

1918

De Monts and Acadia, an Appreciation

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SIEUR DE MONTS PUBLICATIONS

XI

Sieur De Monts Commission

De Monts and Acadia

An Appreciation



ISSUED BY
THE WILD GARDENS OF ACADIA
BAR HARBOR, MAINE



Sieur de Monts National Monument—The East Cliff

SIEUR DE MONTS PUBLICATIONS

XI

Sieur De Monts Commission

De Monts and Acadia

An Appreciation

PURCHAS HIS PILGRIMES

CONTAYNING A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN SEA VOYAGES AND
LANDE TRAVELLS BY ENGLISHMEN AND OTHERS.

*The Patent of the French King to Monsieur de Monts for
the inhabiting of the Countries of La Cadia, Canada,
and other places in New France.*

Henry, by the grace of God King of France and Navarre. To our deare and well beloved the Lord of Monts, one of the ordinarie Gentlemen of our Chamber, greeting. As our greatest care and labour is, and hath alwayes beene, since our comming to this Crowne, to maintaine and conserve it in the ancient dignitie, greatnesse and splendour thereof, to extend and amplifie, as much as lawfully may bee done, the bounds and limits of the same. We being, of a long time, informed of the situation and condition of the Lands and Territories of La Cadia, moved above all things, with a singular zeale, and devout and constant resolution, which we have taken, with the helpe and assistance of God, Author, Distributour, and Protectour of all Kingdomes and Estates, to cause the people, which doe inhabit the Countrey, men (at this present time) Barbarous, Atheists, without Faith, or Religion, to be converted to Christianitie, and to the

Beliefs and Profession of our Faith and Religion: and to draw them from the ignorance and unbeliefs wherein they are. Having also of a long time knowne by the Relation of the Sea Captaines, Pilots, Merchants and others, who of long time have haunted, frequented and trafficked with the people that are found in the said places, how fruitfull, commodious and profitable may be unto us, to our Estates and Subjects, the Dwelling, Possession, and Habitation of those Countries, for the great and apparent profit which may be drawne by the greater frequentation and habitude which may bee had with the people that are found there, and the Trafficke and Commerce which may be by that means safely treated and negotiated.

We then for these causes fully trusting on your great wisdom, and in the knowledge and experience that you have of the qualitie, condition and situation of the said Countrie of La Cadia; for divers and sundry Navigations, Voyages and Frequentations that you have made into those parts, and others neere and bordering upon it: Assuring our selves that this our resolution and intention, being committed unto you, you will attentively, diligently, and no lesse couragiously and valorously execute and bring to such perfection as we desire: Have expressly appointed and established you, and by these Presents, signed with our owne hands, doe commit, ordaine, make, constitute and establish you, our Lieutenant Generall, for to represent our person, in the Countries, Territories, Coasts and Confines of La Cadia. To begin from the 40. degree unto the 46. And in the same distance, or part of it, as farre as may bee done, to establish, extend and make to be knowne our Name, Might, and Authoritie. And under the same to subject, submit and bring into obedience all the people of the said Land, and the Borderers thereof: And by the meanes thereof, and all lawfull wayes, to call, make, instruct, provoke and incite them to the knowledge of God, and to the light of the Faith and Christian Religion, to establish it there: And

in the exercise and profession of the same, keepe and conserve the said people, and all other Inhabitants in the said places, and there to command in peace, rest and tranquillitie, as well by Sea as by Land: to ordaine, decide, and cause to bee executed all that which you shall judge fit and necessarie to be done, for to maintaine, keepe and conserve the said places under our Power and Authoritie, by the formes, wayes and means prescribed by our Lawes. And for to have there a care of the same with you, to appoint, establish, and constitute all Officers, as well in the affaires of Warre, as for Justice and Policie, for the first time, and from thence forward to name and present them unto us: for to be disposed by us, and to give Letters, Titles, and such Provisoos as shall be necessarie, etc.

