



French Mapping of New York and New England, 1604-1760

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Abstract:

This article focuses on colonial-era French mapping of the region between the French and British settlements in what is now the northeastern United States. This area was largely dominated by Iroquoian and Algonquian Indians, many of whom were allied with the French. In comparison to the Dutch and British colonists, the French produced remarkably detailed and accurate maps of this region. These maps contain a wealth of information about Indian settlements, trade routes, and military activities during the colonial period.

Keywords: Jacques Nicolas Bellin, Francesco Bressani, Cartography, Samuel de Champlain, colonial maps, exploration, French maps, Guillaume de L'Isle, Guillaume Delisle, Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, maps, New England, New France, New York State, Nicolas Sanson

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Introduction

The French contributions to the early mapping of the northeastern United States are frequently overlooked. Usually when we think of colonial mapping of this area, English and in some cases Dutch maps come to mind. However, except for those areas that were actually settled by the Dutch or the English, French cartographers often made the earliest and the best maps of much of what is now the northeastern United States.

The neglect of these French maps is mostly the result of national biases. The best recent work on colonial-era French maps of North America has been done by Canadian scholars, such as Conrad Heidenreich and Ed Dahl, but their work has understandably focused on the mapping of the Great Lakes and Upper Canada.^[1] American historians have been preoccupied with other subjects, such as the westward expansion of the United States, and French exploration and mapping do not fit in very well with the main themes of U.S. history. Besides, students of American history tend to be allergic to foreign languages, and consequently they usually view events through the eyes of British or American witnesses.

The importance of the French contribution to the mapping of the northeastern United States was recognized by such nineteenth-century American scholars as Francis Parkman, Justin Winsor, and Henry Harrisse. Few additional maps have been discovered since their time. Several published French maps of this area are fairly well known, but the bulk of them are in manuscript. Many have been reproduced, but they have to be sought out in relatively little used collections, such as that of Louis Charles Karpinski.^[2]

One reason why the French were involved in mapping this area should be obvious from a glance at a map of Northeastern North America ([Figure 1](#)). The focus of New France was the St. Lawrence River Valley and adjacent areas. The Dutch and English settlements were clustered in southern New England and the Hudson Valley. The vast territory in between was largely controlled by groups of Indians, and was an area of rivalry between the French and British until the surrender of New France in 1760. The French had easy access to this area via the St. Lawrence River, the Lake Champlain Valley, and Lake Ontario. This area included most of New York north and west of Albany, almost all of Vermont, and the northern portions of Maine and New Hampshire.

The French mapping of the colonial period has a distinctly different flavor from Dutch or English mapping. The Dutch, with their water-born trading empire, produced excellent charts of coasts and major rivers. Their maps also showed the names and locations of their Indian trading partners, but they provided little reliable information about inland areas. The English were much more interested in gaining control of the land and using it for farms or estates, and much of their mapping reflects their preoccupation with boundaries and land ownership. The French focused on fur trading, missionary activities, exploration, and building their vast empire. Consequently they were much more involved in exploring and mapping unsettled areas than either the British or the Dutch, and they necessarily paid more attention to the Indians. French maps provide particularly detailed information on native settlements, waterways used for trade, fortifications, and military

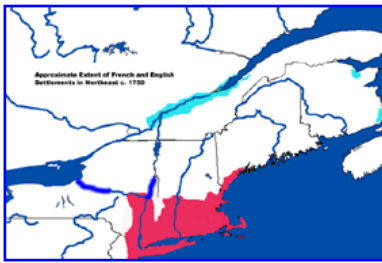


Figure 1

routes. The high quality of French cartography owes much to the policies of the French crown. The French colonial enterprise was much more centralized and under state control than its British and Dutch counterparts. Large-scale mapping requires extensive governmental resources, and the French crown made them available at a relatively early date. The map makers themselves were almost always either government officials, Jesuit missionaries, or military cartographers. These groups worked closely together, and their manuscript maps were collected at the French colonial office (*Dépôt des cartes et plans de la Marine*), where they were made available to the king's map makers.[3]

Early Maps —Samuel de Champlain

Now we are ready to take a chronological look at some of the highlights of the French mapping of what is now the Northeastern United States.

To shorten a long story, I will skip over the maps reflecting the first French discoveries on the East Coast of North America—those resulting from the voyages of Giovanni da Verrazano and Jacques Cartier. Instead I will begin with the maps of the "founder of New France," Samuel de Champlain. Champlain's maps are relatively well known, but they form the foundation of the subsequent French mapping of this area. For his time, Champlain was an expert cartographer, and he explored much of the area under consideration.[4]

Champlain's earliest maps of the New World were actually of the coast of New England, which he explored as far as the south shore of Cape Cod. The initial French settlements were in the Bay of Fundy. As this area was found unsatisfactory for a permanent settlement, Champlain explored southward to find a more suitable site for settlement. His explorations of the New England coast took place in 1605 and 1606, well before the arrival of the Puritans or the rediscovery of the New York Harbor by Henry Hudson. There has been much speculation as to why the French did not decide to colonize Massachusetts Bay, and about why Champlain did not go on to explore the area around New York. The main reason seems to be that he was discouraged by the hostility of the large numbers of Indians living in southern New England. Between the time of Champlain's exploration of the area and the arrival of the Pilgrims, a smallpox epidemic killed between 75 and 90 percent of the Native inhabitants of the area, which may have been crucial for the success of the English settlements.

Champlain's explorations of the New England coast are reflected in his well-known manuscript map of New England, now at the Library of Congress, which is generally regarded as the first easily recognizable depiction of the New England coastline (Figure 2).[5]



Figure 2



Figure 3

In addition, Champlain drew a number of fairly accurate maps of individual harbors, many of which even include soundings. His map of Saco Harbor (Figure 3) is a good example.[6] Note that it includes drawings of Indian dwellings and extensive cornfields. This attention to Native American life is typical of much of Champlain's cartography, as well as of many subsequent French maps of the Northeast. While these drawings should not be taken literally, and often present difficulties in interpretation, they nonetheless provide important clues about Indian life. They have been used by archaeologists and students of Native American history; in this case to provide important information about the extent of agriculture practiced by contact-period Indians as far north as southern Maine.

