

# FRENCH EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

THE NATIONAL SURVEY  
OF HISTORIC SITES  
AND BUILDINGS



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

Theme V

FRENCH EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

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## PREFACE

That phase of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings relating to the theme of French Exploration and Settlement was conducted by Survey Historians assigned to the Regional Offices of Regions One, Two, Three and Five of the National Park Service. Within the geographical limits of these Regions are found all of the significant sites pertaining to the story of France within the present United States.

The initial phase of the Survey was documentary in nature, whereby the overall story of France in America was examined, and a determination made of its most significant aspects. Based on this initial study, identification and evaluations of specific historic sites and buildings were made with a view to selecting those which possess exceptional value in preserving the story of France in the New World. In locating and evaluating specific sites and buildings, standard research sources were supplemented by material from National Park Service Historic Sites Survey reports, including the Arkansas-White-Red River Survey; The Historic American Buildings Survey, and information provided by public agencies and local historical and conservation groups in the several states concerned. Following preliminary identification and evaluation, the most promising sites were personally investigated by the Survey Historians and a standard inventory record made for each site or building.

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FRENCH EXPLORATION

AND SETTLEMENT

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME

"Saint-Castin, Du Lhut, La Durantaye, La Salle, La Mothe-Cadillac, Iberville, Bienville, La Verendrye, are names that stand conspicuous on the page of half-savage romance that refreshes the hard and practical annals of American colonization. But a more substantial debt is due to their memory. It was they, and such as they, who discovered the Ohio, explored the Mississippi to its mouth, discovered the Rocky Mountains, and founded Detroit, St. Louis, and New Orleans."

Francis Parkman

FRENCH EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT  
IN NORTH AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

On a September afternoon in 1759, a detachment of English artillery and infantry marched into Quebec, the capital of France in North America. The flag of Great Britain flying above the Plains of Abraham signalled the end of the French dream of empire in the New World.

The vast territory lost at Quebec had been discovered, explored and settled by men who bore the banners of France and left a record of achievement far exceeding their small number and meagre resources. In the great mid-continental basin between the Appalachians and the Rockies, Frenchmen planted forts and missions, colonies and trading posts. They spread their small number over forests and plains, and made the lakes, rivers and portages their own. They threw light into the dark places of North American geography and blazed the trails that would one day lead a Nation west. But with reckless ambition they claimed lands known and unknown, and poured out their energies in the quest for dominion and wealth. Scattered across the wilderness, beset by enemies in every quarter, they could not stand against the hostile powers of Europe and the determined advance from the populous colonies on the Atlantic.

America's heritage is richer for the men of France who came to this continent, explored and settled the wilderness and passed from the scene to make way for a Nation dedicated not to the enrichment of the Old World but to the freedom of the New.

## FIRST CONTACTS WITH AN UNKNOWN WORLD

The story which ended in violence at Quebec began in the prosaic fishing industry on the teeming cod banks off Newfoundland. At the dawn of the 16th century French, Portuguese, English and Spanish fishermen cast their nets along those misty coasts and returned with their haul to the ports of Western Europe.

In the first decade of the 16th century, French sails penetrated the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and in 1518 a settlement was attempted on an island off Nova Scotia. A short time later it was abandoned in failure. Still, the tide of riches flowing from the Indies to the treasure houses of Spain could not be ignored and, in 1523, the French King sent a Florentine seaman, John Verrazano, ostensibly to find a route to the wealth of Asia but, more precisely, to extend French empire to the coasts of the New World. Verrazano reached the coast of North America in March 1524, and sailed northward along the eastern seaboard.<sup>1</sup> On the coast of New England Verrazano traded with the Indians for fur, a foretaste of the enterprise which would draw generations of Frenchmen into the heart of the continent.

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<sup>1</sup>

There is doubt as to the site of Verrazano's first contact with North America as the explorer's calculations of his landfall were inaccurate. Parkman states that Verrazano made his landfall near the site of Wilmington, North Carolina. See Francis Parkman, Pioneers of France in the New World, Part One of France and England in North America (2 vols. Boston, 1897), II, 15. A later account notes that "Verrazano appears to have reached land along the coast of what is now New Jersey ... ." - John B. Brebner, The Explorers of North America (New York, 1933), 114.

Verrazano returned to France to submit the earliest known account of the northeastern shores of the present United States. Verrazano apparently thought he had seen the Pacific, probably Delaware or Chesapeake Bay, and this "discovery" was related in his report. Despite this hopeful beginning, the fruits of Verrazano's exploration were swept away by the whirlwind of war and invasion in France. Nevertheless, in succeeding years, the Florentine's mistaken belief that he had seen the Western Sea would influence the explorers and adventurers of many nations.

As France slowly recovered from the disasters of the early 16th century, attention was again focused on the New World. In addition to the possibility of new riches in North America, the Crown saw in the conversion of heathen souls a virgin field of effort for a Church beset at home by the inroads of the Protestant Reformation.

In 1534, Jacques Cartier made an exploratory voyage to Canada. The next year he returned to the New World, sailing up the St. Lawrence to the sites of Quebec and, finally, Montreal. Like those who preceded him, Cartier failed to find a North-West Passage across the continent. In the wilderness Cartier and his band experienced the harshness of the northern winter. Despite the Indians' descriptions of a fabulous country farther inland, "A rigorous climate, a savage people, a fatal disease [scurvy] and a soil barren of gold

were the allurements of New France.<sup>2</sup>

The colonizing effort Cartier helped bring to Canada in 1541 failed for want of cooperation among its leaders, and French interest in the New World waned. Although "Cartier had opened the door"<sup>3</sup> for fifty years only the rotting timbers of deserted settlements told of the first attempts to colonize the inhospitable northern wilderness. Not until the opening of the 17th century would French sails carry colonists upstream on the St. Lawrence.

#### FRENCH FAILURE IN THE SOUTH

From Canada the scene of French exploration shifted to the south where lay "La Florida", the vast and ill-defined territory claimed by both Spain and France, which included all of the southeastern portion of the present United States.<sup>4</sup>

In 1562, a small party of Huguenots, sent out by the Admiral of France, Gaspard de Coligny, established a frail fort on Port Royal Sound, South Carolina. France sought a share in the wealth Spain was amassing in the New World, and Coligny, leader of the French Protestants, hoped to find a refuge for his fellow Huguenots while acting in the name of the Crown by founding a military colony in the

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Parkman, Pioneers of France in the New World, II, 37.

3

George M. Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France (2 vols., New York, 1928), I, 75.

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Spain thought of Florida as extending westward to New Mexico and northward to the Pole, but subsequent exploration and settlement by France and England forced the narrowing of this all-inclusive claim to the present area of Florida, part of Georgia and the eastern Gulf region.

heart of territory claimed by Spain. This vanguard of settlement on the edge of an unknown world lost heart and abandoned its forlorn outpost. The survivors finally made their way back to France, ending the first French attempt to gain a foothold within the present United States.

Two years after the failure at Port Royal, another company of Huguenots settled about five miles from the mouth of the St. Johns River in northern Florida and erected Fort Caroline. Mutiny and famine beset the struggling colony and reinforcements from France arrived barely in time to prevent the abandonment of the settlement.

The Spanish reacted quickly to this new threat to Florida and on September 20, 1565, attacked and overwhelmed Fort Caroline. Earlier, a French force had sailed from Fort Caroline to attack the Spanish and was shipwrecked by a sudden storm. In two groups the survivors made their way up the coast. Starving and exhausted, believing themselves outnumbered by the Spanish who blocked their way, the Frenchmen surrendered on the shore on an Atlantic inlet a short distance south of St. Augustine, Florida. More than 300 Huguenot prisoners were murdered on the white sand. By this act of vengeance against the French intruders, the zealous Spaniards gave the name Matanzas - slaughter - to the inlet where Coligny's dream of a Huguenot refuge met its bloody finish. A number of refugees from Caroline finally made their way back to France, but more than a century would pass before settlements on the Gulf of Mexico again brought French colonists

face to face with Spaniards on the North American mainland.

More than a half-century after the failure at Fort Caroline, Frenchmen were more successful in winning a foothold in the temperate south, this time in the islands of the West Indies. A French West Indies Company was incorporated in 1625, establishing itself first on the island of St. Christopher. As in Florida Spain struck back and ousted the newcomers for a time, but the French returned and resumed possession. In 1625 and after, Frenchmen moved into other islands of the Indies and the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 affirmed France's claim to a share of the islands in company with England, Spain and the lesser maritime powers of Europe. Among the islands claimed by France was St. Croix, taken in 1651. The island was given to the Order of the Knights of Malta two years later and in 1733 was purchased by Denmark. Sold by Denmark to the United States in 1917 as part of the Virgin Island purchase, St. Croix is evidence of France's colonial ambitions which extended beyond the mainland of the New World.

#### THE FRENCH COME TO STAY

The half-century or so following Cartier's departure from the St. Lawrence was unmarked by further attempts to settle the Canadian wilderness. Spanish hostility in North America was implacable, the French homeland was racked by war, and American ventures did not hold out sufficient promise of gain for the Crown.

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Frenchmen returned to Florida a few years after the disaster at Fort Caroline. This time their motive was revenge, not settlement. In their attack on San Mateo, formerly Fort Caroline, on April 16, 1568, the French slaughtered the Spanish garrison of some 400 men.

During this period of official neglect, contact with the New World was not lost. The fishing banks of Newfoundland continued to attract French fishermen across the Atlantic, and neither foreign wars nor domestic upheavals interrupted this transoceanic enterprise.<sup>6</sup> The fishermen established rude shore stations for drying and salting their catch, and they came increasingly into contact with the native inhabitants on the edge of the continent. The Indians marvelled at the iron kettles and steel axes of the white men and inevitably a trading system evolved. The native American discovered that he possessed a commodity eagerly sought by the Frenchmen. This was fur, the wilderness treasure which was destined to lure Frenchmen back to the New World and into the heart of the continent.

As the 16th century drew to its close the fur trade was flourishing on the shores of the New World. The prospering commerce inevitably came to the attention of the French court and the Crown looked at New France with revived interest. France was enjoying a short period of peace and, for a time, could look to affairs beyond her borders. The time was ripe for another attempt to colonize North America and there were Frenchmen eager to grasp the opportunity for new wealth.

The effort which led to permanent French settlement in America was undertaken at a site within the state of Maine. In 1604, a small company of settlers planted a colony on St. Croix, or Douchet,

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Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France, I, 139, cites the estimate "that, by 1600, at least a thousand vessels, belonging to many nations, annually visited these northern coasts."

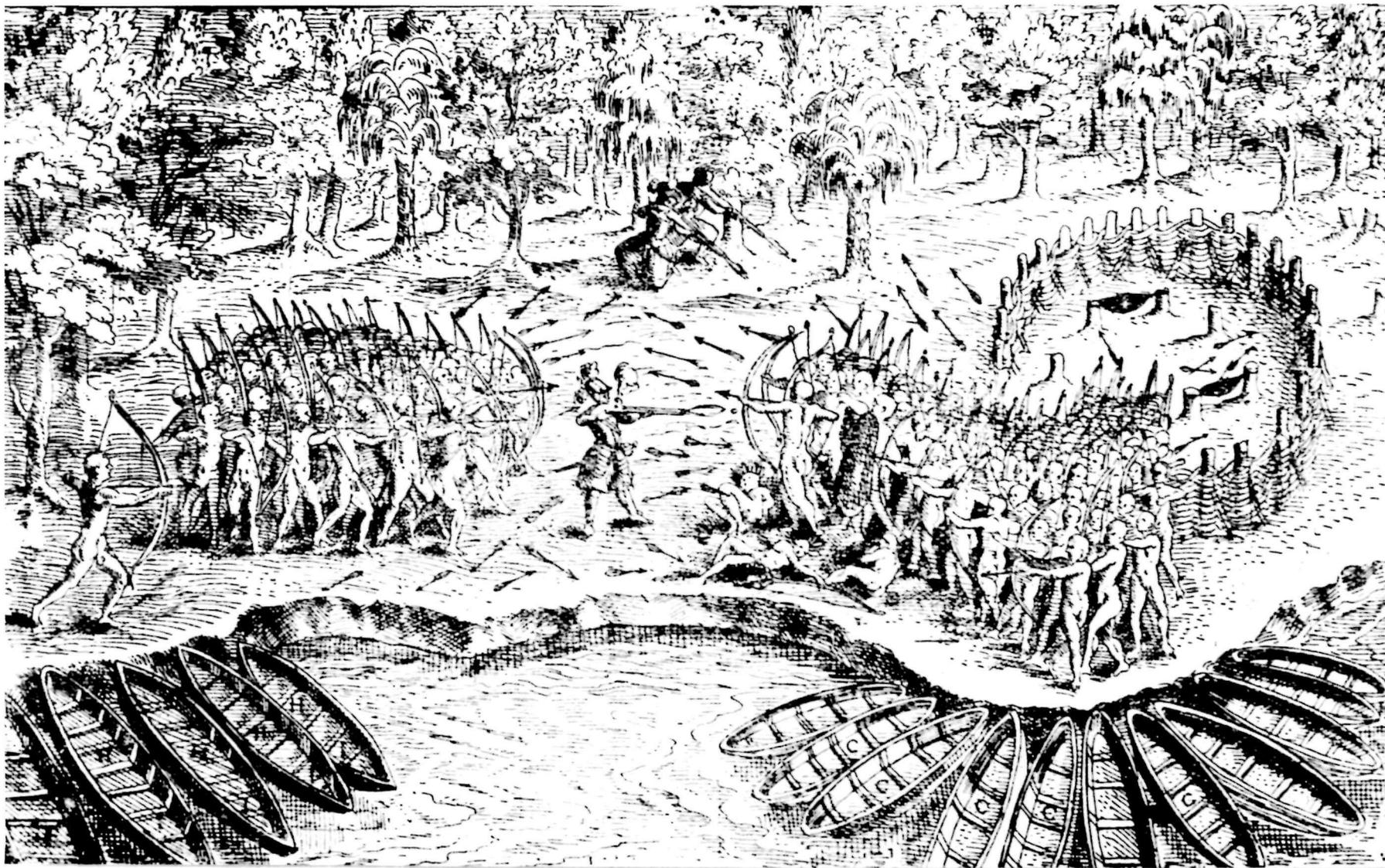
Island in the mouth of the St. Croix River, now the boundary between Maine and Canada. Winter gripped the tiny colony and before spring came almost half of the seventy-nine settlers were dead of scurvy. With spring came relief from France, and the colonists resolved to move to a more congenial site. At the end of the previous summer the colony's geographer, Samuel de Champlain, had explored the adjacent coast and now he guided another coastwise expedition in search of a new location for the settlement. The party passed Mount Desert Island which Champlain had visited and named on his previous exploration, sailed down the coast into Massachusetts Bay and cruised along Cape Cod. At Nauset Harbor they clashed with the Indians and set sail for St. Croix, having found no site favorable for resettlement. The colony finally moved to Port Royal, across the Bay of Fundy from St. Croix, not to be confused with the earlier settlement of Port Royal, South Carolina.

The coastal voyage to Cape Cod had not been wasted. Champlain noted everything encountered on the expedition and, thanks to his observations, American geography began to emerge from the darkness which earlier explorers and map makers had done so little to dispel. <sup>7</sup> From his experience with the St. Croix colony, Champlain learned the needs and problems of settlement in New France and in 1608, with the King's permission, he founded the first continually occupied

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Morris Bishop, Champlain - The Life of Fortitude (New York, 1948), 89-91.



On the lake which now bears his name, Champlain helps his Huron "allies" rout an Iroquois war party.  
(Print from Champlain's sketch, reproduced in Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America,  
vol. IV, p. 120.)

French settlement in America - Quebec.

INTO THE WILDERNESS

With the beginning of permanent French settlement in America there emerged two sharply contrasting forms of Colonial development. The first was the sedentary, semi-feudal society which spread first along the St. Lawrence and later established itself in the lower Mississippi Valley. The other was the restless, shifting settlement which followed in the wake of the explorers, traders and missionaries who ranged the length and breadth of the mid-continent in what is now Canada and the United States. It is with the latter region that this account mainly deals, for the story of Frenchmen in the river valleys, forests and plains between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains is a significant, dramatic and colorful chapter in the history of that vast basin which became the heartland of the United States.

It would be impossible to trace the myriad pathways blazed by Frenchmen through the mid-continent. Much of the story is not even known. There are, however, well-defined patterns of exploration and settlement which disclose how the banners of France were carried from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the

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Although St. Croix and Port Royal marked the beginning of permanent French settlement in North America, neither place was occupied continuously. Quebec is accepted as the first site in North America permanently and continuously inhabited by Frenchmen. In the founding of Quebec can be seen the economic implications inherent in virtually every effort of the French to explore and settle North America. By placing the first settlement on the St. Lawrence it would be possible to control the fur traffic which passed along that great highway into the interior. Quebec was "a natural portal to the trade of a continent." - Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France, I, 172.

