

*When France  
Claimed Michigan,  
1608-1763*

Clarke Historical Library  
Central Michigan University





Map above published in 1719 by Guillaume Delisle, the royal geographer.

Cover illustration: *The Landing of Cadillac*. Watercolor by Leo Boistel (1905). Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection.



Introduction

# When France Claimed Michigan, 1608-1763

with an annotated bibliography

by

John Fierst

published in conjunction with an exhibit in the  
Clarke Historical Library

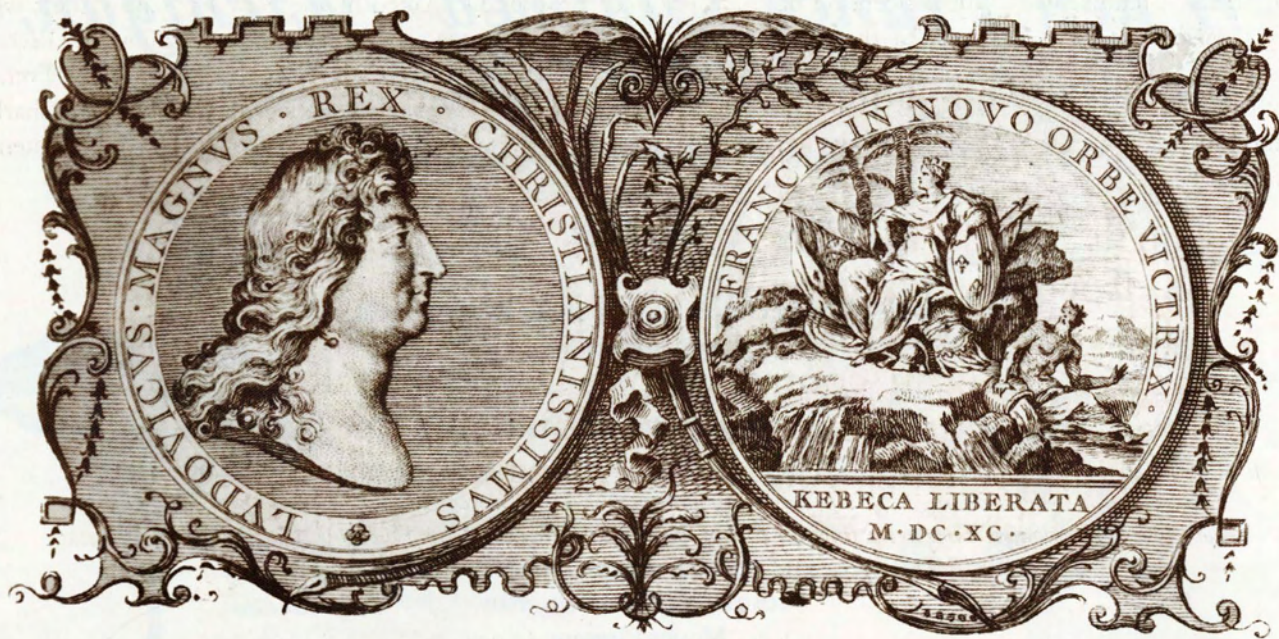
April 1 - July 25, 2008

Clarke Historical Library  
Central Michigan University  
Mount Pleasant

2008

*LX. solanum à  
trois feuilles  
du Canada.*





Coin featuring the image of Louis XV of France. Unless otherwise indicated, all the images found in this catalog are reprinted from Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France* (Paris: Rolin, 1744). The Clarke Historical Library owns a first edition of this work.



# Introduction

The French men and women who lived in Michigan three centuries ago have been transformed in our imaginations by time and circumstances. Our conception of them has been profoundly shaped by the New England settlers who came to Michigan in the early part of the nineteenth century. These Yankees found the French puzzling. The French *habitants* lacked the new arrivals' economic drive, which these new arrivals complained about frequently. The French were often accused of "laziness," but their lifestyle had a certain charm that the new settlers seemed to envy. Charles Fenno Hoffman, a New York journalist who had set out to see and write about the West, captured this inconsistency when he visited Detroit in November 1833:

*The French there [in Detroit] insist upon holding on to their acres, and being unwilling to improve their property, its value remains stationary. These French tenures have had their effect, too, in retarding the growth of Detroit, and they still check in no slight degree its advances in prosperity. The French farms are laid out along the river on both sides, with a front of only two or three acres on its bank, while they extend back into the country for half a dozen miles; a disposition of property very unfavourable to agriculture, and only adopted originally to bring the colonists as near together as possible, for the sake of mutual protection against the Indians. Many of these farms now cross the main street of Detroit at right angles at the upper end of town, and, of course, offer on either side a dozen building lots of great value. The original owners, however, persist in occupying them with their frail wooden tenements and almost valueless improvements, notwithstanding large sums are continually offered for the merest slice in the world off the end of their long-tailed patrimonies. They are a singular race of beings altogether. Mild and amiable, with all that politeness of manner which distinguishes every class of the courteous nation from which they derived their origin—they are still said to be profoundly ignorant. They call Detroit "the Fort" to this day, and yet few of them know any thing of the country whose soldiers first held it. They are good gardeners, but very indifferent farmers; and their highest ambition is to turn out the fastest trotting pony when the carriage races commence on the ice in mid-winter.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Fenno Hoffman, as cited in "I Arrived at Detroit . . .," a collection of early accounts describing Detroit compiled by Clarke Library staff members. It can be found on the web at <http://clarke.cmich.edu/detroit/hoffman1833.htm>.





Hoffman's comments are typical of those made by many nineteenth-century Americans who either visited or settled in Michigan: a long critique of the old settlers' economic naiveté followed by jealous remarks about their "mild and amiable" lives, where racing horses in friendly, though serious, competition was about the extent of a man's ambition. This simplistic and patronizing view of the French as amiable, happy, and perhaps a bit dense is sometimes projected backward to describe the French who came to America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which does them a great injustice because nothing could be further from the truth.

Life in New France was anything but "mild and amiable." The people who resided in New France lived in a different time, but their lives were not simple or easy. Merchants, missionaries, and the French government all had dissimilar and sometimes conflicting agendas, as did the original inhabitants of this land, the Native Americans. Each group formed alliances, made enemies, and sought advantage, regardless of the consequences. New France was a complex world of opposing objectives, mixed loyalties, and considerable danger.

