

Name _____



Samuel de Champlain

By Mary Lynn Bushong

In the great race to explore the New World, Spain was in the lead with a large foothold, and France did not want to get too far behind. The goal was to explore and settle lands that they had claimed more than sixty years before. To do that job, the king of France chose Samuel de Champlain.

Champlain was born in 1567, in the small town of Brouage, France. Little is known of his family or his early life. His father was a ship captain, but he actually received much of his seaman's training from his uncle. Trained as a navigator, he sailed with his uncle, taking Spanish soldiers from France to Spain. Champlain earned command of his own vessel in 1599, which he used for the next two years to go back and forth from the West Indies, Central America, and Panama. While he was at Panama, he thought a canal system might be cut across the isthmus, shortening travel time to the Pacific.

Around 1601, he returned to France and was given a pension by Henry IV. Then in 1603, he was invited to go along on an expedition to explore France's possessions in the New World. They also hoped to find a good place to establish a colony. On May 24 of that year, they anchored at Tadoussac on the St. Lawrence. They took a small boat as far as the rapids above Montreal and back and then explored both sides of the St. Lawrence River as far as the Gaspé Peninsula before returning to France.

In 1604 he returned to found a colony called Acadia on the Bay of Fundy. They formed a settlement on the Island of St. Croix and stayed the winter, but the location proved to be unsuitable.

Over the long, dark winter, Champlain came up with a plan to help keep his men from being bored. He established what he called the Order of Good Cheer. Each man would take one evening and plan the entertainment. The evening included food, dancing, and putting on



plays. In the spring, the whole group moved to Port Royal near present day Annapolis, Nova Scotia.

From 1604-06 Champlain explored the coastline as far away as Cape Cod, making maps and surveys of the area. He returned to France again in 1607. He returned again the next year and continued up the St. Lawrence to a site called Quebec by the Algonquins. He decided to build a settlement and trading post there.

In 1609, Champlain joined his Algonquin allies in a raid against the Iroquois. Moving south, they came to the lake which now bears his name. They engaged the Iroquois and used their more modern weapons to kill many of them. This started the war of the French and Algonquins against the Iroquois. When the English became involved, they took the side of the Iroquois. The battles did not end until the French lost their position of supremacy. At the end of the summer, Champlain returned to France once more.

The next year, he returned and continued the war with the Iroquois. He was wounded with an arrow and returned to France again the next year. While home in France, Champlain married Helene Boule. She stayed in France much of the time but did spend some time with her husband in the New World. That same year, financial losses in the fur trade stopped investing by many merchants. It took the involvement of King Louis XIII to get it moving again. As the appointed commandant of the colony, Champlain was soon anxious to return.

In 1613 he re-established his authority in the colonies and worked to restore the fur trade. He encouraged merchants, missionaries, and settlers to come while he went and explored. During one of the battles against the Iroquois, he was severely wounded and carried back to Quebec. A few years later, his authority was reaffirmed, but he was banned from exploring and taking part in raids.

In 1628, English privateers laid siege to the small colony and the fort. After almost a year, Sir David Kirk and his brothers forced him to surrender. He was taken prisoner and taken back to England. He remained there until 1632, when he was finally released and the colony was returned to French hands.

On December 25, 1635, he died of a stroke in Quebec City, New France. Over the course of his life, he wrote seven books which gave keen insights into his exploration of the New World.



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Samuel de Champlain

Questions

_____ 1. While commanding his first ship, Champlain thought of taking this action in Central America:

- A. Bringing in slaves
- B. Mining for gold
- C. Building a canal
- D. None of the above

2. How would Champlain's trip to Central America to help prepare him as an explorer to New France?

_____ 3. Which king of France sent Champlain to the New World?

- A. Henry IV
- B. Louis XIII
- C. Henry I
- D. Louis XV

4. Why would the Algonquins want to be allied with the French?

_____ 5. What order did Champlain devise to keep his men out of trouble during the long winter months in New France? The Order of:

- A. Good Times
- B. Good Behavior
- C. Hard Work
- D. Good Cheer

6. What is a privateer, and why did they lay siege to Quebec City?

_____ 7. Champlain is best known for:

- A. Establishing Montreal
- B. Finding the St. Lawrence River
- C. Establishing French as a primary language
- D. Establishing Quebec City

8. What was the king's reasoning for banning Champlain from exploring after 1620?