Appalachians to the Rockies.

It was natural that the first exploration of the American interior followed the complex system of lakes and rivers which carved highways through the forest. Champlain, from the first, had recognized the vast opportunities for exploration and trade afforded by the inland waters.

"His greatest inspiration, . . . and one which ran counter to the obvious possibilities of the St. Lawrence River entry as the center for the most profitable North American fur monopoly, was his belief that somewhere down the southwestward trend of the Atlantic Coast there must be a river which would provide a much shorter and a less winter-bound approach to the interior waters."<sup>9</sup>

In 1615, one of Champlain's agents discovered the Susquehanna route between the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay, but the discovery came too late. A few years earlier, Henry Hudson had found the stream which bears his name, and the Dutch who employed him were quick to move into the valley of the new-found river. A half-century later the English seized the Dutch settlements on the Hudson and gained a position of decisive strength in the struggle for North America.

Balked in their effort to secure a short-cut to the Atlantic and to garner the fur trade of that region, the French turned westward toward the Great Lakes. The Lakes were an inviting pathway from the

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John B. Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (New Haven, 1945), 19.

Canadian settlements to the western Indians and the rich fur trade of the interior. Although they were the focus of French activity in the 17th century the Lakes were not discovered and systematically explored in a sudden burst of energy. Only slowly, year after year, were their shorelines traced, their bays and inlets traversed by Champlain's "Young Men" and the adventurers, traders and missionaries who followed them. <sup>10</sup> And, after many years, the picture was clear. Here were five great, connected bodies of water forming the gateway to the unknown continent. Dependent on the inland waters, Frenchmen learned the Indians' skill in handling the birch, elm or spruce bark canoe and, from the first, they met the wilderness on its own exacting terms.

In the wake of the woodsmen, and often hand in hand with them, came the men of God, Jesuits and others, who found in the New World their supreme missionary challenge. In 1611, the first Jesuits arrived in New France, locating originally at Port Royal and moving later to Mount Desert Island. At this latter place they planted the Mission of St. Saviour, only to see their pioneering effort go up in flames when Englishmen from Virginia raided the island in 1613.

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The terms coureurs de bois and voyageur traditionally have been applied to the traders who, more than any other group, spread French influence across the continent. Brebner uses the term coureurs de bois for the traders of the forest, and voyageur for those of the plain, or for all traders generally. He further notes that the term coureurs de bois has been used by some writers to indicate only unauthorized traders and that "that usage of opprobrium was a late and special development, often irregularly applied." - Brebner, The Explorers of North America, 158.

NEW FRANCE AT BAY

Despite the first accomplishment of exploration, in the middle of the 17th century the tide had turned against Frenchmen in North America. To insure the Indians' acquiescence in his design for colonization and development of the fur trade Champlain early had cultivated an alliance with the tribes which formed an unwilling buffer between French Canada and the powerful Five Nations of the Iroquois whose palisaded villages dotted the valleys of New York. From the time of their earliest settlement in America, Frenchmen were to pay in blood for their challenge to the sovereignty of the Five Nations. For twenty years after 1643, the Iroquois, armed by Dutch traders in the Hudson Valley, struck devastating blows at the struggling settlements of New France. In the first years of warfare with the Indians, French efforts to explore and settle North America came to a virtual standstill, with less than 3,000 Frenchmen fighting to maintain their

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foothold in the New World.

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New France at first was the valley of the St. Lawrence. Later, its vaguely defined boundaries included all of the Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes region in addition to the Canadian settlements.

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The population of New France increased but slowly in the 17th and 18th centuries. Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France, I, 242-244, discusses the slow growth of French population in North America, pointing out that the trading companies charged with settlement were after dividends not colonies. The fur trade did not require the large, sedentary population necessary to the agricultural economy of the English colonies as, for example, tobacco-growing Virginia. Settlers clearing the land and driving away the native fur hunters were, indeed, a threat to the fur trade. Moreover, it was difficult to lure Frenchmen from their beloved La France, when departure meant, at best, life-long exile from the traditional way of life. In France "What interest there was in lands overseas was rather to help degraded natives, or to create profitable trade, than to transplant Frenchmen to a new world." - Wrong, I, 244.

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF FRENCH EXPLORATION

Overcoming the obstacles imposed by nature and by human enemies, the French did cling to their New World settlements. After the first onslaught of the Iroquois there were interludes of comparative peace along the thin line of settlement. The spirit of exploration was never wholly extinguished and, despite the hostility of the Iroquois, Frenchmen again turned their faces toward the wilderness.

Pioneers in the revival of exploration to the west were the brothers-in-law Sieur de Grosseilliers and Pierre Radisson. The Iroquois wars had driven weaker tribes into the Wisconsin Country and cut them off from trade with Europeans. These refugees were an eager source of furs if Frenchmen could reach them. Defying the Iroquois, Grosseilliers made his way into the Wisconsin Country and, in 1656, brought back to the St. Lawrence a rich store of furs; exciting evidence of the wealth to be found in the interior.

In subsequent journeys Grosseilliers and Radisson penetrated the region bounded by Sault Ste. Marie, western Lake Superior and southern Lake Michigan. To the other profits of their travels was added an increasing store of information about the headwaters of the streams which coursed southwestward to the Mississippi. In the wake of Grosseilliers and Radisson came the great age of French exploration

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Brebner, The Explorers of North America, 223-227. It was Grosseilliers and Radisson who, a few years later, saw the immense significance of Hudson Bay as a new outlet for the fur trade, by means of which trade goods could be brought in and skins taken out by ocean-going vessels rather than by the laborious canoe routes to the St. Lawrence. Grosseilliers and Radisson fell out with French authorities and turned to the English to carry out their design for Hudson Bay. Despite the bitter opposition of France, England was the beneficiary of the rich Bay trade.

and settlement.

The way for this far-flung exploration to the south and west was paved by decisive victory over the Iroquois. Young Louis XIV had assumed direct control of New France and the colony was soon to reap the benefits of the royal interest. A small professional army arrived from Europe to relieve the French settlements and, by a single campaign against the Iroquois in the fall of 1666, humbled the Five Nations and won a long period of comparative peace.

Relieved of the Indian threat, explorers, traders and missionaries plunged again into the wilderness, seeking new land, furs and heathen souls. Within a few years after 1666, Frenchmen were pushing into every corner of the Great Lakes country and probing to the west and south along the headwaters of the Mississippi. The interior of North America was emerging from the darkness, and names appeared on the land; names which find their echo today in the geography of the great central valley.

As explorers and fur traders probed ever deeper into the unknown land, the vanguard of the westward movement encountered a new problem. The fragile canoe could not carry sufficient food for the two-year round trip into the interior and back to Canada, and the Indians could not provide a dependable source of produce. It was necessary to establish bases of supply along the fur routes and thus were planted wilderness outposts which would one day be cities and towns of modern America.

Another problem which sent Frenchmen far into the interior was the fringe of Indian "middlemen" who traded with Europeans and



**MACKINAC ISLAND, Michigan - Three centuries of Mackinac history are symbolized by the Marquette statue, and in the background an English blockhouse, left, and buildings of the American Fort Mackinac.**

**April 26, 1958**

**National Park Service photograph**

attempted to bar white traders from dealing directly with the fur-rich tribes still farther inland. The inhabitants of the interior begged for European trade goods and were eager to tap their unspoiled wilderness homes for the fur the white man wanted. Thenceforth a major French policy was to bypass the native "middlemen" and deal directly with the more primitive inhabitants of the interior.

In 1671, Daumont de Saint-Lusson summoned the Indians of the Great Lakes to meet him at the Sault Ste. Marie Mission, on the waterway joining Lake Superior and Lake Huron. There, on June 14 he claimed for King Louis XIV possession of all of the American West, discovered and undiscovered. In Saint-Lusson's claim, and others like it, can be found the seeds of French failure in America, for France's effort to claim and occupy vast expanses of territory paved the way for her downfall in the New World. Unfettered by the mountains which pinned the English against the Atlantic seaboard, and possessing rivers which flowed into the interior, the French spread over a much vaster territory a population which was only a fraction of that in the English colonies. Frenchmen could support only scattered islands of settlement in the wilderness and they were at last overwhelmed by the advance from the east.

#### THE CONQUEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

The greatest single achievement of the French in the interior south of Canada was the discovery, exploration and settlement of the Mississippi Basin, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. The

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Ibid, 227-228

stream which had loomed so mysteriously in Indian accounts of the land below the Lakes was finally to reveal itself as the broad central highway of the mid-continent.

In 1672, Louis Joliet was sent on a journey of exploration to seek a route to the fabled Southern Sea. At St. Ignace Mission on Mackinac Straits he added to his party the Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette. On June 17, 1673, Joliet, Marquette and five companions reached a point near the site of Prairie de Chien, Wisconsin, where, first of white men to do so, they embarked on the main stream of the upper Mississippi.

The explorers drifted southward, passing the mouth of the Missouri, the site of St. Louis, the mouth of the Ohio, and halting finally at the mouth of the Arkansas. They went no farther south, but they did determine once and for all that the Mississippi poured its muddy waters into the Gulf of Mexico, not the Gulf of California as some geographers had supposed.

The exploration of the Mississippi begun by Joliet and Marquette was completed by a Frenchman whose name stands among the greatest in the epic of American exploration. Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle's first effort to establish a base in the Illinois Country had ended in disaster in 1680 when the garrison of Fort Crevecoeur, opposite present Peoria, abandoned the post in the absence of their commanders. La Salle was determined to continue his efforts to reach the Gulf by way of the Illinois and the Mississippi. Early in 1682, La Salle and his able subordinate Henry de Tonty set out on the voyage destined to be the supreme achievement of a career dedicated to the



The Wisconsin, foreground, joins the Mississippi, in the distance, near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Near here, Joliet and Marquette embarked on the Upper Mississippi for the momentous voyage of 1673.

April 28, 1958

National Park Service photograph

attempt to plant a French empire in the heart of North America. After years of frustration and disappointment, La Salle descended the Mississippi from the mouth of the Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico.

On April 9, 1682, the expedition reached the Gulf, and La Salle signalized the momentous event in a ceremony claiming the new lands for France:

"I . . . have taken and do now take, . . . possession of this country of Louisiana, . . . from the mouth of the great river St. Louis, otherwise called the Ohio, . . . as also along the river Colbert, or Mississippi, and the rivers which discharge themselves thereinto, from its source beyond the country of the Nadouessioux [Sioux] . . . as far as its mouth at the sea, or Gulf of Mexico, and also to the mouth of the River of Palms, . . ."15

Thus at least in name did the sprawling valley of the Mississippi and the plains of the Southwest pass to the sovereignty of France.

La Salle returned north planning forts and settlements in the Illinois Country<sup>16</sup> and at the mouth of the Mississippi to control the new territory he had claimed for France. His first consideration was a permanent fort on the Illinois River to serve as a fur depot

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15 Francis Parkman, La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, Part Three of France and England in North America (2 vols., Boston, 1897), II, 51.

16 The Illinois Country as comprehended by the French was not clearly defined. Generally, it meant the country occupied by the Illinois Indians in the river valley of that name, although a broader interpretation identified the Illinois Country as the territory east of the Upper Mississippi and north of the Ohio. Traditionally the Illinois Country was part of Canada and was settled primarily by colonists from the north. However, early in the 18th Century, Illinois was annexed to Louisiana, a logical action resulting from the close relationship of the two colonies by virtue of their dependence on the Mississippi River. See Louise P. Kellogg, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest (Madison, 1925) 371-373.



FORT CREVECOEUR, Illinois - Here La Salle's first attempt to gain a foothold in the Illinois Country came to disaster. In the background is the Illinois River and the city of Peoria.

April 30, 1958

National Park Service photograph

and headquarters about which could be assembled a confederation of Indians to assist in the defense of the new possession against the resurgent Iroquois.

La Salle's effort to concentrate the Indians around Fort St. Louis at "Starved Rock" on the Illinois was typical of French policy for control of the native inhabitants of North America. By gathering them to centers of settlement, the French expected to utilize the Indians more effectively in the development and defense of New France. It has been claimed that the French were more successful in dealing with the Indians than were the English or Spanish. Yet, the experience of the French in the Mississippi Valley casts strong doubt on the wisdom of their continuation of La Salle's Indian policy of migration and concentration. <sup>17</sup> The redmen became increasingly dependent on the French who exploited them. The insatiable demand for furs drove the "beaver frontier" steadily westward from the old hunting grounds and the Indians forsook their independent way of life to pursue the retreating fur animals. On an individual basis the French probably understood the Indian better than did other Europeans. Some Frenchmen who spent their lives among the Indians became more savage than the people whose culture and customs they adopted. Yet the French probably did as much as any other nation to despoil and degrade the unfortunate people whose homeland they invaded.

#### NEW FRANCE REACHES OUT

A few years after his voyage down the Mississippi, La Salle

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Louise P. Kellogg, "France and the Mississippi Valley," (Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVIII (June, 1931), 6.

returned to the Gulf from France, planning to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi. Misfortune dogged the expedition from the first and La Salle missed the mouth of the river, landing far to the west on the coast of Texas. Near the coast, in 1685, he erected Fort St. Louis for the protection of his unlucky company. Failing in his attempts to reach the Mississippi, La Salle resolved to push northward to Canada. This effort, too, was doomed, and in 1687, probably near the site of Navasota, Texas, La Salle met death at the hands of his mutinous followers. Most of the colonists left behind at Fort St. Louis were murdered by Indians, and the Spaniards who came to seek them out found only the forlorn ruins of the first French settlement

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on the Gulf.

During the years when La Salle was struggling to plant an empire in the Mississippi Valley and after he met death in Texas, other Frenchmen, no less audacious, and generally more fortunate, were thrusting westward from the Great Lakes and developing the colonies which

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Herbert E. Bolton, "Location of La Salle's Colony on the Gulf of Mexico," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, II (September, 1915), 165-182. Some authorities have raised a question as to whether La Salle reached Texas through error or by design. "No one can say for certain what La Salle planned to do on the Gulf or whether what he did was his original intention, or a series of compromises with accident and circumstances, or the result of sheer geographical ignorance." - Brebner, The Explorers of North America, 325. La Salle's proposals for his expedition included an attack on the Spanish and seizure of the silver mines of northern New Spain. However, this was not his immediate objective, and the prospects of an attack against the Spaniards were probably put forth by La Salle to win Royal favor for his project. Evidence indicates that the landing in Texas was, indeed, a mistake, not a deliberate invasion of New Spain.

La Salle had envisioned in the lower Mississippi Valley.

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In 1679, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Dulhut, explored the country southwest of Lake Superior and, in an effort to make peace among the warring Indian tribes, wintered on the western end of the Lake where the city of Duluth stands today. There were the usual economic implications in Dulhut's efforts, for he sought to divert back to the St. Lawrence the lucrative traffic in furs which, after about 1670, flowed increasingly to the English on Hudson Bay.

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Far to the south, on the mouth of the Mississippi there was renewed activity as the 17th century ended. The French returned to the lower Mississippi in 1699, fifteen years after La Salle had missed the mouth of the great river in his colonization attempt. Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, led the new attempt to colonize lower Louisiana, and he succeeded where La Salle had failed. A number of settlements were established on the Gulf and on inland rivers from Fort Toulouse, Alabama, on the east to Natchitoches, Louisiana, on the west. In 1717-18, New Orleans was founded and La Salle's dream of a permanent colony on the mouth of the Mississippi had become a reality. Louisiana, in its early years, was held as a private grant

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The spelling here is Dulhut's own.

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As noted earlier, the explorations of Grosseilliers and Radisson led to English domination of the Hudson Bay fur trade. England asserted her claim to the Bay by the founding of the colorful and significant Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay. Although the French won notable victories in their effort to regain the Bay, in the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, France finally renounced her claims. The vigorous competition between the English on the Bay and the French along the St. Lawrence played a dominant role in the exploration and development of the Northwest.

from the King. Despite an unhealthy climate and notorious exploitation, notably by John Law's Western Company, the Colony, although not prosperous, became, at least, New France's most successful settlement outside of Canada. For all its irresponsible speculation, Law's company did hasten the development of the sprawling colony on the Mississippi. Although the "Mississippi Bubble" burst and hurled many of its investors to their ruin, Louisiana, when it reverted to the Crown in 1731, was a developing counterweight to the older settlements along the St. Lawrence.

"France held New Orleans and Quebec at the opposite ends of a line stretching a thousand miles from north to south, and, with soaring ambition, she was resolved that all that lay between should be hers."<sup>21</sup>

From the firmly established settlements along the St. Lawrence to those in lower Louisiana there were pockets of habitation in which Frenchmen centered their efforts to hold the inland empire, exploit its riches and save the souls of its native inhabitants. Mention of a few of these centers of settlement reveals the range of French influence in the mid-years of the 18th century.

