

JACQUES CARTIER

The French entered the Age of Exploration in the early sixteenth century. Like the other nations of Europe, France was interested in finding an all-water route to the East. In 1534, King Francis I sent Jacques Cartier to the New World. His mission was to find the Northwest Passage. The Northwest Passage was widely believed to be a water route through Canada to China. It did not exist, but the countries of Europe spent much time, money, and energy trying to find it.

Jacques Cartier was born in St. Malo, France. He became an expert sailor and navigator. On May 6, 1534, he sailed for North America with three ships and 61 men. Landing in Newfoundland, his men made a 30-foot cross of wood and planted it in the sand. Cartier thus claimed Canada for France.

Cartier made a second trip to Canada in 1535. This time he discovered the St. Lawrence River. Thinking that this mighty river led to Indian civilizations as rich as those in Mexico and Peru, he sailed up it as far as the Indian village of Hochelaga. (Hochelaga would later become the city of Montreal.) Here he found the Iroquois Indians to be friendly and courteous. The French offered to share their hardtack and red wine with their new friends. The Indians refused, thinking the French were eating wood and drinking blood!

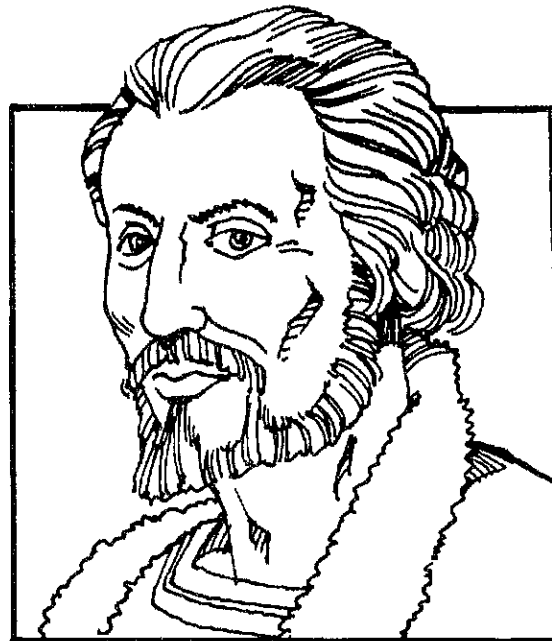
The winter of 1535 had set in, and Cartier was unable to return to France. He and his men were forced to stay the winter with the Iroquois at Hochelaga. Because they lacked fresh fruits and vegetables, many of the Frenchmen died of scurvy. It is interesting to note that those who accepted and drank the Indian cure for scurvy recovered. The Iroquois had learned to make a brew from the branches of the hemlock tree that apparently cured this disease.

Cartier returned to France with samples of what he thought was gold. What he really had carried back was "false gold." This was probably either copper or iron pyrite. Pyrite is a combination of iron and sulfur that has a yellowish color.

King Francis I sent Cartier back to Canada for a third time in 1541. This time he was to set up a permanent French settlement. He succeeded, but the colony lasted only a year.

Cartier never found any gold in New France, as the French Empire came to be called. Nor did he find the Northwest Passage. For his efforts, however, Francis I made him an admiral in the French navy.

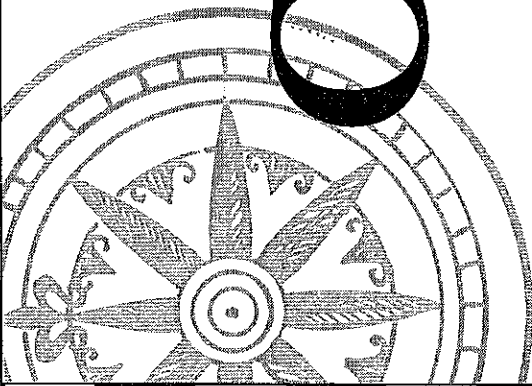
Why were Cartier's explorations important? A look at a map will give you the answer. The St. Lawrence River proved to be the gateway to the continent. It led to the Great Lakes and to the interior of North America. From here the French would fan out and establish the fur trade that brought great wealth to their country.





