

and Californian coasts until he reached the broad inlet of the sea which to this day bears his name, and which forms the southern limit of Canada on the western ocean. Eight years after the alleged discovery by Juan de Fuca, Henry Hudson ascertained the existence of a great inland sea accessible from the Atlantic side of the new continent. From Hudson's Bay it was confidently expected that some passage would speedily be found which would enable ships to traverse from the Atlantic to the Pacific and shorten the voyage from Europe to Asia.

In 1669 the whole region surrounding Hudson's Bay was granted by the British Crown to the society of merchants ever since known as the Hudson's Bay Company, who, after thoroughly exploring its shores, failed in discovering an outlet to the west.

The first civilised men who pierced the interior were probably French adventurers and traders from old Canada, while the whole country was yet in the possession of France. The exploits of these men who, without the slightest previous knowledge of the territory, penetrated among numerous savage tribes, would be of thrilling interest. They passed from the St. Lawrence through the great lakes Huron and Superior, and by the innumerable intricacies of streams; lakes, and portages to Lake Winnipeg. Thence they passed up the River Saskatchewan to about the 103° meridian, where they planted their most distant trading post some 2,000 miles from the then colonised parts of Canada.

In 1679, almost two centuries ago, Robert Chevalier de la Sale entertained the idea of finding a way to China through the lakes and rivers of Canada. His expedition set out in the frail canoes of the natives, his point of departure above the rapids on the St. Lawrence, near Montreal, was named, and is still named, La Chine, in consequence of the daring project to reach from that point the land of the Chinaman. Half a century later the attempt was renewed. In 1731, Pierre Gauthier de Varennes, under the auspices of Charles, Marquis de Beauharnois, Governor of New France, commanded the expedition, and although he failed to reach the Pacific Ocean, he was the first to reach the Rocky Mountains.

In 1762, Fort La Rouge, close to the site of the present Fort Garry, was an established trading post. Soon after this the conquest of Canada extinguished French possession and terminated French exploration in the western wilderness. Even the French missionaries, who were the first to preach the Gospel to the aborigines, abandoned the country, and did not resume the work for nearly sixty years.