

# *Bones of Contention: Gustave Lanctot's Pursuit of Jacques Cartier's Remains*

by E.A. KELLY\*

*Poor Jacques Cartier, I hope they will leave his bones alone.*<sup>1</sup>

Gustave Lanctot, Dominion Archivist 1937-1948, had a life-long research interest in Jacques Cartier. For Lanctot, Cartier was "the first great figure in Canada's past."<sup>2</sup> "Le Canada," he affirmed, "entre véritablement dans l'histoire avec Jacques Cartier. Sans doute, avant lui, plusieurs navigateurs en avaient déjà visité les côtes, mais c'est lui qui le premier pénètre à l'intérieur du pays, le découvre, l'explore et le révèle au monde."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Cartier left a particular legacy to the people of Quebec: "le nom algonquin de notre Québec ne nous est pas venu par Champlain en 1603, mais par Cartier, en 1541."<sup>4</sup> And while Cartier was not the first to discover Canada, he was credited with the exploration of the Laurentian valley. Lanctot's research convinced him Cartier was "a skilled navigator, a remarkable pilot and an excellent cartographer."<sup>5</sup> In addition to work on historical writings and public addresses which praised Cartier, Lanctot was involved between 1932 and 1934 in the arrangements for the commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of Cartier's voyage; he called for a national celebration in remembrance of the coming to Canada of civilization.<sup>6</sup>

The surprising lack of historical documentation about his hero greatly puzzled Lanctot. "In spite of the fact," he wrote, "that his [Cartier's] discovery of a new land ought to have stirred the hearts of Frenchmen of the court, of navigation, and of commerce, there is an

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\* I would like to thank my colleagues in the Historical Division, Department of External Affairs, who commented on an earlier draft of this paper. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of External Affairs.

1 Department of External Affairs (hereafter DEA), file 10478-40, Georges Vanier to Lester Pearson, no. 442, 27 June 1949. This file is in the custody of the department.

2 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), Gustave Lanctot Papers, MG30 D95, vol. 1, p. 1 of undated manuscript "Jacques Cartier's First Voyage to Canada, Not in 1534, But in 1524."

3 *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 1 of manuscript and notes of the book *Jacques Cartier: Le Marin et le Découvreur*.

4 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 2 of speech on receipt of *Prix Champlain*, 1961.

5 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 2 of undated manuscript "Jacques Cartier's First Voyage to Canada, Not in 1534, But in 1524."

6 *Ibid.*, vol. 9, see document entitled "Memorandum — 1934 will mark the fourth centenary of Canada's discovery by Jacques Cartier at Gaspé in 1534."

almost total and absolute silence on the subject.”<sup>7</sup> There was little on record about Cartier’s life or career prior to his explorations of North America and particularly little information to explain how Cartier came to be given command of ships setting out on such perilous voyages. Lanctot’s interest in this problem was aroused by a clipping from the London *Times* referring to the claim by the Reverend A.R. Tremearne that he had found Cartier’s tomb in 1926 while travelling in France. In the autumn of 1948, as Lanctot prepared for what was to be a very active retirement, he wrote to Tremearne asking for more details concerning the location of the tomb and explaining that he had intended to pursue the matter but the outbreak of the Second World War had prevented him from going to France. Lanctot hoped for an early reply since his plans included a trip to France in 1949.<sup>8</sup> In his reply to Lanctot, Tremearne described the road, village, and school-house where he had made his “discovery.” The schoolmistress, on hearing the name Jacques Cartier mentioned during a conversation with Tremearne and his travelling companions, had pointed straight down and said “sous.” (Tremearne’s letter ended with a very broad hint that his church was badly in need of repair and any donations would be gratefully accepted.)<sup>9</sup>