North of the lower Louisiana colony and antedating it by a few years was Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River. This settlement, established in 1686, was the first major French outpost in the lower Mississippi Valley. Still farther north were the Illinois settlements at Cahokia, near the site of East St. Louis, and at Kaskaskia,

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21

Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France, I, 478.



FORT KASKASKIA, Illinois - Earthwork remains are all that survive of the post which guarded Kaskaskia, French "metropolis" of the Illinois Country.

April 30, 1958

National Park Service photograph

some miles down the Mississippi. Fort de Chartres, a few miles north of Kaskaskia, was the seat of civil and military government in the Illinois Country and was, in the 1750's, one of the strongest French fortifications in America. East of Cahokia was Fort Vincennes on the lower Wabash, while the portages between the lower Great Lakes and the Ohio River were guarded by the outposts of St. Joseph, Miami and Ouiatanon. Forts at Mackinac Strait and Detroit protected the most important of the fur routes to Canada. In the triangle between Lakes Michigan and Superior were a number of forts and missions, among them Fort La Baye on Green Bay, and Fort La Pointe on Chequamegon Bay of Lake Superior. Farther east, from 1678 on, a succession of forts had been built at the mouth of the Niagara River at the point where it enters Lake Ontario. Fort St. Frederic, near the site of the later Fort Crown Point in New York guarded the Hudson Valley-Lake Champlain route to Canada.

There were numerous other centers of French activity in the Mississippi Valley and the Northwest, some of which were only intermittently occupied. Near the end of the 17th century the beaver market was glutted, and the Jesuit influence pressed for an abandonment of northwestern military posts to give the missionaries free and undisturbed sway. For more than a decade after 1698 most of the Northwest was abandoned on orders of Louis XIV in a futile effort to overcome the abuses of the fur trade.

While most of the settlements of New France were born of the fur trade, in the Wisconsin and Illinois Countries copper and lead mining had early attracted the interest of French explorers and

traders. Frenchmen engaged in limited mining operations in the northwest and in the Mississippi Valley, but transportation difficulties and the problems of scientific operation made early mining attempts "a promise rather than a performance."

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#### HUGUENOTS AND ACADIANS

Two other types of settlement should be noted, although they did not occur within the framework of the French national effort to explore and colonize North America. From the early years of the 17th century thousands of French Huguenots came to America to escape persecution in the mother country. They settled their own communities, in New York at first, and later throughout the English colonies. After 1685, when the toleration accorded them by the Edict of Nantes was revoked, they flocked to the New World in growing numbers. Although the Huguenot communities made their contribution to the growth of America, they were essentially a facet of development in the English colonies, quite apart from the distinctly French activities west of the mountains.

In addition to the Huguenot settlements, there were scattered groups of French Acadians in the English colonies. These unfortunate colonists came under English rule when Nova Scotia was awarded to Britain in the treaty ending Queen Anne's War in 1713. Doubtful of the Acadians' loyalty, the English, in 1755, deported several thousand of them and dispersed them in the Atlantic colonies, mainly Maryland and Virginia. Some of these exiles finally made their way to

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Kellogg, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest, 363.

Louisiana where their culture and language still color the life of several communities in the lower valley of the Mississippi.

#### AT HOME IN THE WILDERNESS

The communities which clustered around the outposts of New France were not the well-ordered towns of the expanding Atlantic colonies. When French influence in America was nearing its peak in the 18th century, the population of the whole of Louisiana was estimated at about 7,000 persons, while the Illinois Country around that same period supported only about 2,000 Frenchmen. The soil of the Mississippi Valley was fertile and in both the Illinois and Louisiana colonies land around the settlements was cultivated. Yet, the restless commercial activities of the French did not promote stable agrarian development and there seems to have been little appreciation of the immense agricultural potential of the rich land which stretched away  
23  
from the great rivers.

With a few exceptions, notably New Orleans, the French settlements consisted of a few families of habitants, usually from Canada, who farmed the river lands in the vicinity of the forts and trading posts which were the center of frontier life. There was also the transient population of traders, soldiers and missionaries, continually on the move in the wilderness.

The forts and outposts were mostly rude affairs. A French visitor in 1721 described a fort near the foot of Lake Michigan, not-

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Justin Winsor, ed., Narrative and Critical History of America (8 vols., Boston, 1836-1889), V, 53.

ing that "The commandant's house, which is but a sorry one, is called a fort from its being surrounded with an indifferent palisade, -  
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which is pretty near the case with all the rest." The impressive construction of forts like St. Frederic, Niagara and des Chartres was an exception to the more common sort which quickly fell into ruin and vanished in the years after their abandonment.

The typical dwelling of the Mississippi Valley was not the log cabin so widely and erroneously associated with the beginning of American settlement. The log cabin was not known to the pioneers of New France, and a style distinctly "French Colonial" developed in the  
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American interior. The French home was usually of one story and of half-timber construction. Most common was the "post in the earth" type with hewn logs planted upright in the ground with the spaces between filled with clay and moss or some other material. Later designs used a stone foundation and sill on which the logs were stood to prevent their rotting in the earth. In Louisiana the space between the logs was sometimes filled with brick and covered with lime plaster, a surfacing common in today's New Orleans. A porch or galerie surrounded the house and gave access to its rooms. A steep-pitched hipped roof covered the rooms, while a lower-pitched roof extended over the porch.

The plantation houses of lower Louisiana were considerably more elaborate than those of the middle and upper Valley, being

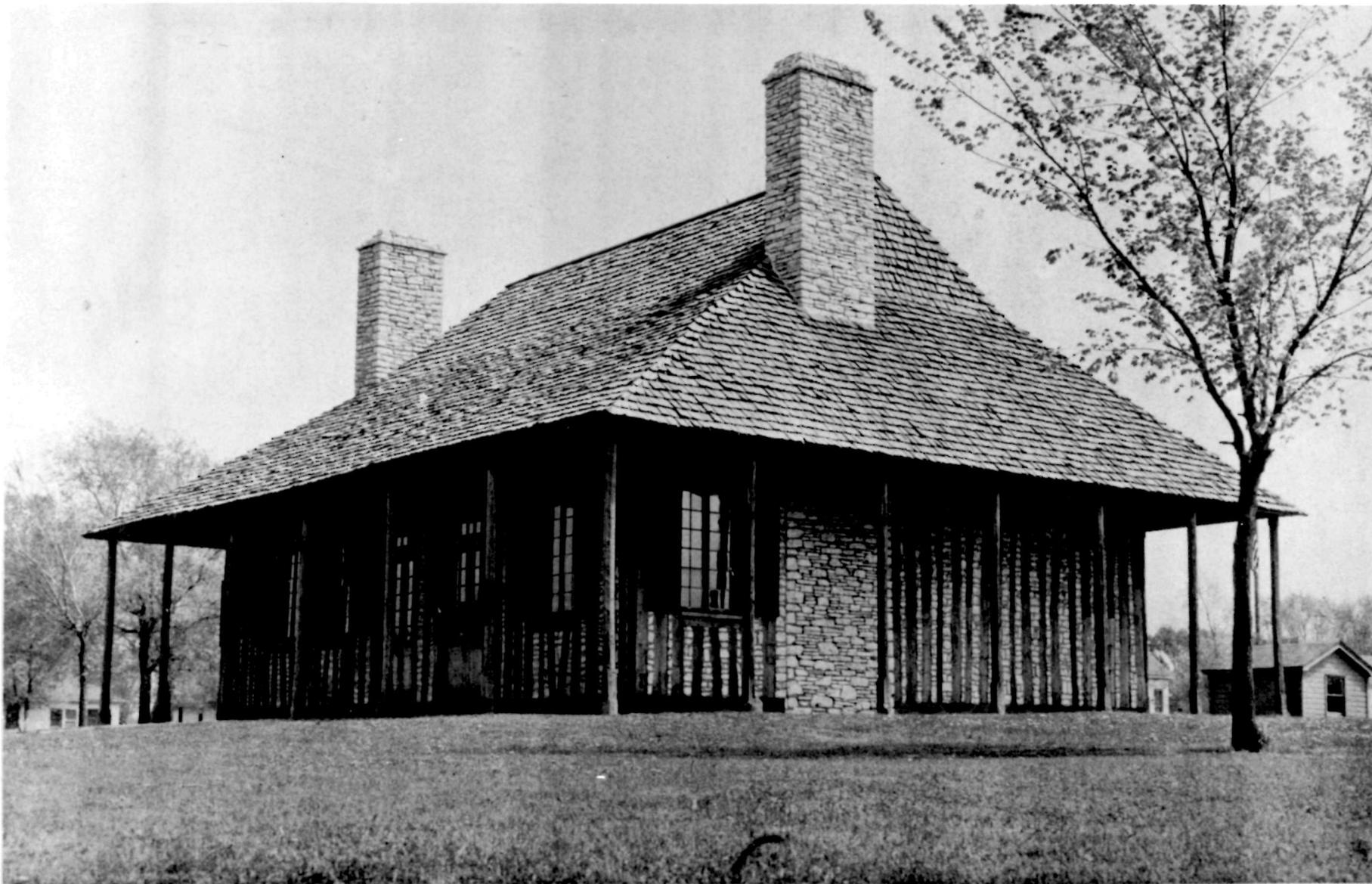
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Ibid, 52.

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This brief discussion of French architecture in the Mississippi Valley is taken from Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 253-268.



CAHOKIA COURT HOUSE, Illinois - An excellent example of French Colonial architecture, this has been called the oldest former dwelling place in the Middle-West.

April 30, 1958

National Park Service photograph

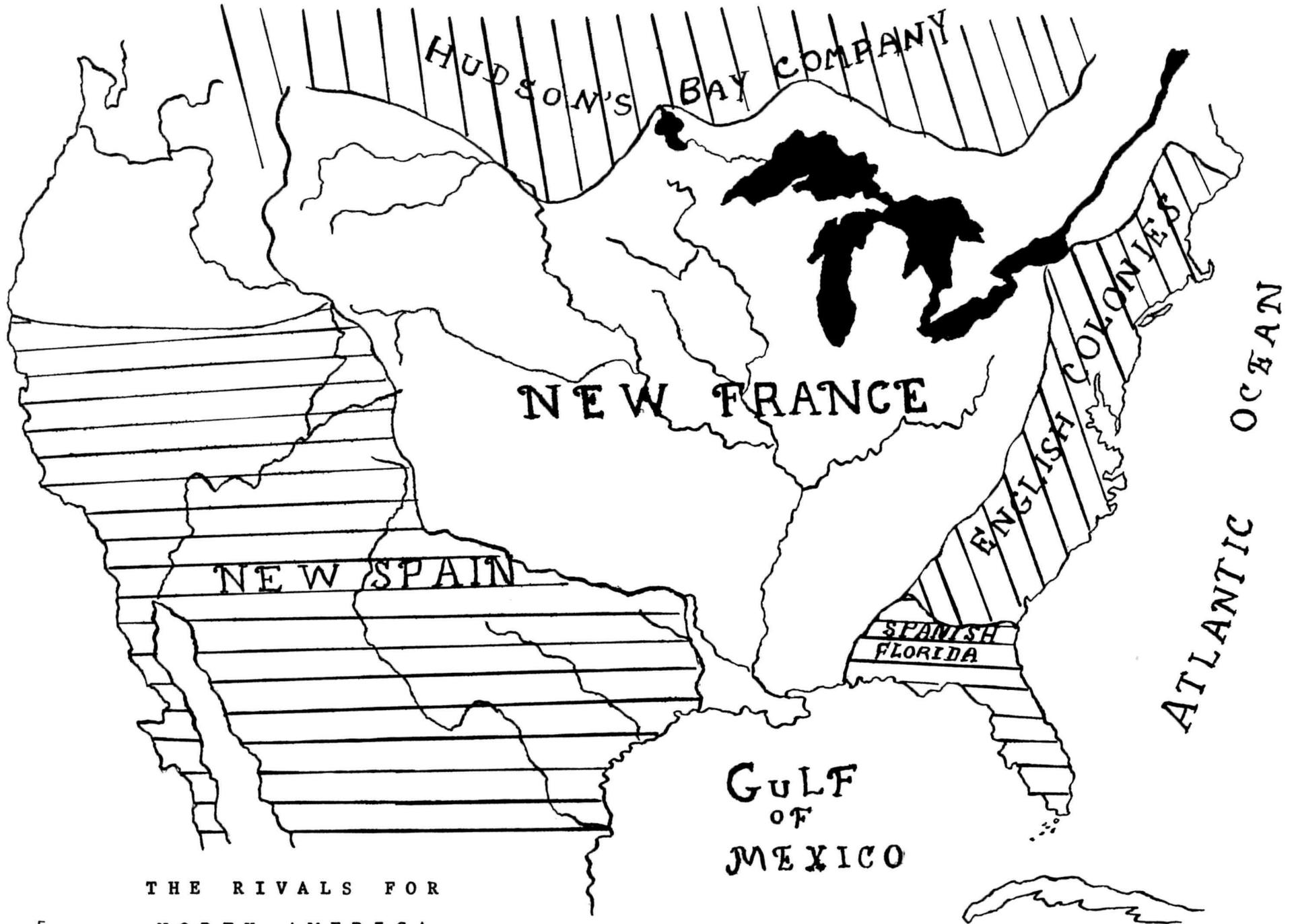
generally of two stories. They usually had plastered brick walls and columns on the lower floor, with wood construction above. In smaller houses the galerie might extend only along the front, or front and back. An outside stairway led to the porch and second story rooms.

These were the homes of some Frenchmen, but others, the explorers, traders and missionaries, knew only a home roofed by the forest and the sky. To many of these sons of New France, the scattered settlements of white men were more alien than the Indian villages and wilderness places where they spent their lives.

#### TWILIGHT IN NEW FRANCE

With the Mississippi secured at both ends, French traders pushed into the continent which lay on either side of the great river. To the east were the expanding English colonies and Spanish Florida; to the southwest was more of the territory of Spain. In 1719 Bienville reacted to the news of war between France and Spain by capturing Pensacola. The port was retaken by the Spanish and finally captured again by the French. Yet, in the end, nothing came of this enterprise; Pensacola was returned to Spain with the restoration of peace. From Louisiana, too, there were aggressive moves by Frenchmen, and the Red River formed an uneasy frontier between the rivals in the southwest.

Both Spain and England were dangerous rivals, but the English threat to the Indian trade was more immediate. In the forest, England and France were maneuvering toward each other, using hostile



THE RIVALS FOR  
NORTH AMERICA

Indian tribes in a curious struggle "by proxy" for control of the  
26  
interior.

As Frenchmen threaded the forests east of the Mississippi, others of their countrymen turned toward the deserts of the Southwest and to the plains which reached toward the western mountains. Despite initial setbacks French traders continued to press west, and within a few years their commercial influence was felt as far west as the eastern slopes of the Rockies, despite the opposition of Spanish authorities.

In 1739, the Mallet brothers reached Santa Fe, the northern outpost of administration and trade in the Spanish Southwest. In this and subsequent expeditions the Mallets "rounded out the pioneer exploration of the South-West", although they failed in their immediate design for winning officially-sanctioned trade between the Illinois  
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Country and Spanish territory. In succeeding years the route between the Illinois and Santa Fe was securely established and by the middle of the 18th century was a flourishing commercial link between the Mississippi Valley and the Southwest.

Farther north another series of explorations was making new

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26 Dawson A. Phelps, "The Chickasaw, the English, and the French, 1699-1744," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVI, 117-133, (June, 1957). This paper deals with the trade rivalry between French Louisiana and English South Carolina, in which the Chickasaw and other Indians were the pawns. Clearly shown is the pattern of the economic "cold war" waged by the contending powers west of the Appalachians.

27 Brebner, The Explorers of North America, 340.

discoveries in the quest for knowledge of western America. From their earliest contacts with the New World the French had sought a river flowing into the Pacific as the St. Lawrence did into the Atlantic. To counter the English firmly entrenched on Hudson Bay, Frenchmen, in the half-century before the fall of New France, had a new challenge to find the fabled river to the west and to hold the known rivers by which furs were transported to the Bay.

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In the years between 1731 and 1743, the Verendryes, father and sons, were the first Europeans to penetrate the Far West, discovering the Dakotas, western Minnesota and perhaps part of Montana. Operating for more than a decade from their headquarters at Fort St. Charles in Minnesota's Northwest Angle, they discovered the Saskatchewan, saw the Red River of the North and the headwaters of the Missouri, opening an immense new territory to the fur trade. Verendrye was the first white man to record his use of Grand Portage, the Great Carrying Place, although it probably was already well known to the Indians and traders. Although the Verendryes stopped short of the Rocky Mountains, they had made a memorable stride forward over what would one day become an overland route to the long-sought western sea.

In this twilight time of New France, even while important discoveries were being made in the west, the energies of Frenchmen in the Mississippi Valley turned more and more to the effort to hold their inland empire against English encroachment from the east. The long

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Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France, II, 688.

struggle for North America was nearing its climax.

