

LESSON 2



PREVIEW

Focus on the Main Idea

French exploration of the Mississippi River led to new French colonies in North America.

PLACES

Mississippi River
Louisiana
New Orleans

PEOPLE

Jacques Marquette
Louis Jolliet
Robert La Salle

VOCABULARY

trading post
tributary

1670

1673

Marquette and Jolliet explore the Mississippi River

1682

La Salle claims Louisiana for France

1720

1718

New Orleans is established near mouth of Mississippi River

French Explore the Mississippi

You Are There

A French missionary, Jacques Marquette (ZHAK mar KET), makes a note of the date in his journal: June

17, 1673. He has just seen the Mississippi River for the first time. Traveling in two birch-bark canoes, he and six other French explorers begin paddling down the river. And Marquette begins filling his journal with descriptions of one incredible sight after another.

He is amazed by the herds of massive buffalo, which he calls “wild cattle.” He and his men hunt the buffalo, and quickly learn that this is a dangerous animal. “If a person fires at them from a distance with either bow or gun, he must, immediately after the shot, throw himself down and hide in the grass.”

Marquette also visits many Native American villages. He speaks with the people there, finding out all he can about the Mississippi River. But he still cannot answer the most important question—where does this river end?

Sequence As you read, pay attention to the sequence of events that led to French control of the Mississippi River.

Exploring the Mississippi

As you read in Chapter 5, the French established New France in 1534. The major settlements of New France were Quebec and Montreal, in present-day Canada. The French moved west slowly, building trading posts and missions along the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes. **Trading posts** were places where the French and Native Americans met to trade goods.

French traders and missionaries learned important skills from the Native Americans of this region. They learned how to build canoes from birch bark, and how to make snowshoes for walking in deep snow. Native Americans also told the French about a big river to the west. Algonquian-speaking Indians called this river *Mississippi*, which means “big water.”

The leaders of New France were eager to explore the **Mississippi River**. Control of this river would help them reach new lands where they could build trading posts. And the French were still hoping to find a river that flowed west to the Pacific Ocean—the Northwest Passage. Could the Mississippi be this river?

► **Marquette and Jolliet explored the Mississippi River by canoe, meeting many Native Americans along the way.**

In the summer of 1673, the French missionary **Jacques Marquette** set out to explore the Mississippi. He was accompanied by a fur trader named **Louis Jolliet** (JOH lee et) and five other French adventurers. As they traveled, Marquette drew maps of the Mississippi. He also spoke with many Native Americans who lived along the river. In his journal, Marquette wrote about entering one Native American village and introducing himself.

“They replied that they were Illinois, and, as a token of peace, they offered us their pipes to smoke.”

After sharing a meal with the Illinois, the explorers resumed their journey. Since the river continued to flow south, however, Marquette realized that this was not the Northwest Passage.

The explorers had paddled almost 1,000 miles south on the Mississippi. Now they had to turn around and head back north.

REVIEW Why did the leaders of New France want control of the Mississippi River?

Main Idea and Details



Founding Louisiana

Nine years later, a French explorer named **Robert La Salle** continued the French exploration of the Mississippi River. La Salle's goal was to travel all the way to the mouth of the Mississippi. He set out from the St. Lawrence River in the winter of 1681. To reach the Mississippi, La Salle and his French and Native American companions put their canoes on sleds and dragged them over snow and frozen streams. They began rowing down the Mississippi River in February 1682. Follow La Salle's route on the map.



La Salle reached the Gulf of Mexico in April. While French soldiers fired muskets in the air and shouted "Long live the king!" La Salle claimed the entire Mississippi River valley for France. He also claimed all of the river's tributaries. A **tributary** is a stream or river that flows into a larger river. La Salle named this territory **Louisiana**, for King Louis XIV of France. Louisiana became a part of New France. New France was now a vast empire.

REVIEW Describe the sequence of La Salle's expeditions. **Sequence**



New France, 1750



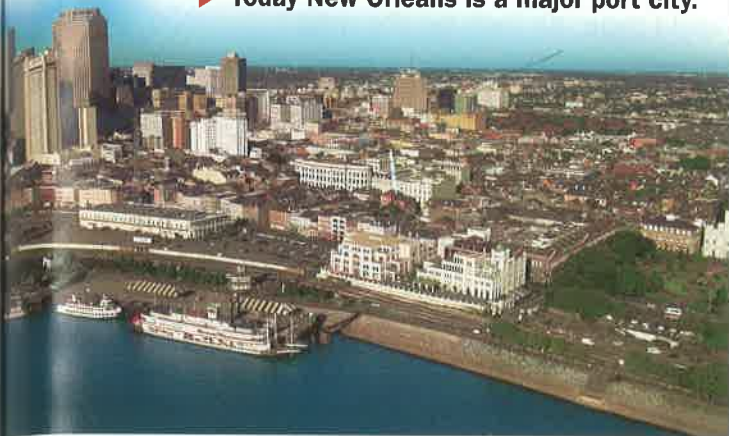
► French explorer Robert La Salle (above) traveled the Mississippi River nine years after Marquette and Joliet.

MAP SKILL Use a Map Scale About how far from the Gulf of Mexico were Marquette and Joliet when they turned around?

New French Settlements

During the late 1600s and early 1700s, the French built trading posts, forts, and missions in New France. Many French settlements, such as Detroit and New Orleans, later grew into major American cities. **New Orleans**, founded in 1718, was Louisiana's territorial and later state capital from 1722 to 1849.

► Today New Orleans is a major port city.



With an ideal location near the mouth of the Mississippi River, New Orleans became a busy trading center. Today, nearly 300 years later, New Orleans is one of the busiest ports in the United States.

REVIEW Name two French settlements that are now major American cities.

Main Idea and Details

Summarize the Lesson

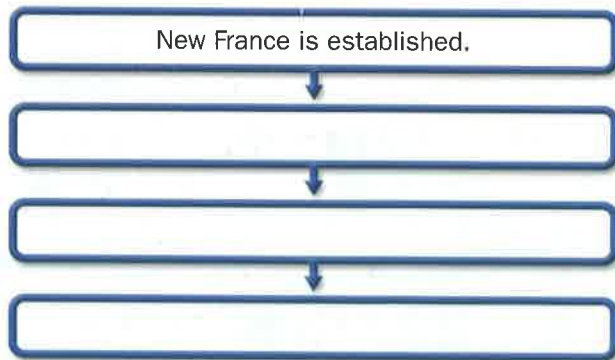
- **1673** Marquette and Jolliet explored the Mississippi River for France.
- **1682** La Salle reached the mouth of the Mississippi and claimed Louisiana for France.
- **1718** New Orleans was founded and quickly became a busy port.

LESSON 2

REVIEW

Check Facts and Main Ideas

1. Sequence On a separate sheet of paper, fill in the sequencing chart by putting the lesson's events in correct order:



2. How did French settlers first learn about the Mississippi River?

- 3. Critical Thinking: Point of View** Give two reasons the French were interested in exploring the Mississippi and its **tributaries**.
- 4.** What did La Salle do when he reached the mouth of the Mississippi?
- 5.** How did New Orleans' location help the city grow?

Link to



Science

Research Birch-Bark Canoes Using the library or Internet, research the birch-bark canoes used by Native Americans. Write a one-page report about these canoes. How were they made? What advantages did canoes have over other kinds of boats? What did they look like? Include a small diagram of a birch-bark canoe.