

Heroes, History, and Two Nationalisms: Jacques Cartier

Alan Gordon

Volume 10, numéro 1, 1999

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/030509ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/030509ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (imprimé)

1712-6274 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Gordon, A. (1999). Heroes, History, and Two Nationalisms: Jacques Cartier. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 10(1), 81–102. <https://doi.org/10.7202/030509ar>

Résumé de l'article

On crée des héros historiques pour promouvoir des causes sociales et politiques. Jacques Cartier illustre à merveille cette affirmation. Il est en fait un personnage du XIXe siècle. Bien qu'il ait vécu au XVIe siècle, il ne fit guère parler de lui avant les années 1830. On peut donc considérer qu'il est un produit des connaissances, des comportements et des préjugés du XIXe siècle. On lui conféra plusieurs significations historiques : drapé à l'origine d'une aura religieuse et nationale, Cartier devint au bout de quarante ans un symbole de liens culturels. De même, on colora différemment son contexte historique selon les circonstances. Jacques Cartier est un personnage flottant de la mémoire historique. En 1835, et encore en 1889, on le présenta comme celui qui avait découvert le Québec, et plus particulièrement la ville de Québec. Dans les années 1930, on amplifia son importance en lui attribuant la découverte du Canada, une assertion par ailleurs sujette à plusieurs interprétations. Mais les héros historiques ne sont pas des créatures cartésiennes. Ces personnages prennent racine dans le vécu, et plus précisément, dans un semblant de vécu. La vénération des héros est bien plus émotive que rationnelle.

Heroes, History, and Two Nationalisms: Jacques Cartier

ALAN GORDON

Jacques Cartier is really a nineteenth-century figure. Although he lived and flourished in the sixteenth century, he was virtually unknown before the 1830s. Thus, the “Discoverer of Canada” is a product of nineteenth-century scholarship, attitudes, and biases. At the end of the seventeenth century his exploits had been reduced to little more than a sentence or two in most authors’ accounts of French expansion in the New World. As Jacques Mathieu has noted, Cartier simply did not exist in the minds of French Canadians until well into the British regime.¹ But this began to change in the 1830s as French Canadians discovered their own distinct history. The first monument to commemorate Cartier’s “discoveries” was inaugurated on 14 September 1835 in Quebec City’s Lower Town, near the Hôpital de la Marine. It was a simple wooden cross bearing an inscription announcing its intent to “marquer l’endroit ou Jacques Cartier, le célèbre navigateur qui a decouvert Québec, a passé l’hiver de 1535-1536.”² It was a plan engineered by J.-B. Faribault, then an ambitious civil servant in the Lower Canadian Assembly, but soon to be renowned for his efforts to strengthen Canada’s archival holdings. Faribault wanted to replace this temporary wooden marker with a more permanent and elegant monument paid for by public subscription. But despite holding a contest to design it, Faribault’s monument was never built. A depressed economy and the well-known events of the latter 1830s interfered with his plans.

Nonetheless, Cartier’s second odyssey, his rise from obscurity to historical herodom, began in the decade following the 300th anniversary of his arrival in the New World. In 1843, Faribault published the first new edition of Cartier’s *Relations* since Richard Hakluyt had released an English translation of an Italian version in 1598. A few years later, a young artist named Théophile Hamel painted a copy of a French portrait of Cartier, which was then lithographed for wide distribution. Suddenly the memory of Jacques Cartier was

1 Jacques Mathieu, *Les mémoires québécoises* (Sainte-Foy, 1991), 318-20. Michel Bideaux makes a similar point in his “Introduction,” *Jacques Cartier Relations* (Montreal, 1986), 9.

2 Archives du Séminaire de Québec, polygraphie 6, no 81; *Le Canadien*, 28 septembre 1835. This story can be followed in J. Robert, “L’invention d’un héros,” in *Le Monde de Jacques Cartier*. F. Braudel, ed. (Montréal, 1984), 295.

evoked in everything from city squares and postage stamps to labour unions and schools.³ A veritable “Cartiermania” swept French Canada in the 1850s and 1860s that lasted at least until the end of the century. It became nearly impossible for an official nationalist ceremony to omit the memory of Jacques Cartier. This much has been well documented by scholars. This paper will not take a contrary stance to the works that precede it. Instead it will attempt to show how historical heroes are used for specific political ends. That is, partisan groups seize broader “national” heroes to legitimise or universalise their much narrower policy objectives.

However, this process reveals a deeper function of historical heroes. Heroes unite people in a political community, but they do so in ways that sometimes eschew cold reason. The bond of the imagined community is an emotive, noumenal bond. It is noumenal in Immanuel Kant’s negative sense that it is profound knowledge that cannot possess empirical or phenomenal reality. Bill Butler notes that heroes, historical, political, or mythical, are marshalled to support social order. But the desire to exalt a hero, one of humanity’s most common symbols, represents more than straightforward social control. Heroes personify our desirable characteristics and reflect an ideal conception of social behaviour.⁴ In 1840, Thomas Carlyle proposed his theory of the hero as a means to see history as a series of biographies of great men. Heroic acts are not part of everyday experience, but the existence of the hero implies their genuine reality.⁵ Political communities such as nations, then, seek to find their “genuine” past in the deeds of historical heroes. At a level deeper still, heroes can help structure our shared memories of the communal past. Although he has passed into the mists of history, communities imagine their identity with the hero.⁶ The hero is a figure that supports the shared hopes, dreams, meanings, and especially memories of a society.

3 Hamel’s portrait toured Canada East in 1847. That year Montreal changed the name of the New Market to Place Jacques-Cartier and Quebec City opened its Marché Jacques Cartier. In 1858, the Government of the United Canadas issued a Jacques Cartier postage stamp denominated at 20 pence. In 1857, the newly established French-language teacher training college in Montréal was christened the École normale Jacques-Cartier. The Union typographique Jacques-Cartier was likely local 145 of the ITU.

4 Bill Butler, *The Myth of the Hero* (London, 1979); J.C. Henderson, “Ancient Myths and Modern Man,” in *Man and His Symbols*. C Jung, ed., (London, 1964), 110. See also, Bruno Hébert, *Monuments et patrie* (Joliette, 1980), 269-75.

5 BH. Lehmon, *Carlyle’s Theory of the Hero* (New York, 1966), 41-88.

6 The choice of masculine pronouns is primarily a stylistic device intended to focus attention on Jacques Cartier, the subject of this paper. French Canada’s heroes are primarily male, but there are also significant female heroes, such as Jeanne Mance and Madeleine de Verchères.

