

THE FRENCH SET UP COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA. (1590-1763)

*How did France build and then lose
a vast empire in North America?*

CHAPTER 9



LaSalle's trip down the Mississippi in 1682 was the first contact between many Native Americans and Europeans. Here he visits the Natchez people.

Looking at Key Terms

- French and Indian War

Looking at Key Words

- **Jesuit:** a member of a special Catholic order
- **coureurs de bois:** French fur traders
- **habitant:** a small farmer in New France
- **ally:** a person or group of persons who joins with others for a common purpose

S T U D Y

Make a chart
listing each
French explorer
in one column
and the territories he explored
in the other.

H I N T

Jacques Cartier (kahr-TYAY) sailed to explore North America in 1533. The king of France had ordered him to find gold, riches, and a short sea route to Asia. Between 1533 and 1542, Cartier made several trips. However, he did not find a route to Asia. However, his voyages were not in vain. Cartier discovered the St. Lawrence River and claimed land for France in what is today Canada. He called this territory New France. New France would soon grow to be a huge French empire in North America.

1 France Claims Land in the Americas.

How did the French explore North America?

After Cartier failed to find gold, riches, and a route to Asia, France lost

French traders, like this one, traded weapons for furs. They traveled deep into North America.



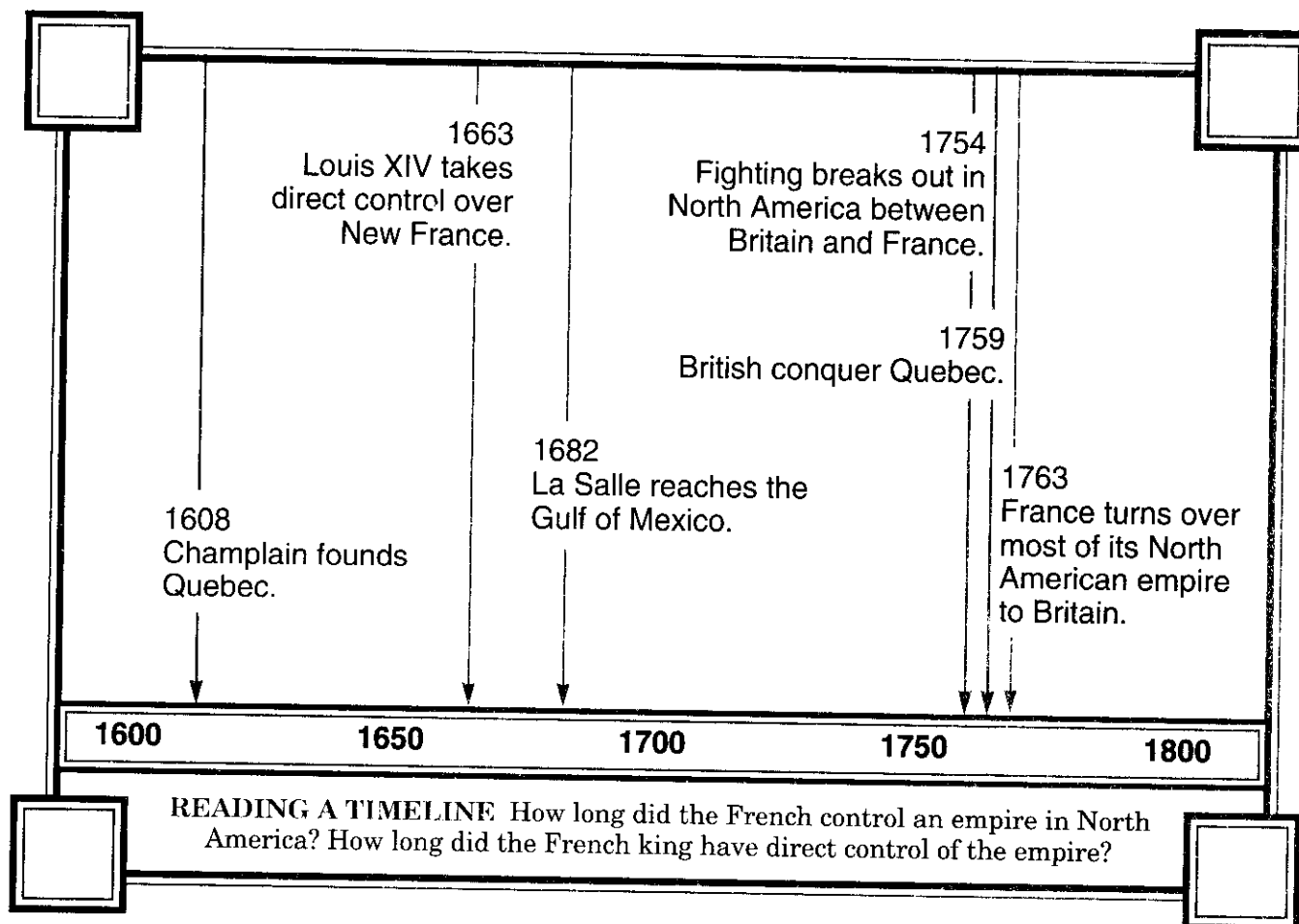
interest in North America for almost 50 years. Then, in the late 1500s and early 1600s, King Henry IV of France began to worry. England and other European nations were also exploring North America. The king of France wanted to protect his country's land claims in North America. He wanted more colonists to come to New France. He believed that only by settling the area would it remain French.

