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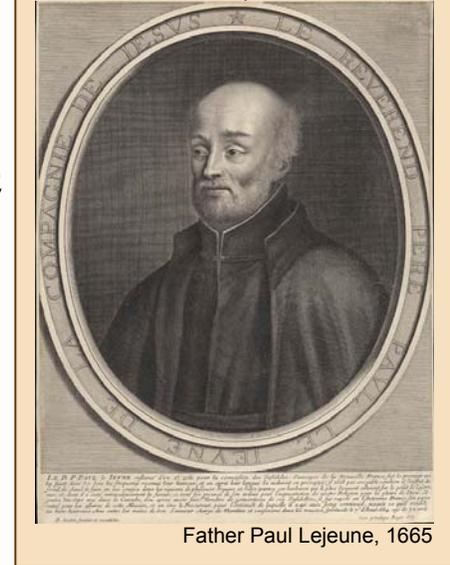
— PAUL LEJEUNE —

RELATION
DE CE QUI S'EST PASSÉ
EN LA NOUVELLE FRANCE
EN L'ANNÉE 1636

ACCOUNT
OF WHAT TRANSPIRED
IN NEW FRANCE
IN THE YEAR 1636

Sent to the
Royal Provincial Priest
of the Society of Jesus

EXCERPTS



Father Paul Lejeune, 1665

- Ch. VIII. On the Present State of New France, on the Great River St. Lawrence.**
Ch. IX. Answers to Some Propositions Submitted to Me from France.
Ch. X. Some Advice to Those Who Desire to Cross Over into New France.

Ch. VIII. On the Present State of New France, on the Great River St. Lawrence.

In contemplating the progress of affairs in New France, I seem to see an Aurora emerging from the profound darkness of the night, which, lighting up the surface of the earth with its golden rays, finally changes into that great Ocean of light brought in by the Sun. The great losses incurred by these Gentlemen in the early infancy of their Company are indeed like a most heavy night, which covered all these countries with horror. They were never thought of except to be rebuffed, they were never looked upon except with aversion. The rightful possession of these lands was debated in France, while famine and the English, one after the other, divided and afflicted them. The Lilies died here in their birth; the few French who dwelt here were Strangers in their own Land. In short, these immense Provinces could aspire to no higher fortune than to be made a storehouse for the skins of dead animals, than to fill savage mouths, to support Elk, Beaver, and great quantities of Trees. Behold to what height the glory of New France could attain under the bondage of the Foreigner, or under the administration of those who love it only for its spoils! But, God having poured out his blessings upon this new Company,¹ that night has been scattered; and now the Dawn of a mild and peaceful prosperity is spreading along our great River. This makes us hope that the Sun of plenty will follow these happy beginnings, every day advancing until it

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¹ The Company of One Hundred Associates was approved by King Louis XIII (and created by Cardinal Richelieu) in 1627 to monopolize the French fur trade in New France and spur French emigration to the settlements. It did not meet either goal and was dissolved in 1663.



Franquelin, *Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale... à Québec en Canada*, copy of 1688 original (detail; Quebec in oval)

reaches the highest point of its Apogee, never to descend therefrom. For the greatest abundance that can be wished for it, is the abundance of virtues, whose fruits are eternal. But let us point out some of the rays of this Dawn, which is beginning to show forth its beauties. . . .

Four things make a Country desirable: good soil, strong and fortified localities, the character and number of inhabitants, and the government.

