

3 FRANCE COMES TO NORTH AMERICA

Chapter 3 Section 1

The Pathway To Michigan!

Here are the key concepts you will find in this section:

The St. Lawrence River was the pathway which finally brought the first Europeans to Michigan. They were the French. Michigan became a part of the French empire.

The fur trade and the search for a way to the Orient were two important reasons the French explored this area. Both activities involved rivers and the Great Lakes water system.

The French became involved in a war between two groups of Native American tribes. This had a great impact on what the French did later.

Life for the early French was not easy and settlement was slow.

If you stop thinking of America as highways and start thinking of it as rivers, you get closer to the country. Charles Kuralt, *Reader's Digest*.

Pathway to Michigan

The St. Lawrence River is like a sword driving toward the heart of North America. This river became a pathway into the continent. Today it is hard for people to realize how important rivers were to travelers when the first Europeans arrived in North America. Imagine the worst dirt road you have ever seen and realize there was nothing then in North America as good as that to use! Also imagine the thickest forest or woods you have ever seen and realize such forests covered most of the continent at that time!

The St. Lawrence was a highway ready to be used by sailing ships and canoes. The Indians had been using it for centuries. It was only a matter of time

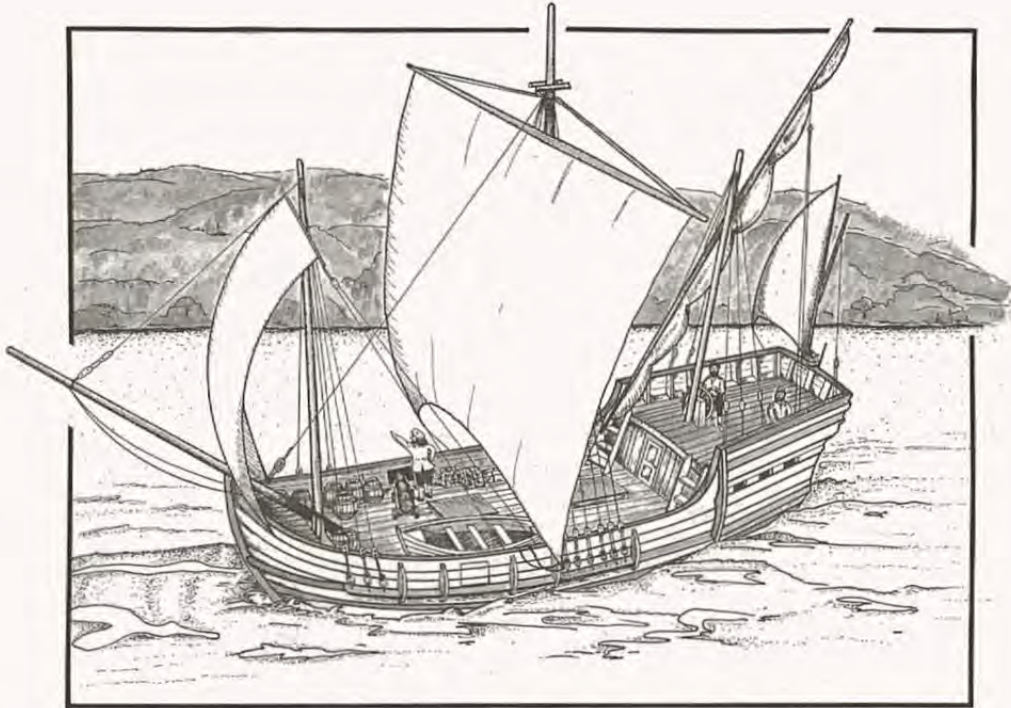
before the adventurers from Europe began to use the river to go southwest into North America.

The pathway of the St. Lawrence River eventually became the pathway to Michigan. Much of our early history is tied to this great river and the people who used it. It reaches the Great Lakes—the same Great Lakes which surround our state. It brought the Europeans here and the Europeans changed forever the land now called Michigan.

Rivals in a New World

The conquest of North America by the Europeans was a contest by four countries: England, France, Holland, and Spain. The Spanish settled in the southern United States and Central and





The St. Lawrence River became a major trade route for the French. Each year they brought in trade goods and supplies; then returned to France with fish and furs. (Art by David B. McConnell)

South America. The Dutch from Holland settled in what is now New York State. Only a few Dutch traders ever went as far west as Michigan. Therefore, Spain and Holland did not have a big part in Michigan history, but England and France did.