Given at Fountain-Bleau the eight day of November: in the yeere of our Lord 1603. And of our Reigne the fifteenth. Signed Henry: and underneath by the King, Potier; And sealed upon single labell with yellow Waxe.

De Monts and Acadia: An Appreciation

Being portion of an address delivered by Major General Joshua L. Chamberlain at the Ter-Centennial celebration of the founding of Acadia and first permanent settlement of America to the north of Florida.

There are things done in the world which by a certain estimation are accounted failure, but which belong to an eternal process turning to its appointed ends the discontinuities of baffled endeavor. We have come to this little spot where broken beginnings were the signal of mighty adventure, and restless spirits, lured by visions of empire forecast upon the morning clouds, pressed and passed like them. The great action of the times we commemorate was not the result of shrewd calculations of economic advantage; it was largely the impulse of bold imagination and adventurous spirit stirred by the fore-

shadowing of untested possibilities, and knowing no limit but each one's daring or dream. While the motive of pecuniary gain was not absent from even noble minds, yet this was secondary and subordinate. A deeper thought was moving them,—to turn to human good such opening store of rich material and marvellous opportunity; to signalize the valor of their race, the glory of their country and their religion; to take a foremost step in the march of civilization,—the mastery of man over nature. It was akin to the chivalry which enjoys personal hazard for a sake beyond self. What generous ambitions, what lofty hopes hovered in those early skies, and since have “faded into the light of common day!”

We come here to recognize the worth of a remarkable man, Pierre du Guast, Sieur de Monts,—to commemorate in a material structure more lasting than any of his own the value of his work and the greatness of his ideas. It is, moreover, a part of the glory of Old France of which we come with one heart to celebrate a passage,—taking this term in both senses of its meaning. Not other than glorious the passage from vision to ideal,—from dream to deed; and although passed are the facts and forms so vivid and vital in their day, who shall say passed the spirit and power, the living potentiality of good, whose course is by unrecorded ways and whose law of manifestation is unsearchable?

England was not wanting in bold sea enterprise. Almost a century before the discovery of this continent she had a brisk trade with Iceland. In a single snow-storm in April, 1419, twenty-five of her vessels were lost on that wild coast. But whether the race instinct of colonization was taking a rest, or because of the absorbing interest in the mythical “northwest passage to Cathay,” she made no effort to follow up the discoveries of the Cabots in 1497 by acts evincing intention of permanent possession.

But it was with express purpose of proceeding to

actual occupancy that France sent out two great exploring expeditions which were not only thorough-going in character but pregnant of consequences: that of Verazano in 1524, which gave the name New France to these North Atlantic shores, and that of Jacques Cartier ten years later, whose remarkable observations and glowing accounts deepened this nominal interest into the sense and pride of ownership. France now asserted her sole right to all the region north of Spanish Florida.

Portugal, also, laid early claim to the vast, unbounded region north of the Newfoundland waters, which she named Corterealis after her great discoverer in the year 1500; the name Labrador preserves a record of her passing hand. She commenced an occupancy, too, about the Newfoundland shores, building a rendezvous or recruiting station for her fishermen there which lasted a long time. Portuguese names remain here, although in disguised form; Cape Race, from Cavo Raso—Flat Cape; and Bay of Fundy, replacing the name Baie Francoise given by de Monts. On the oldest Portuguese and Spanish maps this is Rio Fundo, or Hondo—Deep River.

England kept up some intercourse with these northeastern coasts in the way of fishing interests, but in this she was far exceeded by others. In 1578 the fishing fleet of England here numbered fifty; that of Portugal and Spain twice that number; that of France three times as many. And think of what strong, indomitable blood those early Frenchmen were: Norman, Breton, Biscayan. Strains of these inextinguishable essences remain in those who follow the old vocation off those outlying, storm-swept shores, and abiding tokens in the name and character of Cape Breton, and in the stubborn contest over treaty rights reserved in the islands of Miquelon.

