

Jacques Cartier - Canada's Founding Explorer

by Fred Pritchard

King Francis I of France chose a 43-year-old sea captain, Jacques Cartier, to seek a sea route to the orient. Cartier was an experienced navigator from St. Malo who was already familiar with the waters off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador coasts.



Central African Republic 2003
Souvenir sheet showing route of Cartier's first voyage.

First Voyage - 1534

Cartier weighed anchor in St. Malo on April 20, 1534 and sailed westward on one of two ships and reached the Gaspé peninsula on July 24. He erected a cross thirty feet high and claimed the land called Canada (native for village), for France. He returned to St. Malo.

France 1934 - 400th Anniversary of Cartier's First Voyage



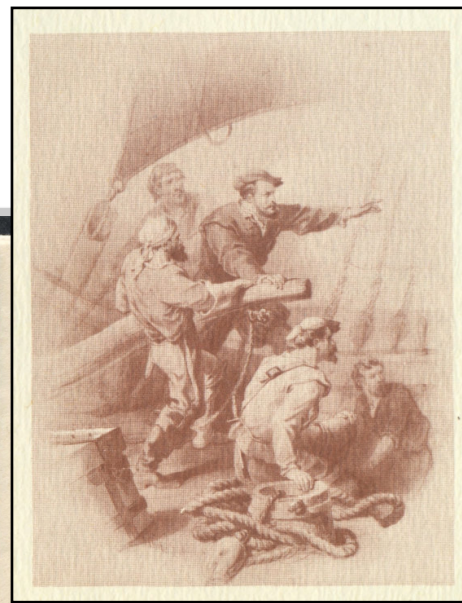
Skilled French engraver, Achille Ouvre, was acclaimed for his portraits of famous people, Jacques Cartier appears on these stamps in the Holbein portrait style that Ouvre admired.

Second Voyage - 1535-36

In 1535 he returned to the New World and discovered a great river which he named St. Lawrence and sailed up as far as a village of indigenous people on the future site of Montreal. He then wintered over on ship not far from the present site of Quebec City.

Canada 1934 - Cartier Arrival at Quebec Issue

This finely engraved stamp designed by George Arthur Gunderson from the original engraving by George Hay was printed by the British American Bank Note Company. It depicts Cartier at the tiller guiding his ship into the St. Lawrence River, the first Canadian commemorative stamp of Cartier's voyages.



Artwork sketch used by engraver Bruce Hay in 1885.



First Day Cover - July 1, 1934



Canada - France 1984 Joint Issue

In a true collaboration to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Jacques Cartier's first voyage to the New World, designer Yves Paquin of Canada and engraver Claude Haley of France created a commemorative stamp in 4 colours for each country. The stamps were printed in Paris by Imprimerie des Timbres-poste France and denominated at the domestic first-class rate for each nation. Artwork by Yves Paquin is pictured on the maxicard featuring first day of issue cancels of St. Malo (France) and Quebec City (Canada).

Third Voyage - 1541

Cartier returned to the Gulf of St. Lawrence for a third time in 1541 before returning to live peacefully in his manor in St. Malo, dying in 1557.

First Image of Cartier on a Postage Stamp

The first portrait of Jacques Cartier on a stamp is an engraving by Alfred Jones of the American Bank Note Company based on a sketch by William Henry Griffen of a painting by Francois Riss circa 1839. Painted 300 years after Cartier's first voyage to Canada, it is suspect because there was no known prior image of Cartier. Nevertheless it is one of the first non-royal likenesses on a British Empire postage stamp, perhaps in recognition of the Province's large French population. In 1855 ten pence in the Province of Canada was equivalent to 8 pence sterling hence the 8p stg in the upper corners.



Province of Canada 1855



Province of Canada 1859

Like many of the British Empire colonies who depended on trade with the United States, the Province of Canada switched to decimal currency in 1859. Eight pence sterling now equated to seventeen cents, as shown on the resissued, now perforated, stamp picturing Jacques Cartier.



Laos 1983