### STRUGGLE FOR NORTH AMERICA

It is true that the American colonial wars were reflections of the series of conflicts which swept over Europe in the 18th century. However, the control of North America was, in itself, an important factor in the broader struggle for imperial supremacy between England and France. Frontier wars in North America represented a rivalry which had local origins equally as compelling as the dynastic ambitions of European rulers.

As early as 1613, the English had reacted to the French threat in North America by sending an expedition from Virginia to wipe out the feeble colonies at St. Croix and Port Royal. A few years later Quebec itself was occupied for a time by the English. The crushing defeat of the Iroquois in 1666 has been noted earlier. This success gave the French their moment of opportunity to dominate the English by moving into the Hudson Valley and encircling New England. But they vacillated too long. England seized the initiative by capturing the Dutch settlements on the Hudson and securing the Iroquois fur trade which the Dutch had found so profitable.

Despite these preliminary skirmishes, it was not until the end of the 17th century that the first of the major frontier wars broke out. From King William's War, 1689 - 1697, until the fall of New France, villages of New York and New England knew the terror of sudden attack by Indian warriors and their French leaders. In retaliation, exposed communities of New France were pillaged and destroyed.



FORT DE CHARTRES, Illinois - Showing reconstructed gateway and buildings. Building in background is on foundations of original storehouse and serves as a museum.

April 30, 1958

National Park Service photograph

France, exercising autocratic control in her colonies, and utilizing her numerous savage allies, at first had the advantage in this warfare of stealth and surprise.

Blood on both sides was spilled in vain, for the series of wars before 1754 was inconclusive in settling the territorial claims and the commercial rivalries of the two powers. But, by the mid-18th century the final conflict, long deferred by the unwillingness of either side to make an all-out effort, was at hand. Englishmen were spilling over the Appalachians into the Ohio Valley, erecting trading posts and blazing trails into the heartland claimed by France. The French reacted first by sending a force down the Ohio Valley to reassert their claim to the region. Outposts were strengthened and new forts were erected on the lines of approach from the Atlantic colonies. In 1753, young Lieutenant Colonel George Washington rode west to deliver a formal protest against the new forts and discover French intentions. His report was a grim one. The French intended to occupy all of the Ohio Country, and they could not be dislodged except by force.

Next year Washington returned with a small force to garrison a fort being built at the Forks of the Ohio, on the site of modern Pittsburgh. He was too late, for the French had already seized this strategic location and thrown up Fort Duquesne. In the course of his expedition Washington surprised and defeated a French scouting party west of Fort Duquesne but a short time later was himself trapped and forced to capitulate at Fort Necessity in southwestern Pennsylvania.

From these almost casual beginnings stemmed what tradition calls The French and Indian War, the American phase of the Seven Years War which saw the triumph of England over her old rival, France, in both the Old World and the New. The French scored early successes in America, but their small numbers and limited resources, coupled with corruption in Canada and France, finally told against them. With William Pitt, the elder, at the helm, the English pressed the war with a vigor hitherto unknown in America. In 1758 and 1759, France's New World empire was crumbling on every front. In the Ohio Valley, on the Great Lakes and in the Hudson - Champlain region the regular troops and colonials of Great Britain were triumphant, their victories exploding like a string of firecrackers along the frontiers claimed by France. With the fall of Quebec in 1759, and the surrender of Montreal a year later, New France was blown away. By secret treaty France, in 1762, ceded her American holdings west of the Mississippi to Spain rather than see that vast territory fall to England. In the Treaty of Paris in 1763, ending the Seven Years War, Canada and the country east of the Mississippi were yielded to England and New France passed from the scene as a contestant for North America.

## EPILOG

Except for a brief and abortive revival, French sovereignty in North America ended with the fall of New France. In 1800, a weak and futile Spain returned Louisiana west of the Mississippi to France, and for a time Napoleon I had visions of a new French empire in the West. This dream never materialized and in 1803 Louisiana was sold to the young and aggressive United States of America.

Although their ties with the homeland were broken, Frenchmen still clung to their way of life in the American interior, dwelling in the old settlements, following the trails of their ancestors and trading for furs in the wilderness outposts across the land. Their empire was gone, but it would be many years before Frenchmen south of Canada were submerged by the westward march of America.

What had the French accomplished within the present United States in more than 200 years of exploration and settlement? What is the measure of their success and failure? With the exception of lower Louisiana, Frenchmen had established no thriving, populous colonies rivaling those of the English on the Atlantic seaboard, and they could never enforce total sovereignty over the territory they claimed.

"While they went to and came back from remote regions, they did not occupy them. They made few settlements, except those required for the fur-trade. Apart from a few clearings, the primeval forest still held sway, and the voyageur who was here today might be gone tomorrow leaving hardly a trace behind. . . ."29

They had never really eliminated the Indian menace, and until the end there were bitter, costly wars with the redmen, from the land

of the Fox in the Northwest to that of the Chickasaw on the lower Mississippi.

Yet, a remarkably small number of Frenchmen had explored the central two-thirds of the continent, planted forts, settlements and missions controlling its major waterways and portages, and had at least held in check the most powerful combinations of Indian tribes which opposed them.

When Americans pushed into the continent's interior they found not an untracked wilderness but a land crossed by the trails of white men and dotted with islands of settlement where Frenchmen had made their homes for generations. But, because they were so few and because they tried to go everywhere and hold everything, Frenchmen between the Great Lakes and the Gulf saw their wilderness heritage overrun by the million hurrying feet of a new nation moving west.

Physical evidences of Frenchmen in the American interior south of Canada are few. The passage of years, the rise of cities, fire and flood, have all taken their toll of the settlements, missions and outposts which were New France between the Appalachians and the Rockies. Yet, in their passing the French left indelible marks on the trails they blazed across the continent. Place names throughout today's United States echo the proud names of France and mark the footsteps of her sons who opened the wilderness. Songs of the voyageurs are sung by Americans, and the Nation's folklore recounts the deeds of the proud spirits who won and lost an empire in the New World.

For Americans of today, the sites of forts and settlements, missions and portages, record the success and failure of Frenchmen who sought glory and gold, souls and empire in the wilderness of a New World.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

A brief notation of sources on French Exploration and Settlement in America may be of interest to the general reader. For purposes of this historical introduction it was necessary to cite only a few works from the vast literature of New France. For the student and specialist in the field of French exploration and settlement, there is a wealth of basic material in manuscript and published form in collections of the United States, Canada and France. These include church records, reports and correspondence of French administrators, personal accounts of explorers, traders, soldiers and missionaries. Many of these are available in published form in English translation and for the student they are indispensable.

For the reader interested primarily in the general interpretation of French exploration and settlement in America there are numerous secondary works of value and significance. Only a few of the many worthwhile studies which have proven their lasting usefulness can be noted here. The seven volumes by Francis Parkman which comprise the monumental France and England in North America have stood the test of time since their initial publication in the last half of the 19th century and have remained a basic source for the interpretation of the struggle for American colonial empire. Parkman, called "one of the greatest - if not the greatest - historians that the New World has produced", brought to his work a familiarity with sources, a sense of high drama and a vitality of style seldom equalled in American historical writing. For the present study, the most useful of Parkman's volumes were Pioneers of France in the New World, Part One of France and England in North America (2 vols., Boston, 1897), and the biography La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, Part Three of France and England in North America (2 vols., Boston 1897). This latter work has been challenged by some historians on the grounds that Parkman's admiration for his subject obscured his critical judgment. However, it remains the most successful effort to analyze and interpret the many-faceted character of the man who carried French Empire down the Mississippi Valley.

A readily-available reference work of great value is Justin Winsor, ed., Narrative and Critical History of America (8 vols., Boston, 1886-1889). This collection is a storehouse of important source material. Volumes IV and V contain many valuable translations of contemporary French accounts of exploration and settlement in North America.

A more recent work of considerable importance is George M. Wrong, The Rise and Fall of New France (2 vols., New York, 1928). While lacking the drama, color and style of Parkman's works, this study is a carefully detailed interpretation by a foremost authority in the field of Canadian-American history.

Another more recent study of great interest and usefulness is John B. Brebner The Explorers of North America, 1492-1806 (New York, 1933). This perceptive study of the opening of the continent by men of many nations is a major contribution in its field. Digging deeply into the primary sources of American history, Brebner has reevaluated the roles played in the New World by the contending powers of Europe, and he shows perhaps more clearly than any other authority the interplay of conflicting national ambitions in the scramble for land, power and wealth in America. Another work of great significance by the same author is North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (New Haven, 1945). A brief but useful summary of the French role in opening North America, and of the Anglo-French rivalry for the continent, appears in Ray A. Billington, Westward Expansion (New York, 1949).

A valuable work, with subject matter broader than its title implies, is Louise Phelps Kellogg, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest (Madison, 1925). While this work deals primarily with the northwest, it presents also a picture of the French in the Mississippi Valley and touches on virtually every facet of French activity in North America. Especially valuable is the interpretation of the French and Indian relationship which played so important a role in France's effort to hold and expand her dominion in America.

On the specialized subject of the architectural heritage of New France, probably the most useful treatment for the layman is in Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952). Technical matter is presented with clarity and the historical setting is interpreted in sufficient depth to give dimension and significance to each architectural period.

## SURVEY OF FRENCH SITES AND BUILDINGS

### A General Statement on their Distribution and Preservation

During the period of her sovereignty in North America, France claimed a much larger territory than did either of her two major rivals, England and Spain. Yet, within the limits of the present United States, the physical traces of French exploration and settlement are meagre compared with the historic remains of English and Spanish occupation. Only in Canada and in the lower Mississippi Valley did Frenchmen establish settlements comparable with those of the English on the Atlantic seaboard and the Spanish in Florida and the Southwest. Frenchmen in the interior south of Canada were not so much interested in permanent settlements as in the quick profits of the fur trade. The transient French population of explorers, adventurers, traders and missionaries, did not encourage the growth of stable colonies. When their New World empire fell to England, and the push of settlement westward from the Atlantic overran the Mississippi Valley, the Great Lakes and the upper mid-west, the scattered settlements of New France were overrun and finally assimilated. Today, the traces of France in the United States are found for the most part in the names of cities, rivers and lakes throughout those sections of the country where Frenchmen struggled to plant a wilderness empire.

While physical remains of New France are uncommon, there are scattered historic sites and buildings which preserve its colorful and significant heritage in America. With the exception of

Canada, it was in the Mississippi Valley that France made her most determined bid to colonize America, and it is in the great central valley, from Wisconsin to the Gulf of Mexico that most of the surviving French sites are located. In addition to this major concentration, a few notable sites are found in the eastern Gulf region, southeast Atlantic coast, the northeast and Great Lakes area, and the upper plains. In the Southwest, one site is especially notable. In the course of the Survey 26 major sites were investigated personally by the Historians and 60 sites of lesser importance were noted. This general comment on the geographical distribution and number of French sites noted in the Survey is amplified below under the discussion of specific sites and buildings.

Because existing French sites and buildings are relatively rare, those which have thus far escaped destruction are generally recognized as important historical survivors and their preservation seems assured. The greatest danger is to those sites which have been located and identified only approximately or whose locations are known not at all. Such sites are threatened by inadvertent destruction by human agencies, or by natural causes which could otherwise be controlled. Fortunately, many of the most significant sites and buildings are in public ownership or in the hands of interested private groups, and although their interpretation frequently is neglected, their protection is adequate. In the upper Mississippi Valley and North West most of the French sites of greatest importance are known and identified; a number possess visible remains.

In the lower Mississippi and in the Gulf Coastal region the sites of several highly important French forts and settlements have been obliterated while others have defied authentication despite intensive investigation. In the southern states particularly, the French custom of erecting their outposts on the river bluffs has subjected some important sites to several centuries of erosion and in some cases total destruction.

Many important French sites must be considered "lost" - overtaken by urban development and buried beneath the cities of the United States. The locations of other sites can be approximated, but in many cases documentary and field investigation has failed to pinpoint them. Further study of some of these might result in recovery of the site's positive location. One of the most notable examples of a lost site is that of the early Illinois village of Kaskaskia. Once the most important French settlement in the Illinois Country, by 1910 Kaskaskia had been swallowed by the changing course of the Mississippi River. Another lost site whose location remains a secret despite exhaustive study is Arkansas Post, the first permanent French settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley. Changes in the course of the Arkansas River necessitated frequent changes of the outpost and positive identification of the original French site has thus far defied both historians and archeologists. The location of the later Arkansas Post, of the Spanish and American periods, is known, however, and constitutes a site of noteworthy importance in the story of the Southwest. The site of the first French settlement in the present United States, Charlesfort on Parris Island, South Carolina, cannot positively be

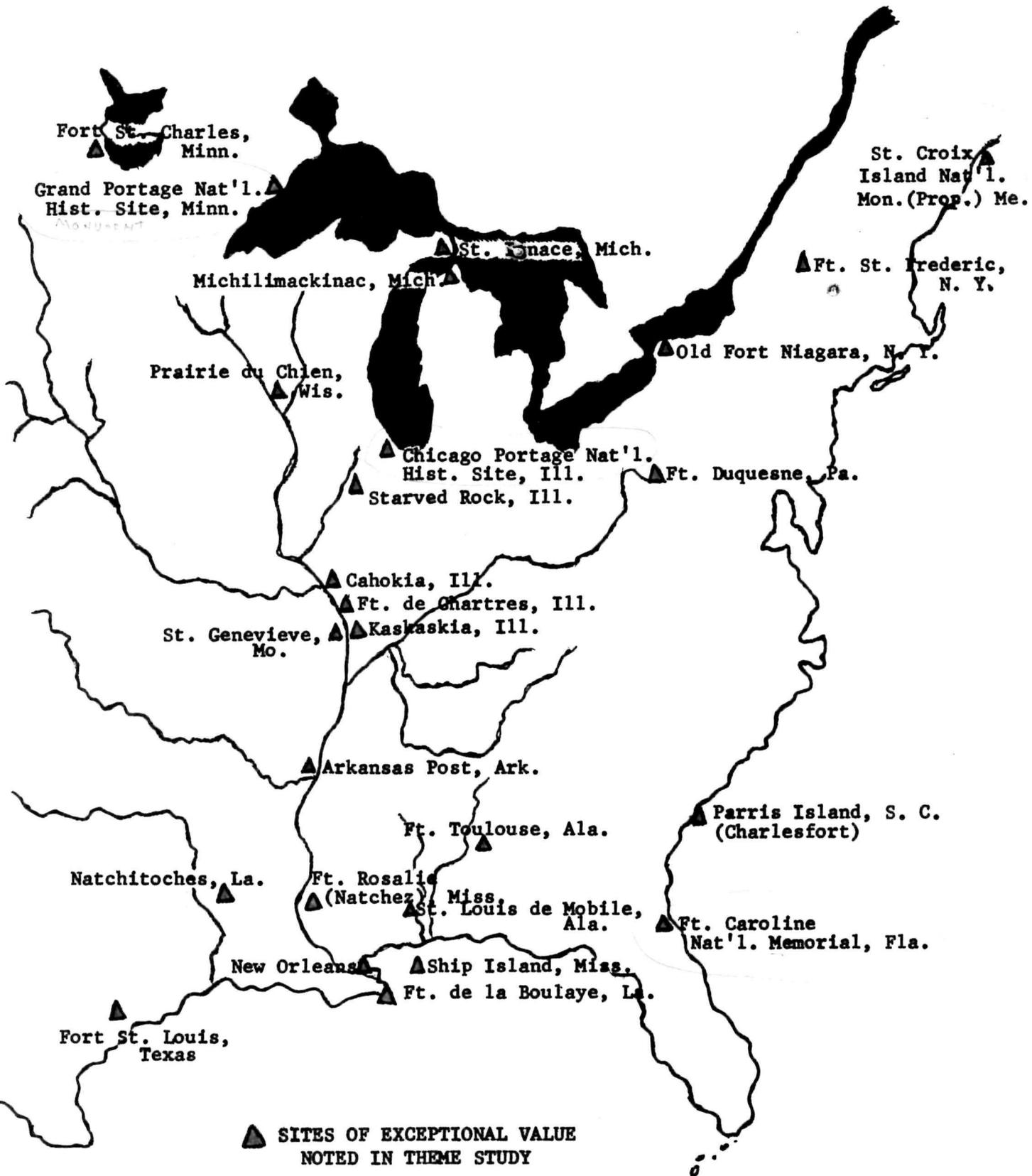
located, while four different sites are claimed for Fort de Maurepas, first capital of French Louisiana, founded on Biloxi Bay, Mississippi in 1699. The first French settlement on the Gulf Coast subsequent to La Salle's failure in Texas, was on Ship Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, 10 miles south of Biloxi, Mississippi. Today there is not a trace of the settlement, and its site can only be approximated.

Another important site whose location can only be estimated is Fort Orleans, built by Etienne de Bourgmond on the Missouri River when he led the first large expedition up that stream in 1723. The location of La Salle's Fort Prudhomme on the Mississippi River north of Memphis, Tennessee is not positively known, nor has the site of the later Fort Assumption been authenticated. This latter post lies presumably within the city of Memphis.