This evidence for the location of Cartier’s final resting place fell somewhat short of the scholarly substantiation Lanctot required, particularly since tradition placed the tomb in the cathedral in St. Malo. According to Tremearne, however, Cartier’s remains could not have been buried in the cathedral since he had been excommunicated.<sup>10</sup> Lanctot’s inquiries were further complicated by responses received from France’s Chief Architect of Historic Monuments, Raymond Cornon, who had not been able to turn up any sign of the remains, and from B. Menthony, an official in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who indicated that Cartier’s tomb had been destroyed during the war when the cathedral was bombed, resulting in the destruction of several crypts whose contents had been mixed and scattered.<sup>11</sup> Tremearne seemed to have more promising leads and provided Lanctot, on request, with a drawing from memory of the school-house. (The records do not show whether Tremearne’s church ever received the necessary repairs, but he at least enjoyed a more varied diet since Lanctot sent him food parcels to express his appreciation.)<sup>12</sup>

Lanctot’s correspondence with Tremearne and the others in 1948 was only preparatory to the trip he intended to take to France to conduct his own search. In the autumn of 1948, he approached the Solicitor General, Joseph Jean, about the project. According to Lanctot, Jean approved at once and suggested the idea be placed before the Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent. Again according to Lanctot, St. Laurent welcomed the proposal and advised him to take the matter up with the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson. The need for Pearson’s involvement was obvious. If the grave could be located, Lanctot planned to request the French government to allow transfer of the remains to Canada. Such a request would, of course, have much greater chance of success if handled at the diplomatic level. On 6 January 1949, Lanctot, then retired, met Pearson to discuss the project. Pearson, as was his custom in dealing with most matters

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7 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 1 of undated manuscript “Jacques Cartier’s First Voyage to Canada, Not in 1534, But in 1524.”

8 *Ibid.*, vol. 9, Lanctot to Tremearne, 17 September 1948.

9 *Ibid.*, Tremearne to Lanctot, 24 September 1948.

10 *Ibid.*, Tremearne to Lanctot, 24 October 1948.

11 *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Cornon, 8 March 1948; Menthony to Lanctot, 20 December 1948.

12 *Ibid.*, Tremearne to Lanctot, 24 January 1949.



Léopold Massard, "Jacques Cartier, Navigateur." Hand-coloured etching, published in *M. de Clugny, Costumes Français, Paris, 1836*. There is no authentic portrait of Cartier; this etching by Massard was taken from a drawing by the mapmaker Descelliers, a contemporary of Cartier. Lanctot used this picture of a regal and visionary Cartier in his book *Jacques Cartier devant l'histoire (Montreal, 1947)*. Courtesy: Picture Division, Public Archives of Canada, C-41570.

related to history, appeared genuinely interested, but Lanctot in his enthusiasm mistakenly assumed the minister's interest extended to full diplomatic and financial assistance for the search.

Lanctot thus set off for France feeling he had obtained all the necessary support. He was determined to locate Cartier's tomb, exhume the remains, and transfer them to Canada with all the pomp and ceremony befitting a hero of Canadian history. He had even gone so far as to suggest that a warship might be used to bring the remains to Canada where they could be placed in a suitable shrine. Lanctot was not unaware that if the project succeeded his reputation would be greatly enhanced, while Pearson no doubt realized that the transfer of the remains to Canada would be a highly visible and popular event with some political advantages for the government.

While Lanctot was en route to France, Pearson sent a cable to Canada's Ambassador to France, Georges Vanier, describing the project and advising him to expect Lanctot's call. "While the proposal appears to have merit," suggested Pearson, "it is thought that a decision regarding official support should be postponed until the attitude of the French Government towards it can be ascertained."<sup>13</sup> Neither Lanctot nor Pearson foresaw the approaching imbroglio.

