

Chapter 1 Adventure

(France 1659)

“Holy Moses....” Etienne began to say, as the cart he was riding on came to the top of the hill, and he finally had his first look at the ocean he would soon be traveling across.

“Just because your mother isn’t here, doesn’t mean you don’t have to watch what you say son,” his father cut him off, chuckling. “You know she would take a switch to you for that kind of language.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time Papa,” Etienne replied, smiling back.

“You’re right. It sure wouldn’t be the first time.” His father stopped the cart, as they sat together silently, looking out at the largest body of water Etienne had ever seen. His father Leonard had only seen it once before himself. “You’re sure you want to do this?” Leonard asked his son.

Etienne held his hand up to block the glare of the sun off the water so he could see better. “Yes Papa, you know I will miss you and Maman, and everyone, but I think this is the right move for me. There’s a chance for me to make something of myself over there and maybe, in time, buy my own land. We’ve all heard the stories and I’d like to see if they are true. If I am not happy, I’ll be back in a few years.”

“Well then let’s get you to that ship.” Leonard snapped the reins, and the horses began to pull the cart forward towards the harbor below and the ship that would take his son away. “I’m gonna miss you son. But I understand why you feel you need to go.”

“I’ll try to send word to you next year if I can find a way Papa. There are lots of priests there I’ve heard, and maybe I can find one where I settle, and they’ll write a letter for me that I can send back on one of the ships. Father Renaud should be able to read it to you,” Etienne said.

“Your Maman and I would like that Etienne. We are proud of the man you’ve become, you know that right?” Leonard asked his son.

“I know Papa,” Etienne replied.

As they reached the end of the road, Leonard turned the cart into the harbor area and they began searching for the ship that Etienne was supposed to board. He once again stopped the cart and they watched as smaller boats were loaded up with cargo and then rowed out to the bigger ships that were sitting out further in the water. The cargo from the small boats would then be hauled up over the sides of the ships, or rolled up ramps that were attached to the sides and anchored to pieces of wood that seemed to float on the water.

“Excuse me sir,” Etienne called out, stopping a man that was about the same age as him that was walking by, half carrying and half dragging his own trunk. “Could you tell me where I can find the ship St. Andre?”

The man grinned and replied, “no sir I cannot, because I’m looking for it also.”

“Well young man, if you’d like, you can throw your trunk and yourself into the back of the cart and we can find it together,” Leonard replied to him.

The man wasted no time and quickly hoisted his trunk into the back of the cart before jumping in himself, grateful not

to have to haul it around anymore. “Thank you so much. I didn’t realize how heavy my trunk was till I had to carry it myself,” he said gratefully.

“I’m Etienne Campau and this is my papa Leonard,” Etienne introduced them as he turned and extended his hand.

“My name is Pierre Guillet,” he grabbed Etienne’s outstretched hand and shook it. “Thank you so much for your help. I hired a cart to get me this far, but they dropped me off at the start of the harbor over there and left. I didn’t think so many ships would be here. When they tell you to report to a ship you get a picture in your head of what the docks look like, I never expected it to be so busy, like this.” As he replied he swept his arm out towards the water and the many ships that were busy loading and unloading.

“Me neither,” replied Etienne looking towards the area Pierre was referring to. “We’ve been traveling for the last three days to get here. This is the furthest I’ve ever been away from our farm. There are a lot more ships here than I expected to see.”

“This is the furthest I’ve been away from home too.” Pierre answered him.

Both Pierre and Etienne sat quiet in the cart thinking about home as Leonard drove and asked many people where to find the St. Andre. “See that big ship a ways up the shore?” one of the people he asked said, pointing towards one of the larger ships, “that’s the St. Andre”.

“Thank you kindly, and God bless,” said Leonard, as he pulled away. Within minutes he pulled the cart off to the side near the area where the St. Andre was being loaded.

“Well boys here we are,” Leonard said jumping down from the seat. “Let’s get you unloaded and find out where you need to be.”

“No Papa,” Etienne replied, climbing down from the seat on the cart and walking towards his father. “You have a long way home. I can take care of it from here. Get home to Maman. You know she’ll worry till you get there.”

