

Joseph La France. (1707-1745)

La France was born at St. Joseph River near Michilmackinac, the son of a French fur-trader and a Saulteaux woman. He was sent to Quebec for his education then became a trader working with his father and had a varied and extensive training. He travelled down the Mississippi as far as the mouth of the Missouri River.

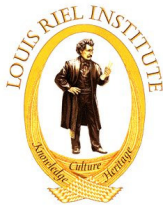
In 1739, having been refused a license to trade on the grounds that he had been selling liquor to the Indians, he decided to align himself with the English traders at Hudson Bay. Thus, he travelled there following the route through Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg River and Lake Winnipeg.

La France wintered in 1740–41 in the Lake Winnipeg region. In 1741–42 he wintered further west and north in the region of Lake Winnipegosis and the lower Saskatchewan River. From there he reached York Factory via the Hayes River in 1742. He was traveling with a large band of Indians to trade furs.

La France was sent to England later in 1742. In London he met Arthur Dobbs. La France supplied crude maps as well as much information concerning the geography and demographics of the region as they British were seeking information on a north-west passage. He recommended that the HBC meet growing French competition in the west as it was rapidly developing through the efforts of the La Vérendryes.

Reference:

Tanner, Helen Hornbeck, “The Career of Joseph LaFrance: *Coureur de Bois* in the Upper Great Lakes.” In *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference*, J.S. Brown et al (Eds.) East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1994: 171-188.



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