

SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

You will remember that Jacques Cartier discovered the St. Lawrence River in 1535 and claimed Canada for France. You may also recall that Cartier was more interested in finding gold than in establishing settlements in the New World.

The task of turning French claims into a permanent colony fell to another explorer: Samuel de Champlain. His efforts in colonization earned him the title of "Father of New France." New France was the name given to French possessions in the New World.

Samuel de Champlain was born in 1567 in the small French town of Brouage. He joined the king's service as a young man and once commanded a ship that visited Mexico City. King Henry IV was so impressed by Champlain's report of his travels that he made him royal geographer.

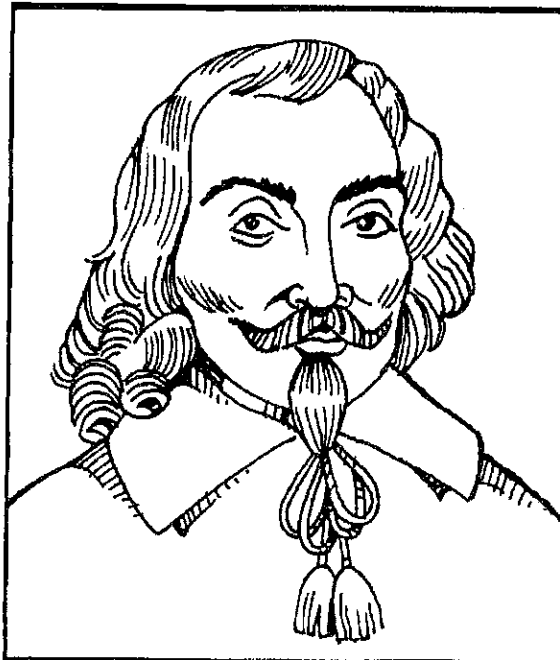
It was as a geographer that Champlain made his first of eleven trips to Canada. This was in March 1603. After returning home, he wrote a book entitled *The Voyages*. In the book he described his travels up the St. Lawrence River, as well as the life of the Indians with whom he came in contact.

On another trip to Canada in 1608, Champlain founded Quebec. Quebec began as a small fur-trading post and later grew into a large city. It remains today the only walled city in North America. Part of the walls surrounding the city date back to the 1600s.

In 1609 Champlain discovered a large lake that lay between what are now the states of New York and Vermont. This lake was more than 100 miles long. Today it is called Lake Champlain in his honor. Champlain came upon the lake while taking part in an Indian raiding party. He had decided to help the Algonquin and Huron Indians in their war with the Iroquois. This proved to be a mistake. In the heat of the battle, he himself shot and killed two Iroquois chiefs with his musket. The Iroquois thereafter hated the French and later sided with the Dutch and the English in their wars with the French settlers.

In 1629 the British conquered Quebec, and Champlain was taken to England as a prisoner. He remained there for several years until Canada was restored to France. Upon his return to New France he served first as lieutenant governor and then as governor. He died at Quebec on Christmas Day, 1635.

Because Champlain was more interested in settlements than in gold and silver, the French colonies in America grew and prospered. That is why he is called the "Father of New France."



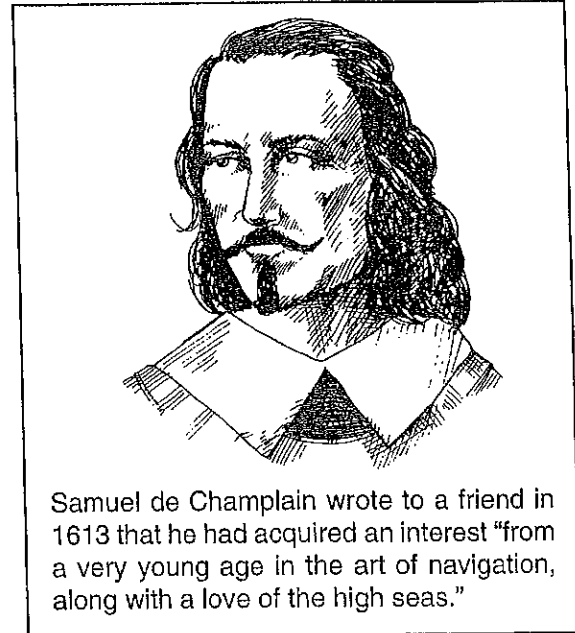
Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet Samuel de Champlain

Born: 1567 in Brouage, France
Died: 1635 in Quebec, Canada

Little is known of Samuel de Champlain's early life. From his father, a sea captain, he learned navigation and mapmaking. Champlain served in the army of King Henry IV for several years. His first known voyage was a two-year trip with his uncle around 1599 to Puerto Rico, Mexico, Columbia, the Bermudas, and Panama.

