

PRESIDENT FINLEY TURNS PATHFINDER

Spent a Month Tracing the Route
Taken to the Southwest by
the French Explorers.

FOUND REMNANTS OF FORTS

Visited the Birthplace of Champlain
and Traveled Over Paths Fol-
lowed by La Salle.

President John H. Finley of City College has just completed a month's tour of exploration along forgotten bypaths of the great lakes and Mississippi River country. The tour was undertaken in an effort to pass over, so far as practicable, the route into America followed by the first French explorers of the continent.

It began in Acadia, Nova Scotia, followed on to the great lakes by way of the St. Lawrence River, went by the portages taken by La Salle to the Mississippi, and ended in the Gulf of Mexico, which President Finley reached by what was probably the same branch of the river's mouth through which La Salle and his main party made their way to the sea.

It was a course of lectures delivered by President Finley when he was Harvard's exchange professor at the University of Paris last Winter that inspired him to the undertaking. While delivering his lectures on the influence of the French explorers on American development President Finley visited the birthplace of Champlain, from whom one of the Great Lakes takes his name. From the doorway of the house in which Champlain was born President Finley took several stones which he brought back to this country.

He determined to use the stones as a beginning for a monument to Champlain, put up at some suitable place along the route of his travels in America. He decided while on his journey that the most fitting spot for the monument is probably north of the Canadian border, and will allow the matter of the monument to rest until it is possible to erect it there.

While President Finley set out to make a faithful retracing of the routes, he was forced by the necessities of modern travel to alter his plans at several points. While the Frenchmen went entirely by boat, or by short portages in which they carried their boats from river to river, President Finley was forced to go on foot at times, at other times to use a rowboat, and sometimes to take a train running along a river bank.

The most important incident of his trip occurred in its initial stage, when he was seeking the remnants of the old colony of Port Royal, near where Annapolis now stands. He carried with him a map of the river and basin near Annapolis, which had been made by Champlain to indicate the location of the colony as founded by himself and Du Guastt. Sieur de Monts. The map showed an island in the river and two large hills on the shore. By means of it President Finley was able to find his way directly to the ruined ramparts of the fort built by Champlain in 1604.

From Port Royal President Finley worked his way up the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Bay of Chaleurs, from which point Jacques Cartier operated in his voyages of 1535 up the St. Lawrence as far as the rapids of St. Louis, above the present site of Montreal. He followed the Cartier route to the point at which Cartier turned back, examining in the meantime the site of historic Fort Frontenac.

From Kingston, which was built on Fort Frontenac's former site, President Finley crossed Lake Ontario to Niagara, and then went to Toronto and on up to the site of La Salle's encampment, where he built the first sailboat ever to be used on the Great Lakes. After reaching Point St. Ignace, where Father Marquette is said to have been buried, he crossed to the Sault Ste. Marie and thence along the east and west shores of Lake Michigan into Illinois.

From Chicago he found himself able to avoid the old portages by which the French explorers reached the Des Plaines, Fox, and Kankakee Rivers on their way to the Illinois and the Mississippi.

Instead of going overland by the modern rail routes or less modern wagon roads, President Finley took to the drainage canal and thus through the latest improvement in watercourses, was able to proceed by boat across the portion of the former explorations which had proved most difficult to the Frenchmen.

In the journey down the Mississippi President Finley stopped to examine the sites of the old French forts along the river route. He found that a part of the powder magazine was still intact at Fort Chartres below St. Louis. The river had washed away portions of the fort, and it was evident, he said, that the rest will soon be destroyed unless a movement is started looking to the old fort's preservation. There is some talk, he said, of making the site a National reservation and building a stone embankment along the river, which will prevent further devastation of the historic site.

The old fort at St. Louis was completely destroyed, although the bluff on which it stood was still looming large above the river bank. Of Fort Creve Coeur, opposite Peoria, there remained not the slightest trace, the fort having disappeared so completely in fact that factions were quarreling as to which of three different sites it occupied. The important French town of Cahokia had been completely washed away by the river, but there were a few traces of the nearby Fort Kaskaskia.

At New Orleans President Finley had trouble in finding the mouths of the Mississippi followed by La Salle to the sea, but he determined to go out to the dividing point of the water and follow the La Salle route as near as he could. Instead of going by boat he went along the levee by railway, picking up a mail boat at the terminus of the road, by which he proceeded to the jetties. There the description left by La Salle indicated that he had proceeded by the westerly channel.

As the channels run to-day this would seem to be equivalent to what is known as the Southwest Passage, and out this President Finley went on board a pilot boat until he was well into the Gulf. On his way back to New York he stopped in Pennsylvania, where he spent some time in visiting the old French Creek country and the route by which the explorers proceeded down it to the Allegheny, and thence to its junction with the Monongahela, where old Fort Duquesne, later Fort Pitt, was located.