The first great explorer to use the St. Lawrence was Jacques Cartier (car tee YAY). In 1534 he was sent by the king of France to find a route to the *Orient*. *The Orient refers to the modern countries of China, Japan, India, and the others in that part of the world.* The king was interested in finding a way through North America so the French could reach those lands by sailing west. No one at that time had any idea how large North America was, or how far it was to the Orient; so it seemed to be a reasonable idea.

Their Motives

Why did Europeans want to get to the Orient? Did they enjoy sailing for

months at a time on dirty little ships with a bunch of smelly sailors and eating half-spoiled food? No! Finding a shortcut to the Orient was a business venture, a way to make a great deal of money. Europeans had discovered the people in the Orient had some interesting products. Spices and silk were two which attracted their attention. Silk made very nice clothes and the spices helped European food to taste much better, especially if the food had not been kept cool or wasn't very fresh!

Up the St. Lawrence!

Cartier left France with two ships and searched for a way to continue across North America. He explored the mouth of the St. Lawrence River and finally landed on the Gaspé Peninsula. There he made friends with some Indians. In the fall, he took two of the Native Americans back to France. The next spring Cartier returned with the Indians. He anchored near an island on the day

honoring the death of a Christian saint named Lawrence. To Cartier, remembering religious heroes was important, so he named the bay at the beginning of the river after Saint Lawrence. Thus, the mighty St. Lawrence River got its name.

His Indian friends guided him as he sailed up the river. They stopped at an island where the tribesmen told Cartier he was in a kingdom called Canada. Canada is the Huron-Iroquois word for village. Cartier continued to use the word for the land he visited. Eventually all the land north of the United States came to be known as Canada.

Cartier could not find a route to the Orient and that caused the French rulers to lose interest for many years in further exploration of the area.

Fish and Furs Keep Them Coming

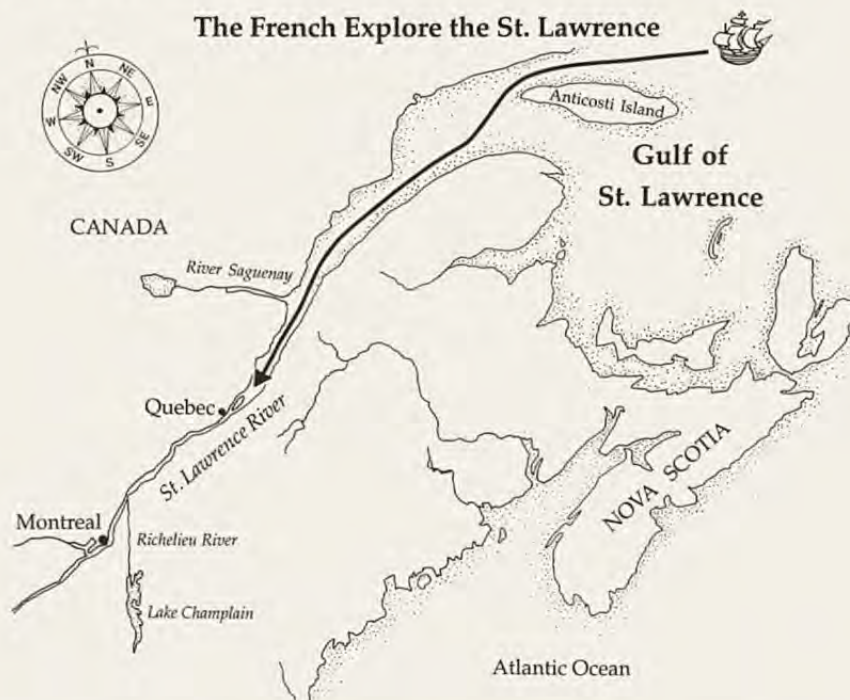
Although French explorers did not come back right away, fishermen did. In the early 1500s it was discovered the ocean near Newfoundland was excellent for fishing. Each summer the sea was dotted with white sails. Sailors met the natives when they went on shore to collect food or to dry their fish. Some ships even went up the St. Lawrence River.

The tribes they met were interested in European metal knives, hatchets, fish hooks, and pots. Such items would make life much easier for them.

What could the Indians give the sailors so they could get these things? Furs! The sailors were happy to exchange their knives and fishhooks for the beautiful Indian furs. The French fur trade with North America developed quite nicely in that long-range manner. The historian Samuel Morrison says in 1583 the Paris fur market sold about \$12,000 worth of North American furs.

Furs for the Rich and Famous

In Europe, furs had been used in expensive clothing for a long time. The kind and amount of fur people wore was related to their rank in society. Beaver hats had been worn in England since the late 1300s. Also, coats were trimmed with fur collars. But by the 1500s, many fur-bearing animals were hard to find in Europe. The last beaver was seen in England in the 1520s; after that time, it became *extinct* in that country. *Being extinct means there were no more of these animals left alive.*



The Frenchman Cartier explored and named the St. Lawrence River.

