

The Foundation of Quebec Samuel de Champlain (1608)

HAVING returned to France after a stay of three years in New France, I proceeded to Sieur de Monts, and related to him the principal events of which I had been a witness since his departure, and gave him the map and plan of the most remarkable coasts and harbors there. Some time afterward Sieur de Monts determined to continue his undertaking, and complete the exploration of the interior along the great river St. Lawrence, where I had been by order of the late King Henry the Great in the year 1603, for a distance of some hundred and eighty leagues, commencing in latitude 48E 40', that is, at Gaspé, at the entrance of the river, as far as the great fall, which is in latitude 45E and some minutes, where our exploration ended, and where boats could not pass as we then thought, since we had not made a careful examination of it as we have since done.

Now, after Sieur de Monts had conferred with me several times in regard to his purposes concerning the exploration, he resolved to continue so noble and meritorious an undertaking, notwithstanding the hardships and labors of the past. He honored me with his lieutenancy for the voyage; and, in order to carry out his purpose, he had two vessels equipped, one commanded by Pont Gravé, who was commissioned to trade with the savages of the country and bring back the vessels, while I was to winter in the country.

Sieur de Monts, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the expedition, obtained letters from his majesty for one year, by which all persons were forbidden to traffic in pelts with the savages, on penalties stated in the following commission:

Henry by the Grace of God King of France and Navarre, to our beloved and faithful counselors, the officers of our admiralty in Normandy, Brittany, and Guienne, bailiffs, marshals, provosts, judges, or their lieutenants, and to each one of them, according to his authority, throughout the extent of their powers, jurisdictions, and precincts, greeting:

Acting upon the information which has been given us by those who have returned from New France, respecting the good quality and fertility of the lands of that country, and the disposition of the people to accept the knowledge of God, We have resolved to continue the settlement previously undertaken there, in order that our subjects may go there to trade without hindrance. And in view of the proposition to us of Sieur de Monts, gentleman in ordinary of our chamber, and our lieutenant-general in that country, to make a settlement, on condition of our giving him means and supplies for sustaining the expense of it, it has pleased us to promise and assure him that none of our subjects but himself shall be permitted to trade in pelts and other merchandise, for the period of one year only, in the lands, regions, harbors, rivers, and highways throughout the extent of his jurisdiction: this we desire to have fulfilled. For these causes and other

considerations impelling us thereto, we command and decree that each one of you, throughout the extent of your powers, jurisdictions, and precincts, shall act in our stead and carry out our will in distinctly prohibiting and forbidding all merchants, masters, and captains of vessels, also sailors and others of our subjects, of whatever rank and profession, to fit out any vessels in which to go themselves or send others in order to engage in trade or barter in pelts and other things with the savages of New France, to visit, trade, or communicate with them during the space of one year, within the jurisdiction of Sieur de Monts, on penalty of disobedience, and the entire confiscation of their vessels, supplies, arms, and merchandise for the benefit of Sieur de Monts; and, in order that the punishment of their disobedience may be assured, you will allow, as we have and do allow, the aforesaid Sieur de Monts or his lieutenants to seize, apprehend, and arrest all violators of our present prohibition and order, also their vessels, merchandise, arms, supplies, and victuals, in order to take and deliver them up to the hands of justice, so that action may be taken not only against the persons, but also the property of the offenders, as the case shall require.

This is our will, and we bid you to have it at once read and published in all localities and public places within your authority and jurisdiction, as you may deem necessary, by the first one of our officers or sergeants in accordance with this requisition by virtue of these presents, or a copy of the same, properly attested once only by one of our well-beloved and faithful counselors, notaries, and secretaries, to which it is our will that credence should be given as to the present original, in order that none of our subjects may claim ground for ignorance, but that all may obey and act in accordance with our will in this matter. We order, moreover, all captains of vessels, mates, and second mates, and sailors of the same, and others on board of vessels or ships in the ports and harbors of the aforesaid country, to permit, as we have done, Sieur de Monts, and others possessing power and authority from him, to search the aforesaid vessels which shall have engaged in the fur trade after the present prohibition shall have been made known to them. It is our will that, upon the requisition of the aforesaid Sieur de Monts, his lieutenants, and others having authority, you should proceed against the disobedient and offenders, as the case may require: to this end, we give you power, authority, commission, and special mandate, notwithstanding the act of our council of the 17th day of July last, any hue and cry, Norman charter, accusation, objection, or appeals of whatsoever kind; on account of which and for fear of disregarding which, it is our will that there should be no delay, and, if any of these occur, we have withheld and reserved cognizance of the same to ourselves and our council, apart from all other judges, and have forbidden and prohibited the same to all our courts and judges: for this is our pleasure.