Other sites are known, but because of subsequent use and development no longer retain any vestige of visual association with their historical character. The early and very significant French sites on the Sault Ste. Marie have been obliterated by modern development of that strategic waterway. The approximate site of the Jesuit Mission on the Sault is marked by a small memorial boulder, but adjacent dwellings and public buildings have completely altered its historical setting. Lost in the same manner is the site of Fort La Baye in Green Bay, Wisconsin, scene of the earliest French settlement in the Wisconsin Country. Fort Pontchartrain, once the vital French Great Lakes post, is covered by the commercial development of Detroit, Michigan, and the site of Fort Conde, Mobile, Alabama, has been obliterated in the same manner.

The city of St. Louis, although its establishment came after the end of French dominion in North America, was French in origin and design. The passing of the years, fire and flood, all took their toll of the characteristically French remains in the city, until now only its name reflects its colorful beginnings. To a lesser degree the same changes have taken place in New Orleans, once New France's brightest adornment outside of Canada. Although many venerable buildings survive, most of these reflect the varied national influences of France, Spain and the United States in a character uniquely their own. Those which are distinctly French Colonial are not common.

In contrast to the many important sites which have been lost, there are examples of the rescue of significant locations. One of the most notable recent examples is the salvage of the site of the French Fort Duquesne, on the Forks of the Ohio at modern Pittsburgh. A few years ago, this site was overwhelmed by industrial development. Today, Point Park in Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle is safe from obliteration and the buried remains of Fort Duquesne and neighboring Fort Pitt are safe until full investigation of the site can be made. This site and other notable examples of historical preservation are described more fully in the following section.



DATA ON SITES RECOMMENDED  
AS HAVING EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

In conducting the survey of French sites throughout the Nation, attention was centered on areas which reflect the period of the French national effort to explore and colonize North America. In general, despite locally significant settlements by Frenchmen at a later date, the main effort ended around 1760 with the fall of Canada and the passing of French sovereignty in the interior. Frenchmen continued to inhabit the American interior after the fortunes of war left them abandoned by their mother country. Some historical remains date from this later period of French activity, and, while a few of these are noted in the following description of sites, they cannot be said to be a part of the great age of French exploration and settlement. Rather, their story belongs to the last phase of the British empire in America and to the birth and growth of the United States. For that reason, with few exceptions, the sites noted below are those which fall distinctly into the period of French dominion prior to 1760.

For purposes of organization and clarity, the sites noted in detail below are grouped geographically from the northeast to the southwest. Except where noted, the sites described are recommended by the Survey Historians as having exceptional historical value and national significance. Few of the "lost" sites noted earlier are described in detail here as their significance as historical remains cannot be ascertained until their specific location and character are determined, based on the additional study recommended

in a later section of this report. Material on some of the most important of the lost sites will be found in the inventory records of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. Sites presently administered by the National Park Service are noted only briefly.

#### THE NORTHEAST

##### ST. CROIX ISLAND NATIONAL MONUMENT (Proposed) AND ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE

St. Croix Island was the scene of the effort which was to culminate in the establishment of French settlement in North America. Here, in 1604, Samuel Champlain and a small party of settlers planted a colony. After a disastrous winter, the outpost moved across the Bay of Fundy to what became Port Royal, Nova Scotia, and from this inauspicious beginning emerged French Canada. The French occupation of St. Croix was a direct challenge to England for mastery of the New World; the first move in a long and bitter contest to be waged for the next 150 years. Its distinction as the mother colony of New France gives St. Croix Island great significance in the story of French exploration and settlement. The site has been investigated archeologically by the National Park Service and burials and other traces of the first settlement have been uncovered.

Mt. Desert Island, Acadia National Park, was the site of the first French Jesuit mission within the present United States; the forerunner of many centers of missionary effort destined to appear in the wake of the explorers who carried French dominion into the interior of America. In 1613, Englishmen from Virginia raided the mission

settlement, destroyed the budding Mission of St. Saveur and took its missionaries captive. The exact site of the mission has not been established.

Site Documentation: William F. Ganong, "Ste. Croix (Dochet) Island" from Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Second Series, 1902-1903, vol. VIII, Section II. Reprinted by the New Brunswick Museum, St. John, New Brunswick, 1945.

FORT ST. FREDERIC, CROWN POINT, NEW YORK

Control of Lake Champlain was a primary objective in the defense of Canada by the French, and in the defense of the Hudson Valley and the northern colonies by the British in the eighteenth century. To guard the Champlain route, the French began construction of Fort St. Frederic in 1731 and for almost a quarter of a century thereafter, the fort was a keystone of France's northern defenses. A visitor to the fort in 1749 described the post as being built on a rock consisting of black lime slates and having high thick walls of the same limestone material which was quarried about half a mile from the site. The eastern side of the Fort had a high watch tower with thick "bomb proof" walls and mounting a number of cannon. The fort included a small church and stone quarters for officers and troops. According to detailed plans of the fort, in possession of the New York Department of Conservation, the fort was four-storied, served by a battery of 62 guns and surrounded by a wall 18 feet thick. Reid, cited below, describes it as being about 300 feet square with four bastions, three of diamond shape and the fourth, on the northwest, in quadrangle shape.

Some years after Fort St. Frederic was built a second French fort was erected to cover the Champlain approach to Canada. This was Carillon, renamed Ticonderoga by the British. Ticonderoga is listed as a site of exceptional value in the Survey of Theme IX, Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775.

Fort St. Frederic was destroyed and abandoned by the French in the summer of 1759 when British General Amherst took Carrillon, 12 miles away, and moved north. The British did not rebuild the destroyed French fort but erected a new post about 200 yards away and named it Crown Point or Amherst. The ruins of Fort St. Frederic are fragmentary but the picturesque remains of walls and earthworks create a vivid impression of the original stone fort which sheltered Frenchmen in the northern wilderness. No major archeological investigation has been made of the site, but the plans of the fort in the files of the State Conservation Department give an accurate picture of the post. The picturesque setting on the shores of Lake Champlain adds to the sense of wilderness solitude as the Fort's French inhabitants may have known it. Chimney Point, on the opposite shore of Lake Champlain, sheltered a French settlement, contemporary with Fort St. Frederic, and should further study of the Chimney Point site so justify, it might also be considered a feature of the St. Frederic interpretive story.

The St. Frederic site, together with the nearby ruins of Fort Crown Point, tells, in impressive fashion, of the bitter struggle between England and France for mastery of North America. An adjacent



FORT ST. FREDERIC, Crown Point, New York - Ruins of French stronghold which guarded the Lake Champlain route to Canada in the eighteenth century.

March 20, 1958

National Park Service photograph

museum contains relics found in and near the forts, although little other interpretation is available to visitors. The Crown Point Reservation is owned and administered by the State of New York. It should be noted that in the Survey of Theme IX sites, Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775, Crown Point was recommended as a site of exceptional value. The two forts may be considered jointly in evaluating their importance but each has exceptional significance within its own theme. Crown Point and St. Frederic are jointly recommended as having exceptional value in both Themes V and IX.

Site Documentation: Hoffman Nickerson, The Turning Point of the Revolution (Boston, 1928); W. Max Reid, Lake George and Lake Champlain (New York, 1910); New York: A Guide to the Empire State, American Guide Series (New York, 1947); Francis Parkman, Montcalm and Wolf, II (Boston, 1884); Charles S. Marshall, "Crown Point and Plattsburg", (Ms. National Park Service, October 14, 1937); "Interim Report of the Joint Legislative Committee to Study Historic Sites", Legislative Document (1950), State of New York, Albany, 1950.

#### THE GREAT LAKES

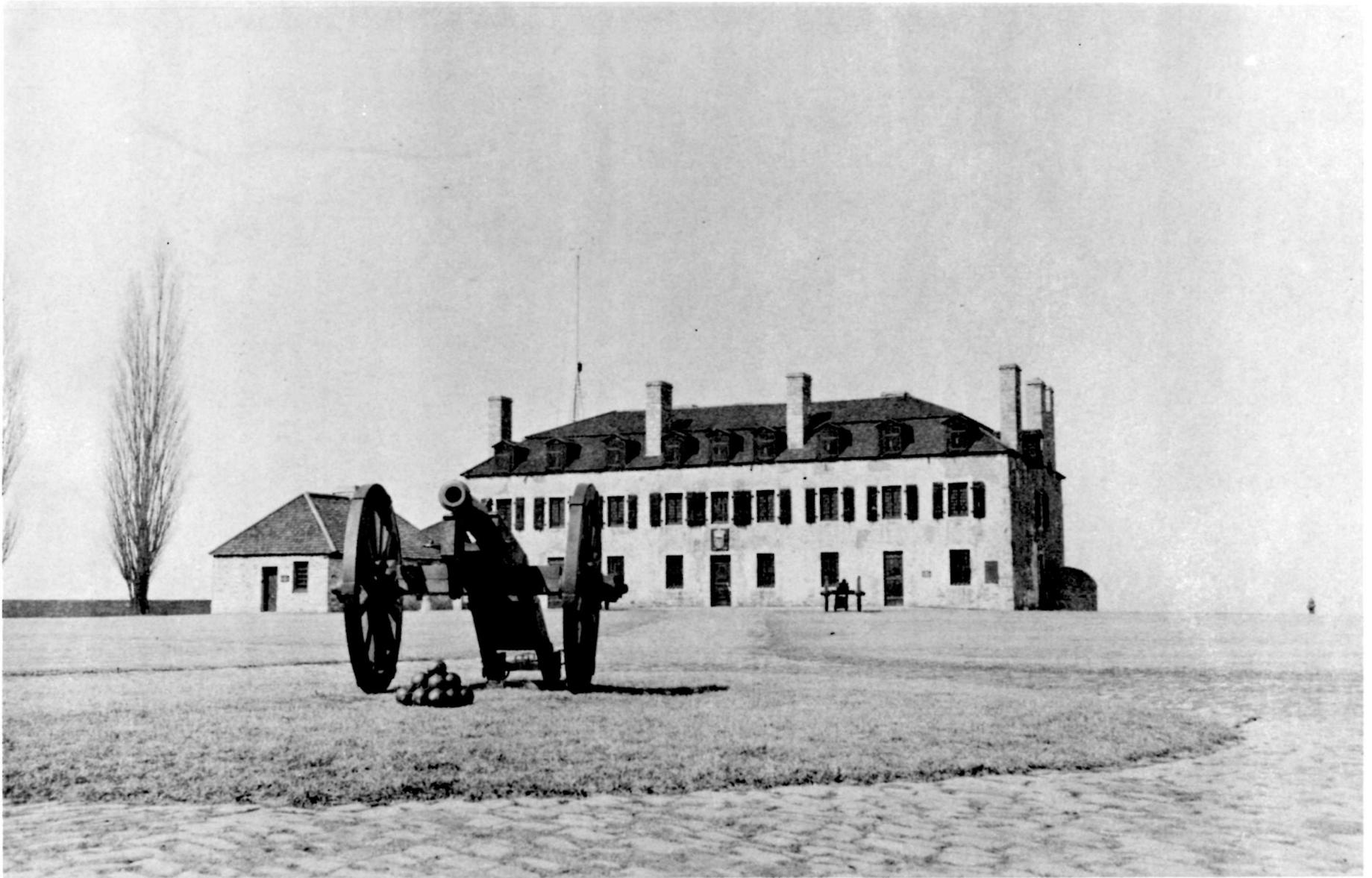
##### OLD FORT NIAGARA, NEW YORK

Throughout the colonial period and the early years of the United States, the strategic site of Fort Niagara made its control the goal of major military operations by France, England, the United States and the great Iroquois federation. It saw as much or more of the struggle for North America than any other outpost from the late 17th century through the early years of the 19th.

Situated at the mouth of the Niagara River, it commanded the Great Lakes route between Lakes Erie and Ontario and covered the approaches to New York's western frontier. The first fort on the site was built by order of La Salle in 1678 and was rebuilt twice by the French, the last time in 1725-6. The notable Stone House, or "Castle", in reality a fort built to resemble a French Provincial chateau, was erected at this time. The fort was enlarged between 1750 and 1759 during which time the Stone House and temporary buildings were converted into an elaborate stronghold with earthworks, moats, magazines and gun emplacements. Much of this later improvement remains.

In 1759, as the struggle between England and France neared its climax in America, Fort Niagara was captured by a force of British regulars, colonials and Indians. Pitt, the English Prime Minister, had declared that Niagara was second in importance only to Quebec. In English hands during the Revolution, Fort Niagara was a base for combined British-Indian expeditions against the American frontier. The British held the fort until, by the Treaty of 1794, it was taken over by the United States. During the War of 1812 the fort was recaptured by the British and was restored to the United States by the Treaty of Ghent.

As Ticonderoga was a key to the colonies on the north, Fort Niagara was a key to their western protection, development and expansion, and its story encompasses the span of American history in the critical years which saw the emergence of the United States. The fort has been restored with remarkable fidelity and is today one



FORT NIAGARA, Youngstown, New York - The "Castle", a French fort built around 1725 to resemble a provincial chateau, is Fort Niagara's oldest surviving building.

March 24, 1958

National Park Service photograph

of the best restored and preserved of America's historic military posts. Restored features include the famous "castle", designed as a French Provincial house to delude the Indians who resented war-like preparations within their territory. Other restorations include the moat, drawbridge and block house, earthen ramparts and parade ground and the cross symbolic of the one planted on the site by Father <sup>Paine</sup> Jean Millet on Good Friday of 1688. Father Millet accompanied a French column which arrived to relieve the survivors of the garrison which was almost wiped out by hunger and disease in the preceding winter.

Located adjacent to the Fort Niagara Military Reservation, a regular army post, the old fort has been leased by the State of New York to the Old Fort Niagara Association. This organization has made a number of competent restorations which, in their entirety, give an excellent picture of this famous site during parts of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries under the successive French, British, and American forces. The work of restoration was aided by the survival of several buildings and fortifications.

The Old Fort Niagara Association has placed the project upon a sound operating basis through its own revenues.

Site Documentation: Frank H. Severance, An Old Frontier of France; the Niagara Region and Adjacent Lakes Under French Control (New York, 1917); Claud H. Hultzen, Sr., Old Fort Niagara, (1939). Thor Borresen, "Father Millet Cross", (Ms. Report, National Park Service, June 1939).

## ST. IGNACE MISSION, STRAITS OF MACKINAC, MICHIGAN

The French mission established on Mackinac Island around 1671 was moved in the following year to the mainland on the northern shore of the Straits of Mackinac. The mission, under Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette, a nearby fort and the French village which grew up at the site became the early center of the flourishing fur trade which developed around the Straits of Mackinac. It was here in 1673 that Marquette joined the explorer Louis Joliet for the journey which was to trace for the first time the broad stream of the Mississippi from its upper reaches in Wisconsin to the mouth of the Arkansas.

The St. Ignace Mission was maintained until 1706 when it was suspended. In 1712 it was reopened and served the region around the Mackinac Straits until, in 1741, it was moved again, this time to the south shores of the Straits.

On his return north from the voyage down the Mississippi, Marquette, worn by exhaustion and illness, remained in the Illinois Country hoping to found a mission there. In 1675, feeling that his death was near, he set out for the St. Ignace Mission but died and was buried enroute. Two years later, his remains were carried to St. Ignace in fulfillment of his wish to be buried at that mission. In 1877, what have been identified as Marquette's remains were discovered at St. Ignace and reburied on the site of the Mission chapel. Although the authenticity of the site has been questioned, general opinion now credits the location as being the correct one. The Michigan Historical Commission has accepted the identification of



ST. IGNACE MISSION, Michigan - The grave identified as that of Father Jacques Marquette marks the site of the chapel of the St. Ignace Mission. In the background is Lake Huron and, on the horizon, Mackinac Island.

April 26, 1958

National Park Service photograph

the site and has so marked it. The location of nearby Fort de Buade has not been definitely established, and additional study should be made to identify that important site.

The chapel site containing the monument marking the grave of Marquette is a small park overlooking Lake Huron and Mackinac Island. A museum adjacent to the chapel site is maintained by the Roman Catholic diocese of Marquette and master planning now under way by State authorities for development of the Straits area calls for development of this museum to interpret the story of Marquette and other French explorers and missionaries. Thorough archeological investigation of the Mission site probably would disclose additional valuable information on this important center of French settlement.

Site Documentation: Louise P. Kellogg, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest, Vol. 1 of Wisconsin History Series (Madison, 1925); Thomas M. Pitkin, "Mackinac Island and Associated Sites" (Ms. Report, National Park Service, 1937 ?). Letter to Regional Director, Region Five, from Dr. George S. May, Historic Sites Specialist, Michigan Historical Commission, dated June 6, 1958.

