

**Claude Bernou**  
Researched by Diane Wolford Sheppard

A timeline concerning Claude Bernou and his relationship with René Robert Cavelier, *sieur* de La Salle, and other explorers through the approximate time that the map attributed to Bernou was drawn precedes the map.

The fact that the map attributed to Claude Bernou illustrates certain landmarks in present-day Minnesota, but does not include the full course of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, means that Bernou drew the map based on information or reports received from La Salle, Louis Hennepin, and/or Daniel Greysolon, *sieur* Du Lhut. Therefore, the following entries from Part 6 of the timeline that can be read on the History of New France page on our website: [http://www.habitantheritage.org/french-canadian\\_resources/history\\_of\\_new\\_france](http://www.habitantheritage.org/french-canadian_resources/history_of_new_france) are included below.

1677 – Ecclesiastics and Intellectuals often influenced Louis XIV's and Jean Baptiste Colbert's decisions regarding North America. The group included César d'Estrées (Cardinal of Laon), Eusèbe Renaudot (editor of the *Gazette de France*), Abbé Claude Bernou (a politician and diplomat), François de Callière (brother of Louis Hector Callière, future governor of New France), and Esprit Cabart de Villermont (a linguist and geographer). The men were also interested in science, geography, and exploration, especially in North America. Bernou dreamed of a French conquest of Mexico; on a personal level, he acted as an agent for a number of explorers; and his ambitions included a bishopric in the Americas. Bernou also acted as an agent for a number of explorers, including Pierre Esprit Radisson. Bernou developed a series of model petitions for different explorers that often incorporated the same facts and arguments. Bernou and Renaudot did not trust anyone else to write the petitions that would be presented to the Court. They knew that they were better writers than explorers or missionaries and that their petitions would have greater chances of Court approval.<sup>1</sup>

1677 to 12 May 1678 – La Salle returned to France where he hoped to receive Louis XIV's permission to build two establishments at his own expense, one at the entrance to Lake Erie and the other at the exit from Lake Illinois (Lake Michigan). While La Salle was in France, he met Renaudot and Bernou. Bernou wrote the document known as the *Mémoire sur le projet du Sieur de la Salle*. . . . This memoir was presented to Louis XIV and formed the basis for the royal grant. Renaudot wrote the account of La Salle's first 11 years in Canada, known as the *Récit d'un ami de l'abbé de Galinée*.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jean Delanglez, S.J., Ph.D., *Some La Salle Journeys* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1938), pp. 10-13; Jean Delanglez, S.J., Ph.D., *La Salle's Expedition of 1682*, in *Mid-America* (Chicago: Loyola University, Vol. 22 (1), January 1940), pp. 3-36, specifically 19, reprinted in Mildred Mott Wedel, *A Jean Delanglez, S.J., Anthology* (New York and London: Garland Press: 1985); Nute, pp. 156-165 (Nute dates a Radisson petition to 1677 and believes that Bernou developed a series of model petitions for different explorers that often incorporated the same facts and arguments).

<sup>2</sup> Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, pp. 46-48, 88; *DCB*, La Salle's biography; Preston, pp. 33-34, 125; Jaenen, pp. 156, 160-161; *NYCD*, Vol. 9, p. 127; B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana, Embracing Many Rare and Valuable Documents Relating to the Natural, Civil and Political History of that State* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), hereafter French, *Louisiana*, pp. 35-36; Delanglez, *Some La Salle Journeys*, pp. 8-29, 43-61, provides biographical information on Bernou and Renaudot as well as discusses the *Mémoire* and the *Récit*. Margry used both documents to "prove" La Salle's alleged discovery of the Ohio and Mississippi. Renaudot used the *Récit* to insert disparaging remarks about the Jesuits. See Pierre Margry (editor), *Voyages des Français sur les Grands Lacs et découverte de l'Ohio et du Mississipi (1614-1684)* (Paris: Impr. de D. Jouaust, 1876), hereafter Margry, Vol. 1, pp. 329-336 (*Mémoire*) and 345-402 (*Récit*); Delanglez, *La Salle Calendar*, p. 289.

