



### **Champlain's Astrolabe**

Charles Macnamara lived in Arnprior from 1881 to 1944, and worked as secretary-treasurer for the McLachlin Bros. At one point in Macnamara's life he became quite interested in the 16th century explorer and soldier, Samuel de Champlain. He conducted comprehensive research using his own correspondence with others, his interviews and knowledge of the Ottawa Valley to complete articles, such as "Champlain as a Naturalist" and "Champlain's Astrolabe".

It is interesting that in the years following Macnamara's Champlain articles, the erection of a monument to Champlain on Chats Lake was discussed by Arnprior council. This is documented in the Arnprior Chronicle of January 13, 1928.

### **About The Exhibit**

Included in this set of images are photos from one of Macnamara's scrapbooks. The map of Champlain's route is not part of the scrapbook; however it is included in this display to show Macnamara's interest in Champlain's precise travels and his knowledge of the Ottawa Valley. Also the image of Macnamara himself is from another scrapbook and is included to provide a short biography. The last three images are in the order that Macnamara included them in his scrap book. The first of these three puts the area around the site into context, the next images move incrementally closer showing further details of where the astrolabe was found.

Macnamara's photos have been scanned from glass plate negatives. Around the side of each photo the emulsion's edge is still visible and is a reminder of the medium used by Macnamara.

-Ryan Tobalt (AMBA 2013 Summer Student)

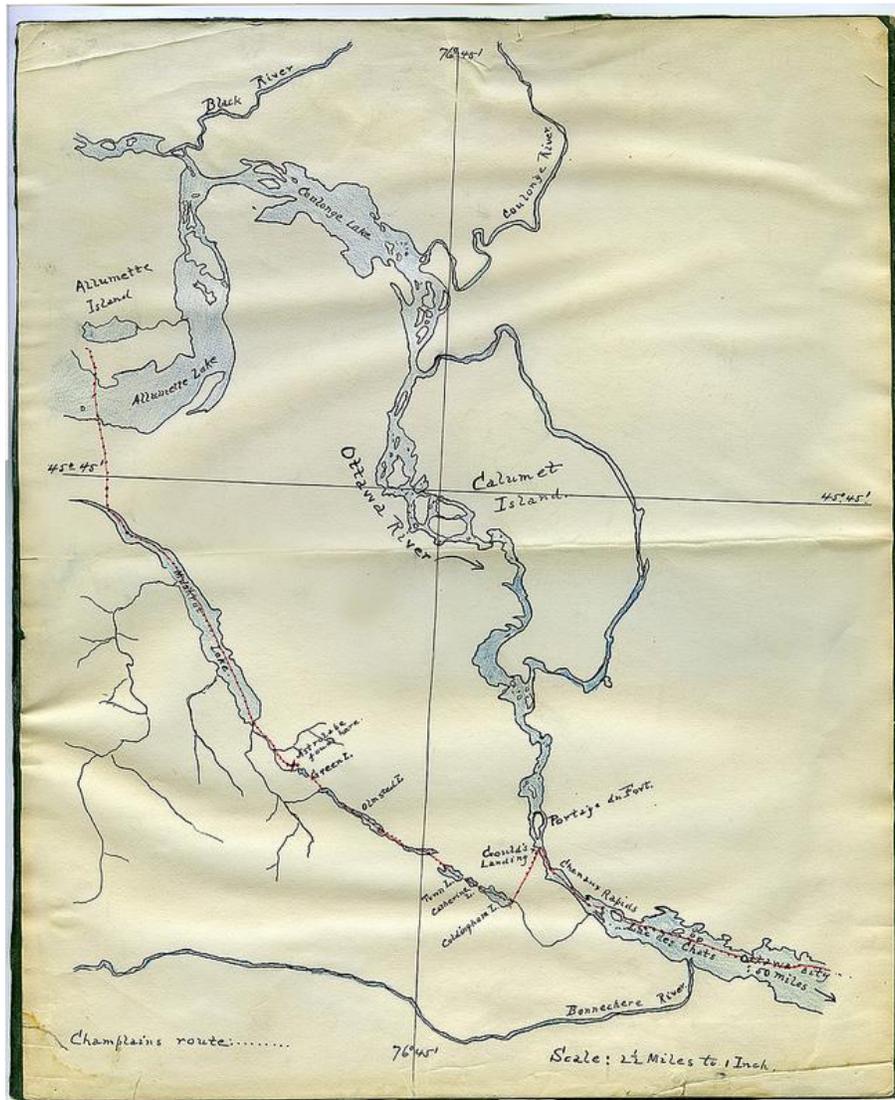


'Charles Macnamara worked as secretary-treasurer for the McLachlin Bros. Lumber Company for 46 years. From 1908 to 1917, Charles Macnamara was involved with the pictorial movement in photography. During this period he took many award winning photographs which have been published in multiple articles and photographic journals. Charles Macnamara was also an amateur entomologist, historian and field naturalist who contributed articles to various publications throughout his lifetime.

During his time in Arnprior, Macnamara became extremely interested in Champlain's Voyage through the Ottawa valley. Correspondence shows that he took a great deal of time and effort preparing articles, such as "Champlain's Astrolabe" and "Champlain as a Naturalist". It was in 1919 that E.D Lee and Charles Macnamara made their way to the site where the astrolabe was found on green lake. Thanks to Macnamara's detailed nature, there are today photographs of what they saw on their excursion and a precise account from E.D Lee himself.'

The Charles Macnamara collection is a wonderful piece of Ottawa Valley heritage and is preserved at the Arnprior & McNab/Braeside Archives.