Given at Paris the seventh day of January, in the year of grace sixteen hundred and eight, and the nineteenth of our reign. Signed, HENRY. And lower down, by the king, Delomenie. And sealed with the single label of the great seal of yellow

wax. Collated with the original by me, counselor, notary, and secretary of the king.

I proceeded to Honfleur for embarkation, where I found the vessel of Pont Gravé in readiness. He left port on the 5th of April. I did so on the 13th, arriving at the Grand Bank on the 15th of May, in latitude 45E 15'. On the 26th we sighted Cape St. Mary, in latitude 46E 45', on the Island of Newfoundland. On the 27th of the month we sighted Cape St. Lawrence, on Cape Breton, and also the Island of St. Paul, distant eighty-three leagues from Cape St. Mary. On the 30th we sighted Isle Percée, and Gaspé, in latitude 48E 40', distant from seventy to seventy-five leagues.

On the 3d of June we arrived before Tadoussac, distant from Gaspé from eighty to ninety leagues; and we anchored in the roadstead of Tadoussac, a league distant from the harbor, which latter is a kind of cove at the mouth of the River Saguenay, and where there are sometimes violent winds, bringing severe cold. It is maintained that from the harbor of Tadoussac it is some forty-five or fifty leagues to the first fall on this river, which comes from the north-northwest. The harbor is small, and can accommodate only about twenty vessels. It has water enough, and is under shelter of the River Saguenay and a little rocky island, which is almost cut by the river. Elsewhere there are very high mountains, with little soil and only rocks and sand, thickly covered with such wood as fir and birch. There is a small pond near the harbor, shut in by mountains covered with wood. There are two points at the mouth: one on the southwest side, extending out nearly a league into the sea, called Point St. Matthew, or otherwise Point aux Allouettes; and another on the north-west side, extending out one-eighth of a league, and called Point of all Devils, from the dangerous nature of the place. The winds from the south-south-east strike the harbor, which are not to be feared; but those, however, from the Saguenay are. The two points above mentioned are dry at low tide.

Our vessel was unable to enter the harbor, as the wind and tide were unfavorable. I at once had the boat lowered, in order to go to the port and ascertain whether Pont Gravé had arrived. While on the way, I met a shallop with the pilot of Pont Gravé and a Basque, who came to inform me of what had happened to them because they attempted to hinder the Basque vessels from trading, according to the commission obtained by Sieur de Monts from his Majesty, that no vessels should trade without permission of Sieur de Monts, as well as expressed in it; and that, notwithstanding the notifications which Pont Gravé made in behalf of his Majesty, they did not desist from forcibly carrying on their traffic; and that they have used their arms and maintained themselves so well in their vessels that, discharging all their cannon upon that of Pont Gravé, and letting off many musket-shots, he was severely wounded, together with three of his men, one of whom died, Pont Gravé meanwhile making no resistance, for at the first shower of musketry he was struck down. The Basques came on board of the vessel and took away all the cannon and arms, declaring that they would trade, notwithstanding the prohibition of the King, and that when they were ready to set out from France they would restore to him his cannon and ammunition, and that they were keeping them in order to be in a state of security. Upon hearing all these particulars I was greatly annoyed at such a beginning, which we might have easily avoided.