“That she will son,” Leonard said as he unloaded Etienne’s trunk from the back of the cart. “But she would have been more worried if I had not brought you here and made sure you made it safely to the ship.” Once more he turned towards his son, “You’re sure about this?” he asked one last time.

“Yes Papa, I’m sure,” Etienne told him.

Leonard turned towards Pierre and shook his hand. “Good luck Pierre. I’m glad Etienne has met you, you seem like a nice young man. Stick together on the ship and help each other.”

“Thank you sir,” Pierre said. “And thank you for the ride and helping me find the ship.”

Leonard hugged his boy one last time. “Never forget Etienne, Maman and I love you and you can always come home. Be safe.”

“I won’t forget, I love you and Maman too Papa.”

Leonard got back up on the seat of the cart and with one last wave he turned towards home. Etienne never seen the tear that slipped down his papa’s cheek as he drove away.

Etienne stood and watched his father leave. He did not take his eyes off the cart till it hit the top of the hill and

descended out of sight. He wondered if that would be the last time he would see his father. It reminded him of just three days earlier when his Maman had stood in front of the house waving good bye to him. He could tell even from a distance that she was crying. With a lump in his throat Etienne picked up his trunk, turned to Pierre, and said, “well what are we waiting for? We’ve got a ship to catch, right?”

“Lead the way Etienne. I’m right behind you.” Pierre answered, picking up his own trunk.

Although saying goodbye to his parents was hard, Etienne was excited and ready to begin this new chapter in his life. He was twenty one years old and about to begin life on his own away from France. As he neared the water, he paused, and once again watched the crew members from the different ships loading the small boats on shore and getting them ready to transport supplies out to the bigger ships. That was when he realized, he was nervous. He was a farmer and somewhat of a mason, not a sailor. But going to the new world meant no more fear of the plague that so often swept through France and other countries in Europe, and hopefully no more worries of going to war, as France so often did with countries like England and Spain. He was heading for what people in France called ‘the new land’. He looked down at his belongings, there sure wasn’t much. One trunk filled with the clothes his maman had made for him, and a few mementos he had taken from home, to remember both his mother and father, who he knew he may never see again.

Etienne stepped in line with others who were waiting to board the ship. It was all men. The priest in his village, who read his contract to him before he signed it with an “X”, told him the French government sent a few hundred men every year over to New France. The men were there to help build, defend and populate the settlements.

He glanced at the men around him trying to learn what he could from their appearance. Most of the men looked like they led a similar lifestyle to him. Mostly younger men that were probably tradesmen or farmers, and in many cases both. They were dressed in simple homemade trousers and shirts. They wore good sturdy boots, that would be able to last through many seasons working in the fields and walking through puddles of rain and snow. Of course there were also a few men that were dressed much nicer. They wore silk vests and jackets, which were probably made especially for them by seamstresses and tailors in the larger cities. The shoes or boots they wore were made to look good, more than last, working hard in the fields. "Probably businessmen," Etienne thought to himself. He wondered if they would be starting new ventures or checking on ones already established in Quebec, or one of the newer settlements like Montreal.

"Well," said Pierre, distracting Etienne from his thoughts, "looks like we're in the right place."

He turned back towards the water, looking at the ship once again, he silently wondering if it would make the voyage across the ocean. He nodded and replied, "looks like we're in for quite an adventure."

"Quite," replied Pierre as he also turned to stare at the ship. This ship would be their home for at least the next six weeks. Longer depending on the weather out at sea.

"So where is home Etienne?" Pierre asked

"Brive-la-Gaillarde," Etienne replied. "That's where my family's farm is. How about you Pierre?"

"I was born and raised in Bordeaux," Pierre answered. "Not so far away from here."

“My father and I traveled for three days. Have you ever sat on a cart bench for a whole day? I was thankful every night when we stopped at an inn to rest,” Etienne told him. Then grinned as he added, “I am so thankful to be off that cart. Hopefully ship travel will be easier than that. My backside may take a few days to recover.”

Pierre laughed, “I don’t want to know about your backside. We don’t know each other well enough for that yet. So to change the subject, do you know much about Quebec or New France?” Pierre asked Etienne.

