

Henry Hudson



SIR HENRY HUDSON.

Henry Hudson is one of the most famous early explorers to Canada. Hudson Bay, Hudson River, Hudson Strait and the Hudson Bay Company are all named after him.

Although he is so famous, not much is known about his early life. Historians believe he was born around the year 1565 in England. There are also reports that he had a wife named Katherine and three sons.

Hudson made four journeys as captain looking for the Northwest Passage. In 1607, he was hired by the Muscovy Company and made it as far as Greenland before he had to turn back because of icy waters. In 1608, he made it to the north of Russia but had to turn back again because of thick ice in the Arctic Ocean.

In 1609, Hudson joined the Dutch East India Company and sailed out of Amsterdam, Netherlands on a ship called the *Half Moon*. He landed in Nova Scotia in July 1609. Indigenous peoples here were used to trading with the French, but Hudson's team did not trade with them. After 10 days on shore, 12 men from Hudson's team went ashore and attacked a settlement, stealing boats and other property. They left and continued south to what is now Hudson River. Here, Hudson traded with the Indigenous groups along the river, mostly for furs. When he returned to Europe, he was stopped in Dartmouth, England. The English were not happy that he was working for a Dutch company, and they sent him out on an English ship.

In 1610, Hudson left London on the English ship *Discovery*. He sailed past Iceland and Greenland into the Hudson Strait and into Hudson Bay. The winter was harsh and the crew was forced to spend their winter in James Bay. In the Spring of 1611, Hudson's crew mutinied, (they took over the ship) and forced Hudson out on a small boat. He is believed to have died shortly after that in or around Hudson Bay.



Jacques Cartier

Jacques Cartier was born in Saint-Malo, France on December 31, 1491. Not much is known about his early life, but he likely had a good reputation and was in good standing in his community as he was named as a witness or godfather in several baptismal records. He married Mary Catherine des Granches in 1520.

Cartier got the attention of King Francis I who sent him on three voyages to explore the “new world.” He left for his first voyage on April 20, 1534 with 61 men on two ships. He reached Newfoundland in mid-May, then sailed into the Gulf of St. Lawrence where he explored Prince Edward Island. He explored some of Newfoundland and traded with Mi'kmaq peoples in Chaleur Bay. In July, he planted a cross near Gaspé Bay and took possession of the land for France, angering local Haudenosaunee. Cartier kidnapped two sons of the Haudenosaunee captain and returned to France.

In May, 1535, Cartier sailed again to Canada, using the two Haudenosaunee captives as guides. They travelled down the St. Lawrence River and arrived at the Haudenosaunee capital of Stadacona (Quebec City). When he arrived, he asked his guides what the place was called and they answered with the Haudenosaunee word “kanata” meaning village. He sailed further down the river to Hochelaga (Montreal), but couldn't sail past there because the river was blocked by rapids. Cartier spent the winter in Stadacona because the mouth of the river had frozen solid. The weather was cold and harsh and many of his men and the Haudenosaunee got sick with scurvy. Roughly 85 Haudenosaunee and 35 French died from their illnesses. They sailed back to France in July, 1536. When Cartier returned to France, he said he had explored into the Canadas – meaning the Haudenosaunee villages. He is credited with giving Canada its name.

In May 1541, Cartier sailed to Canada for the third time with 5 ships set on establishing a permanent colony. He helped build a fort but abandoned the base before the colonists could arrive. He encountered them in Newfoundland and was ordered to return to Quebec but disobeyed orders and sailed back to France in the night. Cartier's good reputation was ruined for abandoning the settlers and for his bad dealings with the Haudenosaunee. He died in France on September 1, 1557.

John Cabot



John Cabot was born with the name Giovanni Caboto around the year 1450 in Genoa, Italy. His father, Giulio Caboto, was a spice merchant in Genoa, but he moved the family to Venice, Italy, when John was 11.

In 1474, around the age of 24, Cabot got married. He and his wife, Mattea, eventually became the parents of three boys: Ludovico, Sancto and Sebastiano.

Around the time he got married, Cabot started trading goods in the Mediterranean Sea, but had to leave Venice when he got into some financial trouble. He left Italy and travelled north to England. There, Cabot met King Henry VII who gave him a grant of money to find new lands for England. John sailed west from England across the Atlantic Ocean, searching for Asia.