Now, after hearing from the pilot all these things, I asked him why the Basque had come on board of our vessel. He told me that he came in behalf of their master, named Darache, and his companions to obtain assurance from me that I would do them no harm, when our vessel entered the harbor. I replied that I could not give any until I had seen Pont Gravé. The Basque said that, if I had need of anything in their power, they would assist me accordingly. What led them to use this language was simply their recognition of having done wrong, as they confessed, and the fear that they would not be permitted to engage in the whale-fishery. After talking at length, I went ashore to see Pont Gravé, in order to deliberate as to what was to be done. I found him very ill. He related to me in detail all that had happened. We concluded that we could only enter the harbor by force, and that the settlement must not be given up for this year, so that we considered it best, in order not to make a bad cause out of a just one, and thus work our ruin, to give them assurances on my part so long as I should remain there, and that Pont Gravé should undertake nothing against them, but that justice should be done in France, and their differences should be settled there. Darache, master of the vessel, begged me to go on board, where he gave me a cordial reception. After a long conference, I secured an agreement between Pont Gravé and him, and required him to promise that he would undertake nothing against Pont Gravé, or what would be prejudicial to the King and Sieur de Monts; that, if he did the contrary, I should regard my promise as null and void. This was agreed to, and signed by each.

In this place were a number of savages who had come for traffic in furs, several of whom came to our vessels with their canoes, which are from eight to nine paces long, and about a pace or pace and a half broad in their middle, growing narrower toward the two ends. They are very apt to turn over, in case one does not understand managing them, and are made of birch bark, strengthened on the inside by little ribs of white cedar, very neatly arranged. They are so light that a man can easily carry one. Each can carry a weight equal to that of a pipe. When they want to go overland to a river where they have business, they carry them with them. From Chouacoet along the coast as far as the harbor of Tadoussac, they are all alike. After this agreement, I had some carpenters set to work to fit up a little barque of twelve or fourteen tons, for carrying all that was needed for our settlement, which, however, could not be got ready before the last of June.

Meanwhile I managed to visit some parts of the river Saguenay, a fine river, which has the incredible depth of one hundred and fifty to two hundred fathoms. About fifty leagues from the mouth of the harbor there is, as is said, a great waterfall, descending from a very high elevation with great impetuosity. There are some islands in this river, very barren, being only rocks covered with small furs and heathers. It is half a league broad in places, and a quarter of a league at its mouth, where the current is so strong that at three-quarters flood-tide in the river it is still running out. All the land that I have seen consists only of mountains and rocky promontories, for the most part covered with fir and birch, a very unattractive country on both sides of the river. In a word, it is mere wastes, uninhabited by either animals or birds; for, going out hunting in places which

seemed to me the most pleasant, I found only some very small birds, such as swallows and river birds, which go there in summer. At other times there are none whatever, in consequence of the excessive cold. The river flows from the north-west.

The savages told me that after passing the first fall, they meet with eight others, when they go to a day's journey without finding any. Then they pass ten others, and enter a lake, which they are three days in crossing, and they are easily able to make ten leagues a day upstream. At the end of the lake there dwells a migratory people. Of the three rivers which flow into this lake, one comes from the north, very near the sea, where they consider it much colder than in their own country; and the other two from other directions in the interior, where are migratory savages, living only from hunting, and where our savages carry the merchandise we give them for their furs, such as beaver, marten, lynx, and otter, which are found there in large numbers, and which they then carry to our vessels. These people of the north report to our savages that they see the salt sea; and, if that is true, as I think it certainly is, it can be nothing but a gulf entering the interior on the north. The savages say that the distance from the north sea to the port of Tadoussac is perhaps forty-five or fifty days' journey, in consequence of the difficulties presented by the roads, rivers and country, which is very mountainous, and where there is snow for the most part of the year. This is what I have definitely ascertained in regard to this river. I have often wished to explore it, but could not do so without the savages, who were unwilling that I or any of our party should accompany them. Nevertheless, they have promised that I shall do so. This exploration would be desirable, in order to remove the doubts of many persons in regard to the existence of this sea on the north, where it is maintained that the English have gone in these latter years to find a way to China.