The inaction of England was practically abandonment of claim. The middle of the sixteenth century saw the new world in theory, in legal presumption and probable fate, apportioned between France, Portugal and Spain.

To us, familiar with the history of modern movement in the world's masteries, it seems strange that the Norman element in English blood, so prone to see an opportunity, and some might say so prompt to seize an advantage, did not follow up England's claimed priority of discovery by earliest occupancy of the new Atlantic shores. But knowing also as we do, the audacity of the mingled strains in the old French blood, we do not wonder that it was this which took the forefront and held on till its last foothold was drowned in its last red tide.

Occupancy by settlement was slow. A charter was granted to Sir Humphrey Gilbert by Queen Elizabeth in 1578, but it was not until 1583 that he began a settlement in Newfoundland at what he called St. John's. But that high spirit who declared, "We are as near heaven by sea as land!" passed out through a storm of elements off those headlands, precarious indeed, and with him the soul went out of his enterprise, and the claim of England through this occupancy did not for a long time emerge.

Sir Walter Raleigh's vigorous efforts in Virginia in 1584 also came to nought. And so at the close of the 16th century there was not a European settlement north of Florida on the western Atlantic shores.

But the human ferment was going on, and the time appointed drawing near. The fierce persecution of the Huguenots was tearing asunder social bonds in France. The quarrel over the succession of King Henry of Navarre had its spring in this bitterness, and the changing play of parties permitted no one to be safe. Earnest minds were moved to seek peaceful homes in the wilderness of the New World, where they might find at least freedom of thought and action, and possibly scope for their best energies. Thus Admiral Coligny sought to plant Huguenot colonies in both South and North America, which soon succumbed to Portugal or Spain. But inward pressure prompted outward movement and bitterly manifest as were the differences in the old home,

these did not prevent association in a common purpose for so high an end. Under Henry IV a notable company was formed, the leading spirit of which was Aylmar de Chastes, a gentleman of high standing and governor of Dieppe, to carry forward colonization on these shores "in the name of God and the King."

At this juncture comes upon the scene one of the most remarkable characters of our New World history—Samuel, Sieur de Champlain. Born on the shore of Biscay in a little seaport where departing and returning ships bringing stories of wide and wild adventure quickened into life that vague consciousness of power which stirs in all brave spirits; by nature bold, chivalrous, romantic; by early experience soldier, sailor, observer and relater; tireless in labor, patient of suffering, large of vision and generous of purpose, genial of spirit and firm of soul, he may well be regarded as providentially prepared to be called to the solution of great problems of enterprise. We do not wonder that he had already received special marks of honor from the king. He and de Chastes seem to have come together by mutual attraction. To him the king gave special charge to observe carefully and report all he should see. The practical charge of the expedition was entrusted to Du Pont Gravé, of St. Malo in Bretagne, who had already made a voyage to this region.

This expedition explored the St. Lawrence, tarrying some time at Tadoussac, at the mouth of the mysterious Saguenay, and finally ascending to the site of Montreal. Of this exploration there were wonderful things to tell in France; and told by Champlain roused an interest such as nothing had done before. He came back with high hopes, but found that his generous patron had passed away, and with him the supporting hand, if not the animating spirit, of the enterprise.

But he found also that the king had given a new charter to a gentleman of equally high character, an officer of the king's household, Pierre de Monts, Seigneur of the

Commune of Guast in Santonge, a region of which La Rochelle was the natural center and strongly Huguenot in its proclivities, as was the family of de Monts. This charter was given November 8, 1603. It conveyed to de Monts in elaborate terms trading and seignorial rights over the New World territory between the fortieth and forty-sixth parallels of latitude—those of Philadelphia and Montreal today—this territory being designated *Lacadie*, or *Acadia*. With this came the appointment of Lieutenant-general, and by inference Vice-admiral, of this vast and vaguely known domain of *Acadia*.

