

CHWNE Module 6 Lesson 1

Pierre du Gua de Mons (1558 -1628)

Part 1



Pierre du Gua De Mons





Pierre Du Gua de Mons was born in the Chateau de Mons, in the city of Royans, in the **Protestant province of Saintonge**. He eventually retired to Pons of Saintonge.

He was a Protestant nobleman and a soldier, who became an explorer, trader and **Governor of Acadia (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia)**.



He was responsible for setting up the first permanent colony in **Acadia**.

As a **Huguenot from Saintonge**, he would have grown up fighting for the cause of the Protestants in the **Wars of Religion(1562-1598)**.



It is known that he made several trips to Canada before 1600, participating in the earlier exploration with **Pierre Chauvin de Tonnetuit** who constructed the first building in Canada, in **Tadoussac.**



The Edict of Nantes, as passed by **Henry IV** in **1598** allowed **Huguenots** to worship without persecution and to trade freely.

This was a game changer for Protestant noblemen and merchants who could now freely engage trade.



This probably helped **Du Gua de Mons** to embark on the adventure to settle Acadia.

In **1603**, **Du Gua De Mons** was given a fur trading monopoly by **King Henry IV**, in exchange for developing colonies in the **New World**.



Henry IV entered into arrangements with explorers
- **Du Gua de Mons and Pierre de Chauvin de
Tonnetuit to establish settlements in exchange
for the exclusive right to trade with the Indians
for furs.**



Previous settlements attempted 50 years earlier by **Cartier and de Roberval** had failed.

Du Gua was appointed ‘**Lieutenant-General of the coastlands and in Acadia, Canada and other places in New France**’.



He was supposed to build the colonies by encouraging **60 colonists a year** to settle and to **win** the Indians to the Christian faith.

The French coffers were lean because of the many years of war and there was a great demand for furs in Europe.



Du Gua de Mons organized a powerful trading company on **Feb. 8 1604**.

He offered shares to merchants in **Rouen, St. Malo, and La Rochelle**, raising a capital investment of **90,000 livres** (in the vicinity of **\$1.6 million today**).



The merchants saw the potential for great profit.
Many of them became partners.

Du Gua de Monts outfitted 5 ships, purchased supplies, and recruited Catholics and Protestants alike.



There were **79 colonists** on the first trip which included: **François Gravé Du Pont**, **Samuel de Champlain**, **Baron Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt**, a pharmacist by the name of **Louis Hébert** (cousin-in-law to Poutrincourt), a priest **Nicolas Aubry**, and a Protestant member of the clergy.



Mathieu de Costa, the legendary linguist, was also on that trip. He was the first registered black man to set foot in North America.

There were also craftsmen, stonecutters, architects, carpenters, masons, soldiers and some unemployed persons.



Some noblemen joined the disparate group for various reasons.

Some for adventure, some to become rich and others to win new lands for France.

Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt was a nobleman who wanted to win new lands for France.



Samuel de Champlain was invited to accompany them as a cartographer.

He had previously visited **Tadoussac in 1603** with **Francois Grave du Pont**.



In 1604, Du Gua sent 3 ships to focus on trading in furs on the St. Lawrence, while he used the other 2 for exploration and colonization.