In 1608 French merchants, seeking to exploit the furs harvested from animals found in North America, established Quebec City, which was the first permanent French settlement in North America. These men were not, however, the first of their countrymen to visit North America, nor were they even the first visitors who came from France to exploit the New World's riches. French fishermen had been harvesting the rich fishing grounds off the coast of Newfoundland for many years and had established sites on the coast that they visited annually in order to dry their catch prior to returning to France. Explorers, who were not necessarily French, had been employed by the French king to learn about this new land. In one way, however, the settlement of Quebec did resemble the prior pattern of French visits: The outpost was to be permanent, but the residents would not necessarily stay forever. Like the fishermen, many early fur traders came to the New World to make their fortunes; they were optimistic that once those fortunes were made, they could return to France and live comfortably for the rest of their lives.

Although New France was born out of the merchant class's desire for profit, intermingled with this objective were the hopes of the missionaries seeking to convert Native Americans to Catholicism. Missionaries frequently objected to what they saw as the fur trade's immoral influence on the Indians, particularly the traders' use of alcohol to obtain pelts. In France the religious orders lobbied the government to regulate the fur traders and make them conform to "Christian" behavior. They also asked the government to ban fur traders from certain areas altogether so that the priests could spread Christian doctrine unhindered by the traders' business practices.



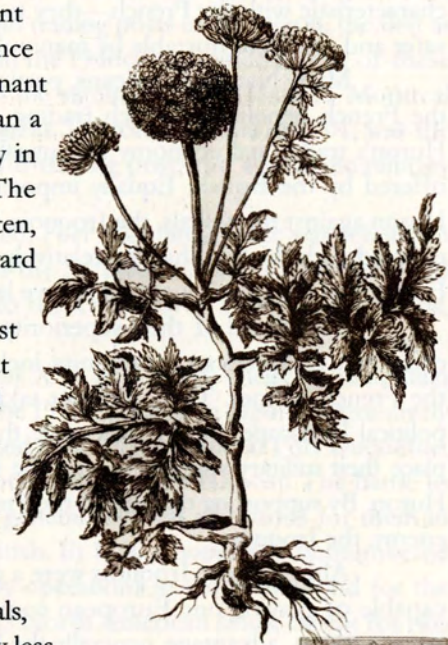


It is not surprising that the traders' agents in France opposed the missionaries' requests. In addition, they often gave their support to religious orders that were less eager to complain to the king about the traders' dealings or try to interfere in their business. A priest who tended his flock and kept his nose out of business affairs was considered the ideal, and some religious orders were more willing than others to play this role.

In 1663 Louis XIV reinvented New France by proclaiming it a royal colony. The king, as part of a grand French strategy to overtake and then supplant England as Europe's foremost power, sought to use New France to counterbalance and limit Britain's American colonies. Louis XIV's vision of France as the dominant European state would remain the basis of French foreign policy for more than a century. It would create conflict throughout most of the world and particularly in North America, where France and England struggled for supremacy. The government's policies concerning the traders and the missionaries changed often, but the prevailing winds usually favored the group that at the time could forward the king's primary goal of dominating Britain.

The Crown, however, quickly learned that it was one thing for his most Catholic majesty to issue a decree in Paris but quite another to enforce that order in North America. Both missionaries invoking the name of God and merchants seeking earthly rewards could prove to be troublesome subjects. Learned French clerics could interpret a royal decree in a way that furthered their own interests more than the king might have wished. Merchants in North America were bolder in their defiance. After 1663 a substantial minority of French traders conducted business without benefit of legal approval or in ways that violated their licenses. And although fur traders, as well as government officials, might argue over legalities to while away the long winters, they were considerably less concerned about the letter of the law when pelts were in hand and profits were to be made.

XXIX. *Angélique à fleurs blanches.*





Although the French conducted their business with the utmost seriousness and were confident that they “owned” New France, the Native American perspective was strikingly different. To the Native Peoples, the French were merely visitors, and “French America” was a bizarre concept that had little meaning or relevance. Native Americans either entirely ignored the French assertion that they ruled New France or found it expedient to let the matter pass unchallenged while they focused on exploiting the French to achieve their own objectives. Native Americans shared one characteristic with the French—they too lived in a complex and dangerous world, one that they might be able to make safer and more comfortable by manipulating the Europeans who laid claim to the Indians’ land.

Many Native Americans, particularly the Huron, found an alliance with the French beneficial. French trading goods were a useful supplement to the Huron’s traditional economy and usually were cheaper than comparable goods offered by the British. Equally important, the French gave military aid to the Huron against their rivals, the Iroquois. Economic benefits and military advantage, coupled with the fact that the relatively small number of French fur traders in New France had a minor impact on Native land, made the French useful allies.

Convinced of their superiority, the French assumed they could dominate every Native American community, including the ones that refused to unite under the French banner. Thus, without taking the time to understand the American political landscape, the French made the rash decision to ally themselves with and place their military support behind the first Indian community they encountered, the Huron. By supporting the Huron the French earned the enmity of the Huron’s great enemy, the Iroquois.

Although the Iroquois were a politically sophisticated group more than capable of playing one European community off against another for their own advantage, generally the Iroquois were the foes of the French. For much of the seventeenth century the Iroquois wreaked havoc on France’s Indian allies and frequently on the French themselves. Large Iroquois war parties traveled as far as Mackinac Island, disrupting

XXVIII. *Platanus occidentalis*.





French economic interests and often killing French fur traders and missionaries. Eventually the Iroquois found diplomacy more useful than war and in 1701 made peace with their Indian opponents and the French through the Treaty of Montreal. The treaty brought an extended peace, but it did not create trust between the French and the Iroquois. The Iroquois remained a constant danger to French interests.

In 1671 the French first raised a cross at Sault Ste. Marie and claimed the area that would eventually become part of Michigan for the French king. The French established missions, forts, and trading posts in the region, the first at St. Ignace in 1680, but the outbreak of a bitter war with the Iroquois in 1689 led the French to abandon most of these difficult-to-defend western posts. With the cessation of hostilities in 1700 and the signing of the Treaty of Montreal in 1701, the French reentered the region, concentrating their strength in three areas. Detroit, founded in 1701, was the most important of these. Detroit was meant to be a permanent settlement, a fur-trading post, and a strategic military asset designed to deny the Iroquois access to the upper lakes.

Other western posts in what is today Michigan were slowly reestablished. Fort Michilimackinac was rebuilt on the Straits of Mackinac by 1715. In 1717 Fort St. Joseph was constructed on the St. Joseph River. Other forts and trading posts were built, but Detroit, especially as the French expanded into the Ohio River Valley in the 1750s, continued to be among the most important outposts in the region.