1678 – Bernou and his group wished to humiliate Spain by acquiring some of the territory that Spain claimed in the Gulf of Mexico. Bernou submitted a proposal to Louis XIV on behalf of Don Diego de Peñalosa. Peñalosa was an exiled and discredited former governor of New Mexico (1661-1664), who moved to France by 1673. The proposal called for the conquest of the area known as Quivira and Tegago/Teguayo (probably the region of present-day Wichita, Kansas, and the Wichita Mountains in present-day Oklahoma) that were rich in precious metals. At the time that this proposal was made, Louis XIV was at war with Holland and Spain. It was reported that Peñalosa was told that his proposals would be carefully considered once the war had been concluded. Although the Treaties of Nijmegen, signed 10 August 1678 with Holland and 17 September 1678 with Spain, ended the war, no immediate action was taken about this proposal. Peñalosa's future proposals played a prominent role in La Salle's 1684 expedition to present-day Texas.<sup>3</sup>

12 May 1678 – Louis XIV granted La Salle permission to go on a voyage of discovery to the Western part of New France under the same conditions as his grant to Fort Frontenac. His expeditions were to be made at his own expense and he was expressly forbidden to trade with the Ottawa or other Native Americans who brought their furs to Montréal. The permission was good for a period of five years. Prior to obtaining permission for the voyage, La Salle had to pay a commission to *Sieur* Bellinzani, Colbert's director of commerce; the commission cost La Salle 12,000 *livres* and an additional 6,000 *livres* over six years.<sup>4</sup>

1 September 1678 to Spring 1679 – Daniel Greysolon, *sieur* Du Lhut, François Lemaître, *sieur* de LaMorille; Christophe Gerbault *dit* Bellegarde, Pepin, Pierre Pepin, Jean Fafard *dit* Macouce/Macons (his interpreter), Paul Tessier *dit* Lavigne, and Joseph Montenon, *sieur* de LaRue, left Montréal secretly for the Western Great Lakes to negotiate a permanent peace between the Sioux, Chippewa, and other tribes that lived west and north of Lake Superior. He also wanted to prevent the Cree and Monsonis (a tribe associated with the Cree and with the Chippewa or Ojibwa) from taking their furs to the English on Hudson Bay. They wintered with the Chippewa near Sault Ste. Marie and set out in spring 1679 for an arranged rendezvous with the Sioux at the western end of Lake Superior. Pierre Gaillou *dit* LaTaille and

---

<sup>3</sup> Delanglez, *Some La Salle Journeys*, p. 28; Nute, pp. 164-165; John Gilmary Shea (editor) and Nicholas de Freytas, O.S.F., *The Expedition of Don Diego Dionisio de Peñalosa, Governor of New Mexico* (New York: John G. Shea, 1882), hereafter Shea, *Peñalosa*, pp. 8-12 (Shea believed that the narrative was authentic); William Edward Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry in the Gulf Region of the United States, 1678-1702, The Beginnings of Texas and Pensacola* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Bulletin, 20 January 1917), pp. 12-16. After his recall as Governor of New Mexico, Peñalosa went to Mexico where he proposed the conquest of lands that he had discovered. He was arrested in 1665, imprisoned, his possessions sold, and he was then exiled from New Spain. He went to England in 1670 where he sought the aid of Charles II in an attack on Santa Domingo or South America; but left England after the Spanish ambassador sought his arrest. Historians believe that Peñalosa forged the *Expedition* about 1673 when he moved to France. It was based on a report written fifty years earlier by Franciscan, Francisco Benavides. See William L. Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, Fifth Edition, 1972), p. 479 for the treaty information.