Henry IV made a deal with French merchants. He allowed them to trade for furs with Native Americans in New France. By doing this the merchants would be able to sell the furs in Europe for a huge profit. However, the French king said the merchants could take part in the fur trade only if they brought colonists to America. The merchants agreed and began forming French fur-trading companies.

First settlements Samuel de Champlain (sham-PLAYN), a geographer, worked for one such fur-trading company. In 1605, Champlain founded a trading post at Port Royal in Nova Scotia. It was the first permanent French settlement in North America.

In 1608, Champlain continued to explore the St. Lawrence River. At the point where the river narrowed, he had to stop. There he founded a fur trading fort called Quebec (kwih-BEHK). Quebec became the center of New France.

Champlain explored the territory around Quebec. He wanted to find Native Americans from whom he could buy furs. He met the Huron, a powerful Native American nation living near Quebec. Champlain made peace treaties with these people. The Huron sold their valuable furs to his company. As he traveled in Huron territory, Champlain studied the way of life of these Native Americans. Champlain described the Huron and their culture in his book *The Voyages*.



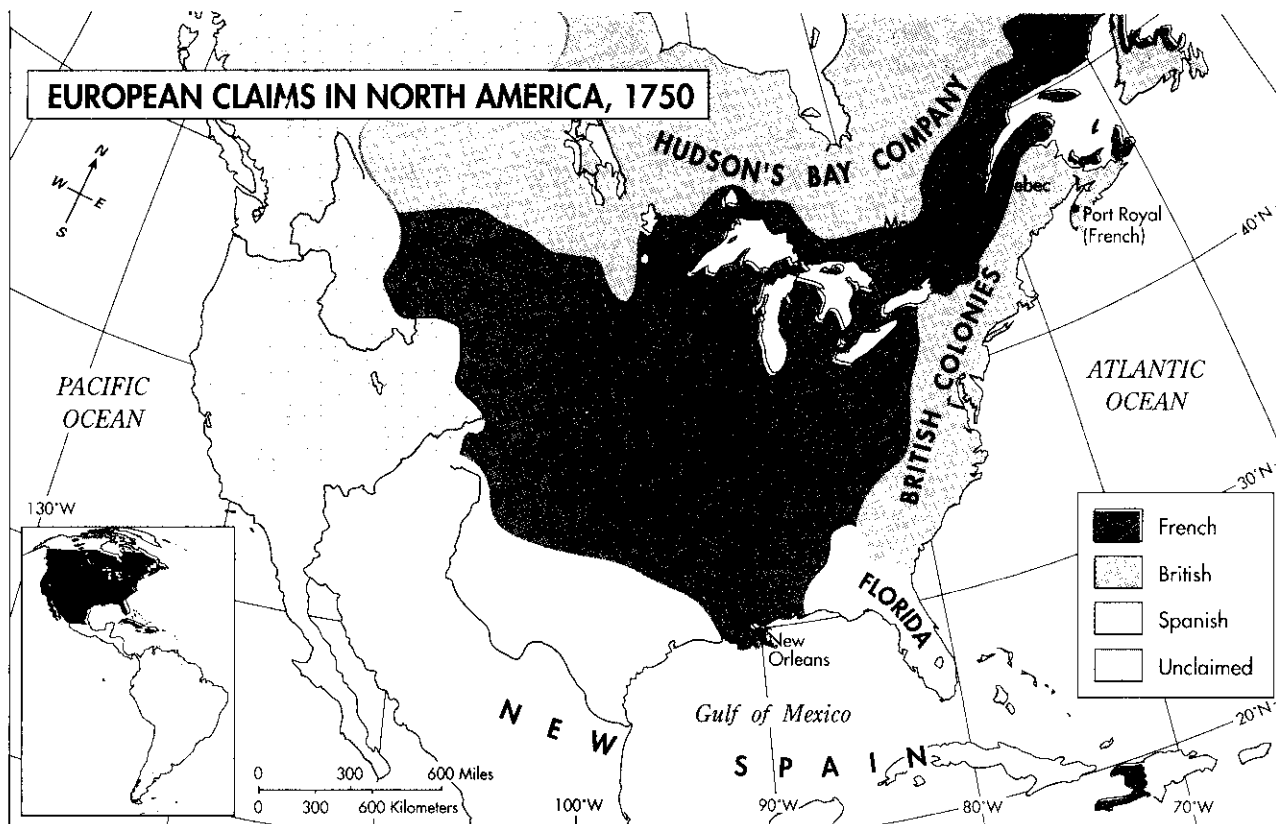
Champlain wanted to strengthen the friendship between the French and Huron nations. So he joined them in a battle against their enemies, the Iroquois (IHR-uh-kwoi). This began serious trouble for the French. The Iroquois nation was very powerful. They kept the French from expanding their settlements for many years.