The French King Takes Action

The Spanish had built a good business by stealing gold from the natives in Mexico. They had developed their colonies and had set up government, farming and religious missions. England had also been busy, but was not quite so far along in North America as Spain was in the south. England sent several sailors to explore the coast of North America.

About 1600, the king of France felt left out of the activity in the New World. He decided to begin a settlement in North America but didn't want to pay for it himself. So he offered to give exclusive fur trading rights to any company willing to start the settlement. Thus, the company had a fur trading *monopoly*. *A monopoly is the total control of a market.* Monopolies and fur trading companies would be important in the future of Michigan.

The first company had a rough time starting their settlement. So, eventually, the monopoly was taken away and given to a new company. The area to be covered in North America by their monopoly was between latitudes 40 degrees north and 46 degrees north—a large piece of land!

A Great Frenchman Challenges the Wilderness

An important member of the second company was Samuel de Champlain (duh sham PLANE). He was an experienced soldier and sailor. He knew about Canada and the St. Lawrence because the fishing ships stopped at his hometown in France.

In 1604 they tried to start a settlement on the southwest side of Nova Scotia. That did not seem to be a good location so an expedition searched for a better site. The expedition sailed down the coast of America as far as Plymouth, Massachusetts. Champlain even made charts of the harbor. That was years before the Pilgrims arrived!

Did the company with the monopoly really keep all the furs from such a huge region? No they didn't. Over 80

competing ships took home furs each year without bothering to give any to those who had the monopoly! It would have taken a whole navy to stop them! Illegal fur traders continued for a long time to be a problem in New France. So Champlain suggested they settle far up the St. Lawrence to be closer to the furs they wanted.

First Settlement on the St. Lawrence

Three ships left France in the spring of 1608 to make a fresh try. Champlain had chosen a place where the river narrows, about 375 miles up the river. The Native Americans called the place *Kebec* which means narrow place in the river. The French changed the name to Quebec (kay BECK) and a great city was about to be born.

Monopoly— So What!

Trouble was waiting for Champlain! When he arrived, angry fur traders were already there. The traders didn't like the idea of a monopoly and killed one of Champlain's men and wounded another in a fight. Champlain had to do some fast talking to control the situation.

He was not, however, one to slow down because of problems. Soon buildings were finished and winter wheat and rye planted. But it was a very cold winter. Several of the men died. By spring, only eight of the 24 were alive! Two of them were boys, Etienne (ay TYEN) and Nicolas. The boys spent the terrible winter learning the Indian language from the local tribe. Their ability to speak with the Indians was later very important.

Helping Friends with Musket Balls!

When Champlain was exploring the east coast of America, the Indians told him of the problems they had with the Iroquois tribes. (They were five tribes who worked closely together. They were also called the Five Nations.) Even though they were bullying other tribes, Champlain hoped he could lead them to be peaceful. At that time, the Iroquois lived in a large area south of the

St. Lawrence River, in present day New York state. The Huron and other tribes with whom the French traded lived north of the river and were often attacked by the Iroquois.

Finally, Champlain felt talking was useless and decided to help the friendly tribes. He reasoned that if they did not have to spend time fighting, the Indians would get more furs. He said he would go with them to battle the Iroquois. About 60 friendly warriors and 20 Frenchmen went in canoes up the St. Lawrence, and then south on the Richelieu (Rish i loo) River. They found a beautiful lake which Champlain promptly named after himself.

History was waiting to be made at the southern end of the lake. After dark on July 29, 1609, Champlain's group met an Iroquois war party of about 200 men. The Iroquois had built a crude log fort to protect themselves. That night the two tribal groups exchanged insults and boasts. The next morning the Iroquois came out and the Huron charged forward, stopped, and urged Champlain to show his power. His power was a matchlock musket loaded with four lead balls.

Three chiefs wearing eagle feathers walked in the lead of the Iroquois. With a single shot, Samuel de Champlain killed two of the chiefs and left the third dying! The course of history was set. Now the French had entered the war between the Iroquois and their enemy tribes. The surprise of the thunderous French muskets caused the Iroquois to turn and run, but it would be for the first and last time!

Did Champlain do the right thing? Could he have helped the two groups of Indians find peace instead? Today we can only guess the answers. But the attack on the Iroquois helped close the pathway of the St. Lawrence to the French. It changed the way they eventually came to Michigan.

