

In 1534, one Jaques Cartier, of St. Maloes, set sail under a commission from the French king, and on the 10th of May arrived at Cape Bonavista in Newfoundland. He had with him two small ships besides the one in which he sailed. He cruised along the coasts of that island, on which he discovered inhabitants, probably the Ekimaux. He landed in several places along the coast of the Gulf, and took possession of the country in the king's name. On his return, he was again sent out with a commission, and a pretty large force; he returned in 1535, and passed the winter at St. Croix; but the season proved so severe, that he and his companions must have died of the scurvy, had they not, by the advice of the natives, made use of the decoction of the tops and bark of the white pines. As Cartier, however, could produce neither gold nor silver, all that he could say about the utility of the settlement was disregarded; and in 1540, he was obliged to become pilot to one M. Roberval, who was by the French king appointed viceroy of Canada, and who sailed from France with five vessels. Arriving at the Gulf of St. Lawrence, they built a fort; and Cartier was left to command the garrison in it, while Roberval returned to France for additional recruits to his new settlement. At last, having embarked in 1549, with a great number of adventurers, neither he nor any of his followers were heard of more.

This fatal accident so greatly discouraged the court of France, that for fifty years no measures were taken for supplying with necessaries the settlers that were left. At last Henry IV. appointed the Marquis de la Roche lieutenant-general of Canada and the neighbouring countries. In 1598 he landed on the isle of Sable, which he absurdly thought to be a proper place for a settlement, though it was without any port, and without product except briars. Here he left about forty malefactors, the refuse of the French jails. After cruising for some time on the coast of Nova Scotia, without being able to relieve these poor wretches, he returned to France, where he died of a broken heart. His colony must have perished, had not a French ship been wrecked on the island, and a few sheep driven upon it at the same time. With the boards of the ship they erected huts; and while the sheep lasted they lived on them, feeding afterwards on fish. Their clothes wearing out, they made coats of seal-skins; and in this miserable condition they spent seven years, when Henry ordered them to be brought to France. The king had the curiosity to see them in their seal-skin dresses, and was so moved with their appearance, that he forgave them all their offences, and gave each of them fifty crowns to begin the world anew.