When's back then?" Wheeler asked.

"I think that the first known steel coating manufactured by plunging hot iron into living flesh method had been produced about 1500 BC by the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro cultures of the Indus River. They got an Austenitic layer of steel over their iron plough shares that was about two millimetres thick and surprisingly consistent over a fairly large surface. They probably used something pretty large, like a Bhrama bull or a Kouprey ox."

"When did this steel-making method get to Europe? Joëlle paused. "And why did you say I wouldn't want to know?"

"I guess this technology travelled fairly rapidly from India to Europe, from smith to smith, but I don't really know any dates. The Assyrians are supposed to have had lots of iron by 600 BC, so they could probably have made this thin steel coating too."

I hesitated, then plunged on. "I said that you wouldn't want to know because they used slaves whenever possible. Generally animals don't have as much body fat as people, but sometimes the smiths and their warrior customers had to make do with a cow or pig they needed to eat anyway."

“Jesus,” said Bert.

“But think of the problems of making a long iron blade into steel,” I said. “Sword blades were the major product absolutely requiring steel. Use your imagination.”

“Impaling,” Joëlle said.

“Exactly. And the best steel-making candidate was always a plump or pregnant woman. More body fat. And, maybe, with luck there would be a lot of carbon-rich liquid, amniotic fluid, in her womb. There was, of course, quick... er... access from the forge lengthways up into the body with no bones in the way, so that the blade would remain hotter longer and the resulting steel coating could be thicker.”

We were all silent for a while. “Wouldn’t a person die instantly from that kind of shock?” Bert asked.

“Hopefully, but not necessarily. I imagine that some slaves lived for hours, hearing their flesh cook and sizzle inside them around the blades.”

Joëlle looked a little sick and absently began to untie her shirt from around her waist. She stretched into the damp arms of the shirt and wrapped it around her chest before she said anything. We all started walking back to our cars that were parked in the farmer’s private drive. “A hideous way to die,” Joëlle commented. “Skewered between the legs and then cooked on a hot spit deep inside.”

“That’s probably why medieval swords had such dramatic names,” I said. “Ogier the Dane’s sword was supposedly called *Ormstunga*, ‘Worm’s Tongue’, by which was meant a pronged dragon’s tongue. A dragon’s bite was considered both excruciatingly painful and always fatal. Another chap’s sword – I forget whose – was named *Skraelingar*, ‘The Screamer’. Shrieks extracted from luckless slaves during the blade’s birth were deemed to be an indication of its potential prowess in battle.”

“I see,” said Joëlle very quietly, now possibly imbued with a new or renewed commitment to feminism, the possible domestic repercussions of which I didn’t want to contemplate so late in the day. “But how would steel chain mail have been made?” she asked, indicating the Ziploc baggie I still carried.

“I’ve read,” I said, “that the inter-connected iron rings were forged first. Probably in small pieces. Then the iron mail was wrapped just once around an iron bar, heated as white hot as

possible, and then shoved into a body cavity. That way the single layer of iron mail would have a chance to turn into steel. This would have to be done many, many times in order to get enough Austenitic steel mail for a complete suit of armour, of course.”

“Were there enough slaves for this?”

“Jesus,” said Bert.

“In some cultures there were probably enough slaves. But I would think that in medieval Europe, especially in northern Europe, animals must have been mostly used for this process, especially after Christianity had been introduced. Except maybe for sword blades, of course.”

Trying to end the dissertation on a more positive note, I said: “I would think that in northern Europe, the body cavity was opened in the normal course of slaughtering an animal’s carcass for cooking meat. The meat was just cooked on both sides, that’s all. From the inside as well as the outside. So, if these links seem to be Austenitic steel – I held up the Ziploc bag again – “then the date should be after about AD 1000 and before AD 1500. Christianity had been introduced almost all over northern Europe by AD 1000. Fairly good steel was available after AD 1500.”

Soon we had reached our cars and within a few minutes we were ourselves on the Queen Elizabeth Way. Bert Wheeler was headed toward Niagara Falls, a fairly short drive. We were headed in the opposite direction, toward Toronto about ninety kilometres or fifty-five miles away. At the QEW cloverleaf, we transmuted into enzymes ourselves. Maybe our investigations, if they resulted in a book, would play its small part in contributing to the Golden Horseshoe’s continued commercial wellbeing.