As to the excellence of the land which

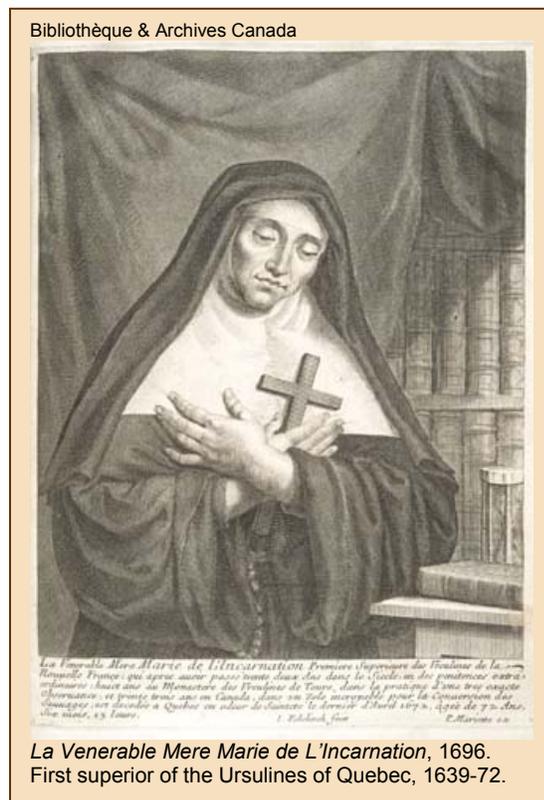
forms the banks of the great River, I shall speak hereafter. As to strongholds, I shall simply tell what there are. Monsieur de Champlain, before his death, fortified the place that the English had usurped and that they surrendered.² Since his death, the work has been continued there, and the redoubt which he raised to command the length of the Quay has been repaired; the cannons which faced upon the river have been increased in number, the platform upon which they rest has been strengthened. The Islet de Richelieu remains as it was, with its heavy ordnance. I spoke of it last year, and will say no more about it at present. Plans grow with time. Monsieur de Montmagny, our Governor, has traced the plan, as I have already said, of a fortress which is to be regularly built. Some are working at the lime, others at the brick, others are hauling stone, and others leveling the ground. They have drawn the plans of a city, in order that all building hereafter shall be done systematically. . . .

I say nothing about the houses of private persons, which have been built and are building every day, some here, some there, according to the inclination and convenience of each. Those who have not seen the Country in its poverty, perhaps do not admire these still quite small beginnings. As to me, I frankly confess that Kébec seems to me another Country, and no longer the little corner hidden away at the end of the world, where could be seen nothing but some dilapidated huts and a few Europeans. The courage of these Gentlemen is going much farther; they are thinking about a number of homes or settlements as far up as the great Sault de saint Louys, which will be some day perhaps as many Cities. Indeed, in the course of time they will even be able to secure the great river up as far as the fresh-water sea of the Hurons, which is a lake of more than five hundred leagues in extent. But we must unite and rally our forces in some permanent and well-protected places, before spreading out so far.

As to the inhabitants of New France, they have multiplied far beyond our hopes. When we entered the Country, we found here only a single family, who were seeking a passage back to France in order to live there under the laws of the true Religion. And now we see a great number of very honorable persons land here every year, who come to cast themselves into our great forests as if into the bosom of peace, to live

² In 1629 the French surrendered Quebec and other settlements to the English, regaining them by treaty in 1632.

here with more piety, more immunity, and more liberty. The din of Palaces, the great uproar of Lawyers, Litigants, and Solicitors is heard here only at a thousand leagues' distance. Exactions, deceits, thefts, rapes, assassinations, treachery, enmity, black malice, are seen here only once a year, in the letters and Gazettes which people bring from Old France. Not that we have not our maladies, but they are easier to cure; and, besides, no money is needed to pay for the attendance of the Physicians. Would to God that souls enamored of peace could see how sweet is life remote from the gehenna [hell] of a thousand superfluous compliments, of the tyranny of lawsuits, of the ravages of war, and of an infinite number of other savage beasts that we do not encounter in our forests. But I am not taking heed,—while intending to speak of the new inhabitants of New France, I go on talking about the peace they possess. . . . When we were told at Kébec that there were many persons at Tadoussac who were coming to increase our Colony,—that nothing was seen down there but men, women and little children,—we praised God, and prayed him to bestow his holy benediction upon these new Emigrants; but when we were assured that there were, among others, six Damsels, and some children as beautiful as the day, that Messieurs de Repentigny and de la Poterie were establishing a large household, and that they were in good health, I leave you to imagine if joy did not take possession of our hearts, and surprise of our minds. All this was doubled in their presence; their elegance, their conversation, showed us the great difference there is between our French and our Savages. Who will now find difficulties in crossing our seas, since children so tender, Damsels so delicate, women naturally timid, ridicule and laugh at the vastness of the Ocean? Let us quickly bring this Chapter to a close. It remains to speak of our government, Ecclesiastical and Civil. . . . Everywhere there are libertine spirits who consider the mildest laws as chains; but their discontent is a disease of the mind, and does not arise from the severity of the laws, which are in no wise characterized by bitterness. Furthermore, those laws enacted here are also observed. Here are some proofs of this. On the twenty-ninth of December of the year one thousand six hundred and thirty-five, there were placed upon a pillar in front of the Church certain notices and prohibitions, with certain penalties, against blasphemy, drunken-ness, failing to attend the Mass and divine services on Holydays. In pursuance of which an iron collar was fastened to the same pillar, and a chevalet [rack] near by for the delinquents; and



La Venerable Mere Marie de L'Incarnation, 1696.
First superior of the Ursulines of Quebec, 1639-72.