#### FORT MICHILIMACKINAC STATE PARK, STRAITS OF MACKINAC, MICHIGAN

The Straits of Mackinac are the crossroads of the upper Great Lakes, connecting Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. In early interior exploration of America, the Great Lakes and their related waterways were the highways into the continent, and the vast strategic importance of the Straits of Mackinac did not escape the French who were the first white men to penetrate the region of the Upper

Lakes. For purposes of historical interpretation, the Mackinac area may be treated as a single area or site of great significance. However, for purposes of their identification in relation to the French theme, the sites are treated individually. Mackinac Island itself was not of great importance to the French and its story falls most distinctly into Theme XI, The Advance of the Frontier, 1763-1830.

The earliest French activity on the Straits centered briefly on Mackinac Island and, more importantly, at St. Ignace on the north shore of the Straits; see description of St. Ignace Mission, above, page 49. For a few years after 1698 the Straits officially were abandoned by the French in an effort to relieve the abuses of the inland fur trade. French traders however managed to maintain their contacts with the Indians around the Mackinac area. Early in the eighteenth century the French formally returned to the Straits and around 1715-1720, erected a new fort, Michilimackinac, on the south shore of the Straits on the present site of Mackinaw City. This post was surrendered to the British after the fall of France in North America. In 1763, during the Pontiac uprising, Michilimackinac's garrison was surprised and massacred but the post was reoccupied in the following year. Michilimackinac was the only British garrisoned outpost on the Great Lakes above Detroit until near the close of the Revolution. In 1781 when American attack appeared imminent the post was moved to Mackinac Island.

The site of Fort Michilimackinac has been established by archeological investigation and its authenticity is accepted by the Michigan Historical Commission. A reconstruction of the stockade



**FORT MICHILIMACKINAC, Michigan - The reconstructed stockade of Fort Michilimackinac overlooks the Straits of Mackinac, key to the upper Great Lakes and early center of French exploration and settlement.**

**April 26, 1958**

**National Park Service photograph**

has been made although there is general agreement that this work is inaccurate. Plans now underway by the Mackinac State Park Commission call for the authentic reconstruction of this highly significant outpost of New France.

Site Documentation: Louise P. Kellogg, The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest, vol. 1 of Wisconsin History Series (Madison, 1925); Howard H. Peckham, Pontiac and the Indian Uprising (Princeton, 1947); Thomas M. Pitkin, "Mackinac Island and Associated Sites" (Ms. Report, National Park Service, 1937 ?); Letter to Regional Director, Region Five, from Dr. George S. May, Historic Sites Specialist, Michigan Historical Commission, dated June 6, 1958.

#### GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, MINNESOTA

The earliest exploration and routes of settlement in North America followed the complex system of rivers, lakes and portages which gave access to every corner of the continent. One of the most notable of these early highways was the water route from the St. Lawrence, through the Great Lakes to the Pigeon River, now part of the United States - Canadian boundary. This gateway to the rich fur resources of the Northwest was highly prized by the men of three nations who successively controlled it - the French, English and American.

The last 20 miles of the Pigeon River are a series of falls and rapids making navigation impossible. To get around this natural obstacle, goods and canoes were carried over Grand Portage, an overland trail connecting the river and Lake Superior. Although it was

undoubtedly known to the Indians and first white men in the northern wilderness, the first recorded use of the Portage was by the noted French explorer and trader Verendrye, who used it in 1731. Grand Portage has considerable importance in the story of French exploration and settlement, although the period of its greatest activity came at the close of the American Revolution.

The Portage is preserved as a National Historic Site, presently in non-Federal ownership. Legislation is pending for acquisition of the site by the Federal Government for designation as a National Monument.

CHICAGO PORTAGE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The site of another vitally important portage, use of which by white men dates from the French period, is located in the southwestern suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The Portage was the overland trail between the Des Plains River and Lake Michigan, and was a major link in the water route from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi.

Despite its location in a center of commercial and industrial development, the site remains relatively isolated by surrounding forest cover. The site is the property of Cook County, Illinois, and is administered by that county's Forest Preserve District. The site currently has no orientation or interpretive features, but development of such facilities has been the subject of planning by officials of the Forest Preserve District.

## LAKE OF THE WOODS REGION

### FORT ST. CHARLES, MAGNUSSON ISLAND, MINNESOTA

Fort St. Charles was the first capital of an empire which Pierre La Verendrye, noted French explorer and fur trader, carved in present Canada and the United States. The Verendryes played a significant role in the expansionist schemes of the French in their efforts to reach the Western Sea. As a result of their explorations, the French gained control of the strategic fur region between Grand Portage and the Assiniboine River. The Verendryes also used this region as a base of operations in pushing westward into the Upper Missouri and Northern Plains regions of today's United States.

This post, according to the evidence that has survived, did a prolific business in furs. It was an important point of contact for the French in negotiating with the Indians. Fort St. Charles was also the scene of a great tragedy in 1736. Because of the shortage of food, provisions, and powder, Pierre La Verendrye sent his son, Jean Baptiste; Father Aulneau and nineteen voyageurs in three canoes to meet a brigade on its way west. On an island in the Lake of the Woods the entire relief party was massacred by the Indians. The bodies were brought back to Fort St. Charles and buried beneath the chapel of the post. The date of the post's abandonment is unknown. Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, former Superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, is of the opinion that it was "the largest occupied French post on Minnesota soil."

Two contemporary descriptions of Fort St. Charles have survived. The first of these, that of Marquis de Charles Beauharnois,



**FORT ST. CHARLES, Minnesota - Established in 1732 by Pierre LaVerendrye. Logs in the right foreground and in the left background mark the corners of the old stockade.**

**July 1955**

**National Park Service photograph**

Governor of French Canada, written in 1733, is as follows:

". . . The interior of this fort measures one hundred feet with four bastions. There is a house for the missionary, a church, and another house for the commandant, four main buildings with chimneys, a powder magazine and a store house. There are also two gates on opposite sides, and a watchtower, and the stakes are in double rows and are fifteen feet out of the ground."

After fruitless searches for the location of Fort St. Charles covering many years, a party from the Jesuit St. Boniface College, in Manitoba in 1908, found the site of the old post. The remains of young La Verendrye, Father Aulneau and the nineteen voyageurs were recovered. Replica logs now indicate the corners of the post, all surface indications of which have vanished.

Site Documentation: Theodore C. Blegen, "Fort St. Charles and the Northwest Angle," Minnesota History, XVIII (September 1937) 231-248; Nellis M. Crouse, La Verendrye Fur Trader and Explorer (Ithaca, 1956).

#### UPPER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

##### STARVED ROCK, ILLINOIS

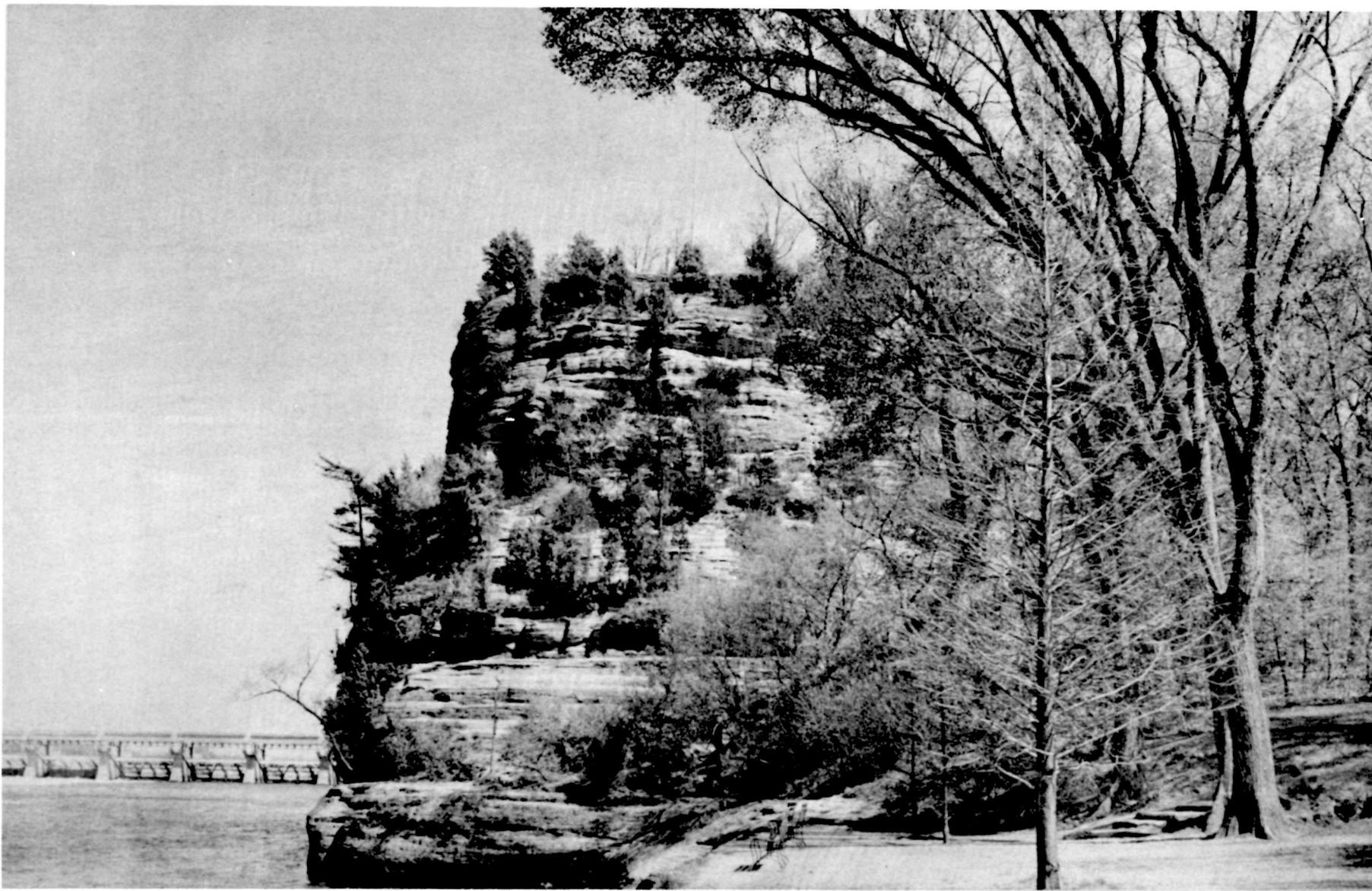
Starved Rock was the first major center of French influence in the Illinois Country. It was chosen by La Salle as the base for his administration and development of the Mississippi Valley after the momentous voyage of discovery down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. Here in 1682-83 was erected Fort St. Louis, about which thousands of Indians were concentrated as part of La Salle's plan to protect and exploit the vast new territory he had claimed for

France. Located on the lower rapids of the Illinois River, Fort St. Louis controlled the strategic waterway which was a major connecting link between Canada and the Mississippi Valley.

The first white men in the area were the explorer Louis Joliet and the Jesuit father Jacques Marquette who passed the Rock on their return north in 1673, after their pioneer voyage down the Mississippi.

La Salle's Fort St. Louis was built upon what the French called simply La Roches. This site has been established beyond all reasonable doubt as being the present Starved Rock. After La Salle's death in Texas the Fort, under the command of the able Henry de Tonty, was a base of French and Indian resistance against the marauding Iroquois. Under mounting pressure from their enemies, the Indians finally deserted Starved Rock for safer territory and the Fort's usefulness to the French was ended. It was finally abandoned in 1691.

Starved Rock State Park today preserves some of the sites of the Indian Village which clustered around the Rock, as well as the pinnacle itself. The Rock is a sheer promontory rising 115 feet above the adjacent Illinois River in a setting of great natural beauty. Use of the Park is primarily recreational although the setting retains much of the feeling of the wilderness as La Salle may have known it. Trails give access to various natural and historical features and plaques on the summit of Starved Rock describe briefly the historical significance of the site, one of the most important survivors of the great age of French exploration and settlement.



STARVED ROCK, Illinois - On the summit, 115 feet above the Illinois River, La Salle built Fort St. Louis in 1682-83.

April 29, 1958

National Park Service photograph

Site Documentation: John B. Brebner, The Explorers of North America (New York, 1933); Francis Parkman, La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West (Boston, 1903); "Starved Rock State Park," pamphlet published by the State of Illinois, Division of Parks and Memorials, n. d; Charles W. Paape, "Starved Rock in the History of Illinois," Ms. Report (National Park Service, September, 1937).

CAHOKIA COURT HOUSE STATE MEMORIAL, CAHOKIA, ILLINOIS

The reconstructed Cahokia Court House has been identified as the oldest house in Illinois and possibly the oldest in the mid-west. Without doubt it is the oldest courthouse west of the Allegheny Mountains. The building is French in origin and its design is a notable example of French Colonial architecture in the Mississippi Valley. The building also symbolizes the story of Cahokia, one of the earliest major centers of French settlement in the Illinois Country.

Cahokia, on the east bank of the Mississippi River, a short distance south of present East St. Louis, Illinois, was the first permanent white settlement (other than fortified outposts) of any importance in Illinois. It was founded in March 1699, by priests of the seminary of Quebec who planted a mission on the site, and became a commercial center of the Illinois Country.

The Cahokia Courthouse probably was built shortly after 1737 and was originally the home of Captain Jean Baptiste Saucier, the builder of Fort de Chartres. The dwelling was purchased in 1793 to serve as the Courthouse of Cahokia, county seat of St. Clair County, part of the new Northwestern Territory. Here were conducted

all civil affairs and criminal trials for an area which extended as far north as Prairie du Chien and Green Bay, Wisconsin. The Courthouse was dismantled for exhibition in 1904 in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis and at the close of the fair was acquired by the Chicago Historical Society. Part of the building was exhibited in Jackson Park, Chicago, while in 1938, the original foundation site was excavated by Illinois State archeologists. The original foundations were uncovered and a number of objects relating to the building were discovered. The House was reerected on the original site in 1939, employing much of the original construction material. Despite the moves undergone by the structure, the survival of much of the original building material and the building's intimate association with the history of the Cahokia settlement entitle it to the designation of having exceptional value. The Courthouse now contains a small museum, artifacts and other material which interpret the history of the structure. Several other buildings in Cahokia reflect the French occupancy of the settlement, but these are of a period subsequent to that of the distinctly French effort to explore and settle the Mississippi Valley. Where their architectural distinction warrants, several of these later Cahokia buildings should be considered in Theme XX, The Arts and Sciences.

Site Documentation: Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952); Charles E. Peterson, "Notes on Old Cahokia," French American Review, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July - September, 1948); "Cahokia Courthouse State Memorial," State of Illinois, Division of Parks and Memorials, n. d.; HABS - one sheet (1934); seven photographs (1934).

### STE. GENEVIEVE, MISSOURI

Of all the numerous Creole missionary, fur trading, farming, mining, and military establishments in the Illinois Country, only Ste. Genevieve has retained much of its early appearance. The oldest settlement in this region, Cahokia, Illinois (c. 1699), suffered heavily from floods. Kaskaskia (c. 1703), after two centuries, was entirely washed away by a change in the river's course. The remnants of colonial St. Louis were lost in the fire of 1849 and in the spread of riverfront development.

Old Ste. Genevieve, founded in the period 1735-1740, was located in the river bottom on the west bank of the Mississippi about three miles below the present village. In its early period, the village appears to have been linked with Kaskaskia; the development of lead mines in the Ozark Hills and of the salt springs on Saline Creek probably being important factors in the expansion of the settlement. Ste. Genevieve, at that time, was engaged largely in storage and shipment of lead, and in the production of foodstuffs for the New Orleans and St. Louis markets.

Floods, especially that of the spring of 1785, caused damage repeatedly, and the town was moved gradually to the present site on high ground. By 1796, only a few huts remained on the old site, and these were inhabited by traders.