Nonetheless, as we entered into the drive back to Toronto in the gathering dusk I was increasingly pervaded by a sense of disappointment and even frustration. Sure, the past five years since 1998 had steadily yielded the bread-and-butter-fare of true archaeology, the small and non-dramatic finds that allowed a vanished people’s lifestyle to be reconstructed with fairly confident accuracy.

But who had ever accused me of being a real archaeologist? By temperament, I was a romantic. A relic hunter, tomb-raider and grave-robber. My spirit has more in common with Heinrich Schliemann than with Carl Blegan.

The Golden Horseshoe of the Holy Grail

What was so wrong about Schliemann's re-naming his young Greek wife "Helen", dressing her in a hoard of jewellery discovered in the ruins of Troy III and then photographing her wearing them as "Helen's" gorgeous trinkets?

For that matter, I would like to have discovered that gold death mask at Mycenae and to have telegraphed the Royal Society with Schliemann's dramatic message: "I have gazed into the face of Agamemnon."

On the Niagara Escarpment I had been hoping for an unlikely and dramatic discovery that would have symbolised the last of the Grail Refugees in one haunting, unforgettable and evocative artifact. Just as Heinrich Schliemann had (probably in error) dramatised the ancient Mycenaean Civilisation in just that way with Helen's bogus jewellery and a death mask from Mycenae that had probably immortalised some other Mycenaean ruler, not Agamemnon.

I was starting to appreciate the wisdom of Canadian historian, Farley Mowat, when he had complained that "the facts always seem to be getting in the way of the truth." Was it not true that the Grail was much more central to Western civilisation than a bunch of Mycenaean or Achaean overlords? And was it not also true that the Holy Grail had been the inspiration for Western civilisation's earliest literature, far older than *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*?¹⁶

Why couldn't Bert Wheeler, Joëlle Lauriol or I have come up out of our assigned excavation plots with a complete late fifteenth century sword, hardly rusted at all, that could have been held aloft in triumph against the flaming sunset of a dying August day?



Naturally, I'd always imagined Joëlle in this role.¹⁷ Was not the personification of France's La Liberté always a sword-wielding woman with at least one breast bared? Even Britain's version of La Liberté, Britannia, boasted at least some cleavage. Only America's Columbia had always been depicted fully draped with typical American decency – or prudery.

Now, Joëlle, for example, holding a perfect sword in the manner of a crucifix against a blood-hued sunset would have symbolised the Last Stand of the Grail Knights in a poignant, heroic vignette fit for the cover of a book. She could have supplied subliminal intimations of La Liberté, too. That would make a good book cover, especially for a book about the final chapter in the most evocative and romantic episode of Western history.

It has been called the greatest story ever told.

Notes to Chapter 1

- ¹ I have slightly disguised the real location for reasons that will become obvious.
- ² My biography has been in the University of Toronto's *Canadian Who's Who* since 1993 under my original name "de Sackville, Michael".
- ³ On March 9, 2004, Professor Alan Wilson of Cardiff University and Professor Baram Blackett from Newcastle University jointly announced that Welsh voyages may have crossed the Atlantic even earlier than the generally accepted expedition of Prince Madoc, the son of Owen Gynedd (King of North Wales), circa AD 1170. According to Wilson and Blackett, there is evidence that an earlier "Madoc", Prince Madoc Morfan of South Wales, made a transatlantic voyage in AD 562. "There are old-style Welsh hill forts around the Ohio River valley that are patterned as they are in Britain," said Wilson. Most readers of this book will know that such announcements are nothing new. Indeed, since the 1950s, the evidence has become overwhelming (and rather boring) attesting to all sorts of transatlantic voyages before Columbus.
- ⁴ Illustrated on page 284 of *Grail Knights of North America*.
- ⁵ Illustrated on pages 296 and 297 of *Grail Knights of North America*.

