

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE NAME LAURENTIAN BY  
THE CANADIAN GEOLOGISTS.

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(ABSTRACT.)

The name Laurentian was given by Mr. Edward Desor in 1850 to some marine deposits in Maine, on the St. Lawrence River, and Lakes Champlain and Ontario. Mr. Desor's paper was first read before this Society and published in the Proceedings (III, 357-358). With this application the term Laurentian was quite frequently employed by Mr. Desor (Proc. Bost. Soc. Nat. His., 1851, IV, 29, 33; Bull. Soc. Géol. France, 1851 (2), VIII, 420-423; IX, 94-96; Am. Jour. Sci., 1852 (2), XIV, 49-59); and it seems to have passed into current use amongst geologists, especially between 1850 and 1857. In 1854 Sir William Logan appropriated the name to designate the Canadian rocks which he had heretofore called the "Metamorphic Series." Logan's action appears to have been unjustifiable and needless. Needless, because the rocks to which he gave the name Laurentian were the equivalents of the Azoic of Foster and Whitney. It is to be remembered that the term Huronian was not employed until 1855, and this formation was for many years thereafter regarded as Paleozoic. Unjustifiable, because the name Laurentian was in current use for a different formation; to which another name had to be given later on on account of Logan's action, thus further complicating the synonymy. Unjustifiable, because Logan knew of Desor's application of the term and had employed it in the same manner himself (Report of Progress Geol. Survey, Canada, 1850-51, p. 8). The complications growing out of the deprivation of Desor by Logan of the credit belonging to the former are, first, the use of the name Laurentian in geological literature with two different meanings; secondly, the naming of Desor's Laurentian, Champlain, by Prof. C. H. Hitchcock, and thus giving the term Champlain two distinct significations in geological literature.

So far as the writer is aware, but one American geologist has ever protested against the injustice done Desor by the Canadian geologists (Amer. Jour. Sci. 1857 (2), XXIII, 305-314).

The following literature offers a somewhat curious commentary upon the preceding described action of Logan. "The crystalline limestones of Canada, with those of New York and the New England States, may be divided into four classes, belonging to as many different geological periods. The first and most ancient occur in that system of rocks, named by Mr. Logan the Laurentian Series, which extending from Labrador to Lake Huron, forms the northern boundary of the Silurian System of Canada and the United States." (T. Sterry Hunt, *Am. Jour. Sci.* 1854 (2), XVIII, 193).

"It was therefore proposed to give the older group a distinctive name, and inasmuch as these rocks form the hills on the north side of the St. Lawrence, to which Mr. Garneau, the Canadian historian, had already given the geographical name of Laurentides, the distinctive appellation of Laurentian proposed by the present writer (Dr. Hunt) was applied to them in the Report of the Geological Survey of Canada for 1852 (page 9) which was published in 1854." (T. Sterry Hunt, *Azoic Rocks, Part I*, p. 72, *Sec. Geol. Survey Penn., E.*)

"In 1854 the writer (Dr. Hunt) in concert with Logan proposed for the ancient crystalline rocks of the Laurentide Mountains . . . the name of Laurentian." (T. Sterry Hunt, *Proc Am. Assoc. Adv. Sci.*, 1879, XXVIII, 283.)