

In 1609, two European explorers staked their claims on the waterways of modern-day New York State. As Henry Hudson sailed for England up the river that would bear his name, Samuel de Champlain discovered the lake that bears his name on an expedition for France.

Born in 1567, Champlain fought in the French religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. When he sailed with an uncle to transport Spanish troops to their home country, the Spanish government commandeered their ship for an expedition across the Atlantic. Samuel's first visit to the New World lasted nearly three years. He secretly composed a detailed journal of what he saw in "New Spain."

When he returned to France, he submitted the journal to King Henri IV, who rewarded him by making him a noble – the Sieur de Champlain.

The French first ventured into the New World nearly 100 years earlier, when Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence searching for "Northwest Passage" to Asia. After early expeditions failed, French activity was mostly limited to fishing expeditions until booming demand for beaver fur made North America look like lucrative territory. In 1603, King Henri sent Champlain across the Atlantic on a mission for France.

For the next four years, on two separate expeditions, Champlain explored the Atlantic Coast from New Brunswick down to New England. He sailed the St. Lawrence River in search of a northwest passage, reaching the Lachine Rapids before turning back. He befriended Huron natives and wrote *Des Sauvages* about the people and the territory.

Champlain returned to "New France" in 1608. To strengthen relations with the Hurons, he agreed to join them on an expedition to the south to fight their Iroquois enemies. The Hurons were as curious about the French as Champlain was about them. They insisted on seeing the colony Champlain had established at Quebec before heading off to war. It was the first permanent French settlement in present-day Canada.

Champlain's men and the Hurons penetrated Iroquois territory on June 18, 1609. On the Richelieu River, the French soon found it impossible to carry their bulky boats on the land portages required by rapids and other water obstacles. Leaving all but two French troops behind, Champlain continued on canoes with the Hurons on the Richelieu until they reached a large lake on July 4.

"Lake Champlain" formed part of a chain of lakes and rivers stretching from the St. Lawrence in Canada to the Hudson in present-day New York. The lake itself stretches from north to south for approximately 100 miles, fluctuating in width from a quarter-mile to more than twelve miles. Its border-crossing length destined Lake Champlain to be fought over by rival Indian nations, and later by rival European powers.

At Ticonderoga, near the southern end of the lake, Champlain and the Hurons finally fought the Iroquois. Champlain's firearms were decisive in the battle, which served as a precursor of 150 years of conflict. In the future, the French and Hurons would be allies in Canada, while



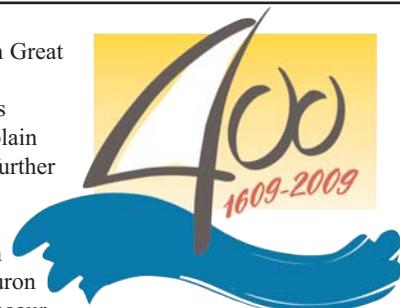
some of the Iroquois allied with Great Britain in New York.

After the battle, the Hurons returned to Canada, and Champlain returned to France to promote further trade and settlement. He made sure to leave one Frenchman behind with the Hurons to learn their language, and to take a Huron with him to learn French. He encouraged others to learn native languages and customs to solidify the Huron alliance.

Champlain invaded Iroquois territory again in 1615, and was wounded while storming an Iroquois fort. Afterwards, he stuck to administering Quebec, but war would eventually follow him north.

In 1627 New France was reorganized under the supervision of Cardinal Richelieu, the power behind the French throne, and the Company of One Hundred Associates. The Company took more aggressive steps to promote French settlement, while Richelieu appointed Champlain "Commander" of New France. Two years later, British forces besieged Quebec until Champlain surrendered control of the colony. In 1632, through the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, Quebec was restored to Champlain and the French. He remained as Commander until his death on Christmas Day, 1635.

The wars between Britain and France for the future of North America had just begun. Lake Champlain served as part of the front line separating French from British territory, with Ticonderoga, defended by Ft. Carillon, becoming a strategic fortress in the ultimate conflict. After the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Britain controlled Lake Champlain, but the lake's role in history as a violent border region wasn't over yet.



EXPLORE NY

HUDSON • FULTON • CHAMPLAIN

Samuel de Champlain and Lake Champlain

This is one of a 10-part educational series created by the NYNPA NIE Program © 2008

Newspaper Tie-ins to Today:

Samuel de Champlain's first visit to the New World was to search for a northwest passage to Asia. Look through newspapers for articles about new discoveries. What were the "explorers" looking for originally? What did they find?

The French explorers including Samuel de Champlain and the Hurons were curious about each other and visited each other's communities. Look through recent editions of the newspaper (in-print and online) for examples of people exploring a new place or community.

Champlain and the French sided with the Hurons in the fights with their native rivals, the Iroquois. Look through the newspaper for modern examples of different groups joining forces to fight against a rival group. Research why these groups are allies.

Image: Champlain exploring the Canadian wilderness, Library of Congress, reproduction number LC-USZ62-3019. For more information on the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadracentennial go to www.explore400.com.