“Not a lot,” he answered. “There were a couple of men from Brive-la-Gaillarde that contracted and went and worked for a few years and came back. I talked to them a bit about it before I decided to go. They said it was a lot of hard work and the native people, they called them indians, weren’t always friendly. I’m not scared of hard work but some of the stories they told me about indian attacks terrify me. How about you?”

“I had a good friend that I grew up with who was a soldier that served in the King’s Army. He was in Quebec for a couple of years also. He didn’t want to stay and returned to our town recently. He also talked about the indians. He wasn’t there so much to work, but for defense against those indian attacks on the settlement. He also was there, just in case, to defend against the English who have a few colonies to the south in New England,” Pierre told him.

“I was told the English settlements have been there as long as the French have been in Quebec,” Etienne said.

“I believe that’s true,” Pierre replied.

“Did your friend tell you anything else about these indians?” Etienne asked.

“Yes, a little bit. My friend Julianne told me that some are very friendly and some are not so friendly. They attack the settlements at times, but it’s never safe to wander out of the settlements alone. He also said to always have a pistol or musket if you do have to go outside, even in a group. The Indians don’t have guns so they’re scared of them. They have a different name for the area. They call it ‘Kanata’. I guess New England has had some of the same problems with the Indians as the people in New France are having.” Pierre told him what he had heard.

“I wonder if the Spanish have had any of those same problems?” Etienne wondered aloud.

Once more Etienne and Pierre turned towards the water and watched the activity going on there. Both young men wondered if they would make it. They had heard of the terrible storms that happened out on the oceans, of the death that could sweep through a ship from disease and of ships that disappeared to never be seen or heard from again.

Although the ship was a ways out on the water, even at a distance it seemed smaller than either man thought it would be. There were three large masts. One in the center with a smaller one on the front and the rear of the vessel. The masts seemed almost as tall as the ship was long, there were ropes hanging off of them from the top down at all different angles. Even from this distance they could see sailors were loading supplies. They made the work look easy as they rolled those supplies up wood ramps and then carried or rolled them away to where they must have been storing them below deck. Many of the sailors were hoisting crates up from the smaller boats with ropes and then hauling them over the sides of the ship, they were also loading livestock this way. Etienne seen chickens, cows, pigs and horses being taken out to the ship. It was something to see how the crew made hauling them up the sides of the ship with various ropes look so simple, since he knew just getting the

cows to move from the barn to the pasture could take some effort. He wondered if most of these animals were going all the way to Quebec or if they were to be butchered and used as food throughout the voyage. He was hoping for the later of the two. He continued to look out towards the water and some of the other ships that were also there. He seen a couple of Navy vessels that were nearby and wondered what they were there for.

Before he could ask Pierre said, “those are our escort ships. The friend who came back to my village said every ship that heads to New France, or comes back, gets a navy escort. Lot’s of things can happen out as sea. Look at how many cannons are on each.’ He pointed towards the Navy ships. “It makes me feel much safer knowing that they’ll be with us on our voyage across the ocean.” Etienne smiled and nodded at him, thinking how much safer it made him feel also.

“Name and papers please,” said a sailor, who was obviously an officer, as they reached the front of the line. Etienne reached into the satchel he was carrying and pulled out his contract, handing it to the sailor who opened it. Etienne was surprised that the man could read and write, something he himself had never learned to do.

“Etienne Campau sir,” he said. The sailor handed him back the contract and waved him towards another officer who was giving directions. Etienne headed towards him.

“Put your trunk on the side over there to be taken out to the ship shortly. You can take a seat on that small boat there. You also will be taken to the ship shortly,” said the officer.

Etienne slowed down and waited for Pierre, as he heard the sailor behind him again say, “Name?”

“Pierre Guillet sir,” he heard Pierre answer as he also handed over his papers. Again the officer scanned them and handed them back, motioning for him to head towards the officer giving directions. He was told to do the the same and also put his trunk to the side and boarded the small boat with Etienne.

“Well there is no turning back now,” Pierre said as they settled on their seats in the rowboat.

Etienne laughed nervously, “how did you know that was exactly what I was thinking?”