After a few years, the French shifted the focus of their activities to the St. Lawrence River Valley, and in 1608 Champlain founded what is now Quebec City. From this time onwards the central valley of the St. Lawrence formed the heartland of New France, but the French continued to engage in extensive activities throughout much of North America. Champlain himself was an active explorer, and his maps of 1612 and 1632 show the rapid growth of French knowledge of interior America.

The 1612 map is notable for its depiction of Lake Champlain, which the explorer discovered and named after himself.[7]. This feature can be seen on the detail presented here (Figure 4); readers interested in viewing the entire map will find a link to the complete image by clicking on the thumbnail on this page.

By 1612 the French had already learned of the existence of the Iroquois in Central New York. French efforts to expand their fur trade in conjunction with their Huron and Algonquian allies had already embroiled them in war with the Iroquois, which nearly proved the undoing of New France in the seventeenth century. Champlain's expedition in 1609 to the lake that bears his name was the first of many campaigns that the French fought against the Iroquois in the seventeenth century. A later campaign against the Iroquois in 1615 took Champlain to the vicinity of Lake Oneida, which also appears on the 1612



Figure 4

map, although Champlain had not yet visited it. Champlain's explorations are summarized in his remarkable map of 1632 (Figure 5). [8] This map shows an excellent geographical knowledge of Northern New England, and names the local Abenaki bands ("Etchimins" and "Souiquis"). The Ottawa River and Lake Ontario are shown with reasonable accuracy, and the remainder the Great Lakes are beginning to take form. In New York, the Iroquois and their neighbors are shown in approximately their correct locations. Such features as the Adirondack Mountains, the Mohawk River, the Oswego River, and Lake Oneida can be discerned. Even features to the south of New France, such as Long Island, the Delaware River, and Chesapeake Bay are clearly shown. One of Champlain's assistants (Étienne Brûlé) had even followed either the Delaware or the Susquehanna River as far as its mouth. Champlain's depiction of Dutch-controlled southern New York is impressive, and does not seem to be derived from contemporary Dutch maps, such as that of De Laet (see note 11 below). Long Island is fairly well formed and given a name, "Island of the Ascension," which appears only on this map and on maps directly derived from it. The Hudson River is called River of Traders (*traittes*), which is probably a reference to the Indian traders who came with furs from this region to New France. These and other details may derive from an undocumented French expedition to the area around New York Harbor. As a synthesis of the geographical knowledge of eastern North America, Champlain's map is on the whole superior to any contemporary Dutch or British maps.



Figure 5

From Champlain to De L'Isle

While Champlain's contributions to the cartography of North America are fairly well known, the same cannot be said of the work of many of his successors in the seventeenth century. Although several important printed maps will be described, much of the map production of this period never achieved publication, and is relatively little known. These maps have to be sought out in little-known facsimile collections, such as that of Karpinski, and there is a great deal of uncertainty about the authorship and dating of many of them.

There was relatively little progress in the settlement and mapping of New France from the death of Champlain (1635) until after 1663, when France became a royal colony. The total population of New France in 1660 was still only around 2,000. [9] Much of the exploration done during these years was by fur traders and Jesuit missionaries. Many of the manuscript maps of this period, which were mostly produced by the Jesuits, seem to be lost, but the state of French geographic knowledge in the 1650s is well summarized by several printed maps.

The first of these maps published in mid-century is Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville's *Le Canada ou Nouvelle France*, which appeared in 1656 (Figure 6 detail with link to complete image). [10]



Figure 6

Sanson, who was the royal geographer and one of the leading map makers of his time, had access to the most recent information sent to the colonial office (*Dépôrt de la Marine*) by missionaries and explorers in New France. In comparison to Champlain's map of 1632, the most striking new feature is the greatly improved rendition of the Great Lakes, which reflects explorations that had taken place since Champlain's death. On closer examination the depiction of western New York also shows striking improvements. In spite of its small scale, one can discern on this map the Finger Lakes, the Oswego and Genesee rivers, Niagara Falls, and the beginnings of the Appalachian Mountains in southern New York. This information was probably supplied by Jesuits, who were present in western New York at this time, both as involuntary prisoners and as missionaries.

Another important feature of this map is its attempt to depict the boundaries between New France and its Dutch or British neighbors. As can readily be seen, all of the territory under discussion in this paper was claimed by the French. This same territory was also claimed by the British, and much of it was even claimed by the Dutch prior to 1664. Although the French did a better job of mapping this area than did their colonial rivals, it should be reiterated that the land was basically controlled by the Iroquois and other Indians, who played the European powers off against each other.

There are some other interesting features about these alleged boundaries. The French were attempting to establish a claim to the entire watershed of the St. Lawrence River, and to keep the English and the Dutch confined by the Appalachian Mountains. This general strategy changed little during the entire period of the existence of New France. On the Sanson map an attempt is also made to minimize the English colonies by recognizing Dutch claims over what is now Connecticut and Cape Cod. At this point the English already presented a much greater threat to the French than did the Dutch: the population of New England was even then more than ten times the size of that of New France.

Sanson's map is derived from a variety of sources. The depiction of the northern areas of Canada around Hudson's Bay is copied from English maps. The influence of Dutch maps is evident in the depiction of southern New York. One of the most notable errors on this map is almost certainly derived from De Laet's map of New Netherland, which was published in 1632. [11] This is the depiction of Lake Oneida, which is shown as being directly connected to both the Mohawk and the Delaware rivers.

The next map to consider is Francesco Bressani's *Novae Franciae accurata delineatio* of 1657 (Figure 7).[12] This map, which appeared the year after Sanson's map, resembles it in many respects, and is either based on the Sanson map or is derived from the same sources, but it also shows some significant differences. Particularly noteworthy is Bressani's more careful and accurate depiction of the Finger Lakes, Lake Oneida, and the headwaters of the Delaware River.