I

Although many authors argue that French-Canadian nationalism in the post-Rebellion years rejected the liberal-national project generally attributed to the *Parti patriote* – there has been a tendency to conflate all French-Canadian nationalist ideas into a single, clerical vision – a liberal nationalist tradition persisted.⁷ Despite this apparent triumph of conservatism, French-Canadian liberalism survived. In the first nine provincial elections following Confederation, Liberals attracted an average of 45 percent of ballots in Quebec, though this generally did not translate to an equivalent number of seats.⁸ Moreover, liberal-minded people continued to support nationalist policies through the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s. *Rouge* papers, such as *L'Avenir* and *Le Pays*, often made use of nationalist rhetoric to promote their visions. In arguing for repeal of the Union in 1848, *L'Avenir* stood on the “natural” division of Canada into its French- and English-speaking halves, never mind the large anglophone population living in the “French” half. Nationality was thus the guiding political principle and the Union was “un act contre nature,” because different nations cannot coexist in a unitary political formation. Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, likewise, felt that the Union was unnatural because it infringed on this principle of nationality. And these liberals often pointed to historical heroes to personify their ideals, the most notable being the *patriote* “martyrs” of the Rebellions, Pierre Bédard, or Vaudreuil. But Jacques Cartier was not at first a major hero in the liberal pantheon. The earliest authors to write on Jacques Cartier were almost all conservatives. Faribault, for instance, began his career under the protection of the Dalhousie administration, and remained connected to conservatives. Before becoming the first *Bleu* premier of Québec, Pierre-J.-O. Chauveau wrote a poem called “Donaconna,” in which the Canadian chief accepts the Catholic faith Cartier had brought and voluntarily exiles himself to France. Paul des Cazes, who delivered papers on Cartier to the Royal Society in the 1880s, had been a friend of Honoré Mercier in his youth, but remained a staunch enemy of the *rouges*. Indeed, of some 15 essays, plays, and poems written in French about Cartier before 1890, at least 12 were written by conservative partisans.

Cartier was, especially at first, a figure who justified the conservative vision of the French-Canadian nation. It might seem obvious that an old regime figure would more easily justify an ideological position that, its opponents believed, wanted to return French Canada to the eighteenth century. But not all old-regime figures can be so easily characterised. Colbert and Jean Talon found

⁷ See, as an example, Fernand Ouellet, “Nationalisme canadien-français et laïcisme au XIX^e siècle,” *Recherches sociographiques* (janvier-avril 1963), 47-70

⁸ Calculated from figures given in Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire du Québec contemporain*, 2 vols (Montreal, 1981), 1: 271.

favour among liberals for their “modernising” initiatives and status, however questionable, as “new men.” Gameau wrote approvingly of Talon’s struggles against the authority of the Jesuits and of “la plus grande liberté qui venait d’être accordé au commerce” during his Intendancy.⁹ By contrast, ultramontanes saw Cartier as the founder of Catholicism in the New World. For instance, the abbé Ferland’s *Cours d’histoire du Canada* insisted that Cartier was deeply religious and undertook his second voyage in order to convert the natives.¹⁰ Among the most explicit efforts was George-Etienne Cartier’s comparison of the explorer to John the Baptist, claiming that both prophesied the coming of the true faith to North America. Mgr. Laflèche, the Bishop of Trois-Rivières, took the hyperbole further. He compared the explorer to Abraham, the biblical father of the faithful. To this conservative, Catholic mind, Cartier represented the founding of French Canada’s religious vocation, its divine mission to defend the Catholic faith in the New World. Thus, for conservative thinkers, Jacques Cartier embodied the link between their French ethnic roots and their religious origins. He represented a particular view of the French-Canadian nation that supported conservative politics. This connection between memories of Cartier and conservatism meant that the image of the explorer commonly appeared at political celebrations.

The ubiquitousness of the image and memory of Jacques Cartier produced the first French-Canadian “national” historical hero. As the nineteenth century reached its final decades, Cartier had been established as the leading figure in the national pantheon of heroes. In part, this was because control of the “official” pantheon rested in the hands of conservative thinkers, especially the priests in control of the educational system and the lay leaders of French Canada’s national societies, the *Associations Saint-Jean-Baptiste*. Cartier routinely appeared at Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day celebrations on floats, in medallions and, at least in Montreal, in the live representation of a boy dressed as the sixteenth-century explorer accompanying another child dressed as John the Baptist at the end of the national parade.¹¹ Cartier, then, had taken on a universalising function in harmony with the social order espoused by clerical and political leaders. And this harmony reached a crescendo at the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day unveiling of a new Cartier monument in Quebec City’s Lower Town. In the 1880s, the *Cercle catholique de Québec*, a sectarian literary and historical society, initiated a drive to replace the long-disappeared cross at the site of Cartier’s first winter in Canada. *Cercle* membership was very conserva-

9 F-X. Gameau, *Histoire du Canada*, 5th edition (Paris, 1913), 256.

10 J-B.-A. Ferland, *Cours d’histoire du Canada* (Quebec, 1861, 1969), 20-21.

11 Alan Gordon, “Inventing Tradition: Montreal’s Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day Re-Examined,” Unpublished paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, St Catharines, Ontario, June 1996.

tive. Members included the lay leaders of the ultramontanes: Jules-Paul Tardivel and Senator F.-X. Trudel, as well as Narcisse-Eutrope Dionne, briefly the editor of the *Courrier du Canada*.¹² Lay ultramontanes styled themselves *Castors* after 1882. They emerged, initially, as a segment of Quebec's *Bleu* party that opposed its leader J.-A. Chapleau and his questionable associations with the ex-Liberal politician and financier L.-A. Sénécal. When Chapleau quit provincial politics for Ottawa, the *Castors*, and especially the *Cercle catholique*, turned their attacks on his friend and successor J.-A. Mousseau. They never had control of their party, but the *Castors* influenced a number of ministers and policies. Still, many abandoned the *Bleus* and rallied to Honoré Mercier's call for a national front to defend French Catholic interests against anglo-protestant attacks following the Riel Affair of 1885. Many ultramontanes initially opposed Mercier's use of the Riel Affair to form a new political movement, his *Parti national*. Mercier, after all, was a liberal. Bishop Laflèche insisted that Mercier's agitation was "evil," but differences between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the lay *Castors* divided conservatives in Quebec. Certainly Mercier exploited this division further as *Castor* support helped bring his *Parti national* to power.

In the midst of this manoeuvring, the *Cercle catholique* decided to pay double homage to Cartier and the Jesuit missionaries of New France. Although the Jesuit Order was founded in Cartier's lifetime, there is really very little historical connection between the two. Thus, a full understanding of this plan requires a slightly longer sojourn through the nineteenth-century politics of religion and education in Quebec. The Jesuits first came to Canada with Samuel de Champlain in the third decade of the seventeenth century. Very quickly they established themselves as the dominant missionary and educational order in New France, as they had in Europe. Protestant Great Britain would have probably preferred to eliminate all vestiges of Catholicism in Canada following the Conquest, but its tenuous hold over the French population necessitated a lenient stance. However, the hated Society of Jesus did not benefit from the full leniency of the Treaty of Paris. The Jesuits had been founded in 1542 as a missionary society by a former soldier, Ignatius Loyola, and organised along quasi-military lines. In and of itself, the Jesuit system of organisation was not particularly offensive, but Jesuit efficiency and success had brought down considerable Protestant hatred. Moreover, the Jesuit emphasis on practicality exposed the order to accusations of Machiavellianism. To be fair, even Catholic countries had grown leery of Jesuit influence in their courts and pressure from France's House of Bourbon convinced the Pope to abolish the order in 1773.

12 Constitution du Cercle Catholique de Québec (Quebec, 1878). On the *Courrier du Canada* and its politics see André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours* (Quebec, 1973), 1: 203-206.

Thus Jesuit property was, by Church law, to revert to the diocese. But in Canada there were complications. The 34 Jesuits in the colony had been permitted to stay and hold on to their properties, but no new Jesuits could replace them. Slowly their numbers dwindled until the last Jesuit, Père Casot, died in 1800. In accordance with civil law, the property formerly owned by the order reverted to the Crown. Neither the Crown nor the Catholic Church would fully accept the legitimacy of the other's claims, and another claim by the estate of Jeffrey Amherst further complicated the mess.