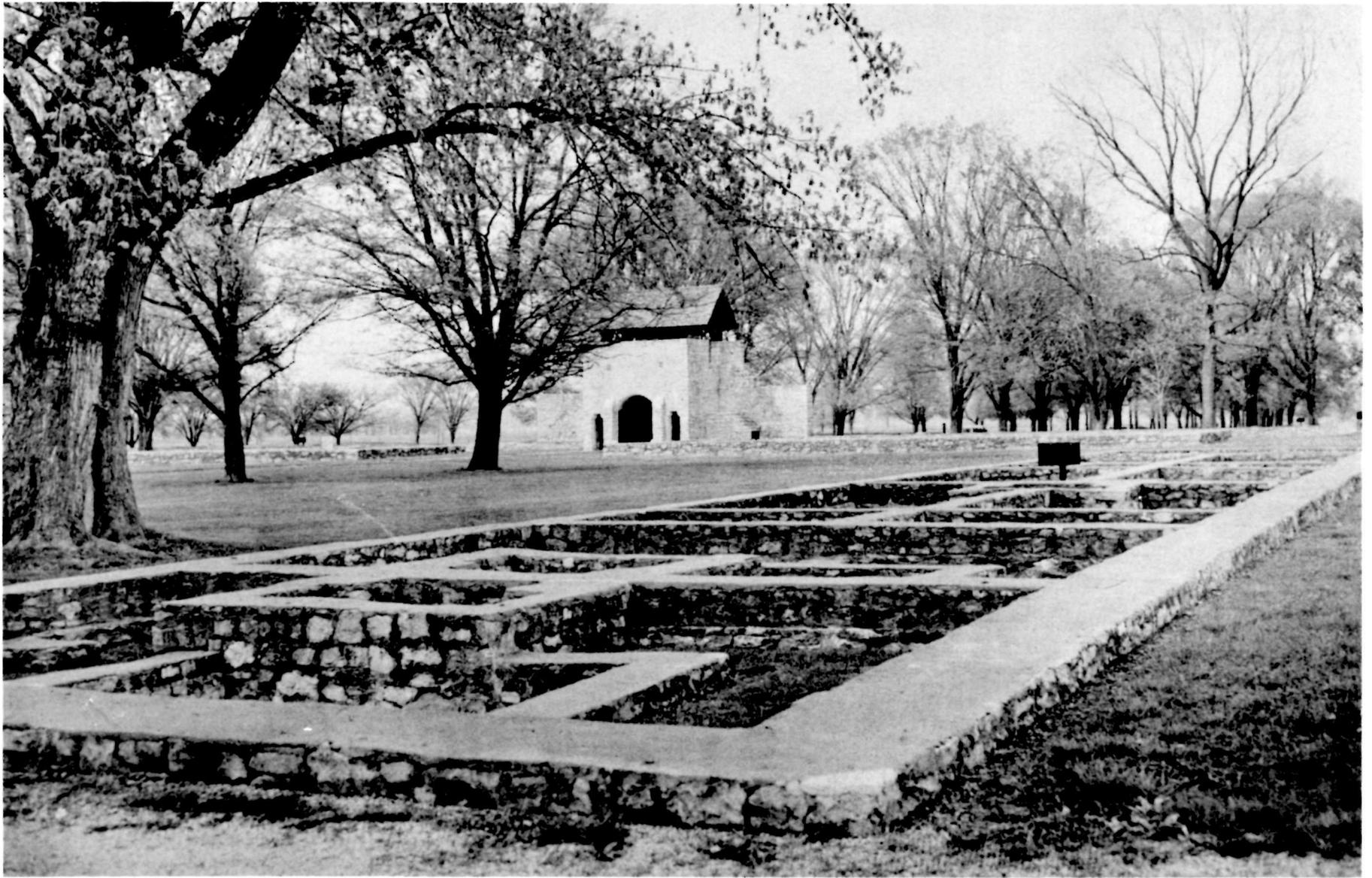
Among the significant remains in Ste. Genevieve are the Louis Balduc House (1785), the Jean Baptiste Valle House (1785), and the Green Tree Tavern (1790). Although these and others of Ste.

Genevieve's 18th century houses are of a period considerably later than the years of the major French exploration and settlement, their character is French Colonial and, as a group, they constitute an important survival of New France in the Mississippi Valley.

#### FORT DE CHARTRES, ILLINOIS

Fort de Chartres, near Prairie du Rocher, was in the eighteenth century the center of French civil and military government of the Illinois Country and was one of France's most imposing fortifications in North America. Although it never had to prove itself against attack, it stands as a remarkable survivor of the aspirations of Frenchmen in the Mississippi Valley. The present reconstructed fort is on the site of the third outpost on the Mississippi to bear the name de Chartres and is preserved as a state park. Construction of this third and last Fort de Chartres was begun in 1753 and completed three years later. The fort's massive stone walls, 18 feet high and more than two feet thick, enclosed two long barracks, guard house, officers quarters, powder magazine, kitchen and outbuildings, arranged around the parade ground about four acres in extent. The post could accommodate a garrison of 400 men but usually was manned by only half that number.

Despite the official end of French sovereignty in America in 1763, a French garrison occupied the fort until October 1765, when British troops moved in. The fort was renamed Cavendish and was the center of British administration of the Illinois Country until 1772 when it was finally evacuated and destroyed. The site was acquired



FORT DE CHARTRES, Illinois - Foundations of the Fort's original buildings as disclosed by archeological investigation. In the background is the reconstructed entry to the fort.

April 30, 1958

National Park Service photograph

by the State of Illinois in 1915 and much of the fort has been reconstructed. Reconstructed buildings include the magazine, guard house and chapel and gateway, but of more interest and importance are the extensive foundation remains exposed by archeological investigation. These present a vivid picture of the nature of the Fort when it housed a French garrison. A small museum, on the foundations of the fort's original storehouse, houses artifacts found in and around de Chartres. Standing in a fertile valley removed from modern encroachments, the lonely fort is an impressive symbol of the widespread holdings of France in North America and is a remarkable survivor of the period when Frenchmen dominated the heartland of America.

Site Documentation: C. W. Alvord, The Illinois Country, 1673-1818, vol. 1 of The Centennial History of Illinois (5 vols., Chicago, 1922); "Fort de Chartres State Park", State of Illinois, Division of Parks and Memorials, n. d.; Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, vol. V (8 vols., Boston, 1886-1889).

#### ALLEGHENY FRONTIER

##### FORT DUQUESNE

Control of the strategically important confluence of the Monongahela and the Allegheny Rivers where they meet to form the Ohio was a decisive element in the climactic struggle between England and France in North America. The first outpost on the site was begun by British colonials early in 1754, on a site chosen by Lieutenant Colonel George Washington. In April the unfinished fort was seized by a force of French and Indians. The French completed the post and

named it Fort Duquesne. Thus the site saw one of the first acts of hostility which led directly to the outbreak of the final American war between England and France.

Duquesne gave the French control of the Ohio River and was the keystone of their defense line on the western frontier of the Colonies. On his way to recover the fort, Washington, with a small force, surprised and defeated a French scouting party east of Duquesne, firing what are considered the opening shots in the Seven Years War, called traditionally in America "The French and Indian War." Fort Duquesne was also the objective of General Braddock's ill-fated campaign in 1755. In 1758 a British and Colonial force under General John Forbes hacked its way through the wilderness to find Duquesne destroyed and abandoned by the French. The fall of Fort Duquesne was of decisive significance in the decline of French power on the western frontier of the Colonies.

Fort Pitt was built by the British a few hundred yards from the site of Fort Duquesne and the two posts together constitute a site of special importance in the history not only of the struggle between France and England but of the opening of the American frontier beyond the Alleghenies. At one time the sites of Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt were virtually overwhelmed by commercial and industrial development. Happily this condition no longer exists, and the sites today are preserved in Pittsburgh's Point Park. The development of the fort site area is closely involved in Pittsburgh city planning and land improvement projects. The site of Fort Pitt has been well-established by archeological investigation. The site of the smaller

Fort Duquesne, nearer the confluence of the rivers, has not been fully identified but its approximate location with reference to the site of Fort Pitt has been established. One of the redoubts of Fort Pitt probably extended over Fort Duquesne. The buried remains of Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt appear to be adequately protected until full archeological investigation can be made.

Site Documentation: Part One of the Report of The Point Park Commission, Pittsburgh, December 31, 1943; (Mimeographed report including archeological report on excavation of sites of Fort Pitt and Fort Duquesne in 1942-43); G. Dallas Albert, The Frontier Forts of Western Pennsylvania, Vol. 2 of Report of the Commission to Locate the Site of the Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1916).

## LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY - GULF COAST REGION

### ARKANSAS POST

Arkansas Post situated near the mouth of the Arkansas River was the first settlement by white men in the lower Mississippi Valley and the later Louisiana Purchase. The first post was established by Henry de Tonty, lieutenant of the famed explorer, Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, in 1686.

Establishment of the first Arkansas Post followed shortly after the exploration of the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico by La Salle in 1682. La Salle immediately claimed all of the vast stretch of the Mississippi Valley for France, and enthusiastic over his new province returned to France to secure more funds and colonists for settlements. His return voyage was beset with troubles and disasters almost from the start. For some reason, probably an error, La Salle did not enter the mouth of the Mississippi but landed in Texas. In the meantime de Tonty had descended the Mississippi for the purpose of meeting his chief. Failing to find La Salle, he returned northward to the Illinois Country. At the mouth of the Arkansas de Tonty left several of his men, at their request, to remain and build a camp. The Quapaw Indians who lived on the lower Arkansas were friendly, and the strategic position here for a trading post made the location particularly inviting.

The first post was small and functioned mainly as a trading post. De Tonty himself described it in 1693 as "a house surrounded with stakes." Information about the first post is meagre, and there is some doubt that the post was continuously

occupied, but with the beginning of John Law's colony about 1720, there was continuous occupation, although the post itself appears to have changed locations several times. The importance of these early settlements on the Arkansas may be summed up as:

1. The first white settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley.

2. A leading center for Indian trade and for establishing French influence in the Arkansas drainage area.

3. An intermediate point as a stopping place for travelers between New Orleans and the Illinois Country and for exploring and trading parties going up the Arkansas.

4. A base for expansion of French trade with New Mexico.

5. A bond to strengthen the alliance with the Quapaw and as an outpost against the hostile Osage and other unfriendly tribes on the northwest border of Louisiana.

6. The later post occupied by the French, Spanish, and Americans, and which in turn became the territorial capital of Arkansas Territory.

7. A stronghold, Fort Hindman, during the Civil War.

The site of the last Arkansas Post is preserved as Arkansas Post State Park.

Unfortunately, the exact location of de Tonty's post and some of the other sites cannot be ascertained with certainty. Although historical and archeological evidence lead one to believe that de Tonty's post was in the vicinity of Menard Mounds, the site

of a Quapaw village, no physical evidence of the post has been found. Evidence of 18th century structures, believed to be of French and Spanish origin at Arkansas Post State Park have been uncovered.

Site Documentation: Ray Mattison, "Report on the Historical Investigations of Arkansas Post, Arkansas," (Mimeographed Ms. National Park Service, 1957); Preston Holder, "Archeological Field Research on the Problem of the Locations of Arkansas Post, Arkansas, 1686-1804," (Mimeographed Ms. National Park Service; 1957); James A. Ford and Robert S. Neitzel, "Excavations at the Menard Site, Arkansas County, Arkansas," (Investigation by the American Museum of Natural History for the National Park Service, Ms. National Park Service, 1956).

FORT DE LA BOULAYE (MISSISSIPPI FORT), near PHOENIX, LOUISIANA

Less than a year after the French founded their initial Gulf Coast settlement on Ship Island, Anglo-Spanish aggressiveness forced them to take physical possession of the mouth of the Mississippi River. Accordingly, in February 1700, Iberville landed a party of soldiers on a low ridge along the east bank of the river, some 18 leagues above its mouth at the "east pass". There they constructed a wooden block-house, 28 feet square, in which they mounted six cannon. By 1707, the Indian threat had forced the official abandonment of the tiny post, but Louis Juchereau de St. Denis remained there alone for several years working with remarkable success to keep the Indians from the warpath. When St. Denis finally left the fort is not definitely established.

No physical traces of the fort remain above ground, and for many years it was a "lost site". In the early 1930's, four New Orleans amateur historians began a three-year search for the fort site, which ended in 1935 with virtually certain identification. Besides the geographical evidence, the site yielded several hand-hewn cypress logs and a small cannon ball.

The site, now nearly a mile east of the Mississippi River, is a low ridge surrounded by reclaimed swamp land. The ridge is only a few feet above the surrounding land. It is covered by a thick growth of trees and brush and the site is bisected by a canal. Dredging operations in 1923 disclosed the hand-hewn logs, though their significance was not realized for some years. The cannon ball was found early in 1936, after the site had been tentatively

identified.

A state historical marker has been erected on the site, but access is so difficult that there are fewer than 100 visitors a year.

Site Documentation: Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion (3 vols., Jackson, 1927-32); Charles Gayarre, History of Louisiana (4 vols., New Orleans, 1903); Maurice Ries, "The Mississippi Fort, Called Fort de la Boulaye", Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (October, 1936).

FORT ST. JEAN BAPTISTE DE NATCHITOCHEs, NATCHITOCHEs, LOUISIANA

In 1715, beside what was then the main channel of the Red River in western Louisiana, was begun the first fortified outpost on a frontier which remained important for 130 years. Fort St. Jean de Baptiste, though not completed for 17 years, held the western flank of French Louisiana against the threat of New Spain. Nor was it merely a passive defense. In 1719 the French commandant, Philippe Blondel, led the garrison out to take and loot the Spanish mission at Los Adaes, 15 miles away. In self-defense, the Spaniards soon fortified their own position. Command of Fort St. Jean in 1722 was given to the magnificent soldier, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, who held it until his death in 1744. Under St. Denis, the fort met its supreme test in 1731 when the Natchez Indians, fresh from the slaughter of the Fort Rosalie garrison and subsequent defeat at the hands of Bienville's force, swept down to the attack. After repulsing all the Indian forays, the French garrison counter-attacked and virtually wiped out the Indian attackers. Six years later, because of recurrent inundation by the river, the fort was abandoned and a successor

built on high ground in what is now the American Cemetery.

Restoration of Colonial Natchitoches, Inc., formed recently by interested local persons, has acquired about half of the fort site and some additional land to be used for parking facilities, and has had a bill introduced into the current session of the Louisiana legislature to develop the site as a State Park. The group is interested in a reconstruction of the original fort.

The portion of the fort site owned by the restoration group is a vacant lot, while the remaining portion (about one-half of the site) is occupied by a private dwelling. No evidence of the fort remains above ground, and no archeological investigation has yet been made.

Site Documentation: Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, trans. and ed., Fleur de Lys and Calumet, Being the Penicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, c. 1953); Milton Dunn, "History of Natchitoches", Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. III No. 1 (January, 1920).

URSULINE CONVENT (THE ARCHBISHOPRIC), NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

In October, 1727, shortly after the founding of New Orleans, a group of Ursuline nuns arrived from France to establish a convent which would "relieve the poor sick and provide at the same time for the education of young girls". Their first convent building, completed in 1734, was poorly constructed and within 10 years was near collapse. The present building, begun in 1748, was completed four years later. Abandoned by the Ursulines in 1824, the old building was presented by them to the Bishop of New Orleans. After two decades

of occupancy by the Bishop, part of the old building was demolished to permit construction of St. Mary's Catholic Church in 1848. The bishop moved his residence from the building in 1899, but the old convent building continued to be used as offices for the Archdiocese and as a seminary for priests. The building was extensively remodeled in 1924.

Despite the alterations which have been made in the past 200 years, the Ursuline Convent remains, in the words of the distinguished architect, Samuel Wilson, Jr., "undoubtedly one of the most important historical and religious monuments in the United States". Besides its architectural significance as a Louis XV public building, it is historically important as one of the few remaining physical links with the beginnings of the great capital of French Louisiana.

No attempt at restoration of the building has been made, and the priests who occupy it have no revenue to undertake such a project. The building appears to be sound structurally, but the interior is in need of repair.

Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion (3 vols., Jackson, 1927-32); Henry C. Semple, The Ursulines in New Orleans and Our Lady of Prompt Succor: A Record of Two Centuries, 1725-1925 (New York, 1925); Samuel Wilson, Jr., "An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital and the Ursuline Convent of New Orleans", Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXIX, No. 3 (July, 1946).



URSULINE CONVENT, New Orleans - General view of northwest facade, looking east. In left background is St. Mary's Church, built in 1848.

May 12, 1958

National Park Service photograph

FORT ROSALIE (PANMURE), NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

Three years after the establishment of a French trading post at Natchez in 1713, Indian depredations caused Bienville to force the Natchez tribe to agree to the construction of a fort at that point. Fort Rosalie was accordingly established in June, 1716. It was a palisaded structure, 25 by 15 fathoms, without bastions, containing a guardhouse, barracks, commanding officer's quarters, and powder magazine. The wooden fort soon fell into ruins, and plans were projected to rebuild it in brick. Before the project could be carried out, however, came the Natchez Massacre of November 28, 1729, in which some 235 men, women and children were slain and 200 taken prisoner. The Indians had destroyed the fort and most of the houses of the settlement, and a provisional fort was built in 1730. Plans for the brick fort were drawn up and submitted to Paris, but it apparently was never built. When the British took over under the provisions of the Treaty of Paris of 1763, they found the second fort also in a ruinous state. They repaired it and renamed it Fort Panmure. British garrisons occupied the fort from 1766 to 1768 and from 1778 to 1783. Seizure of the fort and town by an American raiding force under James Willing in 1777 led to the second British occupation, but even then it was not in sufficient strength. From 1783 to 1798, the fort was occupied by Spain, after which it came under American control by the terms of the Treaty of San Lorenzo. Establishment of Fort Adams, nearer the new American-Spanish border, led to the abandonment of the fort at Natchez within a short time.

In 1820, Peter Little built the present Rosalie Mansion on

a part of the fort tract. During the ensuing 110 years, the house remained in private ownership, being acquired by the Mississippi Society of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, in 1930.