“I think that’s probably what most of us are thinking right about now,” Pierre answered and then turned towards Etienne and with a sincere look on his face, and said, “Etienne I am so glad that I met you. I going to be truthful and tell you I was really nervous about going on this voyage, but having someone to talk to and keep my mind from thinking to much is helping a lot.”

“I feel the same Pierre. I could use a friend on this trip. I love my family and I’m going to miss them a lot, so I could use the conversation and distraction of a friend to help me get through this also,” Etienne told him.

“I have no family left, it will be great to just have someone to listen to me when I feel the need to complain,” Pierre said, and then once again he smiled, as an afterthought he added, “and I may complain a lot.”

“You got it friend,” Etienne said extending his hand. The two new friends shook hands smiling at each other. Etienne could already tell he was going to get along well with Pierre. He had a great sense of humor, like he himself did.

After a few minutes a few more passengers from the line had also checked their paperwork and trunks and had also gotten into the rowboat. The boat was then boarded by a sailor who grabbed the oars. He said in a gravelly voice, "sit tight gentlemen. I'll have you out to the ship in a few minutes."

Etienne was amazed at how fast the man rowed them out to the ship. It was just as the sailor had said, and within a few minutes, they were unloading at the makeshift ramp that seemed to float upon the water. Each of the men exited the small boat one at a time and slowly walked up the ramp. At the top they were met by another officer.

"Please step aboard gentlemen. The Captain will be addressing all passengers on the deck shortly," he told them as Etienne and Pierre reached the top of the ramp, "just find a place to stand against the rails and stay out of the way of the crew." As they walked away, they could hear him saying the same thing to each of the passengers as they boarded.

Etienne and Pierre walked further onto the deck to find a place where they could watch what was going on around them. The ship seemed much bigger now that they were on board. In fact, neither of them had ever seen a boat so big. It was different from anything they had ever experienced before. Etienne and Pierre didn't know where to look. There was activity going on just about everywhere, as the ship's crew were rushing around loading the last of the supplies, animals and passenger trunks, plus securing everything on the deck by tying it down or stowing it below.

"Organized Chaos," Etienne muttered more to himself as he scooted back further on the deck, until he felt his back hit the ship's rail and he knew he was now out of the way, but Pierre had heard him and just nodded in agreement.

They both looked around at the faces of the other passengers that had come aboard. All the other men looked as awestruck and nervous as both Etienne and Pierre felt. For some reason it made Etienne feel much better to know that others were feeling just like him.

After all the passengers were on board the Captain stepped onto the deck. He climbed up onto a crate so that he could be seen and heard by everyone. “Gentlemen, welcome aboard my ship. I say my ship because I set the rules and expect them to be followed. Any breaking of the rules will be subject to consequences that myself or an assigned member of my crew will carry out. These consequences are to be carried out immediately and you will not question my authority!” The captain began speaking, his tone was strong but not unkind. The captain paused for a moment in his speech.

The passengers all just seemed to stare. The Captain stared back making eye contact with many of the men and then he continued, “We are lucky on this ship. We have both a physician and a chaplain aboard. Every morning all passengers and crew not working will be present for morning prayers. If you do not show, you will lose your rations for the day. Bathroom facilities are clearly marked below deck. You will use them appropriately. No pissing off the side of the ship. That will result in one day’s lost rations. If you shite anywhere but in the appropriate area the penalty will be a number of lashes applied upon your bare back. How many you may wonder? I guess that depends on my mood that day. Any questions so far gentlemen?”

Again everyone was silent. The Captain waited until he was certain no one was going to question him and began again. “Many of you may smoke. You may have noticed this ship is made of wood. You may only smoke a pipe and only on the deck. Get caught smoking below and you will be put in irons and shackled on deck and given only bread and water for as

many days as I determine necessary so you don't make that mistake again. There will be no drinking, no swearing and you will behave as gentlemen. If you have a problem with another passenger, make a complaint with the officer on watch. Not with myself, I have a ship to run and no time to deal with petty problems. And last but not most importantly, I will not put up with any fighting on this ship. Many of you have probably brought a firearm of some kind. If you fire it on my ship, you will be given the minimum of fifty lashes, and put in irons for as many days again as I feel warranted." Again he stopped and made eye contact with many of those listening. "You will also occasionally be given certain night duties, such as being on watch. That is all I have for now. Last time I will ask, are there any questions?"