I set out from Tadoussac the last day of the month to go to Quebec. We passed near the island called Hare Island, distant six leagues from the above named port; it is two leagues from the northern, and nearly four leagues from the southern shore. From Hare Island we proceeded to a little river, dry at low tide, up which some seven hundred or eight hundred paces there are two falls. We named it Salmon River, since we caught some of these fish in it. Coasting along the north shore, we came to a point extending into the river, which we called Cape Dauphin, distant three leagues from Salmon River. Thence we proceeded to another, which we named Eagle Cape, distant eight leagues from Cape Dauphin. Between the two there is a large bay, at the extremity of which there is a little river dry at low tide. From Eagle Cape we proceeded to Isle aux Coudres, a good league distant, which is about a league and a half long. It is nearly level, and grows narrower towards the two ends. On the western side there are meadows, and rocky points extending some distance out into the river. On the south-west side it is very reefy, yet very pleasant in consequence of the woods surrounding it. It is distant about half a league from the northern shore, where is a little river extending some distance into the interior. We named it Riviere du Gouffre, since abreast of it the tide runs with extraordinary rapidity; and, although it has a calm appearance, it is always much agitated, the depth there being great: but the river itself is shallow, and there are many rocks at and about its mouth.

Coasting along from Isle aux Coudres, we reached a cape which we named Cap de Tourmente, five leagues distant; and we gave it this name because, however little wind there may be, the water rises there as if it were full tide. At this point the water begins to be fresh. Thence we proceeded to the Isle d'Orleans, a distance of two leagues, on the south side of which are numerous islands, low, covered with trees and very pleasant, with large meadows, having plenty of game, some being, so far as I could judge, two leagues in length, others a trifle more or less. About these islands are many rocks, also very dangerous shallows, some two leagues distant from the main land on the south. All this shore, both north and south, from Tadoussac to the Isle d'Orleans, is mountainous, and the soil very poor. The wood is pine, fir, and birch only, with very ugly rocks, so that in most places one could not make his way.

Now we passed along south of the Isle d'Orleans, which is a league and a half distant from the main land and a half a league on the north side, being six leagues in length, and one in breadth, or in some places a league and a half. On the north side, it is very pleasant, on account of the great extent of woods and meadows there; but it is very dangerous sailing, in consequence of the numerous points and rocks between the main land and the island, on which are numerous fine oaks and in some places nut-trees, and on the borders of the woods wines and other trees such as we have in France. This place is the commencement of the fine and fertile country of the great river, and is distant one hundred and twenty leagues from its mouth. Off the end of the island is a torrent of water on the north shore, proceeding from a lake ten leagues in the interior: it comes down from a height nearly twenty-five fathoms, above which the land is level and pleasant, although further inland are seen high mountains appearing to be from fifteen to twenty leagues distant.

From the Isle d'Orleans to Quebec the distance is a league. I arrived there on the 3rd of July, when I searched for a place suitable for our settlement; but I could find none more convenient or better suited than the point of Quebec, so called by the savages, which was covered with nut-trees. I at once employed a portion of our workmen in cutting them down, that we might construct our habitations there: one I set to sawing boards, another to making a cellar and digging ditches, another I sent to Tadoussac with the barque to get supplies, which was promptly accomplished through the zeal of all, and my attention to the work.

Some days after my arrival at Quebec a locksmith conspired against the service of the king. His plan was to put me to death, and, getting possession of our fort, to put into the hands of the Basques or Spaniards, then at Tadoussac, beyond which vessels cannot go, from not having a knowledge of the route, nor of the banks and rocks on the way. In order to execute his wretched plan, by which he hoped to make his fortune, he suborned four of the worst characters, as he supposed, telling them a thousand falsehoods, and presenting to them prospects of acquiring riches. These four men, having been won over, all promised to act in such a manner as to gain the rest over to their side, so that, for the time being, I had no one with me in whom I could put

confidence, which gave them still more hope of making their plan succeed; for four or five of my companions, in whom they knew that I put confidence, were on board of the barques, for the purpose of protecting the provisions and supplies necessary for our settlement. In a word, they were so skillful in carrying out their intrigues with those who remained that they were on the point of gaining all over to their cause, even my lackey, promising them many things which they could not have fulfilled.

Being now all agreed, they made daily different plans as to how they should put me to death, so as not to be accused of it, which they found to be a difficult thing. But the devil, blindfolding them all and taking away their reason and every possible difficulty, they determined to take me while unarmed, and strangle me, or to give a false alarm at night, and shoot me as I went out, in which manner they judged that they would accomplish their work sooner than otherwise. They made a mutual promise not to betray each other, on penalty that the first one who opened his mouth should be poniarded. They were to execute their plan in four days, before the arrival of our barques, otherwise they would have been unable to carry out their scheme.