Continuing his predecessor's long-term objective in North America, Louis XV's goal was to encircle and contain the British colonies that clung to the Atlantic seaboard. As part of this effort, the French began to expand aggressively into present-day Ohio and Pennsylvania in 1747. Eventually the French established their forward base at Fort Duquesne, at what is today Pittsburgh. In 1754 and again in 1755 the British failed to capture this French outpost. The battle to control Fort Duquesne ignited a global war that went badly for the French in general and was disastrous for them in North America. In 1759 the French colonial capital, Quebec City, fell to the British. In 1760 a hopelessly outnumbered French commander at Montreal surrendered, effectively ending French military operations in the New World for the duration of the war. The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1763, stripped France of all its North American lands, except for two small islands off Newfoundland.

The Treaty of Paris ended French political power in North America, but French cultural influence lingered. At the end of the war a surprisingly tolerant Britain quickly passed laws allowing the Québécois to retain both their language and their religion, rewarding acceptance of British political rule



with tolerance of French religious and cultural traditions. In Michigan, this policy meant French Detroit continued much as it had before the war; the only difference was that a sprinkling of English-speaking officials served in senior political posts. Initially, the transfer of power between Britain and America that occurred after the Revolutionary War did not affect Detroit, except that the accents of the few Anglophones in the community changed to favor pronunciations preferred by New Englanders. French cultural dominance did not begin to wane until the 1820s, when large numbers of English-speaking settlers began to arrive in Michigan.

The territorial officials and settlers who came to Michigan in the nineteenth century found a picturesque community of French people whose culture seemed to pose no threat. The Yankees who settled Michigan generally thought that the French were charming, but they were also judged to be simple and somewhat unsophisticated. These conclusions have influenced our own opinions, and too often we have viewed the inhabitants of New France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the lens of nineteenth-century America, which presents a distorted picture.

For those interested in learning more about New France, John Fierst, the Clarke Library's Public Services Librarian, has prepared a short bibliography, listing both "classic" sources of the period and modern works that are perhaps more accessible to readers. We encourage you to move beyond the opinions of Michigan's Yankee settlers and explore New France both through the accounts of those who experienced it firsthand and in the literature of more recent times.





# *A Word about Maps*

Europeans were fascinated by maps of the New World. Several of these maps are part of this exhibit. Clearly, early maps rarely “got Michigan right.” Often the shapes of the state’s peninsulas are more fanciful than realistic. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mapping was often more art than science. The critical problem was that mapmakers had difficulties obtaining accurate measurements of latitude and longitude.

Of the two, latitude was by far the easiest to measure. Determining where one was in relationship to north or south was a skill fairly well understood in the seventeenth century. Measuring either the angle of the sun or the angle of certain stars against the horizon gave navigators a reasonably accurate approximation of latitude.

Measuring longitude accurately, however, requires a comparison of the time at a fixed point, the “prime” meridian, with the time where the observer is located. Local time was fairly easy to calculate by employing the same tools used to measure latitude to measure the angle of the sun. However, it was impossible for mariners to know the correct time in Paris, where the French chose to run their prime meridian, using seventeenth-century technology.<sup>2</sup>

In 1750, however, the British made a breakthrough, creating chronometers that would work accurately on ships. In principle, these clocks could be used by explorers to measure longitude. The British, however, were not particularly anxious to share this advance with other nations, especially the French. Because the French could not measure time accurately, they developed a variety of other tools to help estimate longitude. But these approaches often worked poorly and rarely yielded consistent results. Thus, European mapmakers often had to choose among explorers’ accounts when they mapped North America. As a result the early maps of the Great Lakes region display lakes and land masses that to our eyes are strangely distorted. Determining the size of the Great Lakes and the shapes of Michigan’s two peninsulas were particularly troublesome issues for these early mapmakers.

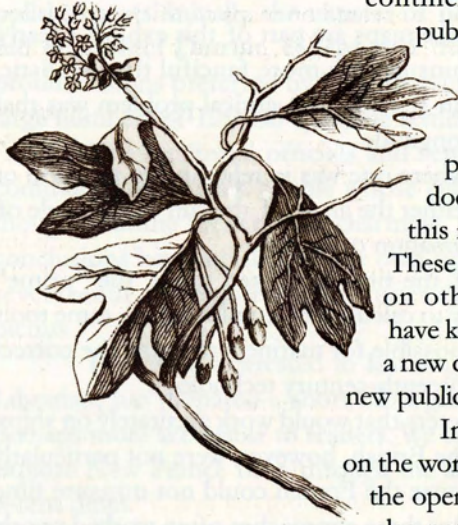
---

<sup>2</sup>Well into the nineteenth century navigational charts lacked an agreed-upon “prime” meridian. Depending on the place of publication, charts located the imaginary line through Greenwich, Paris, Lisbon, Cadiz, Naples, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and even Rio de Janeiro. It is not surprising that this situation caused considerable confusion when navigators attempted to share their locations or state the position of a particular geographic feature. In 1884 twenty-five nations met in Washington and agreed in principle to create a common prime meridian. After some discussion, Greenwich, England, was selected as the site through which the prime meridian would pass, primarily because British charts were already used by 72 percent of the world’s shipping, thus minimizing the disruption this decision would cause.





XVI. *Sassafras*.



The earliest maps of inland America either failed to note the existence of the Great Lakes or simply placed a rather large, randomly shaped body of water somewhere in the continent's interior.<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1650 that Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville published a map noting the existence of five Great Lakes. Sanson's map was unique in that it also acknowledged something that was then unknown; lakes that are today named Lake Superior and Lake Michigan are left with open ends pointing toward the west. In 1671 an accurate map of Lake Superior was published by the Cramoisy Press. The work of Jesuit missionaries, the map documents the problems of contemporary mapmakers. Despite the existence of this fine map, for many years subsequent maps of the lake would be less accurate. These inferior maps were sometimes based on observations made by other explorers; on other occasions they represented reprints of maps issued by mapmakers who may have known better but for economic reasons used an existing plate from which to print a new copy of the old, inaccurate map. The Sanson map of 1650 continued to appear in new publications for more than a century and was reprinted as late as 1766 without revision.

In 1683 Louis Hennepin published his *Description de la Louisiane*, which was based on the work of explorers Louis Joliet and Father Jacques Marquette. Hennepin's map closes the open ends of the Great Lakes in Sanson's earlier map with fair accuracy. Hennepin also notes the existence of both Saginaw Bay and Grand Traverse Bay, although there are plenty of erroneous details that led to serious misrepresentation of both bodies of water and the general shape of Michigan's two peninsulas.

Mapmakers of the early eighteenth century tinkered regularly with the shapes of the Great Lakes as well as the outlines of Michigan's peninsulas. One of the more important map publishers was John Senex, an Englishman whose maps had considerable influence. Although he generally copied existing French maps of the day, in 1719 he revised his conception of Michigan, and not for the better. His 1719 map is the first to insert a mountain range running through Michigan's Lower Peninsula that extended through Ohio to the Appalachian Mountains. Although



<sup>3</sup>The description of Michigan maps found here is largely taken from Louis C. Karpinski, *Bibliography of the Printed Maps of Michigan* (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1931).