The "Friendly" Dutch

The Dutch seemed to get along fairly well with the Iroquois. They were settling New York which they called New Amsterdam. (Amsterdam is the capital of Holland.) From here the Hudson River goes north and almost reaches Lake Champlain. It flows into the heart of Iroquois country. This was certainly to the

advantage of that group of tribes because they learned about guns and eventually traded furs to the Dutch for the new weapons. The government of New France was quite unhappy with the Dutch trading practices.

More French Exploring

Remember, the French wished to find a way to the Orient, to locate a passage through North America.

Champlain continued to look in his "spare" time. Various Indians told him of a salt sea to the west. But how far away was it and how could he get there? He also heard of a great sea to the north. Champlain wanted to try to find it but the Native Americans were not interested in giving away all of their secrets. He could not find anyone who would guide him there.

The two boys, Etienne and Nicolas,



This picture is similar to one Champlain drew showing himself during the 1609 attack on the Iroquois. (Art by David B. McConnell)



Brulé, who lived most of his life in the woods, may have looked like this although there is no known picture of him. He is believed to be the first European to visit Michigan. (Art by David B. McConnell)

who survived the first winter at Quebec, knew the tribal languages well. They spent much time with the Indians and easily learned their customs. Etienne, to whom historians gave the last name of Brulé (broo LAY), eagerly went on several canoe trips. On one of them he traveled west using the Ottawa River and passed through Lake Nipissing, Georgian Bay and finally into Lake Huron. He was the first European to see Lake Huron and probably several of the other Great Lakes.

The trouble with Brulé was he never bothered to write anything down about his travels. Sometimes even Champlain didn't know where he was! Brulé would be gone for long periods of time, living with the Indians, practically disappearing, and then coming back to Quebec. Nonetheless, Brulé and Champlain discovered Lake Ontario in 1615. Brulé and a companion named Grenoble helped find the way to Michigan. They probably reached the Upper Peninsula about 1622. Look on a map and see the route they used. By now the French knew about most of the Great Lakes and had found the land which was to become Michigan!

They did all of this by following the rivers and lakes.

A Competitor Takes Over!

In 1630 the British decided to sail up the St. Lawrence and take over New France. Champlain was caught alone in the fort and he had no choice but to surrender. He was shocked to find Etienne Brulé and Nicolas helping the British. Knowing he was outnumbered, they had gone over to the other side!

Champlain was taken prisoner and put aboard a British ship. Luckily by the time it reached England, peace had been declared. Soon he was able to head back to New France. Champlain was more than a little upset at his two lads who had turned traitor!

The End of Brulé

Etienne Brulé, the first European to see Michigan and explore so much of the Great Lakes, met a sad end. Before Champlain could bring him to trial, a group of Huron Indians turned on him, tortured, and killed him.

The Jean Nicolet Story

By 1634 Champlain was an old man. He decided to make one more try to locate that mysterious passage to China by sending Jean Nicolet (JHAN nee ko LAY) up the Ottawa River. Nicolet had spent many years living with the various tribes and was experienced in that part of the country. He was an interpreter and agent for the fur company. A beautiful Chinese robe was provided to impress the Chinese who might be found.

He traveled through the Straits of Mackinac and followed the north shore of Lake Michigan. At Green Bay, Wisconsin, he thought he might have found a waterway further west. Unfortunately, he soon came to the end of the bay and realized it didn't connect with an ocean. Deciding he might as well impress the Native Americans, Nicolet put on the robe and announced his presence to the first Indian village he found. Then he shot his two pistols in the air. It made a great show and scared away the women and children! The news of the newcomer attracted 4,000 or 5,000 Indians who came

to see Nicolet and provided him with a fine feast. But his search for a way to the Orient was not successful.

The Father of New France Dies

Champlain died in 1635. Today he is known as the "Father of New France." He suffered many hardships. He struggled to start a new country in a wild land. He used the St. Lawrence River as a pathway into North America.

Champlain really wanted to build cities and develop New France as a great country but working with the company of fur traders created difficulties. They were more interested in making money than anything else. They did not bring many families or supplies to Quebec. There was only a tiny 1.5 acre farm to provide food for everyone! He could not get much help from the merchants in the company or from the king.

We know much about Champlain and what life was like because he wrote four books about his adventures. Without those books, we would not know about life in New France.

Questions

1. What were the French doing in North America when they first started to trade furs with the Indians?
2. List three countries which were rivals of France in North America. Tell two problems caused by these rival countries.
3. What was Champlain's purpose when he joined the attack against the Iroquois?
4. What part of Michigan did Jean Nicolet see on his trip to find China? Where did his trip end?
5. Write a paragraph on the importance of the help the Indians gave the French in exploring North America. Back up your ideas with as many facts as possible.