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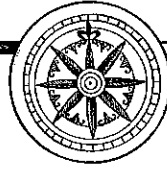


JACQUES CARTIER

FAST FACTS

- It took Cartier and his crew 20 days to cross the Atlantic.
- Cartier discovered that Newfoundland was an island, not a peninsula as was previously thought.
- Friendly Indians acted as guides for Cartier's explorations.
- The Indians showed the French how to cure scurvy with a tea made from bark and needles of the white cedar tree.
- The Indian name for the St. Lawrence River means "The River That Walks."
- The Hurons told stories about a land in the north full of gold and other treasure. This was not true, but the French liked stories of riches and the Hurons liked telling stories.
- The Huron chief let two of his sons sail to France with Cartier.
- Cartier took large quantities of pyrite and quartz back to France, thinking they were gold and diamonds.
- Cartier's men also brought back corn. This was probably the first corn ever seen in northern Europe.
- Cartier died on his estate in France at the age of 66.

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ABOUT JACQUES CARTIER

In the early 1500s, France decided to find a short route to the Indies by trying a northern route around America. This route was called the Northwest Passage.

In 1534 a Frenchman named Jacques Cartier set off from St. Malo, France, to find the passage. He had two ships and a crew of 62 men. Cartier headed northwest. He reached Newfoundland and sailed around its northern tip to Labrador. On land, he set up a cross and claimed the area for France. He named the land New France.

After leaving Labrador, Cartier sailed southwest and discovered a gulf. The gulf was later named the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Cartier explored lands around the gulf. He bought furs from the native tribes, who told Cartier their country was named Canada.

Cartier kept looking for the Northwest Passage. Finally, he discovered a river flowing west from the gulf. He thought it might lead to the Pacific Ocean. But it was late summer, and the weather would soon become cold. With no time left to explore this river, Cartier headed back to France.

In July of 1535, the King of France sent Cartier back to explore the river. This time, Cartier had three ships and a crew of 100 men. He finally reached the river, which



was later named the St. Lawrence River. As he sailed west along the St. Lawrence, the water became shallow. He had to leave behind his largest ships and set off in small boats. Cartier ended up in an area that is now called Montreal. There, he met a tribe of friendly Huron Indians.

The French explorers turned back when they didn't find a Northwest Passage. They traveled the river back to where they had left their ships. Men who had stayed behind with the ships had built a fort. In this area, later named Quebec, Cartier and his crew spent a very cold winter. Many men became ill with scurvy. The Indians taught Cartier and his crew how to cure scurvy, so his men were saved. When the weather warmed, Cartier and his men sailed back to France.

A new French king gave Cartier money to sail back and set up a colony in the new country. The colony failed, mostly because of the freezing weather of Canada's winters.

During the next 20 years, France was at war and lost interest in Canada and finding a Northwest Passage.

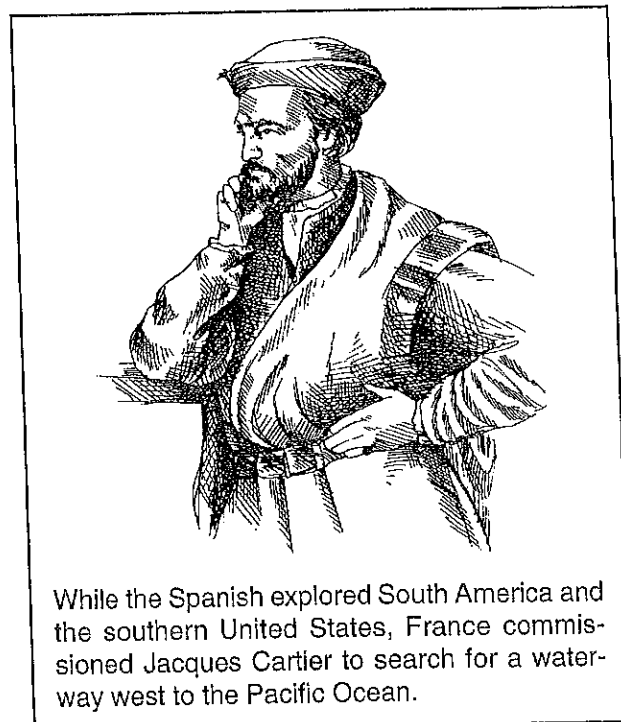
Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet Jacques Cartier

Born: 1491 in Saint Malo, France
Died: 1557

In spite of all the unexplored land and bountiful natural resources of the New World, the French and English monarchs had little thought of colonizing the area at first. They believed it would be more profitable to find a water route across North America to China and the riches of the East.

