



Carte de la Nouvelle-France [Map of New France] of Samuel de Champlain, published in *Les Voyages de la Nouvelle France occidentale, dicte Canada*, 1632
CA ANC NMC-51970



Discovery

The discovery of the lands of New France occurred in several stages. Through the voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano and Jacques Cartier, Newfoundland and the islands, the coast of Acadia and the tributaries of the St. Lawrence were well known in the 16th century. Then, starting from Québec and Montréal, Samuel de Champlain travelled up the Ottawa River to the Great Lakes. Explorations continued with new vigour with the establishment of the first permanent settlements. But the great attraction was the West: Étienne Brûlé reached Lake Superior in the early 1620s; Jean Nicollet reached Lake Michigan in 1634, after living many years among the Aboriginal peoples. In 1647, Père de Quen travelled up the Saguenay River to Lac Saint-Jean. A second wave of exploration took place in the last half of the 17th century with Daniel Greysolon Dulhut, Médard Chouart Des Groseilliers and Pierre Esprit Radisson, Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet, then René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle. In the 18th century, the La Vérendrye family reached the Great Plains of the West. With the voyages, maps became more accurate; some travellers, such as Louis Lom d'Acé de Lahontan and Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, described the flora and fauna they encountered, as well as the customs of the various Aboriginal nations. These explorations had several goals: the discovery of the "Western Sea," the fur trade, the conversion of the Aboriginal peoples, and the search for minerals. The royal administration did not always support these bold and arduous undertakings. In a century and a half, the voyages brought about the discovery of an immense region of land.

Cartographic Compilation

In 1606, Parisian lawyer, poet and playwright Marc Lescarbot accompanied one of his clients, Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt to Acadia. Curious about the country he saw on his travels, he recorded his impressions in his *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (1609), in which he also reported the discoveries of the two great explorers Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain. Through an analysis of Lescarbot's book and other published and manuscript travel narratives, the 18th-century geographer Guillaume Delisle drew up the final version of his *Carte du Canada ou de la Nouvelle-France et des découvertes qui y ont été faites* [Map of Canada, or New France, and of the discoveries that were made there].



Cartographic transcription by Guillaume Delisle of the geographic and ethnographic data derived from the travel accounts of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain and included in Marc Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, before 1703

FR CHAN Marine 6 JJ 75 portefeuille III



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Cartography of Discoveries

At first, North America was mapped by geographers from their cartography offices who, far from the terrain, tried to compile information from sources available in Europe. They often reconciled political boundaries with natural ones, given that both were equally imaginary or invented much of the time. Eventually, the creation of the position of King's geographer led to the gathering of more reliable information from explorers' reports and travel accounts. These new maps served as guides and maintained colonial expectations, despite their inaccuracy. However, the names given to new areas show a greater concern for royal patronage than for physical reality. Also, although Samuel de Champlain, missionaries, fur traders and other explorers had described the Great Lakes and the interior of the continent since 1616, it was not until 1703, with the work of Royal Cartographer Guillaume Delisle, that there was a more accurate representation of eastern North America. In the West, knowledge of the Pacific Coast progressed only as a result of Spanish and Russian explorations during the first half of the 18th century, and since the voyages of Vitus Bering were not taken into account before the 1750s, the representation of the strait between Asia and America remained imprecise. People still believed in a vast Western Sea, and a navigable Northwest Passage. Overall, maps of this time defined the space known to European explorers, and gave it a certain reality in anticipation of future requests.



Partie occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France
[Western part of Canada, or New France], by Vincenzo
Coronelli, 1688
CA ANC NMC-6411



New France
NEW HORIZONS

The Colonies of North America



Description de la Nouvelle-Hollande et Angleterre et de la France septentrionale présentement habitée par les Français cy devant nommée Le Canada [Description of New Netherlands and England and northern France presently inhabited by the French also known as Canada], ca. 1660
FR CAOM COL C 11E 13 fol. 117-125v^o

English, Dutch and French explorers found themselves shoulder to shoulder in North America. With the founding of Jamestown in 1607, Virginia became a prosperous tobacco-producing colony. In 1620, religious dissenters sailed from England on the *Mayflower*, landed at Cape Cod and founded Plymouth. Other settlements, such as Salem, sprang up in the neighbouring area. This was the beginning of New England. The Dutch founded Fort Orange in 1613 (later named Albany), and colonized the Hudson River Valley, which was a site for trade with the Iroquois. On May 4, 1624, the Walloon Peter Minuit disembarked from a Dutch boat on the island of Manhattan with a few families. He bought the island from its Aboriginal inhabitants in 1626, and named it New Amsterdam. The settlement was seized by the English in 1664, and renamed New York.