here in fact, on the sixth of January, a drunkard and blasphemer was placed; and on the twenty-second, one of our residents was condemned to fifty livres fine for having made some Savages drunk. The best laws in the world are of no value, if they are not observed. As to Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, it is only exercised as yet in the hearts and consciences. Truly, we have reason to bless God, seeing that the increase of our Parishioners is the augmentation of his praises. The first sacrifices of the Mass that we presented in this country were offered in a wretched little hut that we would be ashamed of now; afterwards we used a room, then they had a Chapel built. . . . I frankly confess that my heart melted the first time I assisted in this divine service, at the sight of our Frenchmen so greatly rejoicing to hear sung aloud and publicly the praises of the great God in the midst of a barbarous People, at the sight of little children speaking the Christian language in another world. It seemed to me that a well-regulated Church, where God is served with love and respect, had crossed the sea; or that I found myself all of a sudden in our own France, after having passed some years in the country of the Savages. . . .

I forgot to say that the establishment of a College is also of great service for the welfare of the country. Also, a

number of very respectable persons can assure us that they would never have crossed the Ocean to come to New France, if they had not known that there were persons there capable of directing their consciences, of procuring their salvation, and of instructing their children in virtue, and in the knowledge of Letters. . . .

Ch. IX. Answers to Some Propositions Submitted to Me from France.

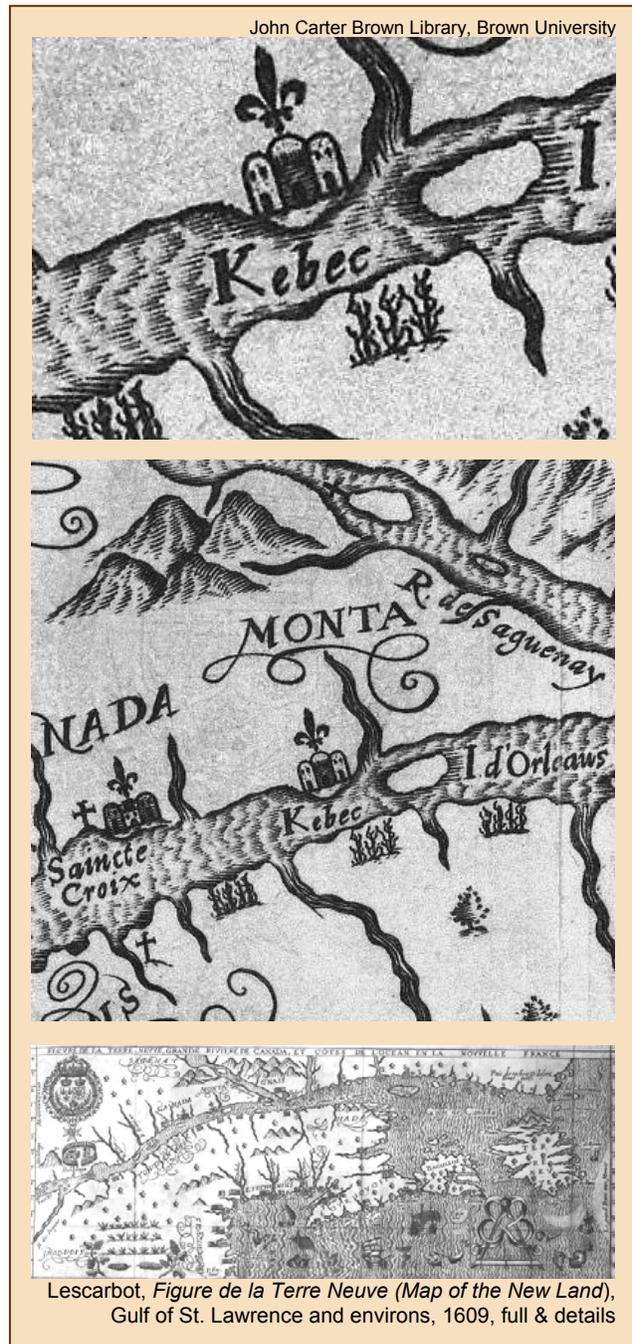
Some persons of standing have caused to be proposed to me, privately and from different places, certain difficulties in regard to which they wish to be enlightened, in order to decide whether to cross over into these countries. It is reasonable to give them exact and satisfactory answers.