Not much is known of the early life of Jacques Cartier. He grew up in a seaport on the northwestern coast of France. After reading John Cabot's reports of the great schools of fish off the North American coast, fleets of French fisherman began traveling to Newfoundland early in the sixteenth century. Cartier may have joined those fishing expeditions in his youth.



While the Spanish explored South America and the southern United States, France commissioned Jacques Cartier to search for a waterway west to the Pacific Ocean.

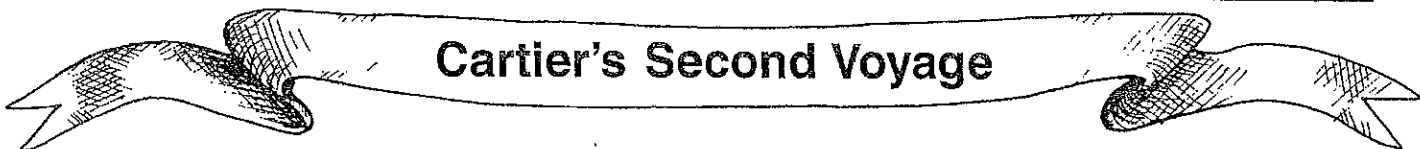
While on fishing expeditions, he would have had the opportunity to meet many of the Native Americans, learn some of their language, and explore inland waterways. His experiences may have been what convinced King Francis I of France to allow Cartier to lead an expedition in 1534 to search for a water passage across North America to the Pacific Ocean.

On his first voyage, Cartier crossed the Atlantic Ocean with two ships and 60 men in only 20 days, about half the time the voyage usually took. He landed first on an island near Newfoundland, then sailed north and west, exploring several inland waterways including the Strait of Belle Isle and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Landing near the site of Gaspé, Cartier claimed the land for France. Along the way, Cartier and his crew encountered the Micmacs and established trade with them. Since it was late autumn by then, Cartier decided to return to France.

1. The type of ship on which Cartier sailed was called a caravel, similar to Columbus's ships on his voyages to the New World. Use reference sources to write a description of a caravel on another sheet of paper. Add illustrations to your report.

Name: _____ Date: _____



Cartier's Second Voyage

Although he had not found the passage he sought, Cartier told the king of France he had heard of another large river that he hoped would lead to the Pacific Ocean. The king authorized a second voyage in 1535, this time with three ships.

Cartier reached the St. Lawrence River and sailed upriver to the present location of Quebec. There he found Stadacona, a Huron village. The chief, Donnacona, welcomed the men to *canada*, the Huron word for village.

The expedition continued on to Hochelaga, a fortified village of the Ottawas near where the city of Montreal was later built.

Cartier learned that if he continued, he would soon encounter rapids too dangerous for his ships to navigate. Disappointed, he sailed back to Stadacona where they stayed for the winter. Cartier heard stories from the Hurons about a land in the north called Saguenay, filled with gold and other treasures.

Over the winter, many of Cartier's men developed scurvy. This disease was common to sailors at that time.

Use reference sources to answer these questions.

1. What causes scurvy? _____

2. What happens to people who have scurvy? _____

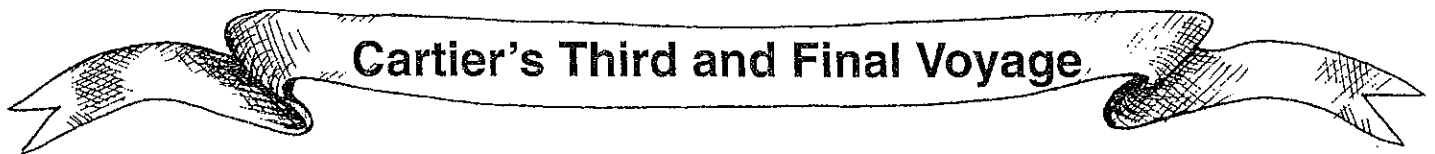
3. How can scurvy be cured? _____

When he returned to France, Cartier had to admit that he still had not found the promised passageway, that many of his men had died, and that he had brought no riches back for the king.