<sup>4</sup> Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, pp. 46-48; H.W. Beckwith (editor) and Board of Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library* (Springfield, Ill.: H.W. Rokker Co., 1903), hereafter *ILHC*, Vol. 1, p. 44; *NYCD*, Vol. 9, p. 127; *DCB*, La Salle's biography. Preston, pp. 33-34, 125; Jaenen, pp. 160-161, 164-168 (extracts from a French memo, possibly authored by La Salle's attorney, *Abbé* Claude Bernou, about La Salle's observations about New France, including attacks on the Jesuits who La Salle believed tried to block his exploration); *PAC1900-1901*, pp. 70, 263; *PAC1905-1906*, pp. 518/897.

Jacques Passard, *sieur de LaBretonnière*, may have been with du Lhut during part of his journey to the west.<sup>5</sup>

2 July 1679 – Daniel Greysolon du Lhut took possession of the area populated by the Sioux in an Isanti village on Lake Mille Lac (north of present-day Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota). Earlier in the year, he had also taken possession of the Songaskiton (possibly the Teton Sioux) and Houetbaton (possibly the Yankton Sioux) villages 120 *leagues* distant from the Izatys village. Three of his men were left with the Sioux and told to continue their exploration as far west as possible. They visited a Sioux village whose warriors had been on the warpath twenty days further westward to a great lake of salt. They may have visited a Teton village in Big Stone Lake in present-day South Dakota. On 15 September, Greysolon du Lhut brought about a peace between the Sioux and the Assiniboine (a Dakota tribe that had broken off from the Yankton, one of the Dakota Sioux divisions) in a council held at the head of Lake Superior.<sup>6</sup>

1679 – 1680 – Following La Salle's return to New France, Tonty oversaw the construction of the Griffon, a ship that set sail for Michilimackinac on 7 August 1679 from Fort Conti at the present-day Niagara River. On 12 September 1679, La Salle and his crew sailed in the Griffon for present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin. On 18 September 1679, La Salle ordered the crew to bring furs back to Michilimackinac, while he departed for the southern end of Lake Michigan. Unbeknownst to La Salle, the Griffon was lost in Lake Michigan. La Salle's men built Fort Miami at the mouth of the present-day St. Joseph River during November and December 1679. La Salle, Tonty, and the rest of their men left Fort Miami and travelled to present-day Illinois. On 15 January 1680, La Salle ordered the construction of Fort Crèvecoeur on the south bank of the Illinois River between present-day Pekin and Kingston Mines, Illinois. He also ordered his men to start construction of the *barque* that he planned to use on the Mississippi. Several men deserted La Salle on 25/26 January 1680.<sup>7</sup>

29 February to 11 April 1680 – La Salle sent Michel Acau, Antoine Auguel *dit* Le Picard Du Guay, and Hennepin to explore the upper Mississippi and to meet with the Sioux. They left Fort Crèvecoeur in a

---

<sup>5</sup>DCB, Greysolon Du Lhut/Dulhut's biography; Pierre Margry, *Exploration des affluents du Mississipi et découverte des montagnes Rocheuses (1679-1754)* (Paris: Impr. Jouaust et Sigaux, 1886) hereafter Margry, Vol. 6, pp. 26-24 (Du Lhut's 5 April 1679 letter to Frontenac names the men, sometimes only using their *dit* names; Fafard's *dit* name is spelled Masson; it is impossible to identify Pierre Pepin's brother with certainty); Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, pp. 323-330; Winsor, *Narrative*, Vol. 4, p. 181; Jaenen, pp. 184-185, 187-191 (Greysolon Du Lhut's Memoir to Colbert de Seignelay on the Sioux Country, 1678-1682); Kellogg, *French Régime in Wisconsin*, pp. 209-210; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (<http://www.banq.qc.ca/accueil/index.html>) hereafter BANQ, Pistard Archives, TP1, S28, P2461. Christophe Gerbault *dit* Bellegarde, Jacques Passard and Pierre Gaillou *dit* LaTaille were sentenced on 28 May 1681 for illegal trading with the Native Americans.