I. It is asked whether this country is beyond the incursions of the Spaniard . . . The Spaniard could only come to us by sea or by land. To come by land is impossibility itself, and he who has ever so little knowledge of the Country would make himself ridiculous by fearing his approach across so many hundreds of leagues of woods, of forests, of rivers, of lakes, and of mountains. To come by water, he has a long voyage to make; for between him and us there is the whole of Florida, and perhaps several other countries beyond; all of Virginia, and all the other lands which belong to France, which are of vast extent. . . .

II. *The land being cleared and ploughed, will it produce enough for the inhabitants?*
I answer, yes; this is the opinion of those who understand the subject. Sieur Giffard, who has been clearing the land for only two years, and still leaving a great many stumps, hopes to harvest enough this year, if his wheat yields in proportion to present indications, to maintain twenty persons. . . .

III. *Is there any hope of apple and other fruit trees producing fruit here?*
I cannot answer positively, as I have had no ocular proof of this. Sieur Hebert planted some apple trees during his lifetime, which have borne some very good fruit, as I have been assured; but the cattle spoiled these trees. We have grafted some wild trees this year, and the scions have united very well. Time will show us what there is in it. . . .

IV. *How long would it take twenty men to clear an arpent of land? What would it cost apiece to maintain them for a year? And*



what provisions would it be necessary to furnish?

Twenty men will clear in one year thirty arpents of land,³ so clean that the plow can pass through it; if they had an interest in the matter, perhaps they would do more. There are some places which are much easier than others. The usual task for each man is an arpent and a half a year, if he is not engaged in other work. . . .

- V. *How is the great saint Lawrence River formed? What kind of banks has it? How far up do the great Vessels go, and of what burden are those which go up as far as Kébec and the three Rivers? What is the condition of the fortifications that have been made for the safety of the Country?*

. . . This King of all Rivers is bordered sometimes by mountains, sometimes by a flat country, or by land but slightly elevated. I have often navigated it from Kébec up to the three Rivers. I have observed that some of the banks are rocky, others sandy; upon others one finds clay,—heavy soil, very good for making brick. The Country is beautiful and very attractive, intersected by rivers, brooks, and torrents issuing from the ground. . . . As to the size of the Ships that can enter this River, I am persuaded that all those which can sail the Ocean with safety can safely come up as far as Tadoussac, and perhaps even to Kébec, and a little higher. . . .

- VI. *In regard to the quality of the soils, to describe those which are suitable for tillage, for planting, for pasture; whether it will be necessary to work them with teams of oxen, or horses; what grains will they bear?*

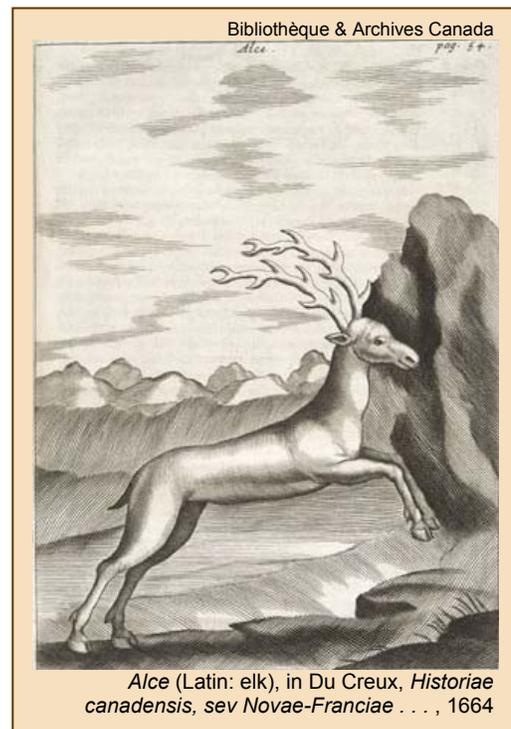
If our great forests were leveled, I could very easily answer these questions; but as they are still standing, and as one does not easily visit them, I will say that I have seen both good and bad land in the places I have frequented. One must reason about New France in this respect the same as one does about the Old. . . .

- VII. *Is building stone to be found there, also clay, sand?*

All these are here in abundance in some places, in others not. For a distance of two leagues round about Kébec lime is made; good building stone is quarried, which can be easily cut; excellent brick is made, and sand is found almost everywhere.