Farther inland In 1663, King Louis XIV (Fourteenth) took direct control of settlements in New France. He sent troops to fight the Iroquois. The Catholic church also sent **Jesuit** (JEHZH-oo-iht) missionaries to New France. Jesuits were members of a special Catholic order. These missionaries tried to convert the Huron and other Native Americans. From the Native Americans, the missionaries learned of a large river to the west that might lead to the Pacific Ocean. The French hoped it was a sea route to Asia.

Louis Joliet (zhoh-lee-AY) and Father Jacques Marquette (mahr-KEHT) set off to find the large river. Joliet was an experienced fur trader. Father Marquette was a Jesuit priest. In 1673, they reached the river. They called it the Mississippi. At first, the river flowed west, but then it turned south. Joliet and Marquette traveled as far south as Arkansas. They turned back when they were sure that the Mississippi did not flow into the Pacific Ocean.

Marquette and Joliet brought back valuable information about the territory they explored. The French then built trading forts along the Mississippi. They also built forts near other rivers in the region.

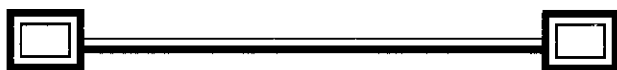
South to the Gulf of Mexico Another French explorer continued where Joliet and Marquette had stopped. Robert Cavalier de La Salle (lah SAHL), aided by Native American guides, traveled farther down the



Reading a Map. What country claimed most of what is today the southern United States? What country claimed the Mississippi River valley?

Mississippi River. In 1682, he reached the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle called this entire region Louisiana, after King Louis XIV, and claimed it for France.

In 1718, the French built a city near the Gulf. They named it New Orleans. It became a major French trading center. New Orleans grew into one of the largest cities in the Americas.



1. Why did the French king want more settlers to come to New France?
2. What river did the French follow to the Gulf of Mexico?

2 New France Depends on the Fur Trade.

Why was the fur trade more important than agriculture to New France?

A group of young French women came ashore in New France in the 1660s. In France, some had been homeless.

Others were from large families that could not afford to care for them. They were called the “king’s daughters” because King Louis XIV of France paid their fare across the Atlantic Ocean. They were met by crowds of men in New France. Within a few weeks, all the young women were married. The French king gave each couple a wedding present. They received a few farm animals, salted meat, and some money. Over the years, 1,000 of these young women came to New France.

Fur traders The king sponsored the “king’s daughters” project because he wanted to encourage settlement in New France. The first colonists in New France had been men. They hoped to make money in the fur trade. Almost everyone in New France had something to do with the fur trade.

French fur traders were called **coureurs de bois** (koo-ROOR duh BWAH). This means “runners of the for-

est.” The *coureurs de bois* traveled miles to trade with Native Americans. They used snowshoes and dog sleds to move furs through New France’s snowy forests. Each spring, when the ice in the rivers melted, the traders brought furs in canoes to the trading posts.

However, the fur trade did not increase New France’s population enough. By the 1660s, there were only 2,500 settlers in New France.

The French king tried many ways to increase New France’s population. Sending the “king’s daughters” to New France was one way. The French government also gave rewards to couples who had large families. It gave money to men who married by age 20 and to girls who married by age 16. Men who refused to marry were punished with heavy fines. By the 1680s, the French population of New France had reached 10,000.

Farming the land The government of New France also tried to get colonists to become farmers. The government divided the land along the St. Lawrence River into large pieces. These pieces were given to nobles or retired army officers. These large landowners got colonists to farm smaller pieces of land.