Excerpts take from Laurie Dougherty's "Charles Macnamara – A Retrospective"  
[http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires\\_de\\_chez\\_nous-community\\_memories/pm\\_v2.php?id=exhibit\\_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=336](http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=exhibit_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=336)



A hand drawn map of Champlain's supposed route by Charles Macnamara. It is interesting that Macnamara chose to put dots after Champlain's route.....



Brass astrolabe found by E.G. Lee in August 1867 at Green Lake near Cobden, Ontario. It is supposed to have been lost by Samuel de Champlain on his journey up the Ottawa in June 1613. The instrument, shown here slightly larger than actual size, is in the collection of Samuel V. Hoffman of New York. Mr Hoffman says that properly speaking this is not an astrolabe but an armillary circle. The astrolabe, when found had a ring at the bottom to which a weight could be hung to steady the instrument in use when necessary. The ring was carelessly broken off and lost while the astrolabe was in hands of the Dominion Government to whom the then owner had offered it for sale.

-Charles Macnamara



Green Lake near which the astrolabe was found. It is situated in lots 12 and 13 of the 2nd concession of the Township of Ross, County of Renfrew, The man in the distance is Edward George Lee, who as a boy found the astrolabe.

-Charles MacNanmara



The striking statue of Samuel de Champlain in Majors Hill Park, Ottawa. It is a fine piece of work and represents the great explorer taking an observation with his astrolabe. Unfortunately, the sculptor has added a handle to the instrument which it never possessed, and has placed the astrolabe upside down in Champlain's hand, a position in which an observation would be impossible.

-Charles Macnamara



The inlet at Gould's Landing where the Indians probably brought their canoes ashore. This is likely the spot where the dispute with de Vignau took place about the route.

-Charles Macnamara

--- Exert taken from "Champlain's Astrolabe", written by Charles Macnamara in 1919. ----

The Indians decided that the road was too hard and dangerous, and refused to go. To overcome these objections, Champlain pointed to de Vignan as a young man who had traveled to the country of the Nipissings without encountering such difficulties or finding the people so unfriendly. Astonished, Tessouat asked: "Nicholas, is it true that you say you were among the Nebicerine?" It was long before de Vignan answered; then he said hesitatingly: "Yes, I was there". At this the Indians raised loud cries, and Tessouat said: "You are a downright liar, you know well that you slept at my side every night with my children; if you were among the people mentioned it was while sleeping."

For a while the impostor brazened it out, but at last gave in and made full confession. "After meditating by himself he fell on his knees, and asked my pardon, declaring that all he had said both in France and in this country in respect to the sea in question, was false, that he had never seen it, and that he had never gone farther than the village of Tessouat."



Gould's Landing on the Ontario side of the Cheneaux Rapids channel, about a mile below the village of Portage du Fort. On his journey up the Ottawa in June 1613, this is where he left "la grande Rivière" and portaged into a chain of small lakes.

-Charles Macnamara



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The stream from Green Lake flows through alders along the bottom of a large sloping field. The astrolabe was found in the extreme distance to the right, about 200 yards from the foot of Green Lake.

-Charles Macnamara



While clearing land in August 1867 E.G. Lee found the astrolabe on the spot where he is seen standing in this photograph.

-Charles Macnamara



While clearing land in August 1867 E.G. Lee found the astrolabe on the spot where he is seen standing in this photograph.

- Charles Macnamara

Arnprior, Ontario  
1919.

Canada, 1st August

Statement of Edward George Lee, farmer, now living on the Third Concession Line of the Township of Fitzroy, County of Carleton, Ontario, (near Arnprior), regarding his discovery of an astrolabe when he was a boy of about 14 years. (Statement taken down by Charles Macnamara, of Arnprior, Ontario.)

*"My name is Edward George Lee. I was born in the Township of Ross, near Cobden, Ontario in October 1852. When I was about 14 years old, my father, John Lee, who was a farmer living a few miles from Cobden in the Township of Ross, took a job of clearing land in the 2nd concession of that township. The land had been located by Captain Roverman [Overman] of the Steamboat "Jason Gould" that ran on Muskrat Lake and it was he who gave my father the job. I don't remember the number of the lot now, but it was afterwards occupied by John Sammon, father of Mr. Sammon of the Copeland House, Pembroke. I used to help pa at this work and one day in June or July [it was really August] when we were working just below Green Lake, he sent me home for his dinner, and when I brought it back, he sat down to eat it while I went on drawing logs with our team of oxen, Buck and Brin, to the heaps where they were to be burned. We burned timber those times that would make a man's fortune now-a-days. There was an old fallen red pine that lay downhill with its top in the little creek that flows out of Green Lake. Pa had chopped the trunk of this tree into three logs, and I drew two of them away with the oxen, but the third log, just below the branches, was not chopped clean off, and I hitched the oxen to it and pulled it around sideways so as to break it off. I had to dig away the moss and marl that the old tree lay in so as to get the chain around the log, and when the log swung around it pulled back the moss like a blanket, and, there on the ground I saw a round yellow thing, nine or ten inches across, with figures on it, and an arm across it, pointed at one end and blunt at the other. Alongside of it was a lump of rust that might have been old chains or something like that, but I did not pick it up. I showed the compass to my father, and he put it on a stump a little way up the hill. Just then Captain Overman came along to see how the work was going, and old Captain Cowley was with him. Pa showed them the compass and they took it away, and pa said they promised to give me \$10.00 for it, but I never got a farthing, nor saw hide or hair of the compass since. Poor pa let them have it, but if I had only got it up to the house, ma would not have given it to them that easy. The compass was lying about two or three rods from the edge of the creek. I never saw water enough in the creek to float a canoe."*