

Who Discovered Prince Edward Island?

THE discovery of Prince Edward Island has long been a subject of debate, some claiming that it was discovered by John Cabot, on June 24, 1497, others claiming the honor for Jacques Cartier, who visited the island in 1534.

In Hakluyt's *Voyages* we find the following description of the discovery of what the upholders of Cabot's side of the question claim to be Prince Edward Island:—

"In the year of our Lord 1497, John Cabot, a Venetian, and his son Sebastian, discovered that country which no one before that time had ventured to approach, on the 24th of June, about 5 o'clock in the morning. He called that land *Terra Prima Visa*, because, as I conjecture, this was the place that first met his eyes on looking from the sea; on the contrary, the island which lies opposite the land he called the Island of Saint John, as I suppose, because it was discovered on the Festival of Saint John the Baptist."

Without doubt the Cabots discovered the mainland of North America, but the general opinion of those who have made a very careful study of the voyages of the Cabots is that the *Prima Visa* of Cabot was Newfoundland, and not Cape Breton. If such be the case the Saint John's Island of Cabot could not be this Island, but probably Cape Breton. There seem to be good reasons to assert that it was Samuel Champlain who named the Island Saint John. However, the evidence procurable is far from being conclusive enough to place the Cabots as the discoverers of Prince Edward Island.

That Jacques Cartier visited the Island in 1534 cannot be doubted. Perhaps the story of his visit may best be told in his own words:—

The next day, being the last of the month save one (June 29th), the wind blew south and by east. We sailed westward until Tuesday morning at sunrise, the last of the month, without knowledge of any land, except in the evening towards sunset, when we discovered a land which seemed to be two islands (probably Grenville, P. E. I.) that were beyond us west-southwest, about nine or ten leagues. All that day till the next morning at sunrise we sailed westward about forty leagues, and on the way we perceived that the land we had seen