Lanctot's feverish activities not only brought him into contact with the authorities who would have to give him permission to begin the excavation, but also with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After initial discussion of his plans with two officials in the ministry in Paris, Lanctot confidently reported, "They both let me know that the French Government entirely favoured the idea."<sup>14</sup> Agreement in principle by officials of the ministry did not, however, signify formal acceptance by the French government. A letter to Lanctot from J.M. Boegner, Deputy Director of the North American Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained that his department looked with favour upon the eventual transfer to Canada of Cartier's remains. The ministry could not, however, come to a formal decision on a still hypothetical proposal, thus the agreement in principle remained unofficial.<sup>15</sup> As long as Cartier remained buried in obscurity, the French government saw no reason to begin formal deliberations on the disposition of his remains. Nevertheless, Lanctot ignored these reservations and pressed on with his search expecting to receive unqualified support from all quarters.

Lanctot proceeded from Paris to St. Malo to confer with archaeologists, historians, and the local authorities about the possible location of Cartier's remains. He also travelled in France looking for clues in old church records. Documentary evidence placed the tomb in the cathedral at St. Malo while local legend suggested Cartier was buried in a small chapel near his manor at Limoilou. Leaving no stone unturned, Lanctot hurried back to the National Library in Paris to pore over more old church registers and other historical material. He concluded, and his counterparts at the National Library agreed, that the most promising place to begin was beneath the cathedral at St. Malo. Lanctot then contacted the Department of Fine Arts in Paris because it was in the process of restoring the cathedral's wartime damage. Fortunately for Lanctot's project, extensive excavations had already begun.

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13 DEA, file 10478-40, Pearson to Vanier, no. 15, 7 January 1949.

14 *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Pearson, 28 March 1949.

15 *Ibid.*, Boegner to Lanctot, 16 March 1949.



*Lanctot (left), the rector of the cathedral, and the architect in charge of the excavation, Raymond Cornon, observing the area of excavation where Cartier's remains were discovered. Courtesy: Department of External Affairs (file 10478-40).*

After reporting to Pearson on these encouraging beginnings, Lanctot was ready to turn to financial considerations. It would be difficult to provide a better example of gilding the bureaucratic lily than Lanctot's description of his discussions with officials in Ottawa. "With the Prime Minister's approbation and your assurance of departmental support," Lanctot wrote, "I started on my quest."<sup>16</sup> That quest had taken three months, and he still had received no financial support for his expenses in France. In reply, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Arnold Heeney, informed Ambassador Vanier that Pearson was not prepared to pay a per diem allowance or Lanctot's expenses for an indefinite period. "On the other hand," added Heeney, "if it is possible within a few days to obtain certain identification of the Cartier remains, the Minister would be willing to have Lanctot's actual disbursements covered for such a brief period." For Vanier's confidential information and guidance, Heeney mentioned that Pearson was interested in the project but would not cover Lanctot's expenses over a long period "in the still insubstantial hope that something concrete will result."<sup>17</sup>

Unclear as to what was authorized and what was not, Vanier asked Ottawa whether certain identification of the Cartier remains was a preliminary condition for authorizing payment of any of Lanctot's expenses. A few days later Heeney responded. Disbursements were authorized to cover one week regardless of identification but subsequent expenses required authority. "If such extension is requested," remarked Heeney, "I should be glad to know what Lanctot considers to be the prospect of success at that time."<sup>18</sup> Heeney did not have long to wait for a reply. Within days exciting news from Vanier reached the department. The mayor of St. Malo had telephoned Vanier to report that the excavators had apparently located the remains of Jacques Cartier. Certification by experts was being arranged.

Initial excitement in the department at Lanctot's success was soon supplanted by concern. Now that the hypothetical had become reality, what would be the attitude of the French government? Should the embassy in Paris formally indicate that Canada was interested in acquiring the remains? Ottawa was not sure whether any commitments had been made by either the embassy or Lanctot. In fact, the department had hitherto treated the whole project rather lightly. An embassy official had discussed it informally with a senior member of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs but there had been no exchange of correspondence. Departmental concern mounted when Vanier reported that he had spoken to the mayor of St. Malo who had become so convinced that the remains were actually those of Cartier that the municipal council had decided that they should be transferred to the Chapelle du Grand Donjon du Château in St. Malo.<sup>19</sup> Worse still was

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16 *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Pearson, 28 March 1949, minuted with the unsigned undated notation "not given."

