



History 101

Pere Marquette

...Priest, missionary, explorer, founding father of more than one city, Father Jacques Marquette S.J. (June 10, 1637 – May 18, 1675), was a French Jesuit missionary who founded Michigan's first European settlement, Sault Ste. Marie, and later founded St. Ignace, Michigan. In 1673, the exploration team of Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet were the first Europeans to see and map the northern portion of the Mississippi River.

Jacques Marquette was born in Laon, France, on June 10, 1637 and joined the Society of Jesus at age seventeen. After he worked and taught in France for several years, the Jesuits assigned him to Quebec in 1666 as a missionary to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. He showed great proficiency in learning the local languages, especially Huron. In 1668, Father Marquette was redeployed to missions farther up the St. Lawrence River in the western Great Lakes region. He helped found a mission at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan in present-day Michigan; and at La Pointe, on Lake Superior near the present-day city of Ashland, Wisconsin. Here, he encountered members of the Illinois tribes, who told him about the important route of the Mississippi River. They invited him to teach their people, whose settlements were mostly further south. Because of wars between the Hurons at La Pointe and the neighboring Lakota people, Father Marquette left the mission and went to the Straits of Mackinac; he informed his superiors about the rumored river and requested permission to explore it.

Leave was granted, and in 1673, Marquette was joined by Louis Jolliet, a French-Canadian explorer. The Jolliet-Marquette expedition traveled to within 435 miles of the Gulf of Mexico but turned back at the mouth of the Arkansas River. By this point, they had encountered several natives carrying European trinkets, and they feared an encounter with explorers or colonists from Spain. They followed the Mississippi back to the mouth of the Illinois River. They reached Lake Michigan near the site of modern-day Chicago, by way of the Chicago Portage. In September, Marquette stopped at the mission of St. Francis Xavier, located in present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin, while Jolliet returned to Quebec to relate the news of their discoveries.

Marquette and his party returned to the Illinois Territory in late 1674, becoming the first Europeans to winter in what would become the city of Chicago. In the spring of 1675, Marquette traveled westward and celebrated a public mass at the Grand Village of the Illinois near Starved Rock. A bout of dysentery sapped his health. On the return trip to St. Ignace, he died at age 38 near the modern town of Ludington, Michigan.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Marquette]



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