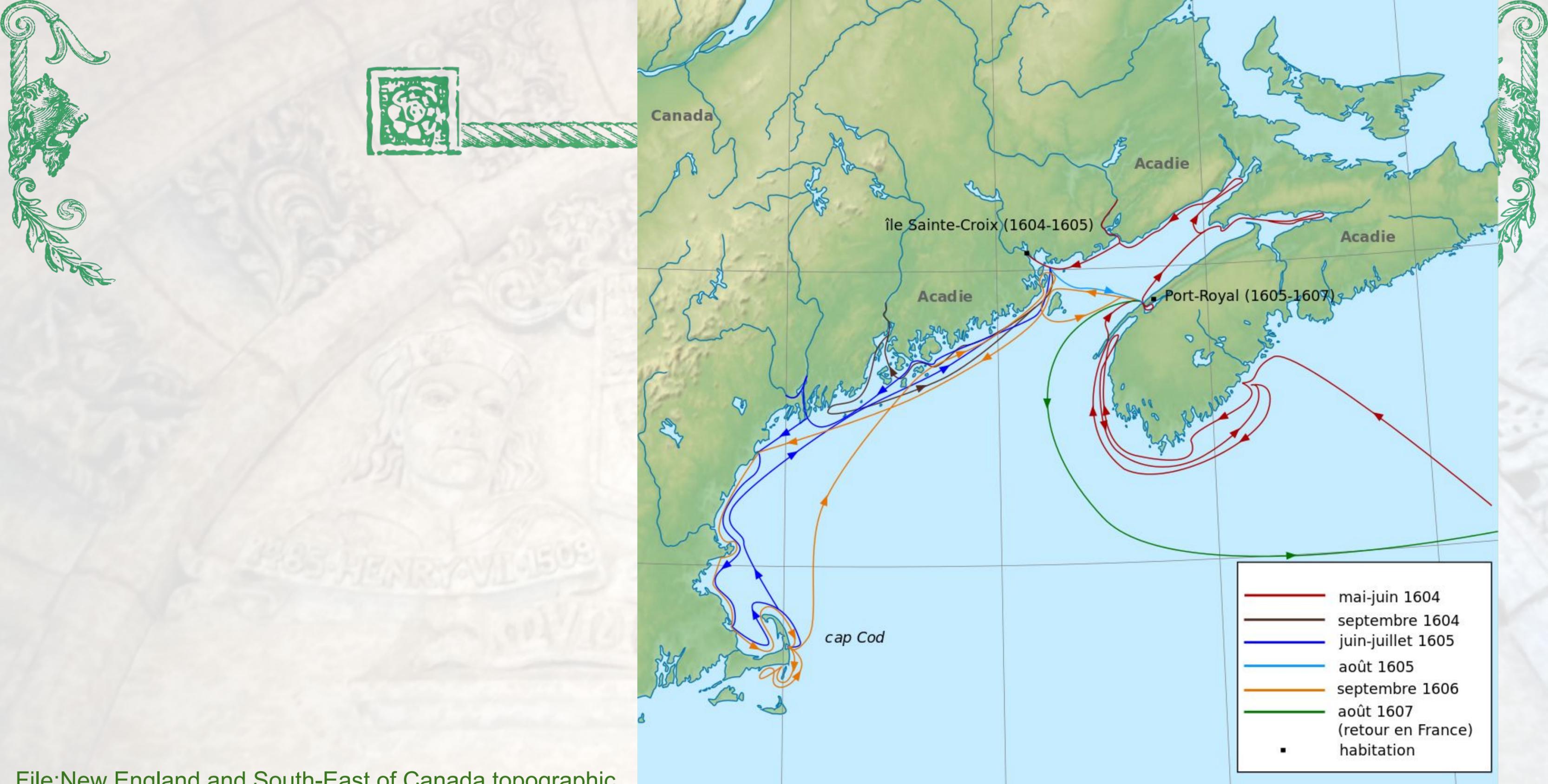


There were two important people on the first ship - **Marc Lescarbot** (a lawyer, traveller,writer), and **Francois Grave Du Pont**, an experienced fur trader who had been visiting the St Lawrence since **1598/99.**



On June 24th 1604, they crossed **Passamaquoddy Bay**, entering a river in which there was an Island - **St Croix Island** which they unanimously thought would meet their needs.

Since it was the day of the celebration of **the feast of St. John**, they called the river **St John River** in honour of the day.



File:New England and South-East of Canada topographic map-blank.svg <http://umaine.edu/canam/publications/st-croix/champlain-and-the-settlement-of-acadia-1604-1607/>, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16717047>



St. Croix island was chosen because of fear of the Indians. One important criteria for choosing a location was its defensibility.



They thought that the Island, which used to be called **Dochet Island**, provided a central, defensible, location and a deep enough harbour to anchor the ships.



Du Gua organized work crews to get different jobs done. Lumber for building the houses was brought from France.

While yet in France, Du Gua, as the visionary and leader of the expedition, had made preparations with settlement in mind.



Because there was little time to prepare for the winter, work began immediately to construct a settlement.

Following Champlain's design, **they built 12 houses (similar in style to the house built in Tadoussac)** surrounding a central court.



The houses were all connected by a wall of palisades so that it looked like a fort.