These farmers of smaller pieces of land were called **habitants** (HAHB-ih-tuhntz). Farming in New France was not easy. The cold climate made farming difficult. New France’s thick forests made it hard for habitants to clear the land. However, habitants raised farm animals and crops. These crops were sent to markets at trading posts.

The number of farmers slowly increased. However, their crops only supplied their families and the fur traders. The crops were not enough to send back to Europe. Therefore, the fur trade remained the colony’s main source of money.

Government in New France

There was much less self-government in New France than in the British colonies. The top-ranking official in New France was the governor, appointed by the king.

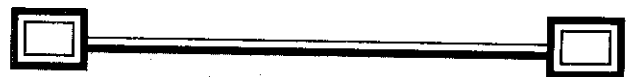
The Catholic church played an important role in governing New France. It was the only religion in the colony. The bishop of the church ranked just below the governor in New France. The church also owned huge amounts of land. Its priests and nuns ran hospitals and schools. Missionaries also tried to convert the Native Americans.

Relations with Native Americans

The French usually got along well with Native Americans. The French did not threaten the Native Americans’ way of life. *Coureurs de bois* lived among Native Americans and learned their languages. Some married Native American women.

The French also did not destroy the places where Native Americans hunted. Since fur-bearing animals lived in the forests, fur traders needed the forests. In New France, farms did not pay as well as the fur trade. So the French did not cut down much forest to make farms.

Another reason that the French got along with Native Americans was that the population of New France stayed small. New France had far fewer colonists than the British colonies did. By 1759, the population of New France was still only 80,000. There were more than 1 million colonists in the British colonies. Native Americans did not fear that the French would take their lands.



1. Why were furs important to New France?
2. List three reasons why Native Americans and the French got along.



Young George Washington led a mixed force of colonists and Native Americans in his invasion of the Ohio River valley during the French and Indian War. Here, before battle, he reads a prayer to the troops.

3 The British and the French Wage a War.

How did the British double the size of their territory in North America?

Great Britain and France were rivals. By the middle of the 1700s, they were the two most powerful nations in Europe. They fought each other in both Europe and North America. The name of the war in North America was called the **French and Indian War**. It began in 1754.

Taking sides The French found **allies** in their struggles against the British. An ally is a person or group of persons who joins with others for a common purpose. Many Native Americans worried about the thousands of farmers in the British colonies. Native Americans feared British colonists

would take their land. So the Native Americans sided with the French.

One important exception was the powerful Iroquois nation. The Iroquois did not forgive the French for joining the Huron in battles against them. In 1754, the British asked the Iroquois to side with them. At first, the Iroquois refused. They pointed out that the French and British were fighting over Iroquois land. However, later in the war, the Iroquois supported the British.

French successes The French goal in North America was to control the Ohio Valley. British fur traders had come to the region. The French intended to drive the British out.

The French had an important fort in the Ohio Valley. It was called Fort Duquesne (doo-KAYN). In 1754, a British force of 200 colonists marched into the

valley. They were led by a 22-year-old colonel, George Washington. The British force was attacked by about 800 French and 400 Native Americans. The British colonists were badly outnumbered. Many were killed or wounded. George Washington had no choice but to surrender. The French allowed Washington and his troops to return home.

The French won a bigger victory in 1755. A large British force led by General Edward Braddock marched toward Fort Duquesne. George Washington warned him that the French and Native Americans would hide behind trees and attack in the forest. But Braddock did not listen. He expected the French to fight out in the open because that was how armies fought in Europe.

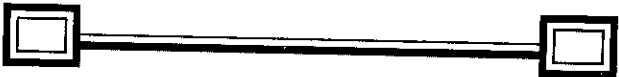
The French did exactly as Washington predicted. They destroyed Braddock's army. Braddock was killed in battle. Washington brought the survivors home. The French continued to win battles for the next two years.

British victory In 1756, the British king named William Pitt as head of Britain's government. Pitt

improved the army. The British began to win the war in North America. In 1759, the British conquered Quebec. Although there was fighting for another year, the British had won the war.

The British and French signed a peace treaty in 1763. The French gave up most of their North American territory. Spain, France's ally in the war, received French territory west of the Mississippi River. The British took all the territory between the 13 British colonies and the Mississippi. Only New Orleans remained out of British hands. This meant that British colonists could move westward.

The British also took control of Canada. However, large parts of what was once New France kept French traditions. French culture is still strong in those regions today.

- 
1. What was the French goal in the French and Indian War?
 2. What was the result of this war?

CHAPTER 9 KEY IDEAS

- The French claimed a large empire in North America. Their territory was north and west of the British colonies.
- The French colonists were mostly fur traders. They usually got along well with Native Americans.
- The British defeated the French in the French and Indian War and doubled their territory in North America.