Chapter 3 Section 2

Search for Souls: Missionaries & Priests

Here are the key concepts you will find in this section:

The priests accomplished these things:

They spread French influence throughout the region.

They gained knowledge about Indian life.

They learned about the geography of the land.

They kept the only written records of many historical events.

Priests On the Way to Michigan

In the 1600s the people of France had an increased interest in religion. Almost as soon as the first attempt was made to start a settlement in North America, French men and women were ready to come. They wanted to make Christians of the Indians in the new land.

The missionaries were members of several religious organizations. In North America there were three main Catholic groups. The Jesuits (JEZH wits) were the most aggressive in their work. They were not just in New France, but also in many other parts of the world. At about the same time the French missionaries were arriving in North America, the Jesuits were also starting missions in South America and Vietnam.

The missionaries, who were generally well-educated, willingly gave up the

more comfortable life they had in France. Here they had to work hard, often with poor facilities.

They had an impact on what happened in New France. Their desire to reach the Indians meant they would travel far from French settlements. By doing that, the area under French control expanded. They studied the tribal languages and customs which made it easier for the French to know how to work with the tribes.

Not Easy Work!

Early missionary work was not for the faint-hearted or lazy! The historian Francis Parkman wrote a description of the winter experience of one missionary trying to live with Indians in a wigwam. The fellow shared a wigwam about 13 feet by 13 feet. The missionary listed his



French priests traveled thousands of miles on Michigan's rivers in their efforts to reach the tribes. (Courtesy Michigan State Archives)

main grievances under four categories; *cold, heat, smoke, and dogs!* This is what he said:

"Put aside the bear skin and enter the hut. Here were packed 19 men, women, and children with their dogs, crouched, squatted, coiled like hedgehogs, or lying on their backs, with knees drawn up to keep their feet out of the fire. The bark covering was full of crevices, through which icy blasts streamed in upon him from all sides; and the hole above, at once a window and a chimney, was so large that as he lay he could watch the stars as well as in the open air. While the fire in the midst, fed with fat pine knots, scorched him on one side, on the other he had much ado to keep himself from freezing. At times, however, the crowded hut seemed heated to the temperature of an oven. But these evils were light, when compared to the intolerable plague of smoke. During a snow storm and often at other times, the wigwam was filled with fumes so dense that all were forced to lie flat on their faces, breathing through mouths in contact with the cold earth. Their throats and nostrils felt as if on fire; their scorched eyes streamed with tears. When he tried to read, the letters of his prayer book seemed printed in blood. The dogs were not an unmixed evil, for by sleeping on and around him they kept him warm at night; but, as an offset to this good service, they walked, ran and jumped over him as he lay, snatched food from his birch dish or, in a mad rush at some discarded morsel, now and then knocked over both dish and missionary!"

"Father Le Jeune and the Hunters"
in Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America*.

The Huron Were First

The early missionaries worked with the Huron tribe who lived south of Georgian Bay and north of Lake Ontario. One of the missions in that part of Ontario was called Sainte Marie.

In 1641 Father Jogues (ZHOG) and Father Raymbault (raim BOE) left the mission and traveled by canoe north to the

Saint Mary's River between the Upper Peninsula and Canada. The St. Mary's River has a swift rapids. It was near that spot where the two priests found a large village of about 2,000 friendly Indians. They called that place Sault Ste. Marie (SOO SAYNT ma REE). Sault means rapids and Sainte Marie was their home mission in Ontario. The Indians invited them to stay; the two priests, however, felt they must return to the land of the Huron.

The priests' work among the Huron tribe was going well until a serious problem developed. The Iroquois tribes decided to attack the Huron and others living in that area. A large part of the Huron tribe was killed and many of its members driven far away. The Iroquois



The Huron tribe had to flee Ontario because of Iroquois attacks. Many Hurons were killed in the warfare. (Art by George Rasmussen)

also tortured and killed many of the priests including Jogues and Raymbault. Because of the Iroquois attacks, the late 1640s was a time of terror in New France! Even much of the fur trade came to a halt.

A New Priest in the U.P. --- Father Menard

The Jesuits were eager to work with the Huron again and they had heard rumors the Huron had fled toward the west end of Lake Superior. In 1660, Father Menard (may NAR) went back to the Lake Superior region with some Indians who had come to Montreal to trade furs. He followed the southern shore of the lake until he came to Keweenaw Bay. The trip must not have been easy for Father Menard as he was 55 years old. Menard spent the winter with people from the Ottawa tribe near L'Anse at the base of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Surviving a difficult winter, he parted company with the Ottawa to go farther west. One Frenchman and some Indians went with him. Unfortunately, somewhere on the way he became separated from his group and was completely lost, never to be seen again! Such was the way of the rugged land.