Figure 7

Bressani himself was an Italian Jesuit (one of the few non-French Jesuits active in New France), and his detailed geographical knowledge almost certainly comes from Jesuit sources. His map, which is very rare, was apparently prepared for inclusion in a book he published describing the activities of the Jesuit missionaries in North America. This map is a particular favorite of mine, mainly because of its brilliant iconography, which is of great interest to students of anthropology, as well as to those who like to contemplate maps as propaganda.

Bressani's map is sprinkled with realistic illustrations of Indians and wildlife, including a wonderful scene of an Algonquin on snowshoes shooting a moose with his bow and arrow. Other illustrations give a good idea of the daily activities of the Indians. Women are shown preparing food and tending children. Men are shown paddling canoes and sitting around a council fire. There is an illustration of an Iroquois long house, and another of a ceremonial dance. In other illustrations, however, Bressani's propagandistic purpose is explicit. In the area labeled "New Belgium" (i.e. New Netherland) there is a fascinating drawing of an Iroquois warrior wearing wooden armor, which looks like a pair of Venetian blinds. (This type of armor was soon abandoned by the Iroquois because it was ineffective against firearms.) The warrior is conspicuously hoisting a gun over his shoulder—thereby apparently subtly informing the viewer that it was from the Dutch that the Iroquois obtained their firearms, which made them such a menace to the French. Even more alarming, another vignette shows Indians torturing a prisoner, and on the eastern sheet of the map (not shown) is a horrific scene showing the martyrdom of the Jesuit fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant. On the subject of Iroquois torture, Father Bressani was able to draw upon his own experience, since he was one of several Jesuit missionaries captured and tortured by the Mohawk. To reinforce the message that the untamed Indians are dangerous barbarians, Bressani includes a rather spooky illustration, apparently copied from an English source, showing the mummification practices of Indians in Virginia. (This image should serve as a reminder that the engravings on seventeenth-century maps were often derived from a variety of sources, and require careful evaluation before being used as evidence for anything.) As a balance to these sinister images, there is a dramatic illustration in the upper-left hand corner showing Christian Indians praying. The message could hardly be clearer: save the Indians from perdition and the French from death by supporting the Jesuit missions. After so much strenuous effort, one would like to think that Bressani's map would have raised lots of money and political support for his cause, but the map was apparently never actually published, and remained virtually unknown until the twentieth century. Several other interesting maps of New France were published around 1660, but they do not add much substantial information about the area we are considering. Several of them can be seen at the Website of the *Bibliothèque nationale du Québec*, which has an excellent selection of French maps of North America from the colonial period.[13]

In the decades after 1660, Louis XIV put extensive resources into strengthening his North American colony, and there was an upsurge in map making by Jesuit missionaries and military cartographers. For me the years between 1660 and 1720 constitute the most creative and interesting period in the cartography of New France, and many of the maps made at that time are not well known.

The role of the Jesuits in the mapping of New France is particularly important. The study of geography was an important part of the Jesuit educational system, and Champlain himself may have acquired his mapmaking skills from Jesuit schools. Many of the Jesuit missionaries in New France were excellent geographical observers, and some were skilled map makers. The seventeenth-century Jesuits were uninhibited by modern notions concerning the separation of church and state, and freely engaged in "data sharing" with the French military and government officials. Much of the content of the following maps is derived from the explorations and sketch maps of Jesuit missionaries.[14]

Much can be learned about the history of New France at this time from a map entitled *Carte dressée pour la campagne de 1666*, which was published in the Jesuit Relations for that year (Figure 8).[15] This map illustrates the strategic importance of the corridor running from the Hudson River to the St. Lawrence River via Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the Richelieu River. The first European to traverse this corridor in its entirety appears to have been Father Isaac Jogues. Father Jogues was another Jesuit missionary who, like Bressani, was captured in Canada by the Mohawks, and brought to their villages for torture. The Mohawks took him along the route shown on this map, and Father Jogues was apparently the first European to see Lake George, which he named *Lac du St. Sacrement*. Father Jogues was captured in 1642 and escaped to the Dutch in 1643. Although he had been horribly tortured and mutilated, he returned to Mohawk Country in 1646 by the same route, where he was finally put to death as a suspected witch.

Largely to deal with the Iroquois attacks on New France and its Indian allies, the French crown finally sent a sizable force of professional soldiers to Canada. In 1665 over 1,000 men from the famous Carignan Salières regiment arrived, and began the construction of the fortifications shown on this map. The French also conducted two raids against the Mohawks. The first, conducted in January 1666, did more damage to the French than to their adversaries. After an unsuccessful encounter, some of the retreating French troops had to be saved by local Dutch settlers from freezing. The second raid, conducted the following year, was more of a success for the French. Although the Indians declined to fight, the French were able to destroy

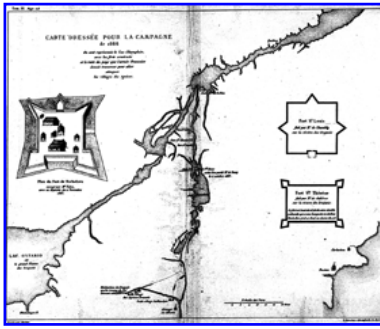


Figure 8

their villages and crops, which prompted the Mohawks and their Iroquois allies to conclude a tenuous peace with the French, which lasted almost twenty years. The location of the Mohawk villages and the route taken by the French troops are clearly shown on our map.

These events also brought the French into direct competition with the English. The French control of the Champlain Valley blocked the expansion of New England to the west, and the French even went so far as to claim control of the Mohawk territory by right of conquest. While the French were busy jousting with the Mohawks, the English were wresting control of New York from the Dutch. These events marked the beginning of nearly 100 years of tension and intermittent warfare between the two colonial powers in North America.