Senex does not explain how he came to believe in the existence of a mountain range in Michigan, it is likely he was amplifying the "high plain" that French mapmaker Guillaume Delisle had noted in his 1718 map of the region, which was the first map to suggest such a geographic feature existed. As late as 1806 Senex's mountains appeared on maps of Michigan. Henry Popple, another British mapmaker, published a more accurate version of the Great Lakes in 1733, but sadly his work would be supplanted in Britain by the less accurate Mitchell map of 1755.

In 1744 the Frenchman Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, working with Pierre Charlevoix, a Jesuit who had traveled extensively in the New World, issued a map that significantly improved upon the geographic knowledge of the Great Lakes. Bellin's map was not without flaws. The most notable error was the introduction of Isle Philippeaux in Lake Superior, which appeared for nearly a century on many maps as a companion to Isle Royale.

The outbreak of war in 1755 between England and France had many consequences, one of which was that both nations printed a large number of American maps. Many of these maps were better than their predecessors. John Mitchell's 1755 map, *A Map of the French and British Dominions in North America*, published in London, would be the accepted version of the region it mapped well past the conclusion of the American Revolution. However, Mitchell's maps were less accurate than French maps based on Bellin's work.

It was not until 1796 that a widely circulated map significantly differed from Mitchell's representation of Michigan. The first maps created from "on the ground" survey work in Michigan appeared in 1824. Early maps of this type, however, tended to include only the southern part of the Lower Peninsula, usually moving from east to west. By 1835 an accurate picture of Lake Michigan's southeastern shore began to emerge. During this transitional period, many maps were issued that included only the surveyed parts of the state. On these maps the unsurveyed portion of the state was often placed in a small insert. The map publisher made no effort to connect the accurately surveyed land with the more crude representation found in the insert. By 1846 maps based on surveys of virtually all of the state were available, although a few particularly remote corners of Michigan, such as Isle Royale and Beaver Island, were still unsurveyed.

Fortunately for those "on the ground" in 1763, printed maps were almost never used to try to find anything. Rather, landmarks and the firsthand knowledge of trusted guides made it possible to travel through the Great Lakes region. Maps were printed largely for the Old World market. In the New World, experience was by far the more important guide.



# *Annotated Bibliography of Selected Works about New France*

Compiled by John Fierst

## Voices from New France

"The Cadillac Papers," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections*. Lansing: The Society, 1904-1905. Vols. 33 and 34.

These two volumes consist of translations of official reports and state papers produced during Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac's tenure as military commandant at Fort Pontchartrain (Detroit). The originals from which these translations were produced are housed in the Archives of the Ministry (Paris). Clarence M. Burton took on the expense of having the original documents in Paris transcribed and translated. They provide a firsthand record of the village of Detroit under Cadillac, as well as a record of French and Indian relations in the *pays d'en haut* for the same period, 1701 to 1710.

Charlevoix, Pierre François Xavier de. *History and General Description of New France*. Ed. and trans. John Gilmary Shea. 6 vols. New York: F. P. Harper, 1900.

Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, who was a Jesuit priest as well as a scholar, made two voyages to New France in the eighteenth century. The first was in 1705 to teach grammar at the Jesuit college in Quebec, but the second trip, in 1720, was more adventurous. The priest had been ordered by the Regent of France, Philippe, Duc D'Orléans, to search for the western sea that was thought to separate North America from the Orient. From his experiences on these assignments and twenty years of research and study afterwards, Charlevoix wrote his history of France's New World settlements, *History and General Description of New France*. It is made up of twenty-two books,



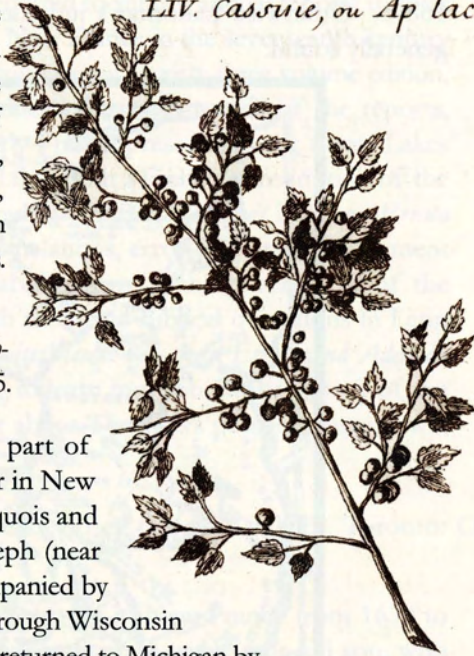


which give the history of New France from the voyages of discovery to the year 1731. These twenty-two books are followed by Charlevoix's journal, which comprises the final third of the *History* and is entitled *Journal of a Voyage to North America*. Louise Phelps Kellogg, in the introduction to a 1923 edition of Charlevoix's journal, wrote that "No other source gives so good a description of the posts, the routes, the missions, the tribes, and the conditions in the Mississippi Valley during the first quarter of the eighteenth century" [Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1923), xxv-xxvi.] The *History* was originally published in 1744 in both quarto (three volumes) and duodecimo (six volumes) editions. The Clarke Library owns an original quarto edition.

Lahontan, Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de. *New Voyages to North-America*. Ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites. 2 vols. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905.

Lahontan came to Canada as a soldier in 1683, and he was part of Denonville's expedition against the Seneca in 1687. His career in New France would place him in many more skirmishes with the Iroquois and the British. In 1688 he was placed in charge of Fort St. Joseph (near present-day Niles, Mich.), and in September of that year, accompanied by five Odawa hunters and a detachment of soldiers, he traveled through Wisconsin and down the Mississippi River to the mouth of the Wabash. He returned to Michigan by way of the Chicago portage. From notes and diaries kept during his travels, Lahontan wrote *New Voyages to North-America*, or *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, which is an account of his ten-year adventure in New France. Lahontan describes the geography of New France, and its flora and fauna, in very detailed fashion. In addition, his observations about the people of New France and the customs of the Indians are very perceptive. *New Voyages*, however, is

LIV. Cassine, ou Ap lachine





not without embellishments or exaggerations. The most egregious of these was the fabulous claim Lahontan made to have travelled four thousand miles to the West up a river he called the Long River, something he supposedly did during his journey to the Mississippi in the fall and winter of 1688 to 1689. Otherwise Lahontan's judgments, which reflect ideas common to the Enlightenment, are generally sound.



This map is based on one that was published by Baron de Lahontan in his book, *New Voyages to North-America* (repr., 1703; Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905).



Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*. 73 vols. Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901.

Jesuit missionaries sent to the outposts of New France were required to submit annual reports to their superiors back in Montreal or Quebec. Our understanding of New France in the seventeenth century is based in large part on these reports or relations. Thwaites's monumental seventy-three volume edition, published between 1896 and 1901, in which Thwaites reproduced most but not all of the reports, remains an invaluable primary source for the study of the early French presence in the Great Lakes region. For each report in Thwaites's collection, the reader will find both a French transcription of the report and an English translation. In 1967 Joseph Donnelly published *Thwaites' Jesuit Relations: Errata and Addenda*, "a one-volume addenda in which mistakes, mistranslations, errors of fact and judgment regarding Catholic practice, misinterpretations of the internal workings of the government of the Society of Jesus, and the like could be corrected, and in which the many Biblical quotations in Latin could be translated and identified." [Joseph P. Donnelly, *Thwaites' Jesuit Relations: Errata and Addenda* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1967), 24.] Anyone wishing to learn more about the history of the relations, the history of Thwaites's edition of the relations, or about Thwaites's personal history, will want to read Donnelly's introduction.

*Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*. Trans. and ed. Joyce Marshall. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967.

The sixty-six letters published in this book offer a special view of life in New France from 1639 to 1670. They were written by Marie Guyart Martin, a French widow with a twelve-year-old son, who became Marie de l'Incarnation in 1631 when she entered the Ursuline Order. Answering the appeal of the superior of the Canadian missions to found a seminary for Native girls—in 1639 she traveled to New France. There she founded an Ursuline convent in Quebec. Joyce Marshall's translations together with her notes and introduction provide the necessary context for appreciating these letters: "To a large extent Marie de l'Incarnation's story in Quebec was the story of the colony, its hopes and fears her hopes and fears. Cloistered





though she was, she was in no sense apart from what took place beyond the walls. Everyone came to her—Jesuits worn and ragged from the Huron mission, the Governors and other officials of the colony, merchants and soldiers, even servants—and told her of the events great and small outside. And this became the material for the shrewd and informative letters she sent to her son and others in France for more than thirty years” (p. 20).

## Voices Interpreting New France

Balesi, Charles J. *The Time of the French in the Heart of North America, 1673-1818*. Chicago: Alliance Française, 1992.

The subject of Charles Balesi's book is “the French presence in the heart of North America during the colonial era” (p. vii). What distinguishes this book from similar histories is its author's French point of view. Balesi served in the French army in North Africa, and because of his military background he has interesting insights to offer about French military campaigns in colonial North America. Writing about the Fox Wars, for example, he states: “The French could only compensate for the ridiculously small number of their military forces, and the sparseness of their demography, by meshing with their cultural environment. The fact that some of their national traits facilitated this integration (to the great despair of the Jesuits) was also an important factor. In these Fox Wars, the French behaved as just another tribe” (pp. 170-71). The history of the French colonial empire is a grand history in Balesi's view, one “of fierce determination, of anonymous heroism,” not to be “recounted in a fragmentary fashion” and certainly not to be “written from the perspective of the nineteenth-century apologists for anything Anglo-Saxon” (p. ix).

Blair, Emma Helen, ed. *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*. Introduction by Richard White. 1911. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.



Emma Blair's classic work *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley* “stands like some weathered landmark along a frontier trail,” writes Richard White in his introduction to the Bison Books reprint edition (p. 1). Blair's work is included here because it contains a full translation of the memoir of Nicolas Perrot: *Mémoire sur les moeurs, costumes et religion des sauvages de l'Amérique*



*Septentrionale; publié pour la première fois par le R. P. F. Tailban, de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: A. Franck, 1864). This primary source shaped the writing of early Great Lakes contact history. Perrot, who came to New France in 1660 as a lay servant to the Jesuits, lived and traded among the Fox and the Potawatomi. He developed valuable negotiating skills and played a critical role in the 1680s as a mediator between the French and the Indians. Perrot wrote his memoir in an attempt to influence French policy. He wished to show how the Indians could be manipulated and “put to French uses,” according to White. In doing so he revealed their independent nature. “Indians emerge as at once exotic and *savage* and yet also as critical participants in a common politics and economy with the French” (p. 3).

Campeau, Lucien. *The Jesuit Mission among the Hurons, 1634-1650*. Trans. William Lonc and George Topp. Bridgetown, N. S.: Gontran Trotter, 2000.

Among the accounts that the Jesuit priests in New France sent annually to their superiors, there is a series of fourteen reports or relations that is specifically devoted to the Jesuits’ work among the Huron. This series, written between 1634 and 1650, was the principal source of information for Lucien Campeau’s study *The Jesuit Mission among the Hurons, 1634-1650*. First published in Montreal and Rome in 1987 under the title *La Mission des Jésuites Chez les Hurons, 1634-1650*, Campeau’s book was clearly a labor of love, written by someone inside the order. His book is a straightforward, detailed, and very readable narrative that begins with the history and traditions of the Huron. It then covers the Jesuits’ work with the Huron, the Huron’s relationship with New France, the progress of the Huron war with the Iroquois, and the destruction of the Huron League. Campeau made use of many unpublished documents not found in Reuben Gold Thwaites’s seventy-three-volume series *Jesuit Relations*. (Thwaites did not publish all the relations; the Jesuit fathers were prolific writers.) Two other features of Campeau’s book could prove very useful to scholars: Appendix I is an essay on “The Hurons of Detroit.” Appendix II contains a map, “Novvelle France,” which shows the location of different indigenous nations when they were known by their Huron names.





Dunning, Idle. *The Post of the St. Joseph River during the French Régime, 1679-1761*. PhD diss. 1946: Reprint. Niles, Mich.: Fort St. Joseph Museum, 2003.

In 2002, archaeologists uncovered the remains of Fort St. Joseph, “a prototypical French colonial frontier outpost” (p. ix) near Niles, Michigan. The fort was later reconstructed, and at that time the Fort St. Joseph Museum republished *The Post of the St. Joseph River during the French Régime, 1679-1761*—Dunning Idle’s 1946 doctoral dissertation. This scholarly work, based on French manuscripts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, presents an excellent history of the post (and with it a history of New France in the West). The book is divided into five chronological periods. For each period Idle examines the roles played at the fort by the military, fur traders, Native Peoples, missionaries, and French officials, providing a clear description of French policies and activities in the region. In a foreword to the book, Joseph L. Peyser praises Idle’s presentation of Native Americans as “both objective and enlightened,” and his analysis of French and Indian relations as “very instructive” (p. x).



Humbler in.

A. Sculp.



Eccles, W. J. *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*. Rev. Ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983.