With reciprocal personal respect and the sympathy of like purpose, these two men joined hands and hearts in the enterprise now more definitely thought out and practically organized than any before. De Monts had been the companion of Chauvin in a former voyage to these north-eastern shores, and had the confidence of experience. Champlain again received appointment as special geographer and reporter for the king. They enlisted also the interest and companionship of Jean de Poutrincourt, Baron of Saint Just in Bretagne, a man of ample means and large of mind and heart, pronounced by King Henry to be "one of the most honorable and valiant men of the Kingdom."

Thus was ordained and organized that famous adventure of *Acadia*, fraught with human hopes as high and fancies as wide as its sequel was to be bright with characters of courage and devotion and stormy with vicissitude and tragedy.

NOTE BY EDITOR:—*This and the following extracts from General Chamberlain's address are published for their admirable and eloquent appreciation of the deeper meaning and significance of de Monts' adventure. The story of the enterprise itself will be published later in this series, in a condensation from Champlain's account.* GEORGE B. DORR.

So passed to dust and ruin this little beginning on the Island of the Cross. So passed into broken lights the

glory of de Monts' dawning dream. Contemplating this ruin and this baffled purpose, must we speak of failure? If so, for de Monts personally the case is not singular. All the first leaders had sad experiences. Gilbert, Raleigh, Gorges, de Monts, Poutrincourt, Champlain even, and we might also say Columbus himself—jealousy, enmity, imprisonment, disgrace barred their sunset sky. But we judge men more by the ideas they quicken into action than by the immediate material results they live to see.

All the developments of succeeding history in this region must be regarded as in some true sense the unfolding of de Monts' purpose, not under his guidance indeed but under the momentum of the impulse he originated, and although we cannot see all the interaction of the composite forces which determine life and history, we must think back to de Monts, when we consider the long, sharp struggle for possession of these Acadian shores and the tenacious hold on them which France maintained for more than a century, and is not wholly yet unfelt.

One singular dignity this St. Croix settlement of de Monts has come to hold. After long lost identity and earnest searching, these ruins were discovered and admitted to be the proper mark for the boundary line between two great nations, England and the United States of America. Such value had this broken enterprise in the minds of men and council of nations. Without the identifying of this spot the language of treaties was in vain, and the bounds of nationalities in confusion.

But this little relic is not the measure of the man. The narrow compass of this island does not bound his thought, nor the dim fragments of his doing that have taken earthly form around us compose his record. The measure of him is his purpose and ideal.

The blood and brain of France that once led the civilization of Europe has not perished from the earth. It has entered into the on-going of human welfare, and the

vision, the prayer, the hope, that went so high and far, may find answer in visible forms of power even beyond the early dream.

Consequences are not in one line alone, but in many lines. When a living thought is projected into the ideal, we cannot trace its course, nor foresee its end. God's ways are on mighty orbits, and their real tending is often lost to human sight; but the "times appointed" will arrive, and the end crown the work. One thing we may be sure of: all these vicissitudes of life, all these toils and struggles, these seeming defeats as well as seeming victories, are overruled for some final good for man—and for every man who has borne himself worthily in them.

So we greet in spirit today him who three centuries ago saw in visions of his soul what for man could be wrought on these treasured shores. The work is going on—but by other hands; the dream is coming true—but to other eyes. The thought is his; and the fulfilment, though different, is of his beginning.

As a Contemporary Saw It

Marc Lescarbot, who came out in May, 1606, to visit de Monts' settlement with Jean de Biencourt, Seigneur de Poutrincourt, and who afterward wrote the History of New France, the best account next to Champlain's we have of de Monts' undertaking and of Acadia at that time, begins his History: "I have to tell in this book of the most courageous undertaking, and the least aided and assisted, that we of France have made to occupy the new lands beyond the Ocean. The Sieur de Monts, called in his own name Pierre du Gua, a man of noble family in Saintonge, is its chief subject. He, having a heart moved to high enterprise, and seeing France in repose through the peace happily concluded at Vervins, proposed to the King. . . ."