Although successive efforts to settle the issue failed, by 1831 the Colonial Office had restricted use of the Estates to education. At Confederation this restriction, coupled with the division of powers of the *British North America Act*, passed control of the Estates to the new Government of Quebec. However, the educational restriction meant that interest in the Estates pitted the Archbishop of Quebec, head of the Church in Canada, against a Society of Jesus reconvened by the Pope in 1814. In 1849, the Jesuits founded the Collège Sainte-Marie in Montreal and set up a rivalry with the Seminary of Quebec (which became Laval University in 1853). Rivalry between the Archbishop and the Jesuits, backed by the ultramontane Bishop of Montreal, was intense, particularly over issues of the control of education. The Bishop of Montreal desperately wanted a degree-granting university of his own and the Archbishop of Quebec desperately defended the monopoly of Laval University. These issues wound their way into public policy in the late 1880s. When Mercier manoeuvred the *Parti national* into power in early 1887, the Jesuits, at least, had reason to cheer. The new premier had been a student at the Collège Sainte-Marie and he had retained close ties with his former instructors. Mercier did not disappoint them. He granted the Society of Jesus provincial incorporation and thus the right to own property. This first step aroused little controversy, but when Mercier began negotiating compensation for the Jesuits' Estates with the Holy See, he stepped into a seething cauldron of sectarian and intra-faith distrust and hatred. Negotiating compensation for what was, in legal title, Crown land was bad enough, but Mercier's solution enraged many Protestants. Mercier set the value of the estates at \$400,000, which he agreed to divide between the Jesuits and other teaching orders. However, in order to prevent accusations of funding Catholic education with state money, he granted an additional \$60,000 to Protestant schools. The result was exactly the opposite of the intent. The Protestant gift seemed a pittance in comparison, and provoked cries of "Popery" and discrimination.¹³

At the height of this dispute, the *Cercle catholique* sent out a circular soliciting donations to its monument fund. Twenty-three people promptly pledged a

13 A full treatment of this issue can be found in J.R. Miller, *Equal Rights: The Jesuits Estates Act Controversy* (Montreal, 1979).

total of \$1,030, which encouraged the committee to reissue the form an additional 14 times. Over three years, and 15 calls for subscriptions, some 528 people offered a total of just over \$5,000 towards the construction of the Cartier monument. A breakdown of these pledges indicates that the appeal of the plan was not likely tightly restricted along class lines. Pledges ranged from a high of two hundred dollars to a low of 25¢. Although the majority of the money came from large donations of \$20, \$50, or \$100, the majority of subscribers pledged modest sums of a few dollars. Assuming that the average income for a Quebec industrial worker of about \$260 per year remained true for this cohort, the average donation of \$9.48 would have represented about two weeks' pay.¹⁴ However, this figure is a little misleading. The average is skewed by the large contributions of such notables as Lord Lansdowne (\$100), the Mayor of Saint-Malo, France (\$200), Sir Donald Smith (\$50), and Lord Stanley of Preston (\$100).¹⁵ Almost half of the total, 223 donations, were no more than two dollars. Even if not truly "popular" in composition, the lists of subscribers point to a broad support for the project from local small businesses, professionals, priests, and otherwise undistinguished men. A full analysis of who gave and why is impossible. For similar reasons we cannot "know" how spectators of monument unveilings reacted to and used the speeches and spectacles they witnessed.¹⁶ Audience agency, the audience's active participation in shaping the meaning of performances, leaves behind little historical documentation. It can be found, but with great difficulty. Leaving behind this caveat that it is dangerous to take official memory at face value, the planned ceremonies offer a revealing glimpse into one political use of a national hero.

The unveiling ceremonies were an interesting mix of military and religious elements, but the spiritual side predominated. On Sunday, 24 June 1889, Quebec City celebrated French Canada's *fête nationale*. The day's festivities opened with the 65th Battalion of Montreal and the 9th Voltigeurs of Quebec marching to the Basilica for mass. Later, the same battalions lent a martial air to the monument unveilings, standing as honour guard and firing a thunderous cannon salute to greet the arrival of Lieutenant-Governor A.-R. Angers at the site. Angers's presence was particularly symbolic. The *Cercle catholique* pro-

14 This figure is a crude estimate based on the 1891 Census (Tableau II) which notes total wages of \$30,699,115 paid to 117,389 men, women, and children at 23,037 Quebec industrial establishments.

15 Figures compiled from *Premier bulletin du Comité littéraire et historique du Cercle Catholique de Québec: Oeuvre du monument Jacques-Cartier* (Quebec, 1888), 6-14 and *Deuxième bulletin du Comité littéraire et historique du Cercle Catholique de Québec: Oeuvre du monument Jacques-Cartier* (Quebec, 1890).

16 There is, however, some evidence that in social environments, people rely on the lead of their "betters" in recalling stories. See Mary Susan Weldon, "Collective Memory: Collaborative and Individual Processes in Remembering," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* (September, 1997): 1160-75.

gram noted that he was a French-Canadian governor of Quebec, thus putting him in a line of succession that included other historical heroes such as Frontenac, Vaudreuil, and La Galissonnière. Despite the institutional rupture between colonial New France and Quebec as a province in the young Dominion, Angers served as another means to tie the glorious past to the present as a continuity of French ethnicity. But the ceremony was more religious than military. Following Angers, the Archbishop of Quebec and the President of the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Québec* took their places at the head of an assembly of perhaps 100,000 people gathered for the celebration of mass.

The official speakers made a great deal of the importance of place in the past. The monuments offered a dual celebration of both Jacques Cartier and the Jesuit missionaries. The site, near Cartier's fort of 1535-36, and the cross erected in 1835, was also the location of the first Jesuit property in the New World. In 1626, Père Brébeuf took possession of the land in the name of his order. The Cartier-Brébeuf monument announced these facts in its inscription. On one face, it read:

Jacques Cartier et ses hardis compagnons les marins de la Grande Hermine, la Petite Hermine et de l'Émerillon passèrent ici l'hiver de 1535-36.

Le 3 mai 1536 Jacques Cartier fit planter, à l'endroit où il venait de passer l'hiver, une croix de 35 pieds de hauteur portant l'écusson fleurdelisé et l'inscription franciscus primus dei gratia rex regnat.

These two sentences explained the nearby cross, but on another face the inscription added another interpretation:

Le 23 septembre 1625 les pères Jean de Brébeuf, Ennemond Massé et Charles Lallemant prirent solennellement possession du terrain appelé Fort-Jacques-Cartier situé au confluent des Rivières St-Charles et Lairet pour y ériger la première résidence des missionnaires jésuites à Québec.

Thus it presented a vision of the past that connected the Jesuit claims of possession to Jacques Cartier's original claim of possession in the name of the King of France. And as Cartier represented to many the first "French Canadian," this connection helped legitimise Jesuit claims.