New France
NEW HORIZONS



The Advantages of Canada

From the first French presence in Canada, exploration and the spread of Christianity were closely linked. Missionaries accompanied explorers and other individuals engaged in the fur trade. Sometimes, the explorers themselves were churchmen. Their precise accounts were usually very detailed geographical and ethnographical descriptions of the regions they traversed. They described the places (lakes, rivers, rapids, portages), towns, climate, resources (mines and fishing) and the advantages associated with them. They also gave accounts of the Aboriginal peoples, their way of life and their conversion to Christianity.

Description [par un sulpicien] du Canada et de ce qui s'y trouve d'advantageux tant pour les interests de sa majesté que pour ceux des colonies françoises qui y sont establies
[Description (by a Sulpician) of Canada and what is found there that is advantageous to both His Majesty and the French colonies that are established there], ca.1671
FR CAOM COL C11A 3 fol. 192-211



New France
NEW HORIZONS



Voyages in North America by the engineer and cartographer Minet, written in 1684-1685
CA ANC MG18-B19

The Voyage of Minet

In 1673, Louis Jolliet and Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette discovered and explored the Mississippi River. Jolliet was convinced that it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico. Some years later in his diary, Jean-Baptiste Minet describes the explorations of René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle. In the first part, entitled *Voiage fait du Canada par dedans les terres allant vers le Sud* [Voyage of Canada's interior going south], Minet relates the descent of the Mississippi by Cavelier de La Salle and his companions during the years 1678 to 1682. The second part of his diary is entitled *Journal de nostre voiage du golfe de Mexique* [Journal of our voyage in the Gulf of Mexico]. It tells of La Salle's last expedition, from 1684 to 1687, in which he attempts to reach the Mississippi by way of the Gulf of Mexico. Minet recounts the events that took place up until his return to France in 1685. Imprisoned for more than a month as a deserter, Minet ended his diary with a series of accusations directed against the explorer.



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Niagara Falls

The first description of Niagara Falls, and an account of the explorers' "great fright" faced with the awe-inspiring spectacle, comes from Louis Hennepin, a Récollet missionary, who was with René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle on his expedition in 1679-1680.



Cataracte de Niagara [Niagara Falls], in Louis Hennepin's, *Nouvelle découverte d'un très grand pays situé dans l'Amérique entre le Nouveau Mexique et la Mer Glaciale*, 1697.

CA ANC Collection Winkworth P-2404



New France
NEW HORIZONS



Carte copiée sur celle tracée par le sauvage Ochagach et autres [Map copied from the one drawn by the savage Ochagach and others], no date
FR CAOM COL E 199 dossier La Vérendrye

The Western Sea

The passage to the Western Sea was a constant preoccupation for explorers, who believed in the existence of a gulf that opened into the Pacific Ocean. Written reports on the subject were received at Court regularly and in great number, and in 1720, the King sent Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix to investigate. For a period of more than 20 years beginning in 1726, a family of Canadian explorers, the La Vérendryes, were dedicated to this single goal. For the expeditions that he had financed by merchants, Pierre Gaultier de La Vérendrye followed the information offered by the Aboriginal inhabitant named Ochaga. As he pushed on further, a number of fortified trading posts were built, from the shores of Lake La Pluie (Minnesota) to the Paskoya River (Saskatoon). La Vérendrye also attempted to pacify the Aboriginal nations encountered: Mandan, Prairie Cree, Assiniboine, Menominee and Fox. His sons pursued the quest to the foothills of the Rockies, near Pierre (North Dakota). It was discovered that high mountains stood between the plains and the ocean, and posed an obstacle. The English and French War brought an end to exploration, and the Western trading posts were abandoned.



New France
NEW HORIZONS



The great speckled loon from Newfoundland, 1735
CA ANC Peter Winkworth Collection P-377

The Flora and Fauna

In addition to cartographic elements, descriptions of places and ethnographic observations, travel accounts often included a brief account of the flora and fauna. The earliest descriptions are approximate. Jacques Cartier often confused European and Canadian species. His particular interest in plants of economic value was shared by other explorers. They listed wood oils, plants with edible fruit or used by the Aboriginal population. All types of animals were of interest, but particularly those noted for their hides and pelts. Starting from the first voyages, specimens were brought back to Paris for the king's garden. In the 18th century, scientific knowledge was exchanged across the Atlantic: Michel Sarrazin, surgeon and naturalist, corresponded with the botanist Joseph Pitton de Tournefort; Jean-François Gaultier, king's doctor at Québec, corresponded with Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau. One of the Governors General of New France, Michel Barin de La Galissonnière, was also a botanist and encouraged this type of research.



New France
NEW HORIZONS