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FELLOWS LUNCHEON CHAT
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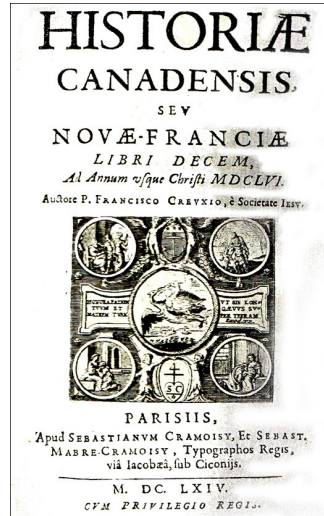
“Canada the Proper Name of the Wilderness (1532 – 1763)”

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WEDNESDAY,
August 25, 2010
12:30 p.m.



“When the Spaniard who first discovered this northern clime sailed past Cape Rosiers at the entrance of the River St. Laurence, the mountains ... were covered with snow. Such a prospect, in the summer season, gave them a very unfavourable opinion of the country, supposing the land to be too barren to recompense their labours ... and ... induced them to call it *Capo di Nada*, or *Cape Nothing* ... and from whence, by corruption of language, it has derived its present name of *Canada*.”

John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader*, London, 1791.

My research advances the proposition ‘*Canada* is the proper name of the wilderness.’ At the John Carter Brown Library I have given emphasis to the *Canada* register through the examination of narratives, maps and other documents of the period of the French Empire in North America, from Cartier’s first voyage of 1532 to the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Early modern cartography (1497 – 1656) of northern North America gives name to and makes visual the putative emergence of three zones of European interest and fabulation: *Norumbega*, *Canada* and *Baccalaus*. The proper name *Canada* is the name that the French use in their strategy to force a wedge between the competing Iberian and English ambitions through the Gulf of St. Lawrence. into an unknown and unfolding interior waterway named by Cartier *La Grand Rivière de Canada*. The cartographic record designates *Canada* that zone with surprising diachronic persistence, consecrated by de Champlain into the binary nomenclature *Nouvelle France dicte* (called) *Canada* in 1632. Whether *Canada* is a-topical, placeless, or ascribed as a topographic particular, its currency accelerates as the name to designate the French imperial ambition to possess the whole of North America. My second way to study the proper name *Canada* is through the French historiography of *Nouvelle France* from 1536 to 1763 by examining the transmission of the proper name *Canada*. What is understood by wilderness emerges within the gap between *Nouvelle France* and *Canada*. Even if *Canada* is a mostly indigenous word, it was still brought by the Europeans. The missionaries called the *sauvages*, *Canadiens* just as the explorers and administrators called the nebulous, vast and uncontrolled expanse *Canada*. Overall, *Canada* is the name that the French imperial project gives to a vast, uncontrolled expanse that persisted literally as *terre sauvage*, oscillating between *sauvage* as a state or condition of ‘solitude’, ‘desert,’ ‘*lieu inculte*’ in French lexicography, and *terre des sauvages* as lands where indigenous peoples dwell: the wilderness, in short.



Chancellor’s Dining Room, Sharpe Refectory
This lecture will follow our weekly
JCB Fellows luncheon, held every Wednesday
of the calendar year, summer and winter, without interruption.

Lunch begins at 12 noon, the chat at 12:30 p.m.
(Buy lunch for \$10 or bring your own.)

Call 401-863-2725 for more information or email: JCBL_Information@Brown.edu