The connection between Cartier and the Jesuits was not at all rational. It was not really intended to be rational. Historical heroes do not assume their place of importance by the strength of rational discourse, but by the power of emotion and symbolism. This case was deliberately emotional. Pierre J.-O. Chauveau, former premier of Quebec, closed the ceremonies with a speech and a passionate reading of his widely read, romantic poem "Donaconna." The poem opens with the Stadaconan chief brooding in his forest kingdom:

HEROES, HISTORY AND TWO NATIONALISMS

Stadacona dormait sur son fier promontoire:
Ormes et pins, forêt silencieuse et noire

The presence of Cartier, and the God he represents, troubles the old king. He considers sending his warriors to kill the French interlopers, but “*inutile espoir ! Leur magic est plus forte.*” Eventually he succumbs to the lure of the Christian God and consents to return with Cartier to France as Chauveau recounts the passing of time:

Douzes lunes et vint, et bien plus se passèrent
Cinq hivers, cinq étés lentement s'écoulèrent
Le chef ne revint pas

Donaconna had passed away during the long years in France, though Cartier did not admit it on his third voyage. But Chauveau's account draws upon a sublime connection between old, disappeared Stadacona and nineteenth-century Quebec City:

Vieille Stadacona ! Sur son fier promontoire
Il n'est plus de forêt silencieuse et noire:
Le fer a tout détruit.
Mais sur les hauts clochers, sur les blanches murailles,
Sur le roc escarpé, témoin de cents batailles
Plane une ombre la nuit.

And as the poem closes, Chauveau invokes the mysterious echo of the past that haunts Quebec's mountains, forests, and plains. Then, suitably prepared to feel the sublime significance of the past, each national or trade society filed past the Cartier-Brébeuf monument in turn. Each saluted the memory of Jacques Cartier, the silent hero of Chauveau's “Donaconna,” before joining an immense triumphal procession through the Faubourg St.-Roch to the Marché Jacques-Cartier. The procession filed beneath flags and ornaments, as well as the watchful eyes of young women in the windows above the streets of St.-Roch, for over three hours before dispersing. But not everyone went straight home. The crowd had dwindled to about half its former size that evening when the lighting of the bonfire, at the Glacis cliff overlooking the monument, signalled the last hours of the festival.

Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day was itself an emotional holiday that united French Canadians through the dual pillars of nationality and faith. Passion was the link that united the people, and tied them to the historical interpretation offered by the monument. Of course, this interpretation ignores the fact that the land had long been used by Amerindians before and after Cartier's pronouncement. It also ignores industrial activity beginning in 1688 (shipyards and pottery

works). And it curiously ignored the farm that, even in the 1880s, continued to occupy a portion of the surrounding land.¹⁷ In other words, it was a selective choice of the past that not only affirmed a specific national vision, but also affirmed a specific political policy. The Cartier-Brébeuf monument announced French Canadians' dual identity, which in turn defended the *Jesuits' Estates Act* and Mercier's *Parti national*. That evening Mercier delivered his famous speech that urged French Canadians to quit their "fratricidal strife" and unite under his brand of unified nationalism:

Quand nous disparaîtrons, nous dirons à la génération appelée à nous succéder : Nous sommes catholiques et françaises, et quand vous, nos successeurs disparaîtrez à votre tour, vous devrez dire à la génération qui vous remplacera : Nous mourons catholiques et françaises ! Ce sera notre testament et le leur; dernières volontés suprêmes d'un peuple héroïque, transmises de père en fils, de génération en génération, jusqu'à la consommation des siècles.

Pour obtenir ce grand résultat et consolider ainsi nos destinées, nous avons un devoir impérieux, urgent, solennel, à remplir.

And he finished with this memorable cry: "Cessons nos luttes fratricides; unissons-nous!"¹⁸ This was perhaps Mercier's greatest speech.¹⁹ For Mercier, the message brought past, present, and now future together; in honouring the historical hero, French Canadians honoured their unity.

II

The Cartier-Brébeuf unveiling represents a sort of dual apogee. It was, as political historians have concurred, the apogee of Mercier's career. But it was also the last great French-Canadian commemoration of Jacques Cartier. It was not the last Cartier celebration. Only a few years later, the Montreal suburb of Saint-Henri inaugurated its own Cartier monument, a monstrous, wrought-iron, Victorian fountain with a statue of the explorer at the top.²⁰ And in 1905, Cartier's home-town erected another monument honouring his birth.²¹ But these events paled in comparison with the national celebration of the founder-

17 Canadian Heritage, Research Bulletin no. 312, *Cartier-Brébeuf National Historic Site: In Search of Jacques Cartier* (Ottawa, 1994).

18 Quoted in Robert Rumilly, *Honoré Mercier et son temps*, 2 vols (Montreal, 1975), 2: 94-95.

19 On this see, Gérard Bergeron, *Révolutions tranquilles à la fin du XIX^e siècle* (Montreal, 1997), 49-50; and Gilles Gallichan, *Honoré Mercier: La politique et la culture* (Sillery, 1994), 52-53. It should be noted that Robert Rumilly counted 16 speakers at the evening's banquet, including Wilfrid Laurier, who spoke for a different brand of nationalism.

20 See Archives de la Ville de Montréal, P23, fonds de la municipalité de la cité de Saint-Henri.

21 Royal Society of Canada, *Proceedings* (1906), xix. A copy of this monument was erected in Quebec City in 1971. Rodolphe Fournier, *Lieux et monuments historique de Québec et environs* (Quebec, 1976), 9.

hero in Quebec City's Lower Town. Nonetheless, this apogee of a form of French-Canadian nationalism helped establish interest in Jacques Cartier among English-speaking Canadians. Until the 1890s, few anglophones had paid much attention to Jacques Cartier. Francis Parkman, the famous American historian, had praised some of Cartier's exploits in the 1850s. And in 1860 Morgan's *Sketches of Famous Canadians* proclaimed Cartier the father of Canada. But not until 1887 did an English-speaking author publish specifically on Jacques Cartier.²² An essay contest promoted by the *Cercle catholique* in conjunction with the Cartier-Brébeuf celebrations produced the first book-length studies of Cartier in English. Hiram Stephens, a Montreal journalist, and Joseph Pope, the personal secretary of John A. Macdonald, each won a prize for their accounts of Cartier's life.²³ Although these books are fairly unremarkable in themselves, each little more than a rewording of Cartier's *Relations*, Pope's in particular became the main reference for anglophones slowly discovering the French-regime past of Canada at the turn of the century. Indeed, little by little, English-speaking Canadians began to recognise Cartier as the discoverer of their country as well.²⁴ However, for English-speaking Canadians, Cartier could not be used to legitimate a French and Catholic nationalism. Cartier had to be remade to suit a different nationalism. Stephens, tellingly, compared Cartier to Columbus to set up a discovery myth parallel to, but distinct from, the American one.

As early as 1921, an American museum curator, John M. Clarke, urged the erection of a monument to commemorate Cartier's landing and taking possession of Canada in the name of the King of France. Clarke's interest in Cartier stemmed from his frequent summer stays in the Gaspé region of the province. There, in 1908, he had discovered a hidden wooden medallion that, for no good reason, he believed depicted Jacques Cartier.²⁵ Clarke's pleas went unanswered,

22 Morgan, *Sketches of Famous Canadians and Persons Related to Canada* (Québec, 1862), 1; W.F. Ganong, "Jacques Cartier's First Voyage." Royal Society of Canada *Transactions* (1887).

23 Joseph Pope, *Jacques Cartier: His Life and Voyages* (Ottawa, 1890); and H.B. Stephens, *Jacques Cartier and His Four Voyages to Canada* (Toronto, 1890).

