

HISTORY



THE history of Montreal as a centre of population commences with the visit of Jacques Cartier to the Indians of the town of Hochelaga in 1535. The place was situated close to Mount Royal, on a site a short distance from the front of the McGill College Grounds, and all within less than a block below Sherbrooke Street, at Mansfield Street. It was a circular palisaded Huron-Iroquois strong hold, which had been in existence for several generations and had been founded by a party which had broken off in some manner from the Huron nations at Lake Huron, at a period estimated to be somewhere about 1400. It was at that time the dominant town of the entire Lower St. Lawrence Valley, and apparently also of Lake Champlain, in both of which quarters numerous settlements of the same race had sprung from it as a centre. Cartier describes how he found it in the following words: "And in the midst of those fields is situated and fixed the said town of Hochelaga, near and joining a mountain which is in its neighbourhood, well tilled and exceedingly fertile; therefrom one sees very far. We named that mountain Mount Royal. The said town is quite round and palisaded with wood in three rows, in form of a pyramid, interlaced above, having the middle row in perpendicular, then lined with wood laid along, well joined and corded in their mode, and it is of the height of about two lances. And there is in that town but one gate and entrance, which shuts with bars, on which and in several places on said palisade is a kind of galleries, with ladders to mount them, which are furnished with rocks and stones for the guard and defence thereof. There are in that town about fifty houses, each at most about fifty paces long and twelve to fifteen paces wide, all made of wood, covered and furnished in great pieces of bark as large as tables, well sewed artificially after their manner, and in them are several halls and chambers; and in the middle of said houses is a