Somewhat later developments in the French exploration and mapping of this area are summarized in the so-called "Great Lakes Map." This is an anonymous map of uncertain origins dating from about 1680, which resides in the Archives of the Marine in Paris. It was a favorite map of Francis Parkman, and a copy of it can be found in the Parkman collection at Harvard. It has been reproduced in the Karpinski collection and elsewhere. The eight sheets of this map cover the entire area from the coast of New England to the Mississippi River. Regardless of who drew it, it is a work of synthesis that draws on a number of earlier maps and reports by explorers and missionaries.[16]

The easternmost sheet of the Great Lakes Map covers present-day New England and northeastern New York, and shows how extensive was the knowledge the French had gained of this area by the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century (Figure 9).[17]



Figure 9

This sheet clearly shows both the Green Mountains in Vermont and the Adirondack Mountains, which are named for the first time on a map as "the Mountains of St. Mary." (This may be an error in copying, since on later French maps the Adirondacks are consistently called the Mountains of Saint Martha.) A note on the Green Mountains reads "here one can find veins of lead, although not in great abundance," which indicates that the French were active enough in this area to engage in prospecting. Northern New England is shown as inhabited by "savages called Mahingans or Socoquis." The depiction of the Lake Champlain corridor is unimpressive, although it is interesting that the Hudson River is labeled "the North River, or of Traiders (*traittes*), or of Maurice"—echoing the Dutch names for the river and the name assigned to it by Champlain, but ignoring the

name favored by the British. This map also shows quite clearly the Black River, which is shown flowing from the "Country of the Iroquois" in northern New York into the St. Lawrence, and is here called the Soegansi River.

The next sheet of this map shows the area around Lake Ontario (Figure 10).[18] It is primarily of interest because of its depiction of Indian trade routes. The Indians are shown as using the Salmon River, which flows eastward from Lake Ontario, as their primary route to carry furs to the Dutch and English. This is somewhat surprising, since the Oswego River, which is located further to the west, and which flows directly into Lake Oneida, would seem to be a more logical route, since it does not involve such a long portage. However, this same route from the Salmon River area (later called by the French "La Famine") to Lake Oneida appears on several subsequent maps, and appears to be historically correct.

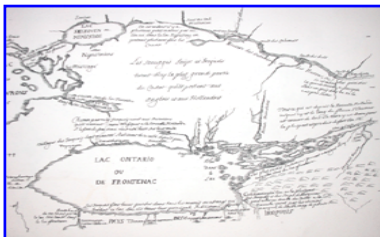


Figure 10

The rivers and Iroquois villages on the south shore of Lake Ontario appear on this sheet, but the map does not seem to show great familiarity with the area, and does not show any details inland from the lake coast. Niagara Falls is also shown, and its height recorded with great exaggeration as "120 toises." (A toise is approximately six feet; the actual height of Niagara Falls is 184 feet.) Those who wonder why Toronto is located where it is will notice that a second Indian trade route is shown going from Lake Toronto (now Lake Simcoe) to an Indian Village located on the site of the present city. Thus, Toronto clearly got its start as a trading center for Indians moving goods from Lake Huron to Lake Ontario, and from there to New France and New York.

Detailed mapping of the Finger Lakes area and western New York took place in the 1680s. After peace was made between the French and the Iroquois in 1668, Jesuit missions were established in several of the Iroquois villages. During the 1670s the French under La Salle made an effort to expand their trading empire to the west by establishing Fort Niagara and Fort Saint Louis in what is now Illinois. These activities eventually brought on renewed warfare with the Iroquois, particularly the Seneca, who had their own ideas about who should be controlling the fur trade with the western Indians. After 1680 the Iroquois attacked Indian allies of the French in the Ohio Valley and even laid siege to Fort Saint Louis. Various retaliatory raids and diplomatic activities followed. All of this military and diplomatic activity was predictably accompanied by an outburst of mapping.

A good overview of French knowledge of western New York at this time is provided by an anonymous map of the region around Lake Ontario and the Finger Lakes (Figure 11).[19]

This map is a reworking, possibly by Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin (of whom more later), of a somewhat more crudely drawn map with the same title by the Jesuit missionary Pierre Raffex, who was active in much of this area between 1666

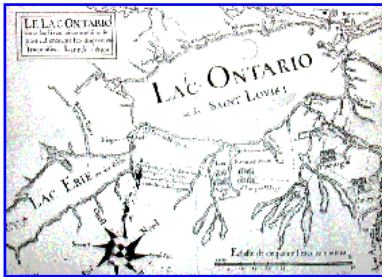


Figure 11

Illinois.” A careful examination of the map turns up such details as the location of fishing locations on the Oswego River and a salt spring near Syracuse.

As impressive as this map is, two even more detailed maps of the Finger Lakes area were made at this time. One of these is definitely the work of the previously mentioned Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, who could be described as the Grey Eminence of seventeenth-century French cartography of North America. Franquelin was a professional mapmaker, who between 1674 and 1693 drew numerous maps to accompany dispatches from New France to Paris. After his return to France in 1693, he continued to produce maps of North America through the early years of the eighteenth century. (He is thought to have died in 1712.) His manuscript maps can be found at the *Archive du Marine* and elsewhere in Paris. Unfortunately, none of his maps were printed in his lifetime, and most of them were unsigned. His influence was clearly substantial on later mapmakers like De L’Isle and even Bellin, but it is difficult to determine the extent of his responsibility for many unsigned manuscript maps. Thus he remains an important, but somewhat shadowy figure.^[20]

One map that Franquelin definitely did make was a *Carte du Pays de Irroquois*, which is signed “Par I.B.L.F. Ydrographe du Roy”(Figure 12 is a detail).^[21]



Figure 12



Figure 13

This is an even more detailed map of the Finger Lakes region than the one described above. It also shows such standard information as Indian villages and paths, along with lakes, streams, and inlets. In addition, it includes notes on the topography, and even gives the number of long houses in each Iroquois village. Another extremely detailed large-scale map, which was probably produced in conjunction with Denonville's expedition against the Seneca in 1687, shows the region from Irondequoit Bay to the Seneca Villages of St. Jacques and Assumption.^[22]

The extent of French knowledge of the geography of central and western New York stands out in contrast to British mapping of the same area. Compare the French maps of the Finger Lakes region to Guy Johnson's map of the country of the Six Nations, which was produced nearly a century later.^{(Figure 13).}^[23] Johnson's map was made by a British official who lived in the Mohawk Valley and was the son-in-law of the leading British expert on Indian affairs, Sir William Johnson.^[24] In spite of these advantages, a glance at his map shows that he was unaware of many of the basic features of the geography of the area, which he described as “having never been surveyed or even thoroughly explored.” He would have done much better to have copied from contemporary (mid-eighteenth century) French maps, which were available to him, and whose depiction of western New York was based largely on seventeenth-century manuscript maps, particularly those of Franquelin.

