

## Canadians of Whom You May Not Have Heard: 1700-1885 Spectacular Explorers, Exploiters, And A Rebel

*Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Verendrye*, born in 1700, son of the Governor of Three Rivers. Though the Governor's son, he had no silver spoon. Three Rivers was less than a village and the Governor merely a retired Army Lieutenant who had been pensioned off. Pierre spent his life from boyhood as a woodsman, a soldier and a fur trader. Much of the time he spent in search of the Pacific. Indians on Lake Superior first told him of a great salt sea far to the West and he (and in time his sons) began moving toward it, setting up blockhouse stockades on Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and at the mouth of the Saskatchewan. His eldest son and twenty companions were massacred by the Sioux. The others pushed on. In 1743 two sons discovered the Mountains.

They may have been the Black Hills of Dakota, but they were probably authentic Rockies — the Big Horn Range in Wyoming. The Pacific was still 800 miles away. On the way back East the sons buried a lead plaque on the banks of the Missouri, dated "le 30 de Mars 1743." South  
*Riel as a prisoner, doomed, in 1885.*

Dakota school children dug it up in 1913.

The Rockies electrified Paris, and La Verendrye, who had received scant encouragement before, was given a command of troops, the promise of backing and the Order of St. Louis. He died in Montreal in 1749, the night before his last push West was to begin. Alexander Mackenzie would get to the Pacific finally in 1793.

*Pierre Esprit Radisson and Chouart des Groseilliers*. Radisson and Groseilliers were brothers-in-law and Huguenots, Protestant refugees from France. They were also from very early age fur trappers. Radisson, the more colorful of the two, was captured by the Mohawks who were about to burn him at the stake when he was rescued by a brave squaw. He became an honorary if not an honorable Indian and adopted some of their customs, including burning his enemies at the stake and occasionally eating them at cannibal feasts. He and his brother-in-law, Groseilliers, opened up vast territories to the fur trade, rambling all over the shores of Lake Superior. He took hundreds of canoes filled with furs to Que-

