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issippi, founded Louisiana, explored the West, first reached the Arctic, by way of the Mackenzie, first crossed the continent. It established the first great trade route on the continent in the 17th century, that by way of the Ottawa to the head of Lake Superior. It extended that water highway until in the early part of the 19th century it reached across the continent to the Pacific, with branches leading into the Dakotas and the Oregon country.

Of all the world's great trade routes of early times, the caravan routes of Asia and North Africa, the routes that radiated from the cities of the Mediterranean to many little known lands, there is none more picturesque and romantic than the great water highway that led from Montreal up the Ottawa, down the French River, across Lakes Huron and Superior, through the network of rivers and lakes that led to Lake Winnipeg, up the rivers that led to the Methye Portage and the Athabasca, and to headwaters that were connected with headwaters of the Columbia River, leading to the Pacific. Here the trade of a continent was carried by great canoe brigades and on men's backs over hundreds of portages.

Then when the railroads came, Montreal took a foremost place in railroad building, so that it is now headquarters of the two greatest railroad systems in the world measured by mileage, one of which by rail and steamship lines connects the British Isles with Japan, China and Australia.