

Adventures on the American Frontier

EXPLORERS in a NEW WORLD

Part Five

Champlain's Search
for the Northwest Passage



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“This must be the mountain and the meeting of the rivers that Jacques Cartier wrote about,” said Samuel Champlain. He and the leader of a French expedition stood on a riverbank below Mount Royal in what is now Montreal, Canada, in the year 1603.



The two men climbed the mountain and looked as far up the Ottawa River as their eyes could see. Cartier had dreamed of a Northwest Passage to China, but he had not been able to find it. Now Champlain felt Cartier's dream rising within him as he imagined what lay beyond the horizon.

Champlain returned to France, but five years later, in 1608, he was back in Canada. It had been his job on his first trip there to draw maps and write reports of what he had seen, and he had decided that he



needed to follow that northwest river, the Ottawa, to learn if it led to the western sea. People in Europe still held hope that there was a waterway that would provide a trade route to China through the great land mass of the New World.

Part of Champlain's work on this voyage was to start a settlement that could be used as a fur-trading center. He looked at a fine rise of land where a Native American village had once been. "This is the best place I've seen for the colony," he said.

Soon his men were busy cutting down trees. They used the logs to build three two-story houses and a large storehouse. They built protecting walls and a little balcony that connected the second story of each building with the others. Soon the flag of France was flying over the little fort. The city of Quebec had been born.

Then Champlain began thinking about the second part of his work, the part that interested him most. He wanted to get back to the Ottawa River to follow it. But



he knew that he would need the help of Native Americans to do that safely, so he set about making friends among the nearby tribes, the Algonquins and the Hurons.

The Algonquins admired the guns that Champlain and his men carried. War would be easy with those! "Will you help us when we go to fight our enemies, the Iroquois?" an Algonquin chief asked Champlain. The Iroquois, enemies of all of the Canadian tribes, lived farther south, where New York state is now.