The site of the fort itself cannot be determined definitely on the basis of present knowledge. The general location is known, however, and additional documentary and archeological research probably would disclose the site. In 1940, Jefferson Davis Dixon built a non-authentic "replica" on the traditional site behind the mansion; the buildings still stand, though abandoned. It is quite probable that the fort site is at least partly obliterated by erosion.

Site Documentation: Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion (3 vols., Jackson, 1927-32); Dawson A. Phelps and Jesse D. Jennings, "A Preliminary Study of the Natchez Trace . . . and Historical and Archeological Sites in and near Natchez, Mississippi" (Ms. Report, National Park Service, 1943); Pearl V. Guyton, The Story of Rosalie (Jackson, 1941).

#### ACKIA BATTLEGROUND NATIONAL MONUMENT, near TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

In Colonial Louisiana the most direct challenge to French authority was from the Chickasaw Indians with whom English traders had established a lucrative trade. The English in South Carolina did not intend to let their rich trade monopoly fall to the French and they worked diligently to maintain enmity between the Chickasaws and their new neighbors, the French. The Chickasaws received not only firearms from their English "allies" but learned, too, the art of fortification

from them.

To counter English support of the Chickasaws the French incited the Choctaws to war on the Chickasaws. In 1736, Bienville, leader of French Louisiana, embarked on an expedition to destroy the Chickasaws or, at least, drive them from their homes. Leaving Mobile, Bienville's forces ascended the Tombigbee River and on May 25 closed in on the Chickasaw villages near the present Tupelo, Mississippi. Next day he attacked the village of Ackia, was repulsed with heavy loss and withdrew to Mobile and New Orleans. The defeat was a serious blow to French prestige but Bienville's efforts to subjugate the Chickasaws were strongly implemented by the support of the Choctaws. The serious Chickasaw threat was finally minimized if not entirely eliminated.

Ackia Battleground National Monument preserves the site of a Chickasaw village and contains a memorial commemorating the battle in which the French suffered one of their most costly defeats at the hands of the Chickasaws.

FORT LOUIS DE LA MOBILE, near MOUNT VERNON, ALABAMA

Second capital of French Louisiana, Fort Louis was established by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, in 1702. Through nine years of floods, near-starvation and recurrent epidemics, the fort was the heart of the French empire in the lower Mississippi Valley and along the Gulf Coast. Among its residents was La Salle's famous lieutenant, Henri de Tonty, who died in a yellow fever outbreak in 1704 and lies in an unmarked grave near the fort site. In 1711, the fort was abandoned in favor of another site downstream near the site of the present Mobile.

The fort tract, marked by a monument erected in 1902 by the people of Mobile, lies in the midst of the 600-acre tract of Courtaulds (Alabama), Inc. The Alabama Power Company, from which Courtaulds obtained the land, retained title to the small tract surrounding the monument. The site is well-kept and attractively located on a high bluff overlooking the river. Until recent years, the site was occupied by several residences, and evidence of recent occupation can be seen in the form of scattered fragments of brick and other building materials. No archeological excavation has been carried out at the fort site.

Site Documentation: Peter J. Hamilton, Colonial Mobile (Boston, 1910); Grace King, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville (New York, 1892); Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America (8 vols., Boston, 1884-89).

FORT TOULOUSE (FORT JACKSON), 4 miles south of WETUMIKA, ALABAMA

From its construction in 1717 until the end of the French and Indian War, Fort Toulouse was the offensive-defensive eastern outpost of French Louisiana. Situated just below the southern tip of the Appalachian highland, at the junction of the two main tributaries of the Alabama River, the fort protected the French settlements from Mobile Bay westward to New Orleans. At the same time, it formed the spearhead of the French drive to wrest control of the southeastern quarter of North America from the Spaniards and Englishmen. The struggle for this strategic outpost was decided, not in its environs, but on far distant battlefields.

In 1814, Andrew Jackson occupied the abandoned site after defeating the Creek Indians at Horseshoe Bend. The fort, recon-

structed and named Fort Jackson, was the scene of the treaty which officially ended the Creek War.

The two rivers, following parallel courses for some distance above their junction, form a narrow peninsula a mile long and only a few hundred yards wide. A privately-owned tract extending upstream from the junction contains the site of an ancient Indian village; one large mound is discernible, and the ground is liberally sprinkled with sherds. East of this tract is the 6-acre fort tract, owned by the State. Adjoining the fort tract on the south and east is private property which contains the Isaac Ross Cemetery, dating at least from the War of 1812. In 1897, some 200 bodies were removed to the National Cemetery in Mobile, as being from Jackson's army. Dr. Peter A. Brannon, director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, believes that some of the bodies were French. The fort tract contains two monuments and the remains of what appears to be a powder magazine. Some years ago, an amateur archeological project was carried out at the Indian site, but not on the State-owned fort tract.

Site Documentation: Verner W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732 (Durham, 1928); Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion (3 vols., Jackson, 1927-32); Daniel H. Thomas, "Fort Toulouse and Its Subsequent History", Ms. Master of Arts thesis, University of Alabama, 1929.

FORT CAROLINE NATIONAL MEMORIAL, near JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Fort Caroline National Memorial commemorates the French Colony of 1564-65 on the St. Johns River of Florida, and marks the second effort by French Huguenots to settle within the limits of the

present United States. The colony was established under the patronage of Gaspard de Coligny, the Admiral of France. Coligny hoped to find a refuge for his fellow Protestants and at the same time unite France in a common cause against the traditional Spanish enemy. The Spaniards reacted quickly to this threat to Florida, and a fleet arriving from Spain scattered the French ships anchored in the mouth of the St. Johns River. The French regrouped and left Fort Caroline to attack the Spanish. A storm blew up, driving the French fleet to shore far to the south. Realizing that Fort Caroline was lightly defended, the Spanish attacked at dawn and within an hour had captured the fort and killed or made prisoner its occupants.

Fort Caroline was renamed San Mateo by the Spanish. On April 14, 1568, Frenchmen thirsting for vengeance, burned San Mateo, and, aided by Indians, slaughtered most of the Spanish garrison.

The site of Fort Caroline no longer exists, having been washed away after the channel of St. Johns River was deepened in the years following 1880. However, the National Memorial preserves the story of the Frenchmen who dared to plant a colony on the edge of an unknown world in defiance of a powerful enemy.

#### SOUTHWEST

#### FORT ST. LOUIS, TEXAS

Fort St. Louis was founded in 1685 by the French explorer La Salle, who, at the head of some 400 soldiers and colonists, had sailed to the Gulf of Mexico, planning a colony near the mouth of the Mississippi. The expedition missed the river's mouth and landed far to the west in Texas. The settlement of Fort St. Louis was a failure

from the beginning. Hunger and Indian attacks disheartened the colonists. La Salle started north, hoping to reach Canada, and was murdered by his mutinous followers. A short time later Fort St. Louis was destroyed and most of the remaining settlers were massacred by the Indians.

Fort St. Louis is an outstanding site. Not only was it the first French settlement near the Gulf Coast, but it was also the cause for renewed Spanish interest in Texas. That interest led to several exploring expeditions, as well as to the establishment of Spanish missions in eastern Texas during the period 1686-1691, and later of other settlements. For two or three years after the destruction of Fort St. Louis the site was visited and temporarily occupied by the Spaniards as a base of operations in the interior of Texas. In 1722 it became the scene of what was intended to be a permanent Spanish settlement, but four years later it was abandoned.

Professor Herbert E. Bolton's conclusion that Fort St. Louis was located in southeastern Texas, about 10 miles east of Placedo, upon the western bank of the Garcitas River, has been generally accepted by historians, and substantially confirmed by recent archeological exploration. The site is on private ranch property and is marked on the surface only by traces of ancient walls constructed of adobe-like bricks.

Site Documentation: Herbert E. Bolton, "The Location of La Salle's Colony on the Gulf of Mexico", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, II (September, 1915); Memorandum to the Director, National Park Service, from Regional Archeologist, Region Three; dated May 7, 1951. Subject: Historical Excavations at Fort St. Louis, Texas.

Memorandum quotes statement by Glen L. Evans, Texas Memorial Museum.  
"Special Report Covering Fort St. Louis", submitted by the Branch  
of Historic Sites, Region III, National Park Service, June, 1939.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

The exact location, the full story, or the extent of existing remains of a number of French sites are not known, and additional study, both documentary and archeological, should be made of these by competent public or private agencies.

In the South, important sites particularly in need of more thorough investigation include Charlesfort, Parris Island, South Carolina; Fort de Maurepas, Mississippi; Fort Prudhomme, Tennessee, and the French settlement on Ship Island, Mississippi.

A number of French mission sites in New York need further investigation before an informed assessment of their value can be made. Archeological exploration particularly is indicated. French sites in Maine and Vermont also should be given more thorough study, comparable to the work which has been done on many of their counterparts in the Northwest and upper Mississippi Valley. Of particular interest is the Chimney Point settlement in Vermont, noted on page 45 in the description of Fort St. Frederic, New York. There are a number of French sites in New York and New England whose locations are generally known but, lacking adequate archeological confirmation, it is difficult to evaluate their relative significance and to choose from among them the most notable historical remains. From a preliminary examination, the most promising sites thus far noted are Fort Pentagoet, Castine, Maine; Norridgewock (Old Point), Maine; Gandagaro (Boughton Hill) near Victor, New York, and Indian Hill, Pompey, New York. These sites are described briefly in the Appendix.

## APPENDIX

### OTHER SITES CONSIDERED IN THE SURVEY

Among the many sites noted in the course of the study of French exploration and settlement, a number were considered to have more than purely local interest, although their importance was not such as to justify their inclusion in the listing of outstanding historical remains. Sites of secondary importance noted in the Survey include the following, listed alphabetically by states.

#### ALABAMA

Dauphin Island: In the Gulf of Mexico at the entrance to Mobile Bay; discovered by d'Iberville in 1699 and used as the main port of the Mobile settlement from 1702 to 1720.

Fort Conde: Mobile; site of the successor to Fort Louis de la Mobile; erected in 1711 and important French post until 1763.

Fort Tombechbe: Built in 1736 on Tombigbee River, as base of French operations against Chickasaws.

#### ARKANSAS

John Law Colony: Colony of foreign settlers enlisted by Law to migrate to French Louisiana early in 18th century. Settlement around Arkansas Post failed with bursting of the "Mississippi Bubble".

Quapaw Indian Village: Village in Phillips County, visited by Marquette and Joliet in voyage down Mississippi, 1673.

#### ILLINOIS

Fort Massac: French fort on Ohio River during last American war between England and France, occupied 1757-64; later used by American forces, 1794-1814.

Pere Marquette State Park: Site of Marquette's and Joliet's first landing in Illinois, 1673.

#### INDIANA

Fort Miami: Fort Wayne; built by French around 1749, replacing an earlier post of the same name. Some importance in British regime in west, and Pontiac Uprising of 1763-64.

Fort Ouiatanon: Fort on Wabash River near present Lafayette; transfer point on fur route from Fort Wayne (Post Miami) to Vincennes and Kaskaskia; abandoned in 1791.

Vincennes, Indiana: Important French settlement in 18th century; original character lost and most surviving historic sites and buildings relate to American frontier period.

#### LOUISIANA

The Cabildo: New Orleans; scene of transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France and subsequently from France to the United States; inventoried under Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement.

Fort St. Philip: Mississippi River defense below New Orleans, built in 1746; more important as Confederate fort in defense of New Orleans in 1862.

Jackson Square (Place d'Armes): Important as original center of French New Orleans; but, as the site of the first raising of the American flag in the Louisiana Purchase, will be inventoried in Theme XI, Advance of the Frontier.

Longfellow-Evangeline State Park: Memorial park commemorating story of alleged real-life heroine who inspired Longfellow's Evangeline, poem about expulsion of French Acadians and their wanderings to Louisiana.

Napoleon House: Building claimed to have been offered as refuge for the exiled Emperor Napoleon I. This romantic legend has been disproved as house was built after Napoleon's death. Located in New Orleans.

Old Absinthe House: In New Orleans' French Quarter, erected sometime after 1806.

Sang Pour Sang: Scene of battle in which French and Indian allies annihilated party of Natchez Indians.

Vieux Carre: The Old French Quarter of New Orleans; architecturally noteworthy as mixture of French and Spanish influence peculiar to New Orleans rather than purely French Colonial.

#### MAINE

Fort Pentagoet: Castine; important French outpost during most of 17th and part of 18th century. Some foundation traces remain but much of site has eroded.

Norridgewock (Old Point): Site of principal village of Abenaki Indians and French mission under Father Sebastian Rale; a focus of resistance to English advance in Maine. Site has much potential value and should

receive additional study as area to interpret a neglected phase of English-French conflict for North America.

#### MICHIGAN

Fort Miami: St. Joseph; outpost built by La Salle in 1679, and used later as starting point for his expedition to mouth of the Mississippi in 1682. Second fort built in 1700 and razed in Indian uprising of 1763.

Fort St. Joseph: Near Niles; one of earliest centers of French operations in the Great Lakes region; garrisoned by French ca. 1700-1760.

Sault Ste. Marie: Site of French mission post and center of first permanent white settlement in Michigan. Scene of ceremony in 1671 by which St. Luson claimed for France possession of a large part of North America, including lands discovered and undiscovered.

#### MINNESOTA

Fort Beauharnois: French outpost and Jesuit mission erected in 1727 on Lake Pepin, to protect line of communication between Lake Superior and the west. Occupied only a short time.

#### MISSISSIPPI

Davion's Bluff: French mission conducted by Father Anthony Davion in 1698.

Fort Louis: Biloxi; headquarters of French Louisiana colony for period 1721 to 1723.

Old French Fort (Krebs Fort): Pascagoula; fort resembling common dwelling, built in 1718 to guard Pascagoula Bay.

Natchez: Early French settlement on the Mississippi River (1716), destroyed by Natchez Indians in 1729; reestablished under English after 1763. The present town reflects the early American rather than the French period.

#### NEW YORK

Caughnawaga: Fonda; Mohawk village site; location of Jesuit Mission for about 10 years. Site has been competently excavated and is good interpretation of an Iroquois village of the historical period.

Fort La Presentation: Ogdensburg; French fort and mission to Iroquois, erected 1749. Held by British 1760-1796.

**Gandagaro: Victor;** site of battle between Denonville's French forces and Seneca Indians, in 1687; French mission site.

**Indian Hill Memorial:** Pompey; site of French mission to Iroquois, near site of the "capital" of the Iroquois Confederacy in the mid-17th century.

**Shrine of the Martyrs:** Auriesville; site of Mohawk town where Jesuit Father Isaac Jogues was murdered by Indians in 1646. Father Jogues' story has some interest as a memorable example of the sufferings endured by missionaries to the Iroquois.

**St. Marie de Ganentaha:** Syracuse; reconstruction of doubtful authenticity of a French mission, on or near site of mission to Iroquois in 1656-58.

#### PENNSYLVANIA

**Fort Le Boeuf:** One of the French forts planted in Pennsylvania to block spread of English colonies toward the Ohio Country. Scene of Washington's visit in 1753, and evidence of the French intention to hold the Ohio Country, which resulted in outbreak of the last "French and Indian War." Held by French, 1753-59.

**Fort Presque Isle:** Erie; fort built by French in 1753 on shore of Lake Erie; served as base for extension of line of forts in western Pennsylvania; taken by English in 1760.

#### TENNESSEE

**Fort Assumption:** Memphis; fort built in 1739 as base of operations against the Chickasaws.

**Fort Prudhomme:** On east bank of Mississippi, north of Memphis; post established by La Salle on voyage to mouth of Mississippi, 1682.

#### VERMONT

**Chimney Point:** French outpost on Lake Champlain, occupied in 1731 when Fort St. Frederic was built on opposite shore. Site needs further study, including archeological investigation.

**Fort Sainte Anne:** Isle La Motte; first French settlement in Vermont, 1666; one of chain of forts designed to defend Canada against Mohawks. Isle La Motte probably was discovered by Champlain in 1609.

#### WISCONSIN

**Boix-Brule-St. Croix Portage:** portage on route from Lake Superior to Mississippi River; probable site of supply base built by Dulhut in 1683.

Chequamegon Bay: Lake Superior's southwest shore; site of early dwellings by white men in Wisconsin Country; location of mission and forts in 17th and 18th centuries.

Prairie du Chien: Near site where Joliet and Marquette entered Mississippi River for the memorable voyage of exploration in 1673. Later French settlement and site of Fort St. Nicholas. Town is more important for role in themes of westward expansion.

Roi-Portier-Tank Cottage: Green Bay; oldest house in Wisconsin, part of building dates from 1780, reflecting architecture common to French fur trade centers in the Northwest. House is not on original site.

#### ST. CROIX, VIRGIN ISLANDS

Salt River Bay Site: Contains ruins of Fort Sale, built during French occupation of 1650-95. On east side of bay, opposite fort site, was located the residence of the French governor.