24 The anthropologist Peter Pope alleges that anglophone Canadians promoted John Cabot as Canada's discoverer in order to diminish Cartier's claim. See his *The Many Landfalls of John Cabot* (Toronto, 1997). Pope's assertions are somewhat overstated. Although Samuel Dawson insisted that Cabot landed at Cape Breton, his was never close to a majority position. Moreover, even Dawson hedged his argument by admitting that Cartier opened Canada for exploration, whereas Cabot merely visited in 1497. Nonetheless, there was a Cabot lobby which promoted the Italian's claim to the discovery of Canada and the erection of a Cabot monument in Montreal in 1933 provoked a considerable controversy. See, for example, *Le Devoir*, 6 octobre 1933 and *Le Canada*, 6 octobre 1933.

25 See John M. Clarke to C.C. Ballantyne, 3 May 1921. Reprinted in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Québec* 15, 4: 195-97; see also Clarke's "Un médaillon de Jacques Cartier," *Revue canadienne* 5 (janvier-juin, 1910), 6-15.

but in 1930 more powerful voices likewise urged building a monument to celebrate the coming 400th anniversary of the discovery of Canada. Rodolphe Lemieux, Speaker of the House of Commons and MP for Gaspé, took up the cause in 1929. At the same time, the Bishop of Gaspé, Mgr. F.-X. Ross, organised a committee in his diocese with the plan of raising a monument and building a commemorative cathedral in time for the 400th anniversary.²⁶ The committee was chaired by Quebec's well-known conservative historian Thomas Chapais.²⁷ That same year, the abbé Groulx took a public stance on the issue in the pages of *Le Devoir*. Groulx proclaimed that this monument should not be simply a local initiative, but "il faut que ce monument soit l'oeuvre véritable d'une souscription nationale, comme il faut un grand acte de foi et de gratitude nationale." Groulx's position was twofold. First, Cartier represented the opening of Canadian history, the first official contact between Canada and Europe and the moment at which Canada became a French country. This national affirmation was crucial because it would help assure French Canada's traditional rights:

Notre pays est envahi par toutes les races du monde, lesquelles n'ayant pas toujours le temps d'apprendre notre histoire, n'ont que trop d'inclination à méconnaître ou à sousestimer notre passé, nos privilèges et nos droits. Encore qu'aux nouveaux venus, et en dépit des pénibles expériences, il ne faille pas négliger de faire savoir nos droits constitutionnels et politiques ...²⁸

While Groulx played to the political and constitutional significance of Cartier, he did not ignore the traditionally held religious significance of the arrival of "un thaumaturge fameux." Lemieux likewise insisted that the celebration should be religious as, borrowing from nineteenth-century misconceptions, Cartier was the first herald of the teachings of Christianity in Canada. Moreover, Cartier's own narrative provides "ample evidence of his profound spirituality and his earnest desire to convert the pagan Indians."²⁹ Into the twentieth century Cartier remained a symbol of the French and Catholic identity of his imagined progeny. But obviously such an emphasis could not unite all Canadians. Nonetheless, interest was not confined to Quebec. Local newspapers across Canada commented on the plans. The Brockville *Recorder and Times* erroneously informed its readers that the province of Quebec planned to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the first attempt to colonise Canada.

26 Lionel Groulx, *Mes mémoires*, X vols (Montréal, 1972), 3: 48.

27 NA, RG 84, vol 1250, F-X. Ross to J.B. Harkin, 16 March 1933. Chapais had succeeded Narcisse Dionne as editor of the *Courrier du Canada* in 1884.

28 *Le Devoir*, 22 octobre 1930.

29 Rodolphe Lemieux, "Canada's Quadcentenary, 1934," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 1 (November 1930): 556-73.

Agreeing with the *Brantford Expositor*, the *Recorder and Times* asserted that Cartier should not be dismissed as a French-Canadian figure, but embraced as the father of “our” country.³⁰ But once again the depths of the economic recession quickly put an end to these ambitious plans.

While all this was going on, the federal government, through the offices of its Historic Sites and Monuments Board, was also examining the possibility of putting a monument somewhere as a commemoration of the discovery of Canada. The HSMB had been established in 1919 to take control of federal commemorations of Canada’s history. The Board consisted of a committee of respected historians and the commissioner of the Parks Branch of the Ministry of the Interior, J.B. Harkin. Its activities consisted of identifying sites of “national historical importance” and placing explanatory plaques at them. The Board, typically slow moving and poorly informed about local initiatives, had actually determined to raise such a monument as early as 1927, three years prior to the public efforts of Ross, Lemieux, and Groulx. Moreover, it had already decided to raise a cross, deviating considerably from its normal monument form of a stone cairn with a bronze plaque. Does this apparent conformity of plans suggest a broad consensus on the significance of Cartier in Canadian history? Evidence suggests otherwise. The Board chose a cross primarily because it had already raised a cross in honour of Cartier’s less historically important visit to Isle-aux-Coudres in the St. Lawrence River, some 60 miles east of Quebec. That plan was initiated by the curé of the Parish of Isle-aux-Coudres, the abbé Paul Lavoie, and especially a Quebec City lawyer named Georges Bellerive. Their effort to attract the Board’s attention began early in the 1920s. Bellerive prodded Aegidius Fauteux, then the Quebec representative on the Board and, following his resignation, pressured his successor, Pamphile Demers.³¹ The idea of erecting a cross was Bellerive’s initiative. Thus, the cruciform commemoration of Cartier, the mimicry of Cartier’s own acts, emerged from the francophone community of Quebec. Indeed, Groulx did not rest with a proposal for one Cartier cross. He imagined the province as a vast sea of Cartier crosses, symbolically united in cruciform commemoration of its French and Catholic roots. At a congress of school inspectors for the provincial Department of Public Instruction, he urged every school to erect a commemorative cross. The Department promptly distributed plans as well as explanations of the symbols involved and estimated costs at \$30 per cross.³² Although the ambition had been to erect one cross for every village in Quebec, few were ever raised. Local residents no doubt preferred the spontaneity of their own wayside crosses and

30 Brockville *Recorder and Times*, 31 October 1930.

31 NA, RG 84, vol. 1277, Pamphile Demers to J.B. Harkin, 15 June 1927.

32 “L’enseignement primaire,” *Education-Instruction* (septembre, 1934).

one scholar suggests that the few that were raised were in towns that did not already have a wayside cross.³³

The HSMB took the different approach of concentrating on a single site. Its first task was to find an appropriate spot for the monument. The Board tended to prefer situating its monuments on, or as close to, the "exact" location of the event it wished to commemorate. Early on in its history, this objective had created problems. But the difficulty was especially profound in the case of Cartier's voyages, not simply because Cartier left few clues in his *Relations*, but because a considerable debate had already sprung up on the subject by the 1930s. This debate extended back to the eighteenth-century Jesuit explorer Charlevoix, who attempted to fix the key stops of his various predecessors in the actual terrain of New France. However, its modern guise really began with William Francis Ganong's paper read before the annual meeting of the Royal Society of Canada in 1887. And, although a Newfoundland Anglican bishop wrote the "final word" on the subject ten years later, such well-known historians as H.P. Biggar continued to search for the locations. By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, the Board was faced with at least five potential sites, all in or around the entrance to Gaspé harbour: Arnold's Bluff, O'Hara's Point, York Beach, Sandy Beach, and the Gaspé Peninsula, as well as a last minute suggestion of Jacques Cartier Point.³⁴ The Board dispatched its Quebec representative, Edouard Surveyer, to Gaspé to inspect the options and report back. Despite having to endure the hardship of a train with no buffet car, Surveyer pressed on to the tiny village where he agreed with the defunct local committee on O'Hara's Point, conveniently next to the parish church. This claim rested on the F.J. Richmond's presentation to the 1922 annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association. Richmond's claim to expertise stemmed mostly from being among the oldest inhabitants of the village, and he founded his research on J.M. Clarke's interviews with a local sea captain. In other words, it was almost pure speculation.³⁵ However, the site was well served by a good road and owned by Bishop Ross, who was favourably disposed to leasing a plot for a federal monument.