17 *Ibid.*, Heeney to Vanier, no. 168, 5 April 1949.

18 *Ibid.*, Heeney to Vanier, no. 182, 11 April 1949.

19 Existing evidence seemed to add weight to the authenticity of the claim that they were indeed Cartier's remains. There was a permit for the burial of Cartier in the cathedral; the remains were found in the exact spot family tradition placed them; the body was buried in lime and charcoal, obligatory when the deceased was a victim of a contagious disease (Cartier died in 1557 during an epidemic); no record existed of any other person who succumbed to a contagious disease being buried in the Virgin's chapel in the cathedral. A later medical report by experts provided further evidence that the remains were Cartier's through examination of the size and shape of the skull, dental characteristics, and bone analysis; see M.M. Piédelièvre, Henri Vallois, Denis Leroy, and L. Dérobert, "Étude et identification des restes de Jacques Cartier," *Bulletin de l'Académie Nationale de Médecine*, nos. 7 and 8 (1952) attached to *ibid.*, Piédelièvre to Vanier, 20 May 1952.

Vanier's analysis of the council's actions. "I should not be surprised if the Municipal Council put itself on record at once in order to ward off any pressure from the French Government regarding the transfer of the remains to Canada," Vanier reported. He added that "Lanctot himself informed me before he left for Canada that he had spoken to the Mayor about such a transfer who appeared to be opposed to it."<sup>20</sup>

The reason for this sudden blossoming of interest in Jacques Cartier among St. Malo's elected officials quickly became apparent. The mayor planned to organize commemorative ceremonies in 1950 and said he hoped that Canada would be represented by government officials as well as Canadian bishops travelling to Rome for the Holy Year. Vanier gracefully accepted the mayor's coup and stoutly replied "that without doubt Canada would wish to be adequately represented at these ceremonies."<sup>21</sup>

Lanctot's persistence and zeal had brought him success in locating the remains of the famous explorer. He was responsible for alerting the authorities to the fact that Cartier was buried under the Chapel of the Virgin in St. Malo cathedral. Lanctot pressed for excavations in that area which otherwise might never have been made. Without his efforts the location of the grave might even have been forever lost during the reconstruction of the cathedral. His impressive achievement, however, was soon eclipsed by the importance and immediacy of the ensuing issue: who was to have the remains? Heeney turned this now contentious matter over to the Head of the department's European Division, T.W.L. MacDermot. Heeney asked him whether there was "anything further we can do now to protect the position of the Minister and the government."<sup>22</sup> Departmental anger was reflected in a memo to Heeney from another member of the division, H.F. Feaver. "In my opinion," fumed Feaver, "Lanctot's activities have proved to be a fiasco because of his failure to obtain in advance, the approval of the Mayor of St. Malo who (to speak in sordid terms) does not want to lose this tourist attraction disinterred by our friend. I assume that the French Government would not be disposed to override the wishes of the municipal authorities in this matter." As for the settlement of Lanctot's expenses, Feaver felt that "it would be difficult to justify, in the eyes of the Canadian taxpayer, payment of any large amount to meet his expenses." Another officer suggested the word "large" might be omitted from Feaver's words of advice.<sup>23</sup> The question hinged on whether Canada should reimburse acquisition rather than just discovery.

By this time, Lanctot had returned to Canada and relegated himself to the diplomatic graveyard by suggesting to the press that if the French authorities would not permit the removal of all of Cartier's remains to Canada, it might be possible to obtain half of them. Amazingly, he was still under the impression that the government had agreed to pay all his expenses.<sup>24</sup> Was Lanctot deluding himself on this point or had departmental officials in Ottawa and at the embassy in Paris not been candid with him? Vanier reported that he had conveyed to Lanctot Pearson's decision relating to reimbursement just prior to the

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20 DEA, file 10478-40, Vanier to Heeney, no. 324, 10 May 1949.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, Heeney to MacDermot, 12 May 1949.

