

This Day in History... July 24, 1701

Founding of Detroit

On July 24, 1701, French explorer Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac established a fort on the site of what would become the city of Detroit.

During the late 1600s, Father Marquette, Louis Jolliet, Robert de La Salle, and many other French adventurers explored Michigan and mapped its lakes and rivers. By 1700, the French had built forts, missions, and trading posts in several locations in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.



Father Marquette helped found Sault Ste. Marie in 1668, one of the first permanent settlements in Michigan.

To prevent British expansion in the West and protect French interests, Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac was sent to establish a stronghold on the Detroit River. On June 4, 1701, Cadillac set sail from Montreal with 100 men. Seven weeks later on July 24, the group selected a spot with steep riverbanks overlooking a narrow strait.

The strategic location was ideal for the defense of the settlement, and the waterway supplied a shipping route for trade. Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit was erected on the spot. It became a key location for France in the New World, and a trading center on the edges of the American frontier. Cadillac served as the commander of the fort until 1710. Detroit was the capital of Michigan from 1805-47 and is the largest city in the state today.

Pictured above, US #1000 was issued on the 250th anniversary of the landing of Cadillac in present-day Detroit. The stamp pictures Cadillac's landing, with an image of the 1951 skyline of the City of Detroit in the background.



Stamp issued on the 250th anniversary of Cadillac's landing.



In 2015, Detroit became the first US city to be designated a City of Design by UNESCO.



This stamp pictures Cadillac's landing with an image of the 1951 Detroit skyline in the background.

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