The Battles Stop --- More Missionaries Come

After much complaining by those living in New France, the King of France sent soldiers to attack the Iroquois villages and burn their crops. After a few months of such aggressive treatment, the Iroquois agreed to an uneasy peace.

Another missionary was then chosen to follow in Menard's footsteps. That person was Claude Allouez (clawd ah l WAY). A Jesuit from the age of seventeen, Father Allouez was a determined person. He made his way along the rocky shore of Lake Superior. As he visited the places where Menard had been, he asked if anyone knew what had happened to Menard.

Of course he could not find the other priest, but in 1667 he returned to Quebec

and told of something he *did* find—pieces of copper from the Upper Peninsula! He also mentioned stories of a great river which lay to the west of Lake Superior. It was actually the Mississippi.

Father Allouez came back to do missionary work among the tribes in and around Michigan. Altogether he spent 22 years in the region and he is buried in Niles, Michigan.



Father Marquette was the founder of Sault Ste. Marie, the first permanent city in Michigan. (Courtesy Michigan State Archives)

The Father Marquette Story

In 1668 a young man, who became one of the best-known Jesuit missionaries, made his way to Michigan. He was Jacques Marquette (JHAHK mar KETT). Marquette once said he wanted to be a missionary from his earliest boyhood. Probably the desire to be a missionary in those days is similar to someone in today's world thinking about being an astronaut. Either career would be challenging and exciting, taking a person to the edge of the unknown.

The son of a lawyer, Marquette was born in 1637. He went to a Jesuit school and those missionaries who died at the hands of the Iroquois were heroes of the students. At 29, he was finally assigned to go to New France and begin his work

among the Indians. It took six long weeks of uneasy sea travel to reach Quebec.

Women in the Missions

Men were not the only ones giving their time and lives in the French mission field. While Marquette was at Quebec he must have seen the school for girls started by Marie Guyard (GHEEAR) in 1639. There young Indian girls lived and studied along with the daughters of French families. Other French women worked along with Marie Guyard to train the Indians in European ways. Quebec also had a hospital run by 13 nuns. They took care of sick or injured Indians. Both the school and hospital are still operating today! Women were not allowed to become priests so they could not work with the tribes in the wilderness.

Going Into the Unknown Land

The first thing all new priests had to do was learn one or more of the Indian languages. It wasn't easy and some priests never could get them quite right. Only those who mastered at least one of the languages had much impact in New France. Marquette was able to learn parts of several tribal languages while he was at Quebec.

Before long, Marquette was in a canoe and on his way to Sault Ste. Marie. His group paddled up the Ottawa River and then west to Lake Nipissing. Their route was the one most often used by the French to reach the Great Lakes. It had 18 *portages*, and some of them were six miles long. *A portage is a place where the canoes must be carried.*

The Sault was a good place to preach to the Indians. Many visited there each summer to catch fish in the rapids. Now there would be *Black Robes* at the Sault too. *Black Robes was the nickname the Indians used for the Jesuit priests.* Marquette started a permanent mission and spent one winter there. It was the place where Father Jogues and Father Raymbault had visited earlier. Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan's oldest city, developed from that mission post.

The next spring Marquette was sent to a place just west of the Upper Peninsula into what is now Wisconsin. Here he replaced Father Allouez.

Learning About a Great River

During the first winter at his new post, Father Marquette helped nurse a sick Ottawa warrior back to health. The man was so grateful he gave the priest an Indian slave who had been captured from the Illinois tribe. Marquette spent much of the winter talking with the Illinois about the land where his tribe lived. At first it must have been difficult to communicate with the young man who spoke a language new to Marquette. Gradually he learned the Illinois man had crossed a great river flowing from north to south. It was probably the same river Father Allouez had heard called the "Mesippi." Could it be a passage to the Western Sea?