Cartier wanted to make another expedition immediately to look for Saguenay, but Spain and France were at war. Finally in 1541, the king gave Cartier permission for a third voyage, but not as the leader. This time he would be the assistant to Jean Francois de la Rocque, sieur de Roberval, Viceroy to New France.

4. Use a dictionary. What does *viceroy* mean? _____

Name: _____ Date: _____



Cartier's Third and Final Voyage

Cartier set sail on his third voyage in 1541 without Roberval.

1. Why do you think Cartier did not wait for Roberval even though the king had commanded him to do so?

Cartier returned to the Huron village of Stadacona where he traded for beaver pelts and other furs. Then he continued his quest for the riches of Saguenay. Along the way, his men collected what they thought were diamonds and gold, but in reality, they were quartz and pyrite.

Use reference sources.

2. Describe quartz: _____

3. Describe pyrite: _____

4. What is another name for pyrite? _____

Cartier returned to Newfoundland in the spring to discover Roberval had finally arrived—a year late. Roberval wanted Cartier to go back to Stadacona while his ships took the furs to France, but Cartier refused and returned to France.

Unknown to Cartier, one of his crewmen was loyal to Roberval. When they returned to France with the furs, the spy reported to the king that Cartier had discovered gold and diamonds and many more furs that he had kept for himself. Unable to learn which report was true, the king refused to allow Cartier to sail again.

The king of France and Cartier, himself, considered his voyages a failure because he had not discovered a water route to the Pacific. However, Cartier's explorations were the basis for France's later claim to a large part of Canada.

5. Do you think Cartier was a failure? Why or why not?

Check It Out:

Jacques Cartier, Samuel De Champlain and Explorers of Canada by Tony Coulter
French Explorers of North America by David J. Abodaher

Cartier Sails for France

The “discovery” of the New World by Christopher Columbus led to an international competition in search of the riches of the Orient and a race to lay claim to American territory by establishing colonies in the Western Hemisphere by Spain, Portugal, England and France.

France joined those European nations interested in New World explorations in the 1520s. In 1523, King Francis I commissioned another Italian sea captain, Giovanni da Verrazano to sail across the Atlantic Ocean in search of a route through the Western Hemisphere to the Orient, known as the “Northwest Passage.” No such route existed, but it became the object of many an explorer over the next several centuries.

Verrazano’s fleet included four ships, but only one completed the voyage (the others were crippled by storms). In April 1524, Verrazano’s ship, the *Dauphin*, reached the American coast and explored from modern-day Newfoundland, where Cabot had already explored, down to the region of South Carolina. For a while, he dropped anchor in New York harbor and traded with the Indians.

In fact, the capable Italian made contact and traded with several tribes along the seacoast, including the Wampanoags of Cape Cod. When he contacted the Abenakis in modern-day Maine, he traded, but ran out of barter goods, irritating his Indian traders.

Some Indians informed Verrazano that a great native city lay to the north, called Norumbega. The city was said to guard the entrance to the Northwest Passage. While the story was a fabrication, Verrazano returned to France and told Francis I what he had accomplished. But the king was distracted in a war with the Spanish, and did not immediately follow up on Verrazano’s information.

Others in France did, however. By the 1530s, French fishermen from Brittany and Normandy ventured across the Atlantic to establish seasonal fishing communities to harvest the abundance of cod and other seafish in the region. While they did not establish permanent settlements, French sea



captains became accustomed to making regular trips to the New World’s fishing banks of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

When Francis I did regain his interest in sponsoring exploratory voyages to the New World, he commissioned another explorer, Jacques Cartier. He proved a superb navigator and shipmaster. Cartier completed three separate voyages to America, landing in Newfoundland, Labrador, and reaching the St. Lawrence River, all between 1534 and 1542. He established trade with the Micmacs, an Algonquian Indian people.

On Cartier’s second voyage (1535) he sailed up the St. Lawrence River, naming a local mountain, Mont Real (Mount Royal), which later became the site for the city of Montreal. During his third voyage, Cartier attempted to build a permanent settlement, but hostile Iroquois Indians caused him to abandon the attempt. Despite his failures, Cartier’s voyages provide the French with claims to the lands included in modern-day Canada. However, overlapping English claims would cause much strife and rivalry between these two competing European powers for years to come.

Review and Write

Why would French explorers have as much or greater interest in searching for a “Northwest Passage” as they did establishing New World colonies?