On this very day one of our barques arrived, with our pilot, Captain Testu, a very discreet man. After the barque was unloaded, and ready to return to Tadoussac, there came to him a locksmith, named Natel, an associate of Jean du Val, the head of the conspiracy, who told him that he had promised the rest to do just as they did, but that he did not in fact desire the execution of the plot, yet did not dare to make a disclosure in regard to it from fear of being poniarded. Antoine Natel made the pilot promise that he would make no disclosure in regard to what he should say, since, if his companions should discover it, they would put him to death. The pilot gave him his assurance in all particulars, and asked him to state the character of the plot which they wished to carry out. This Natel did at length, when the pilot said to him: "My friend you have done well to disclose such a malicious design, and you show that you are an upright man, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But these things cannot be passed by without bringing them to the knowledge of Sieur de Champlain, that he may make provision against them, and I promise you that I will prevail upon him to pardon you and the rest. And I will at once," said the pilot, "go to him without exciting any suspicion; and do you go about your business, listening to all they may say, and not troubling yourself about the rest."

The pilot came at once to me, in a garden which I was having prepared, and said that he wished to speak to me in a private place, where we could be alone. I readily assented, and we went into the wood, where he related to me the whole affair. I asked who had told it to him. He begged me to pardon him who had made the disclosure, which I consented to do, although he ought to have addressed himself to me. He was afraid, he replied, that you would become angry, and harm him. I told him that I was able to govern myself better than that in such a matter, and desired him to have the man come to me, that I might hear the statement. He went, and brought him all trembling with fear lest I should do him harm. I reassured him, telling him not to be afraid, that he was in a place of safety, and that I should pardon him for all that he had

done, together with the others, provided he would tell me in full the truth in regard to the whole matter, and the motive which had impelled them to it. "Nothing," he said, "had impelled them, except that they had imagined that, by giving up the place into the hands of the Basques or Spaniards, they might all become rich, and that they did not want to go back to France." He also related to me the remaining particulars in regard to their conspiracy.

After having heard and questioned him, I directed him to go about his work. Meanwhile I ordered the pilot to bring up his shallop, which he did. Then I gave two bottles of wine to a young man, directing him to say to these four worthies, the leaders of the conspiracy, that it was a present of wine, which his friends at Tadoussac had given him, and that he wished to share it with them. This they did not decline, and at evening were on board the barque where he was to give them the entertainment. I lost no time in going there shortly after, and caused them to be seized and held until the next day. Then were my worthies astonished indeed. I at once had all get up, for it was about ten o'clock in the evening, and pardoned them all on condition that they would disclose to me the truth in regard to all that had occurred, which they did, when I had them retire.

The next day I took the depositions of all, one after the other, in the presence of the pilot and sailors of the vessel, which I had put down in writing; and they were well pleased, as they said, since they had lived only in fear of each other, especially of the four knaves who had ensnared them. But now they lived in peace, satisfied, as they declared, with the treatment which they had received. The same day I had six pairs of handcuffs made for the authors of the conspiracy: one for our surgeon, named Bonnerme, one for another, named La Taille, whom the four conspirators had accused, which, however, proved false, and consequently they were given their liberty.

This being done, I took my worthies to Tadoussac, begging Pont Gravé to do me the favor of guarding them, since I had as yet no secure place for keeping them, and as we were occupied in constructing our places of abode. Another object was to consult with him, and others on the ship, as to what should be done in the premises. We suggested that, after he had finished his work at Tadoussac, he should come to Quebec with the prisoners, where we should have them confronted with their witnesses, and, after giving them a hearing, order justice to be done according to the offense which they had committed.