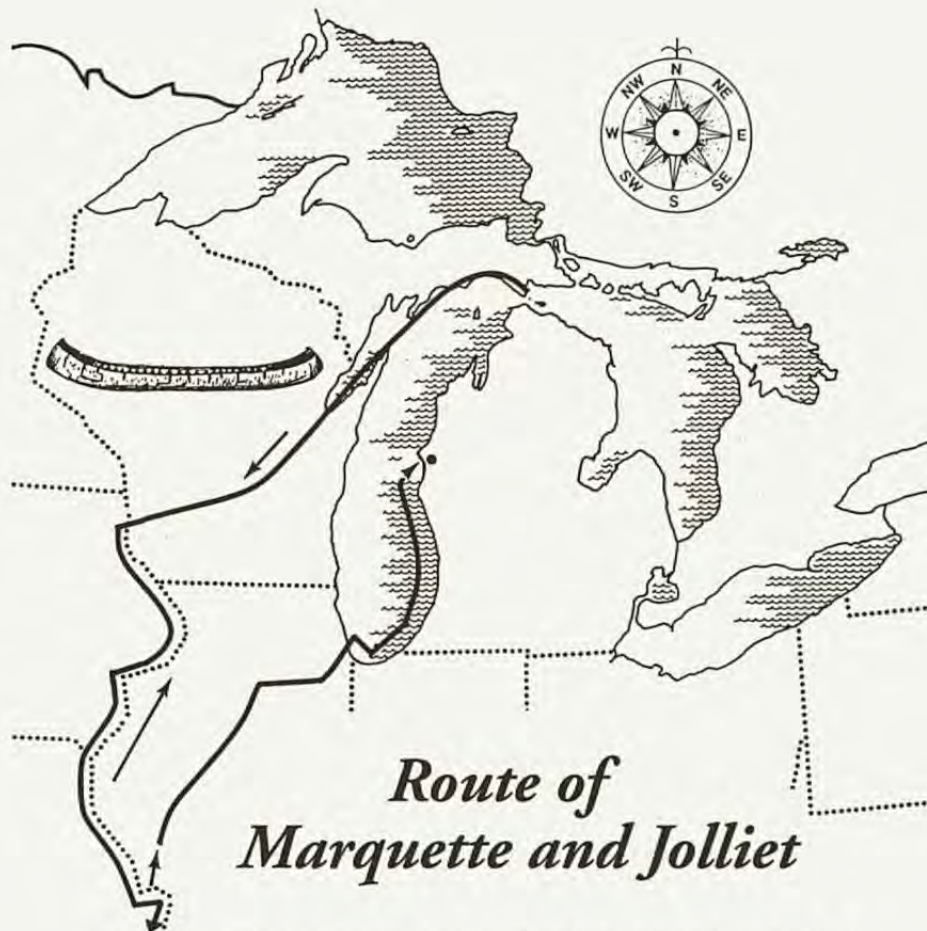
Marquette was ready to explore the river right away, but he had to force himself to wait for permission from the government and Jesuit headquarters in Quebec.

A Dream Which Comes True!

In 1672 Louis Jolliet (LOO ee zhol ee AY) arrived at the St. Ignace mission where Marquette was then working. Louis was well-educated and once wanted to join the Jesuits, but changed his mind.

The news he brought Marquette was very exciting. The government had approved an expedition to find the great river Mesippi and they were authorized to go together in the spring.

Granting permission to make the dangerous voyage was about all the help the government gave Jolliet. He had to pay all the expenses himself. The trip would cost a considerable amount. They needed canoes, food for the seven Frenchmen who would be on the trip, and trade goods as well as gifts for the Indians. In Quebec, a contract was made explaining how any profits from furs collected during the trip would be divided among the adventurers.



Marquette and Jolliet voyaged to find the Mississippi River in 1673.

Voyage To Find the Mississippi River

On May 17, 1673, Jolliet, Marquette, and five Frenchmen were on their way! Their two canoes followed the southern shore of the Upper Peninsula down the Garden Peninsula. Then they turned south to reach Summer Island and went from island to island until they reached the Door Peninsula of Wisconsin. The eastern Green Bay shore was their guide. Along the way they stopped at a Menominee village.

When they told the Menominee people their objective of going down the Mississippi River, the Indians gave them a lecture on the dangers they would face:

"There are Nations who never show any mercy to strangers, but break their heads without any cause....The great river is full of horrible monsters, which devour men and canoes

together; that there is even a demon, who is heard from a great distance, and who bars the way and would swallow up all who venture to approach him."

Father Marquette in *Jesuit Relations*, volume 59, translated by Reuben G. Thwaites.

Marquette told the Indians he could not take their advice "...because the salvation of souls was at stake, for which I would be delighted to give my life...."

They took their canoes up the Fox River and stopped briefly to visit Father Allouez at his new mission. Lake Winnebago was crossed and they once again followed the Fox River. About 50 miles upstream another Indian village was sighted. They asked if two guides could take the group to a nearby river which connected with the mighty Mesippi (Mississippi).

On June 10 the French and two guides left the village as an amazed crowd watched them go. The course took them through swamps and many small lakes. Marquette wrote:

“We greatly needed our two guides, who safely conducted us to a portage of 2,700 paces, and helped us to transport our canoes to enter the river; after which they returned home, leaving us alone in this unknown country....”