This very detailed mapping extended to eastern New England. The next illustration shows a detail from a map, probably drawn by Franquelin, to illustrate the expedition of Intendent De Meules to Acadia in 1685-86 ^{(Figure 14).}^[25]



Figure 14

This detail of a much larger map shows the coast of Maine north of the Penobscot River. Such features as Mount Desert Island and Grand Manan Island are easily recognizable. Note the careful depiction of streams and Indian villiages, which is characteristic of much of the cartography of New France. Here, again, nothing remotely comparable in terms of accuracy or detail was produced by the British for this area prior to the *Atlantic Neptune* in the 1770s.

The previous maps are magnificently summarized by Franquelin's map of North America, which was drawn in 1688 ^{(Figure 15).}^[26]



Figure 15

considered the conquest of New York. A map in the Karpinski Collection, which has been attributed to the French military engineer Robert de Villeneuve and dated to 1693, shows the critically strategic corridor running from Montreal to New York via Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. A detail of the southern portion of this map is shown as [Figure 16](#).^[27]



Figure 16

This map is more accurate for the area north of Albany, as one would expect, but the portion showing southern New York is a favorite of mine because of its bold assertion of French claims. Here the New York Bight is called “the Sea of New France,” and Long Island is rendered into its French equivalent.

Franquelin was also involved in producing maps of southern New York and New England to support the French war effort. He used information, apparently provided by spies or informers, to produce a map of the roads between Boston and New York. He also drew individual maps of Boston and New York City. His map of Manhattan, which was an inset of his Boston-New York map, is something of a cartographical curiosity. This map, which was reprinted by Bellin (the only one of Franquelin’s maps to be published before the nineteenth century), is one of the best known of his cartographic efforts. Franquelin appears to have been misled by a double agent, for his plan shows a fictionalized New York City as a powerful fortress, which would have discouraged any potential French invader.^[28]

It was a long time before the information recorded in the manuscript maps produced between 1660 and 1695 found their way into print. Some of the information recorded in the maps of western New York described above found its way onto Coronelli’s *Parti Occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France* (1688).^[29] For a more massive infusion of this data, we have to wait for the landmark maps of the De L’Isles, which appeared in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The most important member of this family of map makers was Guillaume de L’Isle. Like Sanson and Coronelli before him, he bore the title of royal geographer, and had direct access to the manuscript maps at the *Dépôt de la Marine*. De L’Isle is often regarded as the greatest mapmaker of his time, and the maps of New France that he produced in 1703 (*Carte du Canada*) and 1718 (*Carte de la Louisiane*) are among his best and most influential.^[30] The influence of Franquelin’s maps are evident in the works of De L’Isle, especially in his *Carte de la Louisiane* of 1718 ([Figure 18](#)). Compare the detail of the area around the Finger Lakes from this map with both that on his 1703 map ([Figure 17](#)) and with the Franquelin map previously shown ([Figure 15](#)).



Figure 17



Figure 18

It is a testimony to the accuracy of De L’Isle’s 1718 map that Cadwallader Colden chose to copy the part showing the Iroquois country and publish it as *A map of the country of the Five Nations belonging to the Province of New York* to illustrate his important history of the Iroquois. ([Figure 19](#)).^[31] Indeed, Colden first used this map with attribution to De L’Isle in 1724, and then in 1747 he was bold enough to reissue it without attribution. Colden, who was New York’s long-term Surveyor General and a moderately renowned man of letters, spent much of his long career lamenting the inferiority of the British mapping of interior North America to that of the French, and pleading for money to carry out more accurate surveys—thereby testifying to the superiority of French colonial maps over their British and Dutch counterparts.

From De L’Isle to the Fall of New France

The mapping of the borderlands between New France and the northern British colonies made few dramatic advances



Figure 19

between the appearance of De L'Isle's map of 1718 and the period around 1750. This is partially because the main features of northern New England and New York had already been sketched out, and French cartographers were now occupied with mapping other, newer parts of their far-flung North American empire. In some respects the De L'Isle map of 1718 remained unsurpassed in its depiction of our area until after the fall of New France. However, some important regional explorations and surveys took place between 1720 and 1740, and much of this work was eventually reflected in the maps of Jacques Nicolas Bellin and others published between 1744 and the fall of New France in 1760.

Many of the manuscript maps produced during this period were associated with the name of Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, which was shared by a father-son team of mapmakers. The elder de Léry, a French military engineer, arrived in New France in 1716, and made maps until his death in 1756. His son, who became his assistant, started making maps in the 1730s. Since both shared the same name, and they did not always sign their maps or signed them only "de Léry," there is much confusion concerning which map was produced by whom.

In the 1720s the elder de Léry was involved in surveying the south shore of Lake Ontario.^[32] His many plans of fortifications include drawings of the French Fort Niagara, and of the British fort at Oswego, which was established on what the French regarded as their territory in 1727 (Figure 20).