Even as Surveyer and various Parks Branch technicians searched the relevant literature for an exact spot, another dispute welled up within the Board's ranks. This dispute, over the historical meaning of Cartier's cross, provides greater insight into the thinking of non-Quebecers on the question of Jacques

33 Paul Carpentier, *Les Croix de Chemin: Au-delà du signe* (Ottawa, 1981), 63.

34 NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, JA. Bastien to G.W. Bryan, 1 May 1933; E.-F. Surveyer to J.B. Harkin, 3 April 1934; *L'Evenement*, 29 mars 1934. It was really only five sites as it was later determined that Jacques Cartier Point was an obscure local name for Arnold's Bluff. NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, E.-F. Surveyer to J.B. Harkin, 9 May 1934.

35 NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, GW. Bryan to J.B. Harkin, 1 September 1933. F.J. Richmond, "The Landing Place of Jacques Cartier at Gaspé in 1534," *CHA Annual Report* (1922), 38-46.

Cartier. The Board had decided on a simple inscription at its annual meeting in 1933: "In commemoration of the Four hundredth Anniversary of the landing of Jacques Cartier at the entrance to this harbour on 24th July, 1534." However, unhappy with this sterile interpretation of the discovery of Canada, Surveyer asked Thomas Chapais to draft an alternative inscription. Chapais added the key phrase "and of his taking possession of Canada." Almost immediately, two Board members registered their displeasure. D.C. Harvey and J.C. Webster protested that Cartier himself had made no such claims, but had explained away his cross as a navigational beacon. The inclusion of the phrase, "Vive le roi," they insisted, cannot be taken as an indication of taking possession.³⁶ E.A. Cruickshank felt this protest was ludicrous because even the "untutored Indian" Donnacona knew Cartier's intent. However, he also felt that the whole affair embarrassed the Board and could not be resolved without initiating a new dispute.³⁷ Cruickshank's premonition proved accurate.

Working alongside the federal Board was a political committee headed by Senators C.P. Beaubien and Raoul Dandurand. This committee met irregularly and, at least as far as the HSMB could tell, appeared to do very little. However, from a larger perspective, this National Committee (or sometimes styled Quebec Committee by its detractors) served as a liaison between the Canadian planners and the French *Comité France-Amérique*, a quasi-governmental goodwill committee that promoted French cultural ties with Canada. In the fall of 1933, Dandurand travelled to France where he met many of the French dignitaries planning to come to Canada the following summer. Convinced that this occasion could easily become an important international event, he returned to Canada and immediately urged the federal government to build a more "worthy" monument.³⁸ The HSMB had already designed a 15-foot cross, but Dandurand wanted to double its height. And he continued to agitate for it over the winter, meeting with federal ministers, civil servants, newspaper reporters, and especially pressuring the Quebec member of the HSMB, Montreal's Judge Surveyer. Surveyer's correspondence with the Parks Branch commissioner became increasingly tense in the new year. On 4 January 1934, he wrote Harkin to complain that the 30-foot cross would be too large for the selected site, although Dandurand had criticised that choice as well. Moreover, as plans were already made and the land had been deeded, nothing could be changed.³⁹ A flurry of mail flew back and forth between the various members of the Board. Could anything be done? The answer, it seemed, was no. The smaller cross was

36 NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, JB. Harkin to E.-F. Surveyer, 27 July 1933; J.C. Webster to J.B. Harkin, 1 August 1933.

37 Ibid., EA. Cruickshank to J.B. Harkin, 7 August 1933.

38 Ibid., Raoul Dandurand to J.B. Harkin, 29 November 1933; 16 December 1933.

39 Ibid., E.-F. Surveyer to J.B. Harkin, 4 January 1934.

already under construction, the site had been chosen, and there just was not enough money to start over again. Then, suddenly, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that Dandurand had won an additional \$5,000 from the federal government. The *Gazette* article was premature, but Harkin later learned that the Minister of the Interior had agreed that the cross was too small and approved spending additional money on a larger one.⁴⁰

Suddenly, with only a few months to go before the planned ceremonies, the Board had to abandon its already-built cross and start over with a larger one. Money was no longer a problem, but time was. First the Prime Minister himself phoned Harkin to suggest that the model then in use – incredibly it was a Celtic cross – was inaccurate. Cartier had built with timber, and therefore would not have been able to make a circle. The board redrafted its plan in response.⁴¹ However, the next proposal, a 30-foot cross cut from a single block of stone, posed its own problems. It would obviously be time-consuming to manufacture. But D.C. Harvey had some more biting concerns:

In regard to Québec's passion for identical measurements of Cartier's cross, I am wondering if historical exactitude would not suggest a pole instead of a granite shaft, particularly in view of the difficulty of having such huge arms of granite suspended as a perpetual warning to tourists not to walk beneath them.⁴²

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister wanted a 30-foot, single-piece, granite cross, and that was that. But the 46-ton cross cost \$6,935, nearly \$2,000 over budget. And, it could not be transported from Quebec City to Gaspé by train because the local railway bridges could never handle its weight. It had to be floated by barge, further slowing the project. Still, the cross was standing in place by 15 August, nine days before the big event.⁴³

This was only one major headache for Harkin. About the time that Dandurand began to pester Surveyer and Harkin over the height of the Gaspé cross, another Board member began to feel pressure from his part of the country. Harvey came under increasing pressure to take up the cause of commemorating Cartier's landing somewhere on Prince Edward Island at the beginning of June 1534. The idea appealed especially to another Maritimer, J.C. Webster, who saw no good reason why "all the honours should go to Quebec." Indeed, he felt that Cartier's real "discovery of Canada" had actually occurred at P.E.I.

40 *Montréal Gazette*, 5 February 1934; NA, RG 84 vol. 1250, H.H. Rowatt to J.B. Harkin, 29 March 1934.

