



## **Jacques Marquette**

**1637 - 1674**

**French Missionary and Explorer**

**Explored the Mississippi River with Louis Jolliet**

**JACQUES MARQUETTE WAS BORN** on June 10, 1637, in Laon, France. When he was 17, he decided to become a Catholic priest. He wanted to be a missionary and to “set out for foreign lands.”

As an adult he wrote that “I wanted to explore since my earliest childhood.” He studied to be a Jesuit priest.

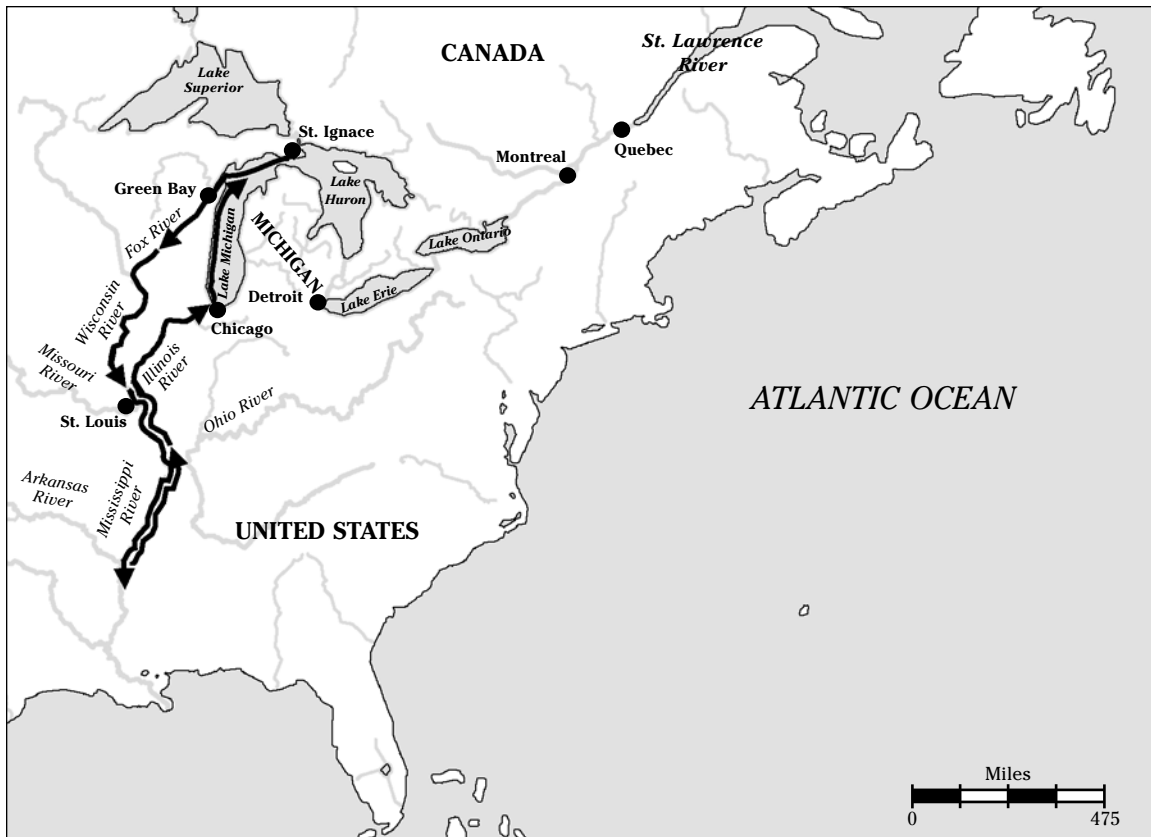
**GOING TO THE NEW WORLD:** When he finished college, Marquette was sent to a Catholic mission in Quebec. It was a settlement in **New France** (now Canada) founded by **Samuel de Champlain**. He arrived in September 1666.

Marquette went to the French-Canadian city of Three Rivers and began to study the languages of the local Indians. Like his countryman **Etienne Brulé**, Marquette learned the local Indian languages. But he wanted to teach them religion, not trade with them.

In May 1668, Marquette left Quebec for Sault Sainte Marie, in what is now Michigan. There, he founded the first European settlements in Michigan. He taught the Christian faith to the Ottawa Indians. In 1669, Marquette traveled to the western part of Lake Superior. He founded a mission there, called Pointe du Saint-Esprit. Here, he also met Indians from the Illinois tribe. In 1671, Marquette traveled back to Michigan and founded another settlement in St. Ignace. From the Ottawa, Marquette learned of a great river that ran south. It was the Mississippi.

**MEETING JOLLIET:** **Louis Jolliet** (zho-lee-ET) was a French explorer who had been hired by the leaders of New France to find the Mississippi. The French thought it might lead them to the Pacific Ocean. If it did, it would be an important trade route for them.

Marquette and Jolliet met sometime around 1671. In 1673, Jolliet got permission for the two of them to explore the Mississippi. Jolliet would explore for the benefit of the people of New France. Marquette would teach religion to the native peoples they met.



*Marquette's voyage with Jolliet in 1674.*

**EXPLORING THE MISSISSIPPI:** Jolliet and Marquette left St. Ignace in May 1674. They had a crew of five, with two canoes. They traveled west along the northern coast of Lake Michigan, stopping at what is now Green Bay, Wisconsin. They traveled southwest from there on the Fox River. Then they followed the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi. Along the way, they met the Illinois tribe. They were very friendly to the French explorers. They even gave them a peace pipe for their journey.

Marquette and Jolliet entered the great river on June 17, 1674. They were the first French explorers ever to reach it. They followed the river south, noting where other powerful rivers, like the Missouri and the Ohio, joined it. They hoped that they had found the route



to the west. They thought they would reach the Pacific by continuing to the west.

But it soon became clear that the river ran south. They realized they would reach the Gulf of Mexico if they continued in that direction.

They went only as far south as the point where the Mississippi meets the Arkansas River. They knew they had reached the area

under Spanish control. As Marquette wrote later, they feared falling “into the hands of the Spaniards.” If that happened, no one would ever know of their important discoveries.

Marquette and Jolliet headed north in July. They traveled up the Mississippi, fighting a strong current. Then they took the Illinois River further north, then took the Chicago River to Lake Michigan, and on to Green Bay.

Marquette left Green Bay in October 1674 to found a mission for the Illinois. In April 1675, he preached to a large gathering of Indians along the Illinois River. But he was ill and needed to return to St. Ignace. Marquette died on his journey home, at the age of 38, near what is now Ludington, Michigan. He is buried in St. Ignace.

**HIS DISCOVERY:** Marquette was a deeply religious man who was also a brave explorer. With Jolliet, he paved the way for French exploration along the Mississippi.

**WORLD WIDE WEB SITE:**

<http://www.win.tue.nl/~engels/discovery/jolmar.html>