



Fathers of Confederation, from the painting by Robert Harris.

GROWTH OF THE NATION

The story of Canada begins nearly 1,000 years ago—with a storm at sea. Leif Ericson, a Norseman sailing from Norway to Greenland, was blown wide of his course and sighted the Canadian coast. Various Norse colonies were established on the mainland during the next three centuries, but disappeared entirely in the fourteenth century, when the existence of the continent became legendary.

Following the quest of Columbus for a western route to the markets of the Orient, John Cabot, sailing from Bristol in 1497, sighted Newfoundland and possibly Cape Breton Island, and claimed the territory for England. His glowing report, that "the sea is covered with fishes which were caught not only with the net but in baskets," brought the fishing fleets of Europe to the rich cod-banks lying off the east coast.

New France

Jacques Cartier, a Breton explorer, founded new France in 1534 with the planting of a cross at Gaspé Harbour. Cartier also discovered the great northern gateway to the continent—the St. Lawrence River. Barter with the native Indians laid the foundation for a fur trade that became immensely important and profitable to France.

The first permanent French settlements were founded by Samuel de Champlain, explorer and trader, in 1604. The earliest was Port Royal in what is now Nova Scotia. Later, on a site commanding the passage up the St. Lawrence, Quebec was founded in 1608. Although only eight of the original settlers survived the first winter, the colony remained, and Quebec became the base for French expansion in North America.

During the next twenty-five years, Champlain continued his exploration of the hinterland in a vain search for a northwest passage to Asia. He reached Georgian Bay and the country of the Huron Indians, with whom he established friendship, and the French became allies of the Hurons against their enemy, the Iroquois.

Settlement advanced slowly from Quebec. Trois Rivières was founded in 1634, and Montreal in 1642. A fresh outbreak of war between the Iroquois and the Hurons seriously involved the French settlements, which were dependent on their fur trade with the Hurons. The Hurons were massacred and the economic basis of the colony crumbled.

The Jesuit missions, key outposts of French influence, were in ashes throughout Huronia; many missionary fathers, including the saintly Brébeuf, were cruelly martyred. Montreal, Trois Rivières, and Quebec itself were menaced by the attacking Iroquois. New France fought for its life.

This perilous situation was met with a new colonial policy for Canada introduced by Colbert, the brilliant First Minister of Louis XIV. Royal Government was established in the colony in 1663, ending the rule of chartered fur trading companies. Vigorous

The Chateau de Ramezay dates from 1704.