41 NA, RG 84 vol. 1250, J.B. Harkin to H.H. Rowatt, 9 April 1934.

42 NA RG 84, vol. 1213, D.C. Harvey to J.B. Harkin, 10 April 1934.

43 NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, R.A. Gibson to J.B. Harkin, 30 May 1934; T.S. Mills to J.B. Harkin, 24 August, 1934.

as it was there that he first landed on what would become Canadian soil.⁴⁴ H.R. Stewart, the province's deputy secretary, concurred. For him, it was crucial to have a ceremony when the French delegation sailed past the island because it was there that Cartier made the "true discovery" of Canada.⁴⁵ The Board seemed to have found a place for its extra cross. Although Harvey felt that the island had "no claim" for a cross, Harkin promptly offered the original 15 footer to the Premier of Prince Edward Island. The offer was flatly rejected.⁴⁶ The main reason for the province rejecting the cross was that, as Harvey pointed out, Cartier had not raised one himself when he landed briefly on the island. Therefore, it was historically inaccurate. But, more importantly, the Island Committee (as Webster, Harvey, and the local authorities came to be known) felt they were staking a claim of priority over Quebec. A smaller cross would imply inferiority. Their claim to priority was evident in their enthusiasm for pointing out that Cartier had visited the Northumberland Strait before heading up to Gaspé. They backed their claim using, not a modern translation of Cartier, but the Englishman Richard Hakluyt's 1598 translation of the text on the explanatory plaque. Hakluyt, in some way, lent historical authenticity to the claim. After all, Faribault had simply retranslated his English version back to French when he published a French edition in 1843. It served to emphasise that French ignorance of Cartier had been overcome by English scholarship. Webster complained that the Quebec Committee — especially Senators Dandurand and Beaubien — routinely slighted the Island Committee and the historical importance of Prince Edward Island.

Thus, this commemoration was contested to a much greater degree than the Cartier-Brébeuf celebrations. Part of the reason is that in 1889 the commemoration was of Cartier's discovery of Quebec City; in 1934 it was of his discovery of Canada. In addition, rather than a fairly homogeneous group of French-Canadian backers, the later project drew in planners from across Canada: English, French, Catholic, and Protestant. Another complicating factor at the 1934 celebrations was the importance placed on attracting tourists. Indeed, some predicted the celebrations at Gaspé could surpass even the 1908 Tercentenary of Quebec City festivities. Tourism was, indeed, a major concern in the 1930s. In 1929 tourism added some \$300,000,000 to Canada's Gross National Product, but that figure had slumped to a mere \$117,000,000 at the depths of the Great Depression in 1933. In response, the Senate launched a special committee to look into what could be done to promote visits to Canada. Chaired by Senator W.H. Dennis of Nova Scotia, the committee recommended a massive and aggressive promotional campaign to draw attention to Canada's

44 NA, RG 84, vol. 1213, J.C. Webster to J.B. Harkin, 4 March 1934; 8 March 1934.

45 Ibid., H.R. Stewart to J.C. Webster, 9 April 1934.

46 Ibid., D.C. Harvey to J.B. Harkin, 10 April 1934; J.C. Webster to J.B. Harkin, 10 May 1934.

numerous attractions.⁴⁷ Although the committee met in May 1934, when plans for the Cartier 400th were already advanced, the prospects of using such events to “pep up” Canada’s image abroad figured prominently in the committee’s vision. The testimony of the assistant to the Director of Publicity of the federal Department of Trade and Commerce, W.H. Van Allen, produced an exchange between Ontario’s Senator Hocken and Senator MacArthur of P.E.I. MacArthur suggested that, while the Chicago World’s Fair would likely keep many Americans in the U.S., the Cartier celebrations could be expected to showcase Gaspé and thus draw many from Great Britain and France to come for a tour and take advantage of the Depression’s low steamship rates. Hocken, picking up the possibility of using Cartier as an advertisement, suggested striking a deal with the Radio Commission for a live broadcast for the thousands outside Quebec who might have an interest in it. To this, MacArthur hastened to add that the “French of Louisiana” might also pay attention.⁴⁸ The following week, Hocken pursued his radio idea with Theodore Morgan of the Canadian Association of Tourist Bureaus. “Would you focus on this summer’s Cartier celebrations?” he asked, when Morgan suggested the government launch an advertising campaign, only to be disappointed with Morgan’s dismissive reply. Federal advertising should not focus on such “passing events,” concluded Morgan.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, tourist advertising was a concern during the planning and unveiling of the Cartier monuments of 1934. H.R. Stewart had insisted that P.E.I.’s monument be at Charlottetown, miles from any probable historical landing, because it had to be close to tourist traffic. Another argument in favour of the Hakluyt translation was that “the quaintness of the wording will catch the interest of visitors.”⁵⁰ And, indeed, the unveiling ceremonies were enormously popular with the travelling public. Gaspé was expected to be mobbed, as newspapers reported heavy ship, rail, and road traffic and it was virtually impossible to find lodgings in Charlottetown by August 1934.⁵¹

III

On 24 August, the packet boat *Champlain* landed at Charlottetown where a distinguished French delegation was greeted by Senator Beaubien and ushered to Province House for the unveiling of the cairn bearing the Board’s plaque recounting Cartier’s arrival at P.E.I. The unveiling showcased the rhetoric of

47 Canada Parliament. Senate, *Report and Proceedings of the Special Committee on Tourist Traffic* (Ottawa, 1934), ix-xiv.

48 *Ibid.*, 19.

49 *Ibid.*, 57-58.

50 NA, RG 84, vol. 1213, H.R. Stewart to J.C. Webster, 9 April 1934; Fred Landon to J.B. Harkin, 26 April 1934.

51 See *Halifax Chronicle*, 19 July 1934; *Le Soleil*, 27 août 1934.

racial fusion that Cartier represented in official Canadian programmes. Ottawa's finance minister E.N. Rhodes and Premier MacMillan emphasised the lessons of Canada's past: that two peoples had come together to work in peace to build a new nation. But, speaking for the French delegation, Henry Bordeaux of the *Académie française* hinted that France saw a broader diplomatic meaning behind the summer's commemorations:

Nous nous trouvons ... sur le sol canadien mais ce n'est pas de fait un sol étranger. nous avons trouvé des descendants de nombreuses anciennes familles d'Europe dont plusieurs françaises.

Not only did these old families speak French, "the language of liberty," but Bordeaux pointed out that the deeper ties of blood between France and Canada were remembered in Canadian war graves on the battlefields of the Western Front.⁵² Following Bordeaux's speech, the Lieutenant-Governor of P.E.I. unveiled the cairn and the band played "God Save the King" and "La Marseillaise." There was a pattern to the island ceremony that repeated itself the next day in Gaspé. For the HSMB, Cartier represented European discovery of Canada. For many French Canadians, he represented the founding of their people. One newspaper proclaimed that "l'hommage à Cartier fut aussi un hommage au Canada français."⁵³ For some Canadians, both English- and French-speaking, Cartier represented the fusion of Canada's people. But for the French dignitaries, and possibly for some astute Canadian politicians, Cartier symbolised Anglo-French alliance. The French delegation had requested that the Charlottetown cairn be draped in the Union Jack and *Tricolore*, much to the dismay of the historically minded HSMB.⁵⁴ The Cartier celebrations, then, were part of a line of commemorations in Canada and Europe, including the Vimy Ridge memorial, Montreal's statue of Jean Vauquelin, and a Nova Scotian commemoration of the Duc d'Anville, that diplomats used to keep these two major European powers on friendly terms.⁵⁵

Charlottetown was but a prelude to the main festival at Gaspé on 25 August. The *Champlain* arrived in the harbour amidst a wondrous salute of 70 fishing boats decked out in flags bearing Breton and Norman arms from the sixteenth century. These little vessels had come from far and wide, and at their own expense, to salute the dignitaries and no doubt their crews helped swell the five thousand that gathered that sunny Saturday afternoon on a hill overlooking the harbour. The town was suitably decorated with triumphal arches and flowers,

52 *Le Soleil*, 25 août 1934.

53 *La Presse*, 27 août 1934.