In early May, 1497, Cabot left Bristol, England with a crew of 18 men. Most historians believe that the ship Cabot captained was called the *Matthew*, but the records are not clear. Some historians believe it may have been called the *Mattea*, named after Cabot's wife.

After 50 days of sailing, Cabot's ship reached North America on June 24, 1497. The exact place he landed is not known, but the governments of Canada and England declared that Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland was the "official" landing spot.

Cabot did not explore much of the land, and there are no records that he met any Indigenous peoples. He left North America after only a couple weeks, arriving back in England on August 6, 1497. He did, however, claim North America for England and is credited with being the first European explorer to reach mainland Canada since the Vikings.



Martin Frobisher

Martin Frobisher was born in Yorkshire, England around the year 1535. His father, Bernard Frobisher, was a merchant who sent Martin to London to go to school. While in London, Frobisher became interested in exploration and navigation and developed the goal of finding the Northwest Passage.

At the time of Frobisher's expeditions, the Northwest Passage was just a theory. Europeans believed that there must be a sea route to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, and many countries sent explorers to find the route so that they could trade goods more easily with Asia. There didn't seem to be a sea route through North America – many explorers looked for one – so they believed the only way through was to sail north above North America.

Frobisher was licensed by the Muscovy Company, and left England on June 7, 1576. On August 18, he landed on Baffin Island in the bay that is now known as Frobisher Bay, near Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Frobisher's team made contact with some local Inuit who agreed to guide them through the area. Five of Frobisher's men went with the Inuit guides, but never returned. It is unclear what happened to them, but Inuit legend tells that the men lived with the Inuit for a few years, then tried to return to England on a self-built boat.

Frobisher returned to England with a piece of rock he believed contained gold. He was sent back to Canada twice to collect more of the ore, once by Queen Elizabeth I, herself. When it was discovered that the rocks were iron pyrite and not gold, Frobisher was not able to raise enough money for another expedition to the north.

Frobisher joined Sir Francis Drake's expedition to the West Indies and was knighted for fighting for England against the Spanish Armada. He was killed in 1594 fighting the Spanish during the Siege of Fort Crozon.



Samuel de Champlain

Samuel de Champlain is known as “the Father of New France.” He was born in Brouage, France in the year 1574. His parents were Antoine Champlain and Marguerite Le Roy. Not much is known about his childhood, but historians believe he was born Protestant because the name Samuel was not usually given to Catholic children. Champlain converted to Catholicism when he was a young adult.

Champlain's father and uncle were both mariners, and he learned about navigation and drawing from them. His first travels were with his uncle around Spain and the West Indies. Champlain's uncle died in 1601 and Champlain inherited his estate. This money gave him status and he became a geographer for King Henry IV.

Champlain's first visit to North America was on a fur trading expedition on the ship *The Good Fame* led by François Gravé Du Pont in 1603. They sailed into the St. Lawrence River and explored the Gaspé Peninsula, making their way to Hochelaga (Montreal). Over the next three years, Champlain explored the area extensively under the command of Du Pont and Lieutenant-General Pierre Du Gua de Monts. They traveled to Stadacona (Quebec City), and south into modern day USA. Champlain used his drawing skills to create maps and give detailed descriptions of the area.

In 1608, Champlain was named as lieutenant to de Monts. They established a fort at Quebec City, which would become the French fur trading headquarters. In 1609, Champlain fought a battle against the Haudenosaunee, which resulted in an unfriendly relationship between the French and Haudenosaunee that lasted over 100 years. His relationship with the Hurons was friendlier. In 1615, Champlain ventured into the Canadian Interior, with his Huron allies as guides. He and the French helped the Hurons attack a group of Haudenosaunee, but were defeated. Champlain was hit in the knee with an arrow. He survived and lived with the Hurons through the winter, learning and writing a lot about Indigenous life in North America.

King Charles I of England decided to take Quebec from France and in 1629, he sent an expedition to take the fort at Quebec City. They succeeded and held the fort until 1632. After the British gave Quebec back to the French, Champlain returned to be Governor. He died in Quebec on December 25, 1635.