Figure 20

Starting around 1730, the French moved to strengthen their hold on the strategic Lake Champlain corridor. In 1731 they began construction of Fort St. Frederic (Crown Point), which is about two-thirds of the way down the lake. This fort was designed by the elder Chaussegros de Léry himself, who also helped fortify Québec and Montreal. During time of war, the fort at Crown Point was used effectively by the French to launch raids against the British settlements in the Connecticut River Valley. In 1755 the French pushed even further south with the construction of Fort Carillon (later Fort Ticonderoga). As was usually the case with fortifications, both French and British military engineers lovingly drew numerous maps of these structures and their surroundings. The illustrations presented here show Fort Niagara (Figure 21) and Fort Carillon (Figure 22).^[33]



Figure 21



Figure 22

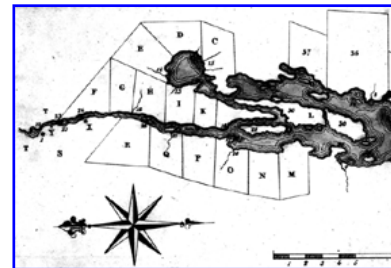


Figure 23

The French also drew many regional maps of the Lake Champlain area. Several of these showed French land grants in the vicinity of the lake (see Figure 23). This is the only area in what is now the Northeastern United States that the French attempted to settle. They used a system (similar to that used by the British in the Hudson Valley) of dividing the land into large *seignories*, which were held by army officers and other notables, who were responsible for attracting settlers to their estates. Not surprisingly, the elder de Léry figures among the list of estate holders, for eighteenth-century surveyors were often paid for their services by being given tracts of land. Most of the estates shown on this map existed on paper only. In spite of the attractions of a warmer climate and some fertile soil, the French were unable to attract settlers to this area. This is partially because the sparse population of New France relative to its land area meant that there were few potential settlers, and also because the area was too exposed to attacks by the British and their Indian allies.

As noted above, these and other manuscript maps were synthesized by Jacques Nicolas Bellin. The earliest of Bellin's maps covering this area is his *Carte des lacs du Canada* (1744).^[34] This map was largely incorporated in his *Partie occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada* (1745), which was accompanied by a *Partie orientale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada*, covering eastern Canada and New England. These maps in turn were revised and reissued in 1755.^[35]

As would be expected, Bellin's maps show the new fortifications constructed by the British and French throughout this area. The most notable changes on his maps (as compared to De L'Isle's) are in the part of New York west of the Genesee River. In the final years of New France, the French tried to consolidate their hold over the Ohio River Valley. Ultimately they constructed Fort Duquesne at the site of Pittsburgh, as well as a chain of fortresses in what is now western Pennsylvania leading from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. As part of this undertaking, they also explored the headwaters of the Alleghany River in New York, and looked for possible routes to the Alleghany from either the Genesee River or Lake Chautauqua. On the 1745 edition of his *Partie occidentale*, the Genesee is described as a "river unknown to geographers, which is full of



Figure 24

cascades and waterfalls.” Actually the Genesee River appears on seventeenth-century maps, but possibly later explorers were the first to note the impressive waterfalls on the upper reaches of “the Grand Canyon of the East” (see [Figure 24](#)).



Figure 25

There are some interesting differences between the editions of Bellin's *Partie occidentale*, which can be seen on the details presented here. Bellin's treatment of the shoreline of Lake Ontario in the 1745 edition, which reflects the surveys of the elder de Léry, should be compared with the De L'Isle map of 1718. In the 1755 Paris edition of Bellin's map, the depiction of Lake Ontario is improved in some respects, reflecting additional surveys by de Léry, but takes on a peculiar north-south orientation. The later edition of the map is also updated to show fortifications constructed on the eve of the French and Indian War. The right-hand border of the map was even shifted eastward to show the recent British and French fortifications in the Lake Champlain corridor. ([Figure 25](#))

One other map by Bellin from this period deserves special notice. This is his 1757 map of the St. Lawrence River region from Quebec to Lake Ontario ([Figure 26](#)).^[36] This map is notable for its relatively detailed depiction of northern New York, including the Adirondack Mountains, and the rivers flowing into Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River. Here is another example of a French map that is considerably more detailed than anything produced by the British or the Americans until after the American Revolution. This map also reflects the status of military activities in the opening years of the French and Indian War. The British fort at Oswego is noted as being destroyed. The French Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) is shown at the foot of Lake Champlain; the nearby British forts Edward and George are shown at the base of Lake George. The small French fort at Ogdensburg ("La Présentation") also makes an appearance, which is unusual on maps. Among the new fortifications depicted here is “Fort Toronto, françois,” making it the earliest printed map I have seen that shows the existence of a European settlement on the site of the present city of Toronto. (The French Fort was destroyed by the British a few years after its construction in 1755, and a permanent settlement was established only after the American Revolution.)



Figure 26

The maps of Bellin influenced much of the cartography of North America throughout the last half of the eighteenth century. Bellin's maps were copied by French competitors, such as Vaugondy and D'Anville. Several important British maps depended on Bellin and his French rivals for much of their information about the interior of North America. These included John Mitchell's famous *Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* (1755), which was used in determining the boundary between the United States and Canada at the Treaty of Paris in 1783.^[37]

Notes

1. The best popular overview is Conrad E. Heidenreich and Edward H. Dahl, *The French Mapping of North America, 1600-1700* (Map Collector Special Publication, [1982?]). Reprinted with additions from: “The French Mapping of North America in the Seventeenth Century,” *The Map Collector* 13 (December, 1980):2-11; and “The French Mapping of North America, 1700-1760,” *The Map Collector* 19 (June, 1982):2-7. Some of the same ground is covered in greater depth by Conrad E. Heidenreich, “Mapping the Great Lakes: The Period of Imperial Rivalries, 1700-1760,” *Cartographica* 18,3 (1981):74-109.
2. See Louis Charles Karpinski, *Manuscript Maps, Prior to 1800, Relating to America; Photographic Facsimilies Made from Originals in Various Archives in Paris, Spain and Portugal* [s.l., s.n.: 1927-45?]. Copies of all or part of the Karpinski collection are in a number of major research libraries in the United States and Canada. The Karpinski collection is notoriously poorly organized and difficult to use. There is no standard system of numbering the maps, and the many untitled and/or anonymous maps have been differently listed or cataloged by various libraries. The maps discussed in this article are in the “French Series” (6 vols. plus 2 vols of indexes). The “Karpinski numbers” listed are those assigned by the Map Division of the New York Public Library. An [online inventory of the Karpinski collection](#) with indexes and useful background information is available from the Huntington Library (San Marino, California). Note that the Karpinski numbers assigned by the Huntington Library are not the same as those cited here.