54 NA, RG 84, vol. 1213, A.G. Doughty to J.B. Harkin, 13 July 1934.

55 See Alan Gordon, "Contested Terrain: The Politics of Public Memory in Montréal, 1891-1930," PhD thesis, Queen's University, 1997, 200-203.

creating a celebratory landscape that confronted the senses. The evening held the prospect of fireworks over the bay, building illuminations, concerts, and feasts. But the focus of the day was the stone cross high above the waterfront. The unveiling ceremony was a thing of legend before it had even begun. As a fitting tribute, the newspapers reported, the 30-foot cross was cut from stone sent to Canada from Saint-Malo, Cartier's birthplace. The rumour was untrue, but this bit of popular myth-making was an appropriate opening to the quest for symbolism that appeared in the dignitaries' speeches.⁵⁶ Quebec's Lieutenant-Governor, E.-L. Patenaude, opened the discourse. He spoke of how the French and English peoples had come together in Canada through discovery and battle to commerce and art. Speaking directly to the visitors from England, France, and the United States, he reminded them that alongside their people, Canadians had sacrificed their young men and resources on the battlefields of Europe. Canada's peaceful development had been interrupted by the Old World, and so it was fitting that the representatives of the Old come together to pay homage to the man who had founded this New World of peace. Next Prime Minister Bennett took the podium and, in English noted *La Presse*, repeated the familiar story of Canada's two founding peoples learning to honour their combined past. The Sulpician priest, Pierre Boissard, echoed the rhetoric of racial fusion:

Le sacrifice de Cartier a donc été fécond par l'apport des deux grands peuples, qui a fondé et fait grandir une race puissante a qui nous resterons toujours unis, la nation canadienne, qui demeure l'un des boulevards les plus solides de la civilisation chrétienne.

Meanwhile the leader of the French delegation, Pierre-Etienne Flandin, reminded everyone that Cartier symbolised the common past, and especially common sacrifices. Thus, as at Charlottetown, official memories stressed the fusion of Canada's two peoples and tried to turn the Cartier cross into a surrogate war memorial. It was a compelling message, especially as France nervously eyed events unfolding in Germany.

However, an older interpretation crept into the Gaspé celebrations. Cardinal J.-M.-R. Villeneuve, the Archbishop of Quebec, followed the Prime Minister to the podium. Villeneuve was, at the time, active in the same nationalist circles as Lionel Groulx and his address returned to a semblance of the nineteenth-century religious Cartier:

Mais est-il dans les fastes de l'histoire humaine un tableau plus grand et une figure plus saisissante que ce Jacques Cartier "dont le geste immortel hante notre mémoire." Les siècles ont passé mais son oeuvre demeure. ... Vous ne

56 See, especially, Ottawa *Citizen* 30 March 1934 and 27 August 1934. The second *Citizen* headline read: "Great Cross of St. Malo Quarry Stone Unveiled."

vous étonnez point, messieurs, que ce quatrième centenaire soit célébré à Gaspé sous l'égide de l'Église, en même temps que l'État, qu'à côté d'une croix souvenir s'élève un temple votif de granit ...⁵⁷

Villeneuve's "granite temple" was, of course, Bishop Ross's memorial cathedral plan ambitiously revived four years after its first failure. The next day was Sunday and Villeneuve had come to Gaspé with a papal delegation to bless the basilica's corner stone and celebrate a pontifical mass on its site. This was a message the French delegation wanted to ignore. The *Champlain* was scheduled to depart for the St. Lawrence River Saturday night amidst a triumphant send off of fireworks and ship horns, but public pressure forced a last minute change. The ship would sail after mass.

Sunday morning beneath an outdoor altar and a canopy of maple branches and garlands, Villeneuve celebrated mass. Camille Roy, the Rector of the Seminary of Quebec, pronounced the sermon. Roy opened with a passage from the Good Friday liturgy: "Voici que par ce bois une grande joie s'est répandue dans le monde." His sermon was an effort to remind French Canadians of the other element of their dual origins. Cartier had chosen Christ's cross as the sign of his "conquest" of the New World, and this symbol united French Canadians much as Groulx had ambitiously planned:

Et les croix, qu'au voyage de 1535, Jacques Cartier va élever sur d'autres rivages, qu'il découvre en remontant notre grand fleuve, témoignent encore de son dessein d'unir toujours dans sa pensée, et les ambitions légitimes de son roi, et le conquête spirituelle des âmes.

Following Roy's sermon, the papal delegate, Mgr Cassulo, blessed the corner stone of the memorial basilica. With the close of the ceremony, the crowd dispersed, leaving the village of Gaspé, this centre of a nation's origins, an isolated and quiet outpost.

Once again, the memorial cathedral proved too ambitious a project and it was never built. The *Champlain* and its distinguished passengers left Gaspé on Sunday afternoon. They sailed on to Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal, attending Cartier ceremonies at each stop. But no other occasion rivalled the seriousness of the Gaspé cross unveiling. Of course, even in Gaspé not everyone was that serious. Not long after the dignitaries had left the little village, and life had returned to its anonymous normalcy, local children discovered that the Cartier cross was an excellent subject for target practice, and took to throwing stones at it from the road below as they walked to and from school.⁵⁸ However, official memory returned to the war. Four years later, following the unveiling

57 Cited in *La Presse*, 27 août 1934.

58 NA, RG 84, vol. 1250, J.B. Harkin to S.R. Sams, 18 May 1936.

of the Vimy Ridge Memorial, Maréchal Pétain made a curious request. During the ceremony he handed some grains of wheat from Vimy to Canadian Legion officials and asked that they be planted at the Gaspé cross. The Canadians, through the HSMB and the Gaspé site caretaker, obliged by sowing the wheat in a little plot behind the cross. Each year, they replanted it along with a plot of poppies, turning the Cartier cross into a surrogate war memorial. It was a curious decision, as the cross stands within a hundred yards of the village war memorial.⁵⁹

Thus, as with the *Cercle catholique*'s use of Cartier to help legitimise the *Jesuits' Estates Act*, twentieth-century thinkers tried to connect Cartier to a fairly specific political position. Cartier represented, loosely, fraternity and the common struggle of French and English. But more specifically, he promoted a war effort. Although some French Canadians resisted this interpretation in the 1930s, it resonated with English Canadians, the British, and the French. Historical heroes are thus themselves historical constructs. Cartier's meaning shifted over the course of some four decades from a religio-national affirmation to a symbol of cultural ties. Similarly, his historical context shifted; Jacques Cartier is not fixed in historical memory. In 1835, and again in 1889, Cartier was portrayed as the discoverer of Quebec, and in particular of Quebec City. By the 1930s, his significance had broadened to the discovery of Canada, with differing interpretations as to what that meant. The argument, in each case, was more emotional than rational. Cartier, obviously, could not have foreseen the rise of New France, its Conquest, and the eventual peaceful cohabitation of French and English any more than he tried to convert the "Canadian" natives. Historical heroes are not rooted in reason, but in lived experience, or more precisely, in lived noumenal experience. The examples cited here suggest that they help add legitimacy – or "genuineness" – to the shifting aspirations and self-images of imagined communities.

59 Ibid., M.F. Gregg to F.H.H. Williamson, 12 April 1937. The wheat and poppies were still growing into the 1940s when an American tourist complained to the Parks Branch that, compared to the immaculate war memorial nearby, the cross site was deplorably maintained and covered with weeds and "hay." Ibid., B.R. Thompson to "The Department," 11 July 1941.