- ⁶ The Quebec “gargoyle” is illustrated on page 300 of *Grail Knights of North America*. The carved head from Pennsylvania is illustrated on page 389 of *Grail Knights of North America*.
- ⁷ A Pennsylvania “Baphomet” rock inscription or carving is illustrated on page 388 of *Grail Knights of North America*.
- ⁸ Produced for the Arts & Entertainment Network by Greystone Productions of Los Angeles.
- ⁹ *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, page 236.
- ¹⁰ I first suggested this on pages 338-358 of *Grail Knights of North America*.
- ¹¹ Some readers may be interested that this same Mormon family was intimately involved in the “9/11” so-called terrorist attacks. Further, it may also be interesting that Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, in a televised interview with Dan Rather, was the first person to my knowledge (and I was glued to the television all that day) to say that he had “proof” that Osama bin Laden had been responsible for the attacks. This “proof” was never discussed further, or examined, but within a few days it had become “common knowledge” that bin Laden’s “Al Qaeda” had masterminded 9/11. The Winter Olympics were held in Salt Lake City in February 2002. How much would Olympics-related travel have assisted terrorist planning in the autumn of 2001?
- ¹² Illustrated (photo) on page 350 of *Grail Knights of North America*.
- ¹³ *Legacy of Stone*, Eastendbooks, 1998.
- ¹⁴ This usage seems to have come from the Spanish *desaparecidos* meaning “the disappeared” which was applied to those who vanished through massacre or imprisonment during the civil war in Guatemala 1962-1996.
- ¹⁵ Fisher, Douglas Alan, *Steel, from the Iron Age to the Space Age*, Harper, 1967.
- ¹⁶ The Swiss Egyptologist Marthe Chambrun-Ruspoli in her *L'épervier divin* (“The Divine Falcon”), argues convincingly (in my opinion) that the famous Egyptian “Books of the Dead” deal with the so-called “Osirian Religion” of Osiris, Isis and their son Horus. This first “Holy Family” became the basis of the Holy Grail legend as well as the template for Joseph, Mary and Jesus in the much later New Testament. Since Egyptian “Books of the Dead” date from at least 3600 BC and the Trojan War traditionally took place about 1225 BC but Homer is supposed to have lived about 800 BC, then this Holy Grail tradition actually ranks as the earliest Western literature. It is about 2,800 years older than *The Odyssey* and *Iliad*.

¹⁷ For some years, about ten to fifteen, I've gradually developed the notion through observation that women's breasts are some kind of "social sensory organs".

As most of my readers know, I have a fair amount of zoological and anthropological training (under Dr. Carlton Coon, among others). It would make sense, around a tribal fire, for women's breasts to be able to "pick up" and transmit the "social vibes" of the group, especially of possibly aggressive males (and females) in the group. I have even conducted some "semi-scientific" research on this idea using Duke University's card system.

A topless woman seeing a card and then "sending the image" to another topless woman who "receives" the symbol mentally, results in scores higher than chance. And I've tried all combinations of topless sender, topless receiver, various symbols and more complex messages.

The size of the breast doesn't seem to matter so much (although bigger breasts seem to "receive" a bit better), but what really *does* matter seems to be the nipple. Big nipples with a definite teat work better than "little girl"-type nipples. Redheads (with redder nipples) seem to work better than other skin complexions.

I think this may be the source of "women's intuition" and maybe also the origin of some Wiccan lore.

This has helped me to find artifacts because some of my women friends could walk over terrain and tell me where they felt "emotional vibes" -- a battle, or much sadness or misery. And where any human tragedy happens, you're likely to find artifacts.

The woman doesn't have to be completely topless, but the breasts can only be covered by a thin layer of non-synthetic material. But you do get more definite "vibes" with bare breasts.

In 1995, before I met Joëlle in 1997, I went to the Escarpment with a tall (taller than me), biggish-breasted redheaded woman named Zoë N. (from Nova Scotia), the wife of a good friend of mine, Bob Hall, a special effects artist in the film business. Bob had been working on a film shoot for six solid weeks, night and day, and Zoë was bored stiff and had hardly seen him. So I invited her for a day trip on the Escarpment to give her something to do. This area had always intrigued me because it just looked "lived in" by Europeans for a long time.

It was at the Welland Feeder Canal that Zoë got such strong vibes of sadness that she began to cry. I told her then what I suspected (*Swords at Sunset*) about the area. And I also told her what I suspected about breasts and why, perhaps, she had started crying. Being an uninhibited and Bohemian girl, Zoë took off her bra and held her T-shirt clear of her nipples and walked all around this part of the canal banks. She

pinpointed a "grave" and I dug. I did not find a burial, but I found a half-dozen arrowheads around a rusted iron "battle-axe" blade. Several of these "battle-axe-looking" blades have been found in the Escarpment area, the last about 15 years ago in Stony Creek. You read about these discoveries every few years or so.