*The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760* is part of the *Histories of the American Frontier* series. At the time of its publication, this book made an important contribution to the reappraisal of the history of New France. It broke new ground. Eccles credits the social values and institutions of the French as much as the physical environment in which they operated for giving shape to the French Canadian frontier. Eccles describes not one but three frontiers: "The Fur Trade Frontier, 1663-1700"; "The Imperial Frontier, 1700-1750"; and "The Military Frontier, 1748-1760." One critic, Yves F. Zoltvany, pointed out the uneven treatment Eccles gave to different aspects of the frontier. [See Yves F. Zoltvany, review of *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*, by W. J. Eccles, *Pacific Historical Review* 39 (November 1970): 523-24.] In the 1983 edition of his book, Eccles himself states that were he to write it over he would enhance the role of the Indian nations. Zoltvany, nonetheless, found it "a sound and lively general account of the westward expansion of New France from earliest times to the British conquest of 1760" (p. 524). Further establishing its excellence as a guide to the study of the *pays d'en haut* is the book's extensive bibliography.

Eccles, W. J. *The French in North America, 1500-1783*. Markham, On.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1998

For a short, readable history of New France, *The French in North America* by W. J. Eccles is a good choice. Eccles does an excellent job of condensing 300 years of history into 273 pages. This is the second revision of a book he originally published in 1972 under the title *France in America*. Each revision, based on more recent scholarship, is an improved version as Eccles has refined his arguments and insights. In addition, he has revised and updated the "Bibliographic Essay" in the back of each edition. The book's eight chapters begin with the earliest French presence in the New World and conclude with the fate of the French living in America in the years after 1763. Eccles's emphasis is on Canada, but he does include a discussion of the West Indies and Louisiana in chapter six "The Slave Colonies, 1683-1748." His command of sources and the breadth of his understanding are remarkable. The history of New France is viewed socially, politically, culturally, and militarily. This book is a great resource, and it quickly places in context administrative policies and decisions, important events that occurred in the colony, and developments related to trade, war, society, and religion.





Edmunds, R. David and Joseph L. Peyser. *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.

Much has been written about New France extolling the special relationship that grew up between the French and Native Peoples in the Great Lakes region. France's relationship with the Fox or Mesquakie, whom the French attempted to annihilate in 1730, runs counter to the pattern and was, obviously, not so successful. The Fox lived on the periphery of New France and opposed French attempts to incorporate them into their fur-trade network. Strategically located in east-central Wisconsin, the Fox controlled many of the routes that allowed access to the western nations, such as the Sioux, a traditional enemy of the Fox. Edmunds and Peyser make use of colonial documents and correspondence as well as oral histories to analyze the political struggle between the Fox and the French. Not only were the Fox fighting the French, they were also fighting the nations allied to the French, such as the Ojibwe. When the Fox found themselves isolated in Wisconsin and attempted to move eastward, intending to settle among the Seneca in Iroquoia, the French and their allies set upon them, killing more than two hundred Fox warriors, and even more women and children, at the battle of Grand Prairie on the Illinois River (p. 156). As Governor General Beauharnois had directed, nearly the entire Fox Nation was destroyed. In their book, Edmunds and Peyser explore the complex events that led to this massacre.

Havard, Gilles. *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*. Trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

"In the summer of 1701, 1,300 representatives of forty native nations from the Maritimes to the Great Lakes and from James Bay to southern Illinois met with the French at Montreal. Elaborate, month-long ceremonies culminated in the signing of the Great Peace of Montreal" (p. i.). This treaty effectively ended the war between the Iroquois Confederacy and the French and their Native allies. Gilles Havard, expanding on his master's thesis, which was first published in 1992 as *La Grande Paix de Montréal*, argues that the costly war had left the Iroquois weak and depopulated at the end of the seventeenth century. They were ready to come to some sort of accommodation with their enemies. Havard's book is a close study of the treaty and offers considerable insight





into the complex relationships the French had with their Amerindian allies. In the course of negotiations the French acknowledged Native independence and followed Native protocol, according to Cornelius Jaenan, who reviewed Havard's book. Jaenan agreed with Havard that the treaty was a triumph for French diplomacy. According to Jaenan, the Iroquois threat had been removed, a buffer now existed between New France and New York, the Great Lakes tribes were confirmed allies, the colony of Louisiana was launched, and France was established at Detroit and poised to expand her influence in the upper country [Cornelius J. Jaenan, review of *The Great Peace of Montreal*, by Gilles Havard, *Journal of Military History* 66 (April 2002): 549-51.]

Kellogg, Louise Phelps. *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925.

Louise Phelps Kellogg was one of the first authors to write about New France from the point of view of the upper country or *pays d'en haut* (referring to the country upriver from Montreal), and *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* was the standard source for students until W. J. Eccles began writing about the French in North America. Today there is still much to recommend in Kellogg's book, particularly its many illustrations and maps and its readable style. The latter is illustrated in her stirring account of Jean Nicolet's 1634 journey from the St. Lawrence River to Green Bay. Infelicitous passages like the following, however, remind one that Kellogg was writing in the 1920s: "The woods were filled with young Canadians who had broken away from all the restraints of civilization and tended toward the savage level" (p. 305).

XXI. Cerfeuil du Canada.





Moogk, Peter N. *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada—A Cultural History*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000.

Peter Moogk describes his book as “a series of exploratory essays on various aspects of French-Canadian culture before 1760” (pp. xvii-xviii). He is not writing comprehensive history, like W. J. Eccles or Marcel Trudel, but rather cultural history that attempts to understand the distinctive character of French Canadians living in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moogk has been criticized for homogenizing French Canadian culture. He succeeds, nonetheless, in presenting his readers with a sense of how life was actually lived in New France. He also provides insights into French and Indian relations in an important essay: “Europeans and ‘the Wild People’: French-Amerindian Relations.” “The French newcomers were culturally self-centered,” Moogk writes, but “did not see themselves as racially superior” (p. 20).

Parkman, Francis. *France and England in North America: A Series of Historical Narratives*. Part Four. *The Old Régime in Canada*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1874.

Francis Parkman chronicled the rise and fall of New France in eight romantic narratives that were published in the second half of the nineteenth century. His explanation for the fall of New France stood unchallenged in the United States for decades. French Catholic absolutism for Parkman was a reactionary force that was destined to give way to the forces of progress, embodied in Anglo-American Protestantism. The fourth part of his grand narrative of the Anglo-French contest for control of North America, *The Old Régime in Canada*, focuses on the attempt, and failure, of France before 1763 to strengthen her North American colony and to assert absolute control over it. Parkman's work is distinguished by his large-scale historical vision, his compelling narrative skill, and his intimate knowledge of geography. His central thesis and the racism that undergirds it, however, are problematic. [For a critique of Parkman,

see Francis Jennings, “Francis Parkman: A Brahmin among Untouchables,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 42 (July 1985): 305-28.]