Etienne looked around at the passengers around him. He could see the fear and uncertainty in many of their eyes. But there was also something else there... excitement.

As the captain left the deck one of the officers stepped up. "I am Chief Officer Guillaume. If you have problems that you can not take care of yourself please come and see me. The crew on this ship will be extremely busy, so try to stay out of their way. There may be times a crew member may ask for your assistance either moving supplies, or securing cargo on the ship. You are expected to help without question. Below deck you will find the passenger sleeping quarters. Your belongings have been moved below, so find your belongings and you will find your bunk, and then get settled. We set sail shortly. Good day gentlemen." Officer Guillaume nodded his head and turned and walked away.

For the first few seconds everyone seemed to stand around looking at each other not sure of where to go or what to do. "Come on," said Pierre. "Let's head below and see what we're in for the next few weeks."

“Well as you said earlier...I’m right behind you,” Etienne replied..

The two new friends reached the stairs and slowly went below deck. The first thing Etienne noticed was how much darker it was and he stood to the side to let his vision adjust to the lack of light. He knew Pierre and the other passengers must be having the same problem since they had also stopped walking and were just standing along the walls of the ship. It took only a few minutes for their eyes to adjust to the dim conditions, but once they could see, Etienne and Pierre walked forward into the passenger sleeping area and looked around. What they found was shocking. Bunks were stacked three high. This wouldn’t have been to much of a problem except the ceiling was only about five feet high and all the men had to duck down so as not to bang their heads. Bunks were so close together you wouldn’t even be able to sit on one without hitting your head on the one above.

Although their eyes had adjusted to the low level of light it was still a chore to see even back in this area, with the only light coming from a couple of port holes. A sailor who had been below spoke up. “This area is for sleeping only. It is not very lit up down here, but during our voyage it will be even darker.” He motioned towards the port holes the were open on the side of the ship. “These port holes will be closed once we set sail. They will only be opened if a member of the crew is down here or we need them for defense. Passengers are to never open them.”

“What would we need defense from sir?” Etienne asked.

“It doesn’t happen often, but there are pirates on these waters, and also ships from England or Spain that would love to get a hold of our cargo,” the sailor answered.

“Isn’t that why we have the navy ships with us?” Pierre asked.

“Yes, those are a couple of the reasons,” said the sailor. “But we prefer to have some defenses of our own to deter anyone from trying to separate us from our escorts. If you look in a few of the corners of the ship you will notice there are cannons that can be pulled up quickly to the port holes. Please do not touch the cannons.”

The sailor continued, “there are to be no open flames in this area. No lanterns, no matches, no smoking. Once the port holes are closed, this area will be pretty dark, so as I said earlier this area is for sleeping only. You will get some light from the opening going up to the deck which we will leave open during good weather. Any questions?” No one spoke. “I will leave you to get settled then. You’ll find your trunk near your assigned bunk.”

Etienne and Pierre found their trunks and also what would be their bunks. They had lucked out and were close. Etienne knew he had made a new friend and silently said a prayer of thanks. As he laid on his bunk he heard the call of the captain for the ship to depart.

“Come on,” Pierre said as he walked past him. “Let's head up on deck and watch as we head towards our future!”

“We seem to be saying this to each other a lot today, but again... I’m right behind you.” Pierre and Etienne both laughed as they hurried towards the steps and back up onto the deck of the ship.

When they stepped out onto the deck Etienne was awestruck as he watched the crew pull on thick ropes which hoisted the ship’s sails into place. He had never seen anything like it. They were massive. At the back of the ship Etienne could hear the sound of metal dropping on the deck, as the large anchor was lifted from the sea. At that moment the wind

caught the sails, filling them, and the ship began to move forward across the water.

Most of the other passengers had also come up onto the deck. They stood at the rails, and many waved to family and friends that stood on the shore to watch the ship as it sailed away. A cheer went up on deck as they headed out towards the ocean.

“Quebec here we come,” yelled Pierre, as he looked over at Etienne. Both men couldn’t help smiling.