Some of these maps are also reproduced in Gabriel Marcel, *Reproductions de cartes et de globes relatifs à la découverte de l'Amerique du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Leroux, 1893); and in Alphonse Louis Pinart, *Recueil de cartes, plans et vues relatifs aux États-Unis et au Canada, New-York, Boston, Montréal, Québec, Louisbourg, 1651-1731 reproduits d'après les originaux manuscrits et inédits, etc. Exposés à l'occasion du quatrième centenaire de la découverte de l'Amerique* (Paris: n. p., 1893). Several of these manuscript maps are also reproduced in vol. 4 of Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of*

America (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1884-89), and in Winsor's *Cartier to Frontenac: Geographical Discovery in the Interior of North America in its Historical Relations, 1534-1700* (1894; reprinted New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970).

3. On the role of the government in French map making see: David Buisseret, "Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps in France before the Accession of Louis XIV," in David Buisseret, ed., *Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 99-123; Josef W. Konvitz, *Cartography in France, 1660-1848: Science, Engineering and Statecraft* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1-31.

4. The best study of Champlain as a mapmaker is Conrad E. Heidenreich, *Explorations and Mapping of Samuel de Champlain, 1603-1632*, Cartographica Monograph no.17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976). A readable biography of Champlain with copies of many of his maps is Samuel Eliot Morison, *Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France* (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1972).

5. Champlain, Samuel de, [Manuscript Map of New England], 1607. Available on the World Wide Web from the Library of Congress (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3321p.np000002>).

6. Champlain, Samuel de, Saco Harbor, 1613. Available on the World Wide Web from the Osher Map Library (<http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/exhibit2/ser2.htm>). Originally published in his *Les Voyages* (1613).

7. Champlain, Samuel de, *Carte géographique de la Nouvelle France*, 1612. Available on the World Wide Web from the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargeo/accueil.htm>). Originally published in his *Les Voyages* (1613).

8. Champlain, Samuel de, *Carte de la Nouvelle France*, 1632. Available on the World Wide Web from the Stony Brook University Web site (<http://www.sunysb.edu/libmap/img2cap.htm>). Published in the 1632 edition of *Les Voyages*.

9. W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*. Rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), p. 57

10. Sanson, Nicolas, *Le Canada ou Nouvelle France*, 1656. Available on the World Wide Web from the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargeo/accueil.htm>).

11. This is Johannes de Laet / (Hessel Gerritz), *Nova Anglia, Novum Belgium, et Virginia* (Leiden: De Laet, 1630). Reproduced in Paul Cohen, *Manhattan in Maps, 1527-1995* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), 26-27 and elsewhere. A copy can be found on the World Wide Web at the Osher Map Library site <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/exhibit2/25.jpg>

12. Bressani, Francesco, *Novae Franciae accurata delineatio*, 1657 Available on the World Wide Web from the Stony Brook University Library (<http://www.sunysb.edu/libmap/Bressani.htm>).

13. DuCreux, Francois, *Tabula Novae Francia anno 1660* (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargeo/accueil.htm>)

14. See the chapters on history and geography in François de Dainville, *L'Education des Jésuites, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (rev. ed.; Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1978). Particularly relevant to the subject of this article is Nellis M. Crouse, *Contributions of the Canadian Jesuits to the Geographical Knowledge of New France, 1632-1675* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Publications Company, 1924).

15. Full title: *Carte dressée pour la campagne de 1666 ou sont représentés le lac Champlain, avec les forts construits et le reste du pays que l'armée Franscoise devait traverser pour aller attaquer les villages des Agniers* ["Map prepared for the campaign of 1666, showing Lake Champlain, the forts constructed, and the remainder of the country that the French army had to cross in order to attack the Mohawk villages"].

16. This multi-sheet map resides in the *Bibliothèque historique centrale de la Marine*, and is listed in its online catalog (http://www.culture.fr/culture/nllefce/fr/rep_ress/ba_00300.htm) as "Recueil 67, pièces 47 à 53," The map has been attributed to the Abbé Claude Bernou, and appears to be a reworking of materials from Jolliet and Franquelin. It is reproduced by Pinart and Karpinski (cited above). Parkman appears to have seen a version of this map in which all of the pieces were assembled as a single sheet. A copy of this single-sheet map can be found in the Parkman collection at the Harvard Library. It is described along with other seventeenth-century French maps in Appendix A of *La Salle and the Great West*. See Francis Parkman: *France and England in North America*, David Levin ed. (s.l., The Library of America, 1982), I, p. 1044. A reduced-scale copy of Parkman's copy with the names and legends transcribed is in Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, IV, pp. 215-17. For comments on the origin and accuracy of this map see Jean Delanglez, "Franquelin, Mapmaker," *Mid-America; an Historical Review* 25 (new series), 14 (1943): 57.

17. [Bernou, Abbé Claude?], [Map of area from Saint Lawrence River south to Albany and Boston], [1679?]. Reproduced in Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 424; Pinart, *Recueil de cartes*, no. 14. Illustration is a photograph from Pinart.

18. [Bernou, Abbé Claude?], [Map of area around Lake Ontario], [1679?]. Reproduced in Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 423; Pinart, *Recueil de cartes*, no. 15. Illustration is a photograph from Pinart.

19. The map used in the illustration is [Franquelin, Jean-Baptiste Louis?], *Le Lac Ontario avec les lieux circonvoisins*.

L'année 1688. Illustration is a photograph of Karpinski, *French Series*, no 435. The version by Raffex is Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 40.