Peyser, Joseph L., trans. and ed. *Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre: Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996.

This is one of two books Joseph Peyser translated and edited for the French Michilimackinac Project, which is part of the Mackinac State Parks' research program. Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre served in New France as a field commander until his death at the Battle of Lake George during the French and Indian War. "From 1729 to 1753, during periods of peace, Saint-Pierre was commander of five upper-country posts, being appointed first to Chagouamigon in 1729 for several years, then to the Miami post until 1734, Fort Beauharnois in the Sioux country from 1734 to 1737, the Miami post again from 1741 to 1744, Michilimackinac from 1747 to 1749, and the Western Sea from 1750 to 1753" (p. 5). In 1753, the twenty-one-year-old George Washington delivered to Saint-Pierre the Governor of Virginia's demand that the French leave the Ohio Country. Joseph Peyser does a superb job of combining editorial commentary and documentary evidence to bring Saint-Pierre's career into focus. There were two sides to the career of a French officer assigned to a post in the upper country: first there was his role as a commander, but second there was his role as a businessman engaged in the fur trade. By exploring the "divided interests" of this "noteworthy upper-country post commander" (p. 9), i.e., by taking into account business and personal records as well as official correspondence, Peyser deepens our understanding of how French society functioned in the *pays d'en haut*.

Raymond, Charles de. *On the Eve of the Conquest: The Chevalier de Raymond's Critique of New France in 1754*. Ed. and trans. Joseph L. Peyser. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997.

This is the second volume Joseph Peyser translated and edited for the French Michilimackinac Project. Like many of his other books, it combines commentary and translations of original documents and illustrates his scholarly expertise. The document Peyser discusses is *Enumeration of all the Canadian Posts (Dénombrement de Tous les Postes du Canada)* written by Charles de Raymond, a captain in the Troupes de la Marine. "Frustrated in his efforts to win promotion," Peyser writes, "or a choice frontier post where he could engage in the profitable fur trade, Raymond wrote a critical account of the state of affairs in New France just as France and England were about to escalate







This map was published in Paris by Jacques-Nicolas Bellin in 1755. Bellin first published the map in 1744 in Charlevoix's *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*. Bellin was the French navy's chief cartographer.



their recent armed clashes in North America to full-scale warfare" (p. 1). "Raymond chronicled bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption, discussed diplomatic relations between the French and the Indians, analyzed military and trade strategies, and put forth his own solutions to the problems he identified. In short, he provides his readers with a comprehensive, although strongly biased, overview of New France as it entered its final years as a colony of France" (p. 1). Raymond sent his report to Colonel Michel le Courtois de Surlaville, "a rising star in the French army" (p. 6), who modified the report and submitted it to the minister of the colonies. Peyser's editorial work (introduction, annotations, appendixes, bibliography) provides a context for the report that enriches it beyond measure. "Just as Cadillac's early letters provide an overview of the upper country and the colony near the start of the eighteenth century, Raymond's highly detailed exposé is a source of new information on conditions in the posts and society of New France on the eve of conquest" (p. 10).

Peyser, Joseph L., trans. and ed. *Letters from New France: The Upper Country, 1686-1783*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

*Letters from New France* is an excellent place to begin a study of the upper country or *pays d'en haut*. These letters—actually a collection of documents gleaned from French, Canadian, and United States archives—center around Fort St. Joseph, a French outpost built on the St. Joseph River near present-day Niles, Michigan. Peyser combines translations of these letters with editorial commentary to create a narrative history of the upper country. That history covers a period of ninety-seven years, from 1686, when the Jesuits requested a grant of land on the St. Joseph River, to 1783, when the part of the upper country that eventually became known as the Old Northwest was ceded to the United States. Readers will appreciate the care Peyser took in preparing this volume. The introduction provides a concise history of the settlement of New France to the year 1686. The chapters that follow, which provide the history of the French outpost, are well-researched, well-written, and well-documented. Maps and illustrations are plentiful, and the appendixes contain helpful lists, such as "Governors of New France" and "Special French Terms." The only drawback is that the book is out of print and may be difficult to locate.





Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

Susan Sleeper-Smith explores the role of women in the Indian-French kinship network that controlled the western Great Lakes fur trade. Native women in this matrifocal world employed adaptive strategies in their encounters with foreigners to ensure the survival of Native communities. Inter-marriage with the French, which lengthened trade kinship networks; the incorporation of Catholicism into traditional culture; and the commercialization of Native agriculture to supply the fur trade—were all adaptations that helped Native culture survive. As Victoria Freeman states: “Women, kinship and Catholicism shaped the dynamics of the exchange process in the southern Great lakes region” [Victoria Freeman, review of *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*, by Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Summer 2003): 275-77.]

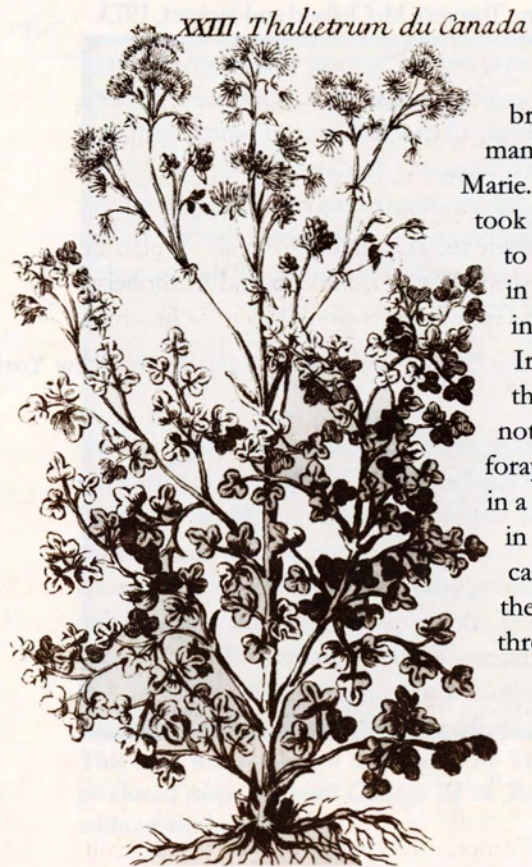
Of special interest to Michigan readers are the four chapters of Sleeper-Smith’s book that describe how the exchange process played itself out in the history of the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley.

Tanner, Helen Hornbeck. “The Career of Joseph La France, Coureur de Bois in the Upper Great Lakes,” in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*. Ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994.

