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## FIRST FRENCH FOOT-PRINTS BEYOND THE LAKES; OR, WHAT BROUGHT THE FRENCH SO EARLY INTO THE NORTHWEST?

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Copper mines in the north, and burial-barrows everywhere, bespeak prehistoric races in Wisconsin. But in *modern* Wisconsin there was little agricultural settlement before 1836, which we may accordingly reckon its American birth year.

Between these two developments, however, there was a third, a sort of midway station between the mound-builder or the Indian and the Anglo-Saxon — namely, the *French* period. This portion of our annals seems worthy of more attention than it has yet received.

The French were early on Lake Huron, and even in Wisconsin. They were there before the cavaliers in Virginia, the Dutch at Albany, and the Puritans of Boston had pushed inland much more than a day's journey. The Mississippi was mapped before the Ohio. Champlain sailed on Lake Huron in 1615, only seven years after the settlement of Quebec. A monk had arrived there a month or two before Champlain.

On early maps the contrast between French knowledge and English ignorance is at once plain to the eye. On the map drawn by Champlain, in 1632, we see the Lakes which we call Ontario, Huron, Superior and Michigan, while no one of them, nor indeed any river St. Lawrence, is discoverable on Peter Heylin's atlas, the one best known in London twenty years afterward. On the blank, where those inland seas should have figured, we read the words *America Mexicana*, as if Mexico had extended to Hudson's Bay.

But while the English on the Atlantic coast were ignorant of western geography, and before the French in Canada numbered ten thousand, Joliet and Marquette, in 1673, traversed Wisconsin from lake to river. They were long supposed to be among the earliest explorers of Wisconsin. In 1853, however, the Catholic