**SAMUEL CHAMPLAIN BIOGRAPHY**

Samuel de Champlain (ca. 1570-1635) was a French geographer and explorer whose mission was to establish a joint French and Native American agricultural and fur-trading colony. In 21 voyages to New France he planted the foundations for modern Canada

Samuel de Champlain was born at Brouage, a small seaport town in France. He was probably born a Protestant, but sometime before 1603 he embraced the Roman Catholic faith. He had served against the Catholic League in the army of Henry IV until 1598. By 1601 he was following his love of travel and the sea and extending his expertise in navigation.

**Early Travels**

Champlain spent time during 1601-1603 on voyages as far as the West Indies, working for Spain. In 1603 he went, probably as an observer, with François Gravé du Pont, whom King Henry IV of France was sending on an expedition to the St. Lawrence.

Gravé du Pont's ships arrived at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, some 120 miles below Quebec, on May 26, 1603. Champlain and Gravé du Pont reached Montreal that summer; by questioning natives through an interpreter, Champlain made astonishingly accurate guesses about the network of the Great Lakes, including Niagara Falls. Both men were back in France by the end of September.

Champlain, however, had acquired some interest and curiosity about Acadia (the area of Newfoundland and around the St. Lawrence), where he hoped to find mines and perhaps a more effective route into the interior.

Champlain began a new expedition in May 1604. The expedition made landfall at what is now the southeast coast of Nova Scotia. Champlain was asked to choose a temporary base for settlement. The winter was a bad one, the cold being exceptionally severe, and the island became surrounded by treacherous half-broken ice flows, making it more a prison than a place of safety. Scurvy was prevalent, but Champlain, was healthy enough to have escaped it.

In the summer of 1605 Champlain explored the American coast as far south as Cape Cod. Although one or two English explorers had preceded Champlain on this coast, he made such precise and excellent charts of it that he really deserves the title of the first cartographer of the New England coast. The winter of 1605 was spent comparatively easily in a fort protected from the savagely cold northwest winds. In 1606, new arrivals turned up, with whom Champlain again explored southward along the American coast, this time as far as Martha's Vineyard.

The winter of 1606 was mild and easy, for the new arrivals had brought supplies and wine. In May 1607 the whole colony returned to France, stopping en route to explore the eastern end of Nova Scotia.

In 1608 Champlain received his first official position. Up to now all his work had been as observer or geographer on an informal basis. Now he was put in charge. This new expedition went once more to the St. Lawrence. Arriving in the St. Lawrence in June, they began the construction of a fort at the site of what is now Quebec. In the summer of 1609 Champlain cemented an alliance between the French and the Hurons by an expedition against the Iroquois Indians. This alliance dated from about 1603; if the French wanted furs, they had to support the Native Americans who supplied the furs, or at least controlled access to them. Thus they were compelled to support the Hurons against their enemies.

Champlain was back in France over the winter 1609, making a reports to the king. The story of Champlain's relations with a number of French financial investors is long and complicated. There were a variety of them and a good deal of quarreling between various groups seeking to get control of the fur trade. Champlain had less interest in money than in exploration and in the development of a colony. With immense patience and persistence, he traveled back and forth across the Atlantic for the next 2 decades. All totaled, he made some 21 voyages across the Atlantic.

**Travel to the Interior**

In 1615 Champlain made his boldest and most spectacular venture into the interior of Canada. Bound by promises to the Hurons to help them against the Iroquois and driven by his own considerable curiosity, he began his epic voyage to the Huron country with two Frenchmen and Native American canoeists. He left Montreal in July 1615. Traveling the river, he reached the northeastern corner of Lake Huron. He was probably the first white man to see it.

They met with the Huron raiding party at a village and canoed down to Lake Ontario, to the Iroquois village, not far from present-day Syracuse. Huron lack of discipline made a coordinated assault on the Iroquois fort impossible. Champlain was wounded in the knee by an Iroquois arrow, and with support failing, the raiders had to return home. Champlain, unable to walk, was at times carried like a baby on the back of a Huron.

Champlain was obliged to winter in the disagreeable habitat of a Huron village but continued his habit of travel and exploration, visiting other tribes that were neighbors of the Hurons. In addition, and perhaps more important, he provided a detailed and informed account of the Native American ways of living, one of the earliest and best available. He returned to France in 1616.

In 1619 he wrote accounts of his voyages, which he illustrated with sketches and maps.

Champlain was a man of large ideas; his aim was to establish a joint French and Native American agricultural and fur-trading colony. He contemplated the Christianizing of Native Americans and their intermarriage with the French. He is, of all the explorers, the real founder of Canada, and he himself would have been pleased to be thought so. It was certainly what he set out to do.

**SAMUAL CHAMPLAIN**

1. When did Champlain live?

2.  Before working for France, Champlain actually worked for what country?

3.  Why was Champlain interested in Acadia?

4.  What talent did he have?

5.  What happened between the French, the Hurons, and the Iroquios indians?

6.  Why did Champlain feel the need to support the Hurons in a war against the Iroquios?

7.  Why didn't the French success in their attack of the Iroquios?

8. What were some of his goals for this area?