Champlain presented the king with detailed reports and drawings of what he had seen in Central and South America. He was invited by Aymar de Chaste, a fur trader, to join an expedition to Canada in 1603.



Samuel de Champlain wrote to a friend in 1613 that he had acquired an interest "from a very young age in the art of navigation, along with a love of the high seas."

When Champlain arrived, he found the Algonquins and Hurons were in the midst of a war with their enemies, the Iroquois. Champlain and other Frenchmen became allies of the Algonquins and Hurons to protect the French fur trading interests. This alliance later caused many problems for French and English colonists.

From the natives, Champlain learned of a "great water" to the west. Champlain hoped this would be the Pacific Ocean. At last he might be the one who found the elusive water route to India!

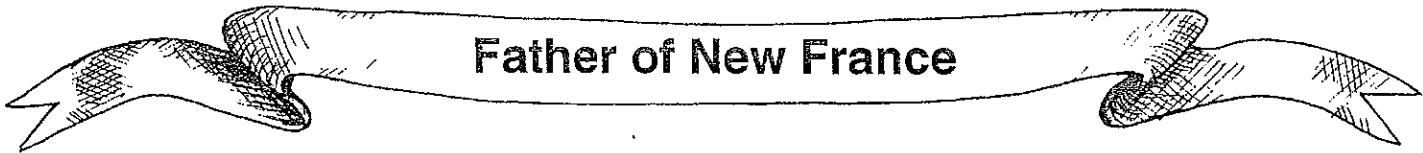
Champlain returned to the king of France with his news. The following year he sailed again to Canada as mapmaker and geographer with a group planning to establish a colony. They explored the North American coast as far south as present-day Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

After building a fort at Port Royal, Champlain explored the area and established friendly relations with the Micmacs and other natives before returning to France.

By 1608, Champlain was back in Canada. He chose Stadacona as the most suitable place for a new colony. This eventually became Quebec and was the first permanent city in North America north of Florida to be settled by Europeans.

1. Champlain was a skilled mapmaker and illustrator. Why would these skills be valuable to the king?

Name: _____ Date: _____



While in France in 1610, Champlain married Helene Boule, who was only 12 years old at the time. She remained in France for ten years before joining her husband in Canada. Four years later she returned to France, unable to accept the harsh conditions in Canada. After he died, she entered a convent.

1. How old was Champlain when he got married? _____

Champlain made several trips between France and Canada. In France, he pleaded with the king for supplies, finances, and people for the colonies. In Canada, he continued to explore lands and waterways to the west and south. He named one of the lakes he discovered for himself, Lake Champlain. He helped establish another colony that later became Montreal. Champlain also became further involved in the war between the Hurons and Algonquins against the Iroquois, and he was wounded several times.

France and England went to war in 1628. The following year, Quebec was captured by the British. Champlain was taken to England as a prisoner. By then, however, the war had ended. Champlain returned to Canada in 1633 as governor of New France to find Quebec in ruins. He worked to rebuild the city, expand the fur trade, and encourage colonists until his death in 1635.

If you lived in Canada today and wanted to get a message to someone in France, you could make a phone call or send an e-mail. To send news to France, Champlain had to wait for a ship to sail. The trip across the Atlantic usually took four to six weeks, one way. Few ships crossed the Atlantic in winter. It could easily be six months or more from the time he sent a letter until he received a reply.

2. What types of problems might develop due to this delay in communications? Give specific examples.

3. Champlain has been called the "Father of New France." Do you think that is appropriate? Why or why not?

Check It Out:

Jacques Cartier, Samuel De Champlain and Explorers of Canada by Tony Coulter
Samuel De Champlain by W. J. Jacobs