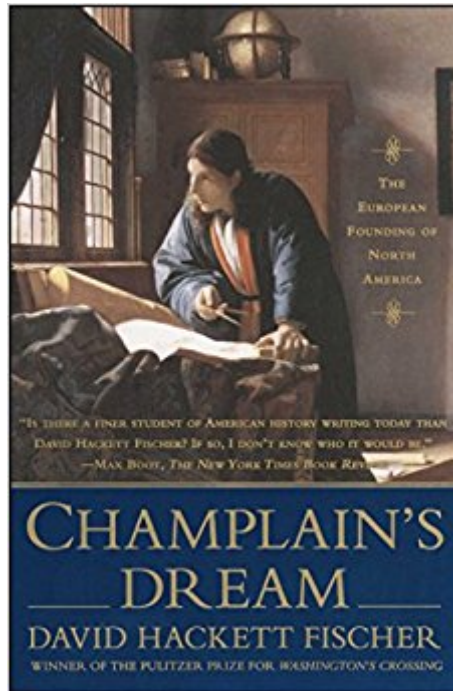




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Champlain's Dream



Synopsis

Winner of the Pritzker Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing In this sweeping, enthralling biography, acclaimed historian David Hackett Fischer brings to life the remarkable Samuel de Champlain—soldier, spy, master mariner, explorer, cartographer, artist, and Father of New France. Born on France's Atlantic coast, Champlain grew to manhood in a country riven by religious warfare. The historical record is unclear on whether Champlain was baptized Protestant or Catholic, but he fought in France's religious wars for the man who would become Henri IV, one of France's greatest kings, and like Henri, he was religiously tolerant in an age of murderous sectarianism. Champlain was also a brilliant navigator. He went to sea as a boy and over time acquired the skills that allowed him to make twenty-seven Atlantic crossings without losing a ship. But we remember Champlain mainly as a great explorer. On foot and by ship and canoe, he traveled through what are now six Canadian provinces and five American states. Over more than thirty years he founded, colonized, and administered French settlements in North America. Sailing frequently between France and Canada, he maneuvered through court intrigue in Paris and negotiated among more than a dozen Indian nations in North America to establish New France. Champlain had early support from Henri IV and later Louis XIII, but the Queen Regent Marie de Medici and Cardinal Richelieu opposed his efforts. Despite much resistance and many defeats, Champlain, by his astonishing dedication and stamina, finally established France's New World colony. He tried constantly to maintain peace among Indian nations that were sometimes at war with one another, but when he had to, he took up arms and forcefully imposed a new balance of power, proving himself a formidable strategist and warrior. Throughout his three decades in North America, Champlain remained committed to a remarkable vision, a Grand Design for France's colony. He encouraged intermarriage among the French colonists and the natives, and he insisted on tolerance for Protestants. He was a visionary leader, especially when compared to his English and Spanish contemporaries—a man who dreamed of humanity and peace in a world of cruelty and violence. This superb biography, the first in decades, is as dramatic and exciting as the life it portrays. Deeply researched, it is illustrated throughout with many contemporary images and maps, including several drawn by Champlain himself.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Fischer, Pulitzer Prize winner for *Washington's Crossing*, has produced the definitive biography of Samuel de Champlain (1567–1635): spy, explorer, courtier, soldier, sailor, ethnologist, mapmaker, and founder and governor of New France (today's Quebec), which he founded in 1608. This extraordinary and flawed individual was a man of war who dreamed of establishing a peaceful nation in the New World. Fischer once again displays a staggering and wide research, lightly worn, including no fewer than 16 fascinating appendixes covering everything from the Indian Nations in Champlain's World, 1603–35 to Champlain's preferred firearm. The bibliography is equally impressive, and the same should be said of Fischer's literary skills and approach. He does not have a thesis, or a theory, or an ideology, but instead answers questions (Who was this man? What did he do? Why should we care?) to weave together his epic story. With 2008 the 400th anniversary of the foundation of New France, the time is ripe for this outstanding work. 16 pages of color photos; b&w photos, maps. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Regarding the history of European settlement in North America, David Hackett Fischer has been around the block. It is no surprise, then, that *Champlain's Dream* speaks with authority on the relatively unknown biography of one of the period's leading figures. Fischer's solid, comprehensive and ultimately sympathetic portrayal of the enigmatic Champlain rekindles the consequences of European settlement in the Americas. Throughout, the author maintains a professional interest in separating fact from fiction: "Because he is a rigorous historian, not a historical novelist, [Fischer] is always scrupulous about drawing a firm line between facts and inferences," claims the reviewer for the *New York Times Book Review*. With the exception of the

