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## **Forman H. Craton - 1934 - 1935 - Diary**

Extracted on Apr-18-2024 11:01:31

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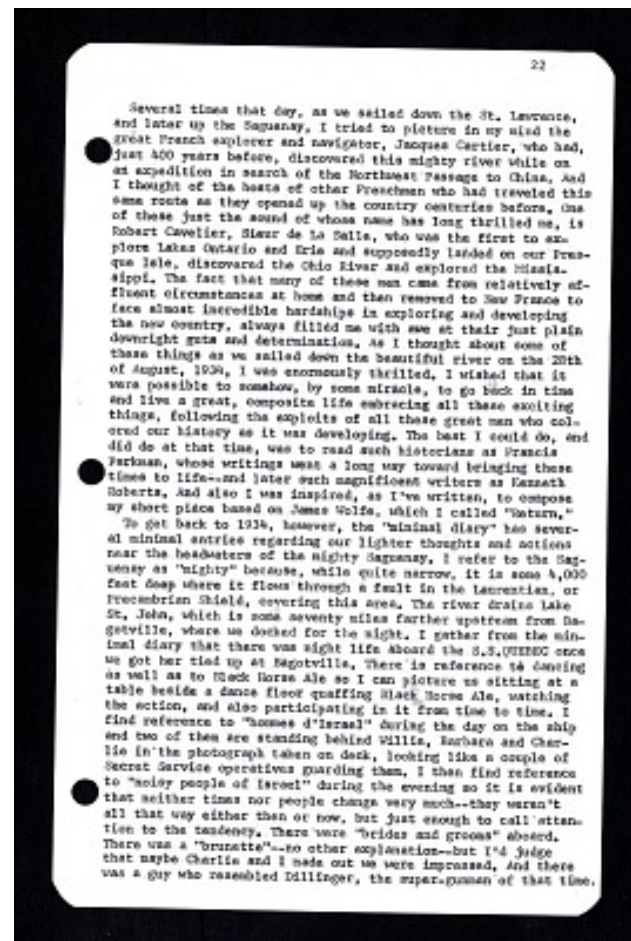
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Several times that day, as we sailed down the St. Lawrence, and later up the Saguenay, I tried to picture in my mind the great French explorer and navigator, Jacques Cartier, who had, just 400 years before, discovered this mighty river while on an expedition in search of the Northwest Passage to China. And I thought of the hosts of other Frenchmen who had traveled this same route as they opened up the country centuries before. One of these just the sound of whose name had long thrilled me, is Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, who was the first to explore Lakes Ontario and Erie and supposedly landed on our Presque Isle, discovered the Ohio River and explored the Mississippi. The fact that many of these men came from relatively affluent circumstances at home and then removed to New France to face almost incredible hardships in exploring and developing the new country, always filled me with awe at their just plain downright guts and determination. As I thought about some of these things as we sailed down the beautiful river on the 28th of August, 1934, I was enormously thrilled. I wished that it were possible to somehow, by some miracle, to go back in time and live a great, composite life embracing all these exciting things, following the exploits of all these great men who colored our history as it was developing. The best I could do, and did do at that time, was to read such historians as Francis Parkman, whose writings went a long way toward bringing these times to life-- and later such magnificent writers as Kenneth Roberts. And also I was inspired, as I've written, to compose my short piece based on James Wolfe, which I called "Return."

To get back to 1934, however, the "minimal diary" had several minimal entries regarding our lighter thoughts and actions near the headwaters of the mighty Saguenay. I refer to the Saguenay as "mighty" because, while quite narrow, it is some 4,000 feet deep where it flows through a fault in the Laurentian, or Precambrian Shield, covering this area. The river drains Lake St. John, which is some seventy miles farther upstream from Bagotville, where we docked for the night. I gather from the minimal diary that there was night life aboard the S.S. QUEBEC once we got her tied up at Bagotville. There is reference to dancing as well as to Black Horse Ale so I can picture us sitting at a table beside a dance floor quaffing Black Horse Ale, watching the action, and also participating in it from time to time. I find reference to "hommes d'Israel" during the day on the ship and two of them are standing behind Willie, Barbara and Charlie in the photograph taken on deck, looking like a couple of Secret Service operatives guarding them. I then find reference to "noisy people of Israel" during the evening so it is evident that neither times nor people change very much -- they weren't all that way either then or now, but just enough to call attention to the tendency. There were "brides and grooms" aboard. There was a "brunette" -- no other explanation -- but I'd judge that maybe Charlie and I made out we were impressed. And there was a guy who resembled Dillinger, the super-gunman of that time.



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