I went back the next day to Quebec, to hasten the completion of our storehouse, so as to secure our provisions, which had been misused by all those scoundrels, who spared nothing, without reflecting how they could find more when these failed; for I could not obviate the difficulty until the storehouse should be completed and shut up. Pont Gravé arrived some time after me, with the prisoners, which caused uneasiness to the workmen who remained, since they feared that I should pardon them, and that they would avenge themselves upon them for revealing their wicked design. We had them brought face to face, and they affirmed before them all which they had stated in their depositions, the prisoners not denying it, but admitting that they had acted in a wicked

manner, and should be punished, unless mercy might be exercised towards them; accusing, above all, Jean du Val, who had been trying to lead them into such a conspiracy from the time of their departure from France. Du Val knew not what to say, except that he deserved death, that all stated in the depositions was true, and that he begged for mercy upon himself and the others, who had given in their adherence to his pernicious purposes.

After Pont Gravé and I, the captain of the vessel, surgeon, mate, second mate, and other sailors had heard their depositions and face to face statements, we adjudged that it would be enough to put to death Du Val, as the instigator of the conspiracy; and that he might serve as an example to those who remained, leading them to deport themselves correctly in future, in the discharge of their duty; and that the Spaniards and Basques, of whom there were large numbers in the country, might not glory in the event. We adjudged that the three others be condemned to be hung, but that they should be taken to France and put into the hands of Sieur de Monts, that such ample justice might be done them as he should recommend; that they should be sent with all the evidence of their sentence, as well as that of Jean du Val, who was strangled and hung at Quebec, and his head was put on the end of a pike, to be set up in the most conspicuous place on our fort. After all these occurrences, Pont Gravé set out from Quebec, on the 18th of September, to return to France with the three prisoners. After he had gone, all who remained conducted themselves correctly in the discharge of their duty.

I had the work of our quarters continued, which was composed of three buildings of two stories. Each one was three fathoms long, and two and a half wide, with a fine cellar six feet deep. I had a gallery made all around our buildings, on the outside, at the second story, which proved very convenient. There were also ditches, fifteen feet wide and six deep. On the other side of the ditches I constructed several spurs, which enclosed a part of the dwelling, at the points where we placed our cannon. Before the habitation there is a place four fathoms wide and six or seven long, looking out upon the riverbank. Surrounding the habitation are very good gardens, and a place on the north side some hundred or hundred and twenty paces long and fifty or sixty wide. Moreover, near Quebec, there is a little river, coming from a lake in the interior, distant six or seven leagues from our settlement. I am of the opinion that this river, which is north a quarter north-west from our settlement, is the place where Jacques Cartier wintered, since there are still, a league up the river, remains of what seems to have been a chimney, the foundation of which has been found, and indications of there having been ditches surrounding their dwelling, which was small. We found, also, large pieces of hewn, worm-eaten timber, and some three or four cannon-balls. All these things show clearly that there was a settlement there founded by Christians; and what leads me to say and believe that it was that of Jacques Cartier is the fact that there is no evidence whatever that any one wintered and built a house in these places except Jacques Cartier, at the time of his discoveries.

This place, as I think, must have been called St. Croix, as he named it, which name has since been transferred to another place fifteen leagues west of our settlement. But there is no evidence of his having wintered in the place now called St. Croix, nor in any other there, since in this direction there is no river or other place large enough for vessels except the main river or that of which I spoke above; here there is a half a fathom of water at low tide, many rocks, and a bank at the mouth, for vessels, if kept in the main river, where there are strong currents and tides, and ice in the winter, drifting along, would run the risk of being lost; especially as there is a sandy point extending out into the river, and filled with rocks, between which we have found, within the last three years, a passage not before discovered; but one must go through cautiously, in consequence of the dangerous points there. This place is exposed to the north-west winds; and the river runs as if it were a fall, the tide ebbing two and a half fathoms. There are no signs of buildings here, nor any indications that a man of judgment would settle in this place, there being many other better ones, in case one were obliged to make a permanent stay. I have been desirous of speaking at length on this point, since many believe that the abode of Jacques Cartier was here, which I do not believe, for the reasons here given; for Cartier would have left to posterity a narrative of the matter, as he did in the case of all he saw and discovered; and I maintain that my opinion is the true one, as can be shown by the history which he has left in writing.

Source.

From: Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries, pp. 342-354.

Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

This text is part of the Internet Modern History Sourcebook.

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.asp>)

The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.