Washington Post's critic, who cites poor "skills as a narrative historian," critics agree that Fischer's effort is both important and admirable. Copyright 2008 Bookmarks Publishing LLC --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is one of the most revelatory biographies and histories I ever have read. This book is packed with erudite scholarship as related by an author in command of the art of storytelling. It's a huge book, which will surprise you because - your know - who's Champlain? Did he merit any more than a paragraph or two in any (U.S.) school book you read? That's probably because we descend from an English tradition. We see our history through an English lens, at least until we throw off the yoke of King George and the lobsterbacks and Hessians he used to quash our freedoms and inalienable rights (yeah, yeah). The fact so few of us know this story is reason enough for the Quebecois to desire independence. If this alone doesn't make you want to visit Montreal and Quebec, then tack the first six of Louise Penny's mystery novels onto it and you'll hardly be able to stay away.

I decided to read this primarily because I lived near Lake Champlain during my childhood and I wanted know what was behind the name. And despite his reputation, I had not read anything by David Hackett Fischer. What I found was a work that gives dignity and relevance to history and biography. By uncovering Champlain's life, Fischer teaches us a grand overview of an era of French history, the founding of Canada, and, most importantly, the contrast of Champlain's approach to the New World as compared that of the Spanish, Dutch and English. Champlain had a respect for native people that was sorely lacking in most other colonizing (or conquering) experiences. One cannot help but conclude that the seeds planted by him have done so much to make Canadian history and culture so separate and distinct from that of the United States. Fischer does a magnificent job of detailing the impact that the French wars of the late 16th century, the reign of Henri IV, and his travels through New Spain had on Champlain's character and acts. Champlain also learned from his varied experiences in Acadia and along the St. Lawrence to become a pragmatic, humanistic leader. It caused me to ponder how different the history of the United States might have been had we had more people like Champlain among the founding fathers and framers of the Constitution. In many ways I was reminded of Roald Amundsen and how he learned from the Inuit during his voyage through the Northwest Passage and how it led to his later success on the way to the South Pole. Both men realized that they could learn from native peoples and integrate those experiences into their own. This book is highly recommended for anyone who loves to read histories and biographies.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, particularly as the importance of what Samuel Champlain accomplished became increasingly clear as the book neared its end. Champlain was a remarkable man, although the popular knowledge of him probably extends not much beyond giving his name to a large lake in a remote part of upstate New York state. Champlain, however, excelled at many things and was deficient in very few. His skill resulted in the settling of French colonies throughout the southern rim of Canada. Champlain embodied the talent of a diplomat in dealing with many fractious Indian tribes, smoothly gaining their trust and their respect. He handled innumerable difficult situations in his native France, through two regents and one extraordinarily critical minister, Cardinal Richelieu. He held his tiny colonies together through tough winters, desertion, and battles with the native Indians. Eventually, at the end of his life, in 1635, he lived to see the population of southern Canada explode and the French culture take firm root in the North American continent. This is a wonderful story, told by in my opinion a great historian. David Fischer's *Washington's Crossing* was perhaps a more focused book, telling a story of enormous significance to American history. However, Professor Fischer's skill at weaving a strong impression of a great multi-faceted man is demonstrated here, in his portrait of Champlain, just as vividly as it was with Washington. I would say, in fairness to the reader of this complex but stirring book, that it would be advisable to read the book with a highly detailed Atlas of Canada firmly in hand. I thought I knew something of Canadian geography but this is a graduate seminar in rivers and peninsulas and islands. It can be a bit confusing at times without a strong sense of Canadian geography. Also, be prepared for a crash course in Indian tribal history. Much of this is difficult, since it is so new to me. But it is an important part of what Champlain faced. He was forced to deal with a strange unknown land, populated with unknown people speaking languages that were totally unknown to any European, and had to sell his vision of the importance of this new land to a skeptical and largely ignorant France. He did this with incredible skill.

I think the book itself is excellent. This is my first time reading a book by this author, and I am quite impressed. One of my favorite aspects of the paperback version is all the maps and images included in the text. The maps, especially, are important to understanding what's happening in the book. I also have the kindle version, which is much more amenable to my lifestyle than a heavy pile of dead tree. However, the image quality of the maps/images included in the kindle version is just terrible. Very low res. It is no better on the iPhone kindle app on my iPhone, which has a much higher res screen than my Kindle 3. I'm not sure if this is an problem or a publisher problem, but the

maps need to be very high res for them to be useful to the reader. At this point, if you're on the fence between paperback and kindle, I'd suggest the paperback version. Rating for the book itself: 5 stars Rating for the kindle version: 3 stars

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