23 *Ibid.*, Feaver to Heeney, 13 May 1949; and undated minute by Escott Reid.

24 *Ibid.*, Heeney to Vanier, no. 296, 17 June 1949; minute by Heeney of 20 June 1949 on memo from MacDermot to Heeney, 18 June 1949.

discovery of the tomb. Lanctot, however, was completely confident that he could convince Pearson and/or the prime minister that commitments had been made which should be honoured.

MacDermot reviewed the whole project in a six-page report. He determined from the records that neither Pearson, Heeney, nor Vanier had ever given Lanctot any assurance that the department would support his expenses for any more than a short period of investigation. In fact, a period of one week was specifically mentioned and a report on progress had been requested. MacDermot observed that no report had been received but this was academic since the discovery of the tomb seemed to reflect quite adequately Lanctot's progress. "Consequently," stated MacDermot, "from the very outset the project was a private undertaking by Dr. Lanctot which received, it is true, some encouragement from the Minister, but on a very definite understanding, namely, that the French Government approved of the mission: that mission being not only to find, but to remove to Canada, the remains of Jacques Cartier." In MacDermot's opinion, Lanctot "never wholly accepted the extremely definite and emphatic limitations placed by the Minister and the Under-Secretary upon the amount that could be repaid to him for his expenses. He addressed himself directly and personally to the Minister on this matter and does not appear to have accepted or understood the significance of the instructions transmitted to him by the Ambassador."<sup>25</sup>

MacDermot did recognize that Lanctot had displayed much persistence and enterprise to get as far as he did. He also speculated on what would be involved if the remains did indeed come to Canada. Some form of mausoleum would be necessary; there would be elaborate ceremonies; the undertaking would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. MacDermot felt that under these circumstances money to pay Lanctot's expenses could be found without much difficulty. "If," added MacDermot, "a settlement, with Dr. Lanctot, either by the payment of the whole or part of his expenses, concluded the matter, it might not be difficult to make satisfactory arrangements, but the matter is by no means closed. We do not know what the final policy of the French Government will be on the transfer of the remains...." This more businesslike and optimistic approach did help dispel the concern of some departmental officials about the situation. He concluded by advising that Vanier be directed to make discreet inquiries about the prospects of the French government acceding to a request for Cartier's remains, either from the Canadian government, the Province of Quebec, or a committee organized by Lanctot.<sup>26</sup>

Heeney agreed with MacDermot and sent a letter to Vanier the following day. Reminding Vanier that "we do not wish to press any enquiry or suggestion on the French Government which would be embarrassing,"<sup>27</sup> Heeney asked him to raise the question informally with the French, taking care to ensure that they understood that no formal request was being made. Evidently the Canadian government had not given up on the possibility that Cartier's remains might be brought to Canada amid celebrations which would include a triumphant Gustave Lanctot. As requested, Vanier ascertained the French government's policy concerning Cartier's remains. "I feel sure," he wrote Heeney, "that the French Government would be willing to agree to the transfer ... at the request of

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25 *Ibid.*, "Dr. Gustave Lanctot's Expedition to Identify and Retrieve for Canada the Remains of Jacques Cartier," T.W.L. MacDermot, 7 July 1949.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*, Heeney to Vanier, 8 July 1949.



the Canadian Government if there were no opposition from the local authorities, namely the Mayor and Council of St. Malo. A request from a Provincial or private source would not be entertained unless approved by the Canadian Government.” Vanier, however, had not stopped his inquiry there. He had also spoken to the mayor of St. Malo who was in no mood to be subtle. “He would never consent,” said Vanier, “to the transfer of the remains. He was categorical about this, under no circumstances would he agree to such a proposal. It was quite unthinkable that St. Malo should allow the remains of such a distinguished citizen to be removed.”<sup>28</sup> In fact, plans were already underway to prepare a sarcophagus and chapel for the remains. Given this information, Escott Reid, the Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, concluded that “it would appear therefore that no useful purpose would be served by the Canadian Government taking any action in this matter.”<sup>29</sup>