- VIII. *Notice what the country furnishes to sustain human life, the kinds of animals, etc.*

Game among river birds is abundant in season, that is, in the Spring and Autumn; but as it has been so greatly disturbed in the more inhabited localities, it is going farther and farther away. . . . There are Elks, Beavers, Porcupines, Hares, and some of the deer family—such as the common red Deer, and a kind of cow that appears to have some affinity with ours. This chase of the larger animals is as yet mainly indulged in by the Savages, who, by the pursuit of them, have driven these animals from our settlements; some of the French, however, have killed Elks, but not many. The time will come when they can be domesticated, and we shall make good use of them, having them drag over the snow the wood—and other things which we shall need. . . . As to the fish, he is here, as it were, in his empire. There are a great many Lakes, Ponds, and Rivers, filled with them. The great river is full of Sturgeon, Salmon, Shad, Pike, Flounders, goldfish, whitefish, Carp of different kinds, Eels, etc. Not that



³ Arpent: about four fifths of an acre.

they can be caught everywhere in the same abundance, but there are places where the quantity of fish seems marvelous. While I am writing this, here comes a boy bringing twenty-five or thirty Flounders, caught in one night. . . .

IX. What kind of merchandise can we send from here to France, such as Peltries; Codfish, dry and fresh; oil of the Whale, and of other big fish? What minerals can be found here, gummy woods which produce resin, Pines, Firs, Cedars, Oak planks, materials with which to build our Ships?

I answer that all these things are found in this country, but there are not yet enough people here to gather in its riches. We have Codfish at our door, so to speak. They come from France to fish for it in our great river, at Gaspé, at l'Isle percé, at Bonaventure, at Miskou; and yet the Codfish that is eaten at Kébec generally comes from France, because there are not yet enough men here to go down to that fishery. I can say the same of the coal and gypsum,—these are found here, but ships are needed to go and get them; these forces are as yet lacking, for our chief care must be to provide for lodgings, fortifications, and the clearing of the land. . . . Everything will come in its turn. Some persons of good business ability, such as are needed in this country, assure me that they are sending to France Clapboards, Oak planks, and those made of other woods, for Ships, to the value of ten thousand francs; and all this has not taken one year's work, for they have been engaged part of the time in clearing the land. . . .

Ch. X. Some Advice to Those Who Desire to Cross Over into New France.

All those who desire to come and increase this Colony are either people of means, or poor people; I will speak to both. Let us begin with the poor.

A poor man burdened with a wife and children should not come over here the first years with his family, if he is not hired by the Gentlemen of the Company, or by some one else who will bring them hither: otherwise he will suffer greatly, and will not make any headway. The Country is not yet in a condition to care for the poor who cannot work. But if there happen to be some worthy young men or able-bodied married men, who can handle the axe, the hoe, the spade, and the plough,—such people, if willing to work, could become rich in a little while in this Country, to which they could finally bring their families. . . . There are so many strong and robust peasants in France who have no bread to put in their mouths; is it possible they are so afraid of losing sight of the village steeple, as they say, that they would rather languish in their misery and poverty, than to place themselves some day at their ease among the inhabitants of New France, where with the blessings of earth they will far more easily find those of heaven and of the soul? . . .

As to people of wealth and rank, I would advise them before coming here to obtain from the Gentlemen of the Company a place to build a house in the town which has been laid out, and also a few arpents of land near the town, capable of sustaining their families. In addition to this, a grant of some fine locality which they will choose in the course of time. When this has been accomplished, they must bring over at least two Masons, two Carpenters, and some laborers; and, if they desire more, some workmen to clear the land, provided with tools adapted to their trade. . . .

If this order is followed, when the women and children reach here they will all be comforted at finding a dwelling ready for them, a garden for their refreshment, and people at their service who will have a knowledge of the Country. As I have been told, without any one being named, that there are very honorable families who wish to come to enjoy the delights of rest and peace in New France, I have thought that the love I already feel for them, without having the honor of their acquaintance, obliges me to give them this advice, which cannot injure them. I will make two more suggestions. The first, that if they can have men who have interests at stake, to clear the land, as I have just said, it will be much better. The men who work for wages, for the most part try to be like some of our neighbors, who, having scarcely

passed the line of the Equator, all begin to call themselves Gentlemen, and no longer care to work; if they felt constrained to do it for themselves, they would not sleep over it.

In the second place, I beg those who shall come, to come with a desire to do good. New France will some day be a terrestrial Paradise if our Lord continues to bestow upon it his blessings, both material and spiritual. But, meanwhile, its first inhabitants must do to it what Adam was commanded to do in that one which he lost by his own fault. God had placed him there to fertilize it by his own work and to preserve it by his vigilance, and not to stay there and do nothing. I have more desire to see this country cleared, than peopled. Useless mouths would be a burden here, during these first years. _____



Quebec, 82 years later. *Quebec, The Capital of New-France, a Bishoprick, and Seat of the Sovereign Court*, depicting Quebec in 1718, published in 1759.