20. For Franquelin see Delanglez, "Franquelin, Mapmaker" and M.W. Burke-Gaffney's article on Franquelin in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, II, 228-31.

21. Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, *Carte du pays des Irroquois, par I.B.L.F Ydrographe du Roy*, [ca. 1688]. Illustration is a photograph of Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 434.

22. Anonymous, *Carte de la route entre les villages St.-Jacques et la Conception et le lac Ontario*, [ca. 1688]. Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 436.

23. Johnson, Guy, *Map of the Country of the Six Nations* (manuscript, 1771). The full (and fulsome) title is: *To His Excellency William Tryon Esqr. Captain General & Governor in Chief of the Province of New York & &, this map of the country of the VI. Nations proper, with part of the adjacent colonies, is humbly inscribed by his Excellency's most humble servant*. The original of this map was destroyed in a fire at the New York State Library. A facsimile was published following p. 660 in volume IV of E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed Parson & Co., 1849-51) Available on the Internet from the Three Rivers website (<http://www.threerivershms.com/tryonmap.htm>).

24. For the Johnsons and the Iroquois see James Thomas Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet: A Biography of Sir William Johnson* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1989).

25. [Franquelin, Jean-Baptiste Louis?], [Northeastern Canada, with a portion of Acadia], 1686. The photograph is of Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 267. A similar but less detailed and more ornate version of this map is signed by Franquelin (Karpinski, no. 266). Another interesting early French map of northern New England was drawn by Father Joseph Aubry, S.J., in 1713. Although not as detailed as the previous map, it provides important information about the location of Jesuit missions and Indian settlements. The map is reproduced in Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, p. 138.

26. Franquelin, Jean-Baptiste Louis, *Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale*, [1688] Available on the World Wide Web from the Library of Congress (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3300.ct000668>)

27. [Villeneuve, Robert de?], [Region from Montreal to New York], [1693?]. Illustration from Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 117.

28. Franquelin's regional map is entitled *Carte de la coste de la Nouvelle Angleterre, depuis le Cap Anne jusqu'a la Pointe Nevresing, ou' est compris le chemin par terre et par mer, de Boston a Manathes, par J.B. Franquelin, hydrographe du Roy* (1693). It is Karpinski, *French Series*, no. 272. His map of Boston is *Carte de la ville, baye, et environs de Boston par Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin, Hydrogr. du Roy* (1693). A copy can be found in Pinart, *Recueil de Cartes*, pl. 4. Franquelin's *Ville de Manathe ou Nouvelle-Yorc* was republished by Bellin in his *Petit Atlas Maritime* (1764). See Cohen, *Manhattan in Maps*, pp. 50-51 for a facsimile and description.

29. Marco Vincenzo Coronelli, *Partie occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France ou sont les nations des Illinois, de Tracy, les Iroquois, et plusieurs autres peuples; avec la Louisiane*, 1688. Copy of facsimile published by Association des cartothèques canadiennes /Association of Canadian Map Libraries available on World Wide Web from Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargo/accueil.htm>).

30. Guillaume and Claude de L'Isle, *Carte du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France et des découvertes qui y ont été faites*, 1703. Copy of facsimile published by Association des cartothèques canadiennes /Association of Canadian Map Libraries available on World Wide Web from Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargo/accueil.htm>). Guillaume de L'Isle, *Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi*, 1718. Available on the World Wide Web from the Library of Congress (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3700.ct000666>). For a comprehensive examination of the De L'Isle family and their place in the history of cartography as well as the mapping of North America, see Nelson-Martin Dawson, *L'Atelier Delisle: L'Amerique sur la table à dessin* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 2000).

31. The first edition of Colden's map was published in his *Papers Relating to an Act of Assembly* (1724). The second edition (1747) bears the title *A map of the country of the Five Nations, belonging to the province of New York; and of the lakes near which the nations of far Indians live, with part of Canada*. A copy of Colden's map can be seen at the Web site of the University of Pennsylvania Library, <http://www.library.upenn.edu/exhibits/rbm/kislak/lands/fivenationsmap.html>

32. For the de Lérays' surveys of Great Lakes, see Heidenreich, "Mapping the Great Lakes," 79-83.

33. The illustration presented here is a copy of a lithographed nineteenth-century facsimile, which added an English translation to the French text. Its title is *Carte du Lac Champlain depuis le fort Chambly jusqu'au fort St. Frederick Levée par le Sr Anger arpenteur du Roy en 1732 fait à Quebec le 10 Octobre 1748 Signé de Lery* (Albany: Pease, [ca. 1849]. It was published in the *Documentary History of the State of New York*, I, facing p. 358. Available on the World Wide Web from Stony Brook University Library, <http://www.sunysb.edu/libmap/Lery.htm>

34. Available on the World Wide Web from the University of Illinois, "Historical Maps of Illinois and the Northwest Territory" site (http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/historical_maps/northamerica/canada.html)

35. There are two versions of the 1755 edition of the *Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France*. One version was published in Nürnberg by the successors of Homan with the title *Partie occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou du Canada* is an almost exact reissue of the 1744 edition (available on World Wide Web from Bibliothèque nationale du Québec at (<http://www4.bnquebec.ca/cargeo/accueil.htm>). The 1755 Paris edition by Bellin is the one with the revisions (available on the World Wide Web from Stony Brook University at (<http://www.sunysb.edu/libmap/Bellin.htm>))

36. Jacques Nicolas Bellin, *Suite du cours du fleuve de St. Laurent depuis Quebec jusqu'au Lac Ontario*, 1757. Originally published in Prevost's *Histoire Générale des Voyages*. Copy illustrated here was reprinted in De La Harpe's *Voyages* (1780)

37. Mitchell's map is widely available on the World Wide Web and elsewhere. It can be viewed at the Library of Congress Web site at (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3300.np000009>). For an introduction to this map (but little about its borrowings from French maps) see, Matthew H. Edney, "John Mitchell's Map: An Irony of Empire," on the Web site of the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, University of Southern Maine, <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/mitchell/>.

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