Months later, in a letter to Pearson, Lanctot asked whether removal of Cartier’s remains was still under consideration by the Canadian government. To assist the minister and the department in reaching a decision, Lanctot skilfully touched on the most politically sensitive aspect of the question — one intended to create concern among departmental officials. “Quebec,” wrote Lanctot, “has the matter [the disposition of Cartier’s remains] so close to its heart that Premier Duplessis is reported contemplating a move in that direction.”<sup>30</sup> Given the fact that the French government had made its position clear and given the political friction between the federal Liberals and Quebec Union Nationale, the suggestion could hardly have been welcome. Fortunately, the Quebec government did not resurrect the issue and Cartier’s grave remains to this day in the cathedral at St. Malo.

Lanctot’s visionary project lost its glamour during the wrangling over the possession of the remains. A clear impression, however, of the amazing power of such “relics” to influence human behaviour and even political authorities survives the episode. Why did possession of Cartier’s remains become so important to Lanctot? A grave site may provide clues to the deceased’s philosophy, personality, tastes, aspirations, or accomplishments. In this case, however, Cartier’s remains probably served as a tangible link to the past providing an immediacy not available in the printed page, picture, or human imagination. Perhaps there is also in this some connection between historical and religious relics in that they may have the mysterious power to bring people together. The famous Shroud of Turin is a powerful force for Christian reassurance and unity. Other sorts of relics may also possess an ability to bind people together through participation in a common heritage which the relic represents. In an article on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, C.J. Taylor shows that historic sites were expected to function in this manner.<sup>31</sup> For Lanctot, the value of Cartier’s remains also lay in their nationalist appeal. He described his find in a letter to St. Laurent as “cette importante découverte du tombeau de Cartier qui est tout à l’honneur du Canada et qui paraît intéresser nos compatriotes anglais tout autant que les Canadiens-Français.” Moreover, in a letter to the Director of the French Bureau of Architecture, Lanctot explained the

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28 *Ibid.*, Vanier to Heeney, 7 August 1949.

29 *Ibid.*, Reid to Pearson, 18 August 1949.

30 *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Pearson, 29 December 1949.

31 C.J. Taylor, “Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (March 1983), pp. 3-24.

reaction of Canadians, as he saw it, to his discovery: "Déjà la nouvelle s'en est répandue au Canada, où elle a soulevé un sentiment de satisfaction, de réjouissance et même d'émotion nationale."<sup>32</sup>

Another possible reason for Lanctot's venture emerges from the bureaucratic haggling which developed over who would pay his expenses. Lanctot had already submitted an expense account totalling approximately \$1800 for the period 6 January to 11 May 1949. Pearson countered that Lanctot should prepare a claim for the expenses relating directly to the excavation and identification of the remains. Accordingly, Lanctot submitted a bill for \$432.80 covering a period of thirty-two days. Since some of the days claimed were devoted to corresponding with officials and arranging appointments and, since the total number of days still exceeded the period authorized by the department, MacDermot suggested to Heeney that a compromise of \$300 be offered. But there was a further problem. S.D. Hemsley, the Head of Finance Division, pointed out the difficulty of obtaining Treasury Board approval. There was simply no logical departmental budget against which Lanctot's expenses could be charged and the only authority for covering the costs was in the disputed unwritten agreement between Pearson and Lanctot.