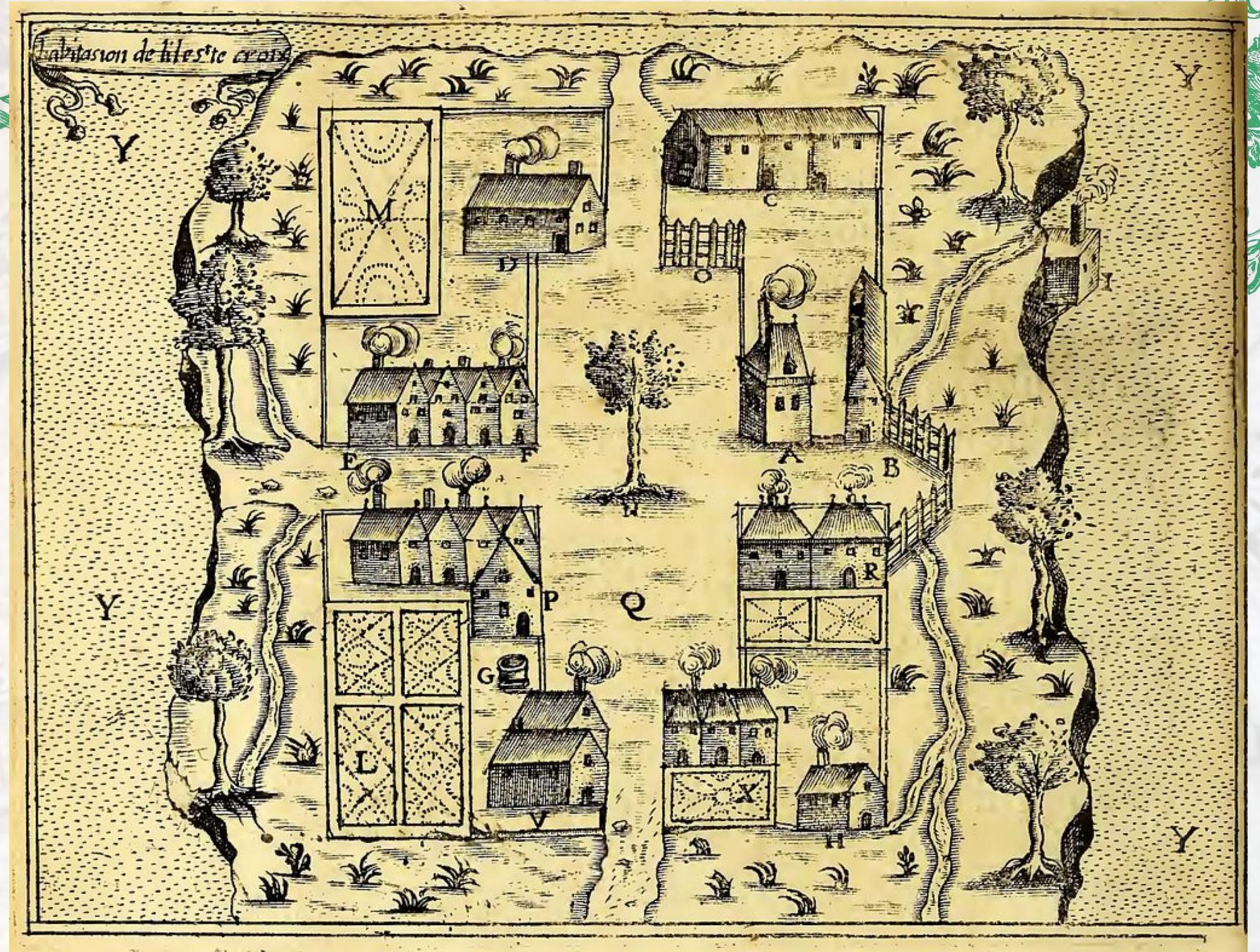
Ancillary buildings such as a storehouse, kitchen, a common living-dining hall, and a chapel were also built.

Du Gua's first settlement

Built on St. Croix Island

As designed by

Samuel de Champlain



By Samuel de Champlain -

<https://ia600401.us.archive.org/34/items/lesvoyagesdusieu00cham/lesvoyagesdusieu00cham.pdf>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1760577>



While the houses were being built, (even though it was already late in terms of Canadian planting season), a crew worked on planting crops.

Crops were planted both on the island and on the opposite mainland at Port Royal. This area is now known as the Annapolis region of Nova Scotia.

