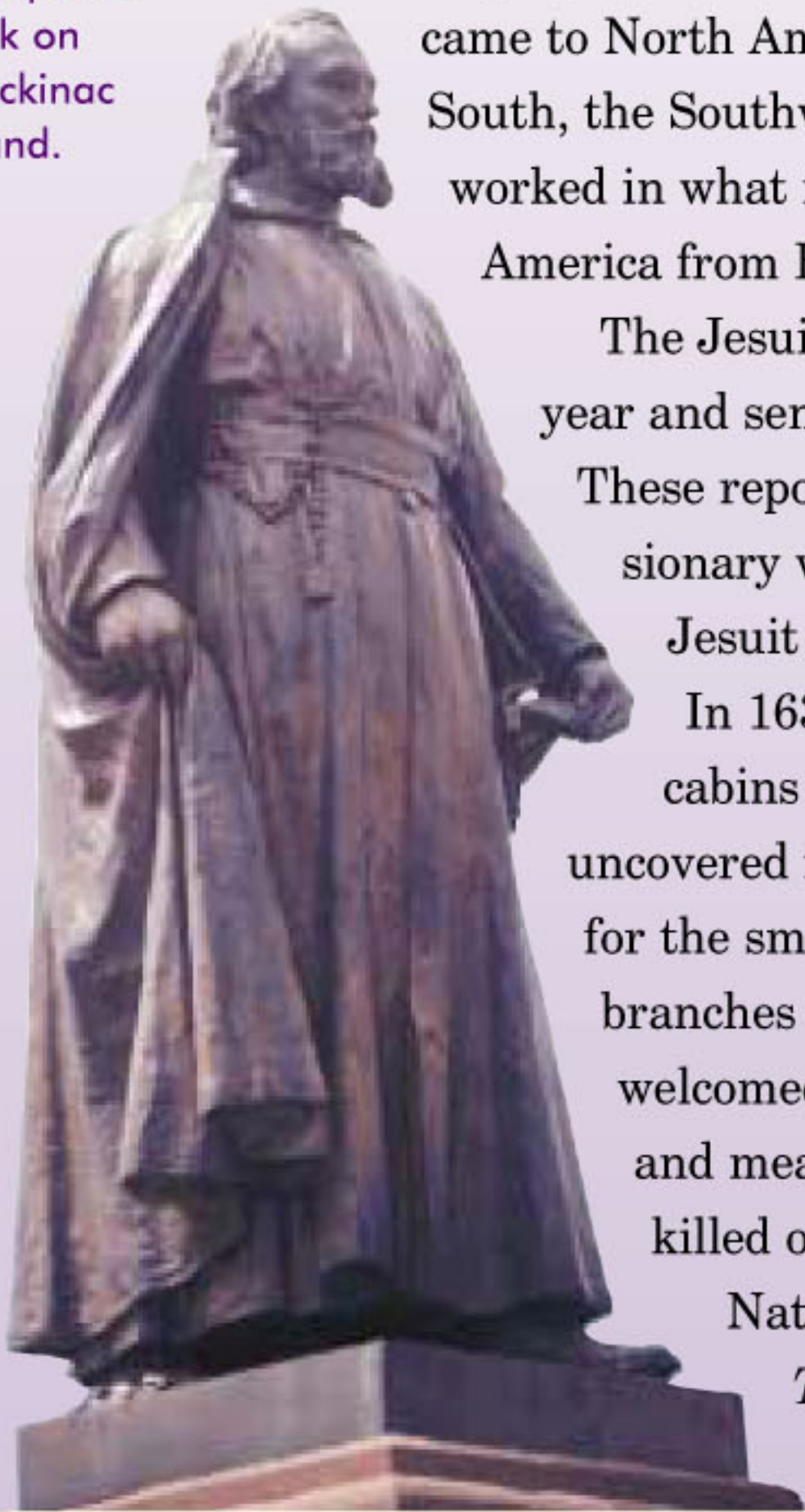


WHO WERE THE “BLACK ROBES”?

“Black robes” is the name the Native Americans gave to the Jesuit missionaries because of the clothes they wore.

This statue of Father Marquette wearing his black robe is in Marquette Park on Mackinac Island.



Jesuits are a group of Roman Catholic missionaries from around the world who travel to many places to tell people about the Catholic faith. They sometimes work with people who are hurt, sick, or poor. Starting in the 1500s, Jesuits from Spain came to North America to teach Christianity to the Native Americans in the South, the Southwest and Mexico. French Jesuits came in the early 1600s and worked in what is now Canada and the American Midwest. Jesuits also came to America from England, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, Switzerland and Germany.

The Jesuits in New France—like Father Marquette—wrote reports every year and sent the reports by ship back to Catholic church leaders in Europe. These reports told about the Jesuit priests’ plans for new projects and missionary work that they were doing. While telling these stories, the French Jesuit writers also wrote about the Indians whose villages they lived in.

In 1632 the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune described the Montagnais Indian cabins as “made of poles, clumsily covered with bark, the top left uncovered for the purpose of letting in light and of leaving an opening for the smoke to go out . . . the ground [inside] was covered with little branches of fir, for they have no other seats.” Native people sometimes welcomed the Jesuits and shared their food—usually corn, squash, beans, and meat. At times the Native Americans got angry at the Jesuits and killed or tortured them. We know a lot about everyday life among Native Americans from a collection of these yearly reports called *The Jesuit Relations*.

Where to Take Your