Seeking to find a way out of this awkward situation, the department decided to try the traditional bureaucratic solution of foisting the problem on someone else. In this case the intended victim was the Secretary of State which had responsibility for the Public Archives. Hemsley suggested that the whole affair seemed to be related far more to the work of the Archives than to any of the functions handled by External Affairs. Knowing he would need as much support as possible, Heeney enlisted the aid of the prime minister. St. Laurent agreed with Heeney that "the expense was incurred in connection with work more properly related to the interests of the Dominion Archives."<sup>33</sup>

In his reply to the proposed compromise settlement, Lanctot pointed out that, although he would lose \$1500, "I do not mind being out of pocket for the benefit of Canada and the successful result of my historical investigation."<sup>34</sup> With Lanctot's acceptance of the compromise, Pearson hoped to free himself of this administrative headache once and for all. In his letter to Secretary of State F.G. Bradley, Pearson provided a short history of Lanctot's mission and mentioned the \$300 bill. Pearson then suggested that "as this project was of a kind more directly related to the interests of the Dominion Archives and was carried out by the former Dominion Archivist, the funds might be provided by your Department."<sup>35</sup> While he was open to receiving his ministerial colleague's comments, Pearson pointed out that St. Laurent agreed with this solution.

St. Laurent's approval was not, however, sufficient to conclude the issue. The Dominion Archivist, W. Kaye Lamb, pleaded total ignorance of the search for Cartier's bones. And since he had a very tight travel budget which would not withstand the loss of \$300, Lamb refused to pay Lanctot's bill. He added that proof that the remains were indeed Cartier's still had not been produced and that there was some dispute as to who should actually receive credit for the discovery. Lamb's position was clear: "It would, I think, be most unwise for the Archives to identify itself with either side of these various

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32 PAC, Gustave Lanctot Papers, vol. 9, Lanctot to St. Laurent, 2 July 1949; and Lanctot to Cornon, 28 April 1949.

33 DEA, file 10478-40, Heeney to St. Laurent, 20 January 1950.

34 *Ibid.*, Lanctot to Heeney, 18 March 1950.

35 *Ibid.*, Pearson to Bradley, 19 April 1950.

controversies, and this is an additional reason why I prefer to keep clear of the whole affair.”<sup>36</sup> A disgruntled MacDermot commented that “the motto of the Archives in this regard is ‘no soap’.” Since an alternate solution had to be found, he advised Hemsley that Heeney “was not able to suggest a way out of escaping the unavoidability of the logic of the Archivist. It was an amusing piece of impertinence while it lasted.”<sup>37</sup>

This chapter in the story raises a final question. Why had Lanctot not informed the Public Archives of the Cartier project and sought its support? In a recent letter to the author, Kaye Lamb offers this explanation:

Lanctot was known to deal privately in manuscripts and other archival materials, and this was frowned upon — quite rightly — by the Minister of the day, Colonel Colin Gibson. As a consequence he left the Archives with an order from the Minister never to enter the Archives building, and except for a quick dash in and out to greet his successor, he never did enter it as long as Colonel Gibson retained the portfolio of Secretary of State. He (Colonel Gibson) was still in office when Lanctot was endeavouring to secure support for his Cartier project from the Prime Minister and Lester Pearson, which no doubt explains why he (Lanctot) made no approach to the Archives. To the best of my recollection I heard nothing about the matter until the request to pay Lanctot’s expenses came to me in April 1950.<sup>38</sup>

It seems reasonable to suggest that Lanctot’s pursuit of Cartier’s remains may have also been motivated by a desire to undo the major professional embarrassment he had suffered at the end of an otherwise distinguished career. The Lanctot Papers, however, are silent on the question.

In the end, External Affairs sought Treasury Board approval to charge the \$300 to departmental administration sundries. On 23 June 1950, Treasury Board authorized payment. Officials in External Affairs were pleased to see this matter settled as they laboured over more critical issues such as the Berlin crisis and the Korean War. As for the indomitable Lanctot, he was ready to begin the search for the remains of John Cabot. But all was not lost from his previous experience as he informed Pearson that the venture would be “this time entirely on my own initiative.”<sup>39</sup>

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36 *Ibid.*, Lamb to Teresa Maloney, 1 May 1950; she was the Executive Assistant, Office of the Secretary of State.

37 *Ibid.*, MacDermot to Hemsley, 19 May 1950.

38 Lamb to author, 27 November 1984.

39 DEA, file 10478-40, Lanctot to Pearson, 29 December 1949.