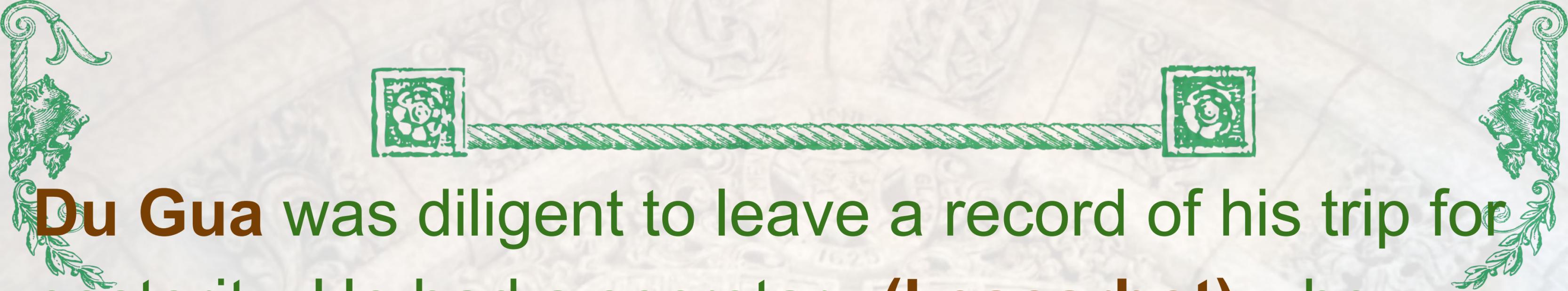


This was the first wheat ever planted in **Acadia and New France**. Because of the late planting of crops, there was a small first harvest.

Winter came early that year, with the **first snowfall on October 6th**. It was a long, hard winter with 3-4 feet of **snow on the ground as late as April**.



In the fall of 1604, one of the ships
commandeered by **Francois Grave du Pont** went
back to France to bring a further **40 relief settlers**
in the Spring of **1605**.



Du Gua was diligent to leave a record of his trip for posterity. He had a secretary (**Lescarbot**) who recorded the venture.

He assembled collections of animals, birds, Indian portraits, artifacts and anything else that was new and different to send to France.



In 1604, some of those items were taken to France by **Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt**, and in **1605**, by **Du Gua himself**.

Experts like the humanist **Nicholas de Peirese** examined these artifacts, which resulted in some of the earliest descriptions of the flora and fauna of North America.



Many hours of idleness in the long winter proved difficult, especially for some of the ex-cons.

Fresh food supplies were exhausted before the end of winter, leaving the men with a diet of salted meat.



Lack of nutrition caused **scurvy**, which killed **50%** of the colonists.

There was also a scarcity of freshwater so snow had to be boiled.

In the spring, thick ice floes on the river made it dangerous to cross to the mainland.



Around March **1605, Etchemin**
(Passamaquoddy) Indians traded fresh meat with
them.

As they got stronger, the men were able to hunt for
their own game.



That spring, Champlain also explored the New England coast with the **Micmac Chief Panounias and his wife** as interpreters and guides.

He did not find any alternative suitable places for a settlement.



In the Spring of 1605, eventually, supply ships from France, with a relief party of 40 men led by Ralluau and Francois Grave Du Pont, arrived.



Pierre Du Gua de Mons also received news that his trading company in France was experiencing financial troubles and the fur trading monopoly was in jeopardy.



The decision was made to dismantle the buildings from the **St Croix Island** and take them by ship to a new location on the mainland of **Nova Scotia to Port Royal**



The work of resettlement was well underway when
Du Gua left for France in 1605.

He left **Francois Grave Du Pont in charge** by proxy, since the one who was supposed to be in charge, **the Sieur d'Orville**, was still recovering from scurvy.



All of the survivors of the first winter were taken back to France with Du Gua, except for **Samuel de Champlain**, a man by the name of **Fougeray** and another by the name of **Champadore**.

Champlain's job in Du Gua's absence was to conduct further explorations.



Francois Grave du Pont also engaged in explorations, probably with **Samuel de Champlain**.

However in **his first winter of 1605/1606**, 12 more men died because of scurvy.



The surgeon, **Guillaume Des Champs**, could not discover the cause of the disease after autopsies.

In order that the men would be motivated and active in the winter, a club called '**The Order of Good Cheer**' was formed.

With activity and **a milder winter of 1606/1607**, only 7 men died of scurvy.



In October of 1605 when Du Gua got to France, he learnt that merchants who were not members of his company were lobbying to have his fur trading monopoly revoked.

He therefore remained in France to protect his interests.



He secured financial backing from well-known La Rochelle merchants by the names of **Macain (or Macquin)** and **Georges**, who were also **Huguenots**.

His monopoly was secured and he retained orders to continue searching for a suitable location to settle and manage the colony.



Du Gua remained in France to manage his business affairs.

In May of 1606, another ship set out for Acadia with supplies and new settlers once more.



Some of the settlers on this trip included **Jean Ralluau, Marc Lescarbot and Charles de Biencourt**, with **Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt** as commander.



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By the time their ship arrived in **July of 1606**, most of the good furs were already taken by traders from the Basque region.



On their return to France, Du Gua was pleased to learn of the success of the colony's grain and food production under the supervision of **Francois Grave du Pont**.



Meanwhile in France, forces were at work against Du Gua's endeavours in Acadia.

The colony in Acadia failed eventually because of jealousy from Saint Malo merchants who were not included in the monopoly.