<sup>6</sup>DCB, Greysolon Du Lhut/Dulhut's biography; Jaenen, pp. 187-191; Kellogg, *French Régime in Wisconsin*, pp. 209-211; Winsor, *Narrative*, Vol. 4, pp. 181-182.

<sup>7</sup>Delanglez, *La Salle Calendar*, pp. 293-294; DCB, La Salle's biography; Tanner, map 6; Winsor, *Narrative*, Vol. 4, p. 224; *Relation – La Salle, 1679*, pp. 73-147 (The English text states they departed on December 30<sup>th</sup>; the French text the 3<sup>rd</sup>; states they arrived at the Illinois village on 1 January); Tonty, *1684 Relation*, pp. 23-31, 35 (states they departed on 6 December; mentions the Duplessis incident and the attempt to poison La Salle); Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, pp. 56-58; Shea, *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley*, pp. 100-101 (Membré's account as written by Chrétien LeClercq), 102-110 (background information on Hennepin). Many of the men are not found in Jetté, or are listed only by their surname or *dit* name.

canoe filled with about 1,100 *livres* of merchandise; La Salle departed shortly thereafter to return to Fort Frontenac. The Sioux captured them on 11 April 1680.<sup>8</sup>

June 1680 - Daniel Greysolon du Lhut left Lake Superior with a Native-American interpreter and four French Canadians to try to find a water route to the Sioux. He ascended the Brule River in present-day Wisconsin, portaged to the St. Croix River, and finally reached the Mississippi when he learned that the Sioux had captured three French Canadians. Du Lhut put his own exploratory expedition on hold to rescue Acau, Auguel, and Hennepin from the Sioux. Du Lhut, his men and Hennepin wintered at St. Ignace with the Jesuits.<sup>9</sup>

Spring 1681 to 1682 – While he was at St. Ignace with his companions, Acau, Auguel, and Hennepin, Du Lhut learned that Duchesneau had denounced him as the leader of the *coureurs de bois* and Frontenac's partner in the fur trade. He departed from St. Ignace on 29 March to defend himself against the charges. When he arrived in Québec, Duchesneau ordered Du Lhut's arrest and incarceration, but Frontenac overruled this decision and sent Du Lhut to France to report to Jean Baptiste Colbert de Seignelay. Du Lhut asked for permission to continue his exploration and for the grant of a *seigneurie* in the lands that he might discover. Although he successfully cleared himself of the charges Duchesneau made against him, he was not able to convince Seignelay to grant him a *seigneurie*.<sup>10</sup>

1681 – 1682 – The map attributed to Claude Bernou was published. The map appears on the following page and was downloaded from Gallica. A portion of the map appears in *Mapping a Continent*, on pages 116-117.<sup>11</sup> The cartouche from the map appears below.



---

<sup>8</sup> DCB, La Salle's, Hennepin's and Tonty's biographies; Kellogg, *French Régime in Wisconsin*, pp. 216-220; Winsor, *Narrative*, Vol. 4, p. 184; *Relation – La Salle, 1679*, pp. 117-133 (covers Hennepin's journey); Delanglez, *La Salle Calendar*, pp. 294-295; Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> DCB, Greysolon du Lhut/Dulhut's biography; Kellogg, *French Régime*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>10</sup> DCB, Greysolon Du Lhut/Dulhut's biography; Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, pp. 324-334 (biographical information regarding Du Lhut and his memo to Colbert de Seignelay).

<sup>11</sup> Raymonde Litalien, Jean-François Palomino, Denis Vaugeois, and Käthe Roth (translator), *Mapping a Continent – Historical Atlas of North America – 1492 – 1814* (Georgetown, Ontario, and Sillery, Québec: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, McGill University Press, and Les éditions du Septentrion, 2007).



*Carte de l'Amérique septentrionale et partie de la méridionale depuis l'embouchure de la rivière St Laurents jusqu'à l'isle de Cayenne avec les nouvelles découvertes de la rivière de Mississipi ou Colbert - Attributed to Claude Bernou (circa 1681) - Available from Gallica:*

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b80088611.r=bernou.langEN>