Jesuit Relations, volume 59

Alone in Dangerous Country

The Indian guides helped them reach the Wisconsin River. They canoed 118 miles down the Wisconsin. On June 17 Marquette wrote “...at 42.5 degrees of latitude, we safely entered the Mississippi...with a joy I cannot express.”

What did they see in the new land? They did not see any Indians at first. But they were still worried; so each night they slept in the canoes anchored away from the shore. On the eighth day someone noticed footprints on the right bank of the river! Marquette and Jolliet decided to follow the footprints while the others stayed behind to guard the canoes.

They came close to an Indian village. Both of them put their courage to the test and began to shout and yell to attract the villagers—and maybe end their lives! Marquette spoke to them in the Illinois language. Would they understand? Yes, they were from the Illinois tribe! Soon, as was the Indian custom, calumets were smoked as a token of peace. The French left the village after visiting for several days.

Onward they traveled into uncharted land filled with tribes who spoke unknown languages. After many days they were quite certain the Mississippi did not go to the Western Sea (Pacific Ocean) but went instead into the South Sea (Gulf of Mexico). When they reached what they figured was the latitude of 33 degrees, they felt they might be at risk of falling into the hands of the Spanish. If that happened, they knew all knowledge of their voyage would be lost while they

rotted in prison—or worse! It was time to head the canoes north and fight the mighty Mississippi’s current and paddle home.

Back Home—Almost!

Near the end of September the explorers dragged into the mission on the Fox River but no one was there. The Indians and Father Allouez had gone off to hunt for winter game. In October, Jolliet and his crew left for Sault Ste. Marie with Marquette staying behind.

In the spring when everyone returned, they found Marquette was not the healthy young man they remembered. He had chills and fever and could not eat much. He remained sick and very weak all summer.

Marquette’s illness continued over the next several months. Once he tried to go back to visit the Indians he had met but was too sick to continue. Finally two French friends paddled him to visit the Illinois tribe. Marquette was an honored guest.

He was asked to stay but his health had become poor again. Marquette decided he must go back to St. Ignace, Michigan, where he hoped to get better.



The Marquette Memorial in St. Ignace, Michigan. (Courtesy Nancy Hanatyk)

He was highly thought of by the tribe and canoe loads of Indians followed them up the Illinois River. As they left the Indians behind near Chicago, Marquette was so sick he could not even move.

In a desperate attempt to get Marquette back to St. Ignace, the two friends decided to take a new route and follow the east shore of Lake Michigan. No Frenchman had ever seen that side of the Lower Peninsula. The priest was now only semi-conscious and he prayed often. On May 18 they came to a river and Marquette told the men it would be a good place for him to be buried. They took him ashore, probably near Ludington, and he died late in the evening as his companions prayed and wept.



Jolliet had almost reached home when tragedy struck in the rapids of the St. Lawrence. His canoes tipped over and all his notes were lost. (Drawing by Chet Kozlak from *A Great Lakes Fur Trade Coloring Book*, copyright 1981 by the Minnesota Historical Society)

Jolliet's Problems

Meanwhile, Louis Jolliet had almost made it back to Montreal when both his canoes turned over in a rapids on the St. Lawrence River. Some of the men drowned and he lost all of his notes and papers. To add humiliation on top of the disaster, his sister-in-law sued him for rent on one of the canoes which he had borrowed from her! Eventually the government did recognize his work in exploring the Mississippi and gave him the largest island in the St. Lawrence River where he set up a fishing business.

Remember to Take Notes!

Much of the history presented in this chapter would be unknown except for the journals the priests kept while in New France. The tribes did not have written languages and many of the fur traders could not read or write.

The Jesuits recorded everything they possibly could and most of their information is very accurate. The Jesuit order in France published books of what happened to the priests each year. Their books are called *Jesuit Relations*. Today there are over 70 volumes of the *Relations* and they have been translated into English. They cover a span from the time the first French priests came to New France until after the French and Indian war, about 150 years later.

At many places in this book there are quotes from letters and diaries kept by other people. Because people went to the trouble to keep accurate records we know more about the past. Someday, your notes may be studied by historians trying to find out about life during the twentieth century!

Questions

1. Besides fur trading, what brought many French men and women to America? Was this group easily accepted by the Indians?
2. Who named Michigan's oldest non-Indian settlement? Why did they give it this name?
3. Name three of the French priests who came to Michigan. Tell some of the things priests did which helped New France expand into Michigan.
4. How did the roles of men and women differ in French missionary work among the tribes?
5. Refer to the color map pages M4 & M5. Tell which modern roads and highways you could use to follow as nearly as you can to the first part of Marquette and Jolliet's route to the Mississippi.
6. What personal qualities helped Father Marquette to be successful in his work among the Indians and in his voyage to the Mississippi?