Helen Tanner begins this essay by noting that “of people involved in the French fur trade the most elusive are the *coureurs de bois*” (p. 171). These free traders were elusive because most of the time they were trading illegally and because they melded into Indian communities, fathering the first generation of Métis in the upper Great Lakes region. Tanner states that the only *coureur de bois* about whom there is any extensive knowledge was named Joseph La France. La France was born at Michilimackinac in 1707 and learned the fur trade from his father at a time when the rivalry between the French and British over this trade was reaching its climax. Until 1734 he generally traded in the northern Lake Superior region, but that year he changed his routine, traveling to







the Mississippi River and returning through Illinois and then southern Michigan. In 1738 he was arrested on the French River east of Georgian Bay by the governor-general's brother-in-law, and his goods were confiscated. La France managed to escape with his gun and made his way to Sault Ste. Marie. This event marked the beginning of a fantastic odyssey that took him west of Lake Superior and eventually up the Nelson River to Fort York on Hudson's Bay, where he was taken into custody in June 1742. He was eventually shipped to London and there interviewed by Sir Arthur Dobbs, "a politically prominent Irishman," who took down his story (p. 171). La France died the next year on board a guardship in England. Tanner does not simply tell La France's story but skillfully places his trading forays and his difficulties with both French and British authorities in a scholarly context. Readers will learn much about the fur trade in New France in this essay. Although the end of La France's career took an unusual turn, his life more than likely "parallels the experience of hundreds of other *coureurs de bois* who operated throughout the *pays d'en haut* west of Montreal" (p. 172).

Trudel, Marcel. *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*. Trans. Patricia Claxton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

According to Marcel Trudel the early years of New France constituted “a long period of repeated disappointments” (p. xii). *The Beginnings of New France* is a condensation of this eminent French Canadian historian’s three longer works on the struggle to establish a French colony in North America: *Les Vaines Tentatives, 1524-1603*; *Le Comptoir, 1604-1627*; and *La Seigneurie des Cent-Associés, 1627-1663*. When he published *The Beginnings of New France*, Trudel was already known for his fresh interpretations, extensive research, cartographic expertise, skillful demographic analyses, and knowledge of Indian cultures. Readers will discover here a lucid account, told by a distinguished historian, of the struggles, hardships, and insecurities that marked the early years of New France.

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

The publication of Richard White’s *Middle Ground* in 1991 challenged historical writing about Indian-white relations in the Great Lakes area like nothing that had come before it. The book countered the two prevailing paradigms—stories of conquest and stories of cultural persistence. White theorized that the Iroquois wars of the seventeenth century shattered the Indian nations of the Great Lakes and that the remnants of those nations, who were mainly refugees, afterwards joined with the French newcomers to reorder the world of the *pays d’en haut* (the upper country). Together they created out of the devastation a new order with shared meanings and practices—a middle ground. White’s theory has been challenged in its turn, but because of its extensive scholarship, compelling descriptions, and intriguing analyses, *The Middle Ground* remains an important study of Indian-white relations in the Great Lakes region from 1650-1815.







This map was published in London by Thomas Kitchin in 1773. It was engraved by Emanuel Bowen, who produced maps for both George III of Britain and Louis XV of France. Bowen borrowed freely and usually without attribution.



Zoltvany, Yves F., comp. *The French Tradition in America*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969.

*The French Tradition in America* contains more than sixty-six documents and could be used as an excellent source for teaching the history of New France. It opens with an unadorned overview of that history. The rest of the book is arranged chronologically into six sections: "The Origins of New France, 1534-1663"; "The Royal Régime"; "Intercolonial Rivalry, 1682-1713"; "The French Empire at Its Height, 1713-1754"; "The Fall of New France, 1754-1760"; and "The Beginnings of British Rule, 1763-1810." Each of these sections in turn has a number of chronologically arranged subsections, and each subsection is built around a primary document. For example, a subsection in "The Royal Régime" titled "The Discovery of the Mississippi, 1673," is built around an account of the discovery of the Mississippi, which was written in 1674 at Quebec by Father Jacques Dablon. Dablon, the superior of the Jesuits, had taken the account down orally from the explorer Louis Jolliet. All subsections (there are forty-four of them) share a common form: title, explanatory headnote, "Further Reading," and "Source" (document or documents). The documents lend an immediacy to the study of New France that narrative alone cannot provide.





# Acknowledgments

As with all of the exhibits in the Clarke Library, many people worked to make the final product possible. We are, however, particularly indebted to the Burton Historical Collection, which is housed in the Detroit Public Library, for the loan of three rare items: a document signed by Detroit's founder, Cadillac; a fur-trading license issued in 1715; and an original 1703 edition of the French-language version of Lahontan's book, *New Voyages to North-America*, to complement the first English edition, also published in 1703, that is part of the Clarke Library's collection. The Mackinac State Historic Parks kindly lent us a number of artifacts for display from the French era in Michigan. Central Michigan University's Museum of Cultural and Natural History also loaned the Clarke materials for this exhibit. We thank the staff members of these three institutions for their help and generosity.

As always, I am grateful to the many Clarke Library staff members who helped prepare this exhibit. John Fierst worked with care and diligence to select and annotate a number of key works about the French era in Michigan. Pat Thelen spent many hours scanning the images used in this catalog, and we are grateful for her expertise. Rebecca Zeiss created a striking visual presentation within the galleries. Mary Graham edited and proofread much of the material, eliminating many awkward phrases and pointing out, tactfully, the sometimes woeful state of my grammar and spelling. I am indebted to each of these individuals. Thanks also to Amy Motz, who designed this publication. Finally, I must thank my family, who yet again asked a now-too-familiar question, "Dad isn't going to spend Sunday afternoon working on that silly exhibit, is he?" Dad often did, and I am grateful for Valerie, Matt, and Nick's support and understanding.

Frank Boles



## Clarke Historical Library Board of Governors

John H. Logie, chairman

Frank Boles (ex officio)

Norman E. Clarke, Jr. (family representative)

Susan Clarke

Sandra B. Croll

Michael R. Federspiel

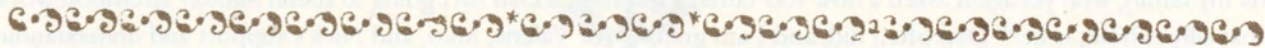
Timothy Hall (ex officio)

Thomas Moore (ex officio)

Michael Rao (ex officio)

William Strickler

Ormond S. Danford (emeritus)



Central Michigan University, an AA/EO institution strongly and actively strives to increase diversity within its community.

For more information see <http://www.cmich.edu/aaco/>.



Printed by CMU Printing Services





This map was published in London by Henry Popple in 1733. It was the most commonly used British map of North America until the 1750s, and was largely based on Delisle's map of 1719.