Since the experience with Zoë, I've always taken a woman along to Escarpment areas, and preferably a woman who was somewhat "exhibitionist" (that's a man's term).

I think women were and are designed to go topless because they get valuable information that way, and "clothing them decently" according to Judaic-based religions is a purposeful attempt to blunt their sensory input, their birthright.

Now, researching with Joëlle on the Escarpment, there was never any problem (in the summer) because of her topless proclivities. And I think that's one of the reasons we found so many artifacts. I knew where to go, generally, by the "lay of the land" and the history I had worked out, and Joëlle could then pinpoint where to dig. Now, she may have been correct 100% of the time for all I know, but we found some anomalous artifact about 30%-50% of the time. This is better, much better, than the usual archaeological dig. This is why I also wanted to include a semi-nude photo of Joëlle in Chapter 1 of *Swords at Sunset*. Besides "titillation" (pun intended) her proclivities contributed materially to our success!

I think that a book about finding old artifacts, combined with tasteful photos of topless researchers and Wiccan commentary, would probably be a bestseller in itself. Aside from that, some very valuable additional evidence of pre-colonial Europeans on the Escarpment might be found.

Now the "Cooley" site at Ancaster, Ontario (near Hamilton) was a known early and small colonial cemetery where archaeologists expected to find 6-12 interments. Instead, over 100 were found. The archaeologists have clammed up, but it is possible that some of the "extra" bodies may have been pre-colonial Europeans. Early colonial settlers may have accidentally discovered this cemetery and used it themselves.

About 20-30 years ago, it seems to me, Elaine Morgan wrote a book called *The Descent of Woman*. She basically took Sir Alastair Hardy's Oxford theory of human evolution and applied it to the evolution of women only. It was very popular in some feminist and New Age circles, but physical anthropologists (both male and female) were either amused or outraged by it.

Although it is simply a fact that only human females among the primates (or *any* mammals) have breasts that protrude all year around and not just when nursing, Elaine Morgan denied this. She didn't like

the current anthropological explanation that human female breasts had developed as "sexual aggression-displacement mechanisms" in addition, of course, as a means of nurturing babies. Morgan went on to assert that manatees also had human-like breasts. They do not.

Morgan would have been better off to have met me and talked with me. Although human female breasts are undoubtedly *both* "sexual aggression-displacement mechanisms" *and* "secondary sexual attractants" (and mammary glands), I think they are *also* and perhaps more significantly for human evolution some sort of "social sensory organs".

I find it odd that human female breasts must have developed rather suddenly, and then in response to a fairly large leap in intelligence that characterized the transition between Australopithecines (thought to be like Chimpanzees – no breasts) and true "humans", although very primitive humans.

I call these "not quite human" or "very primitive human" creatures "Australo-homo-pithecines" and there were apparently many different kinds of them. On some, like the *Sedepa* described from Sumatra, the females are reported to have small but definite breasts. And this *Sedepa* is only on the very barest threshold of being fully "human".

All "modern humans" known to be living today, even groups so primitive as the Ulele pygmies of the Congo and the *hantu Sakai* of former Malaysia, have definite female breasts. They also all have at least a rudimentary form of *religion*.

To me, there's nothing remotely "mystical" or "spiritual" about religion. Religion has a biological and evolutionary function. It is to assert the conception of "territory in the dimension of time" as a valid human environment to be inhabited and "exploited", but this all-important concept is really what separates us from other "animals".

Human breasts seem to have developed in step with the conception of religion. This is because of the higher level of aggression required of humans by yet *another* kind of "territory" (in addition to real territory and the social territory of dominance) to be inhabited, defended and asserted. Females, women, above all had to be able to assess the stage of this higher level of aggression at any given time and to decide whether it posed an immediate threat to themselves and their children.

I have some reproducible evidence for this opinion. I would like to explore this possibility, get more indisputable evidence of it, and do a book about it. I would suggest reading *Esau's Empire II* on my website, "The Psychobiology of Religion". It is basically the gist of my first book, *The Cronos Complex*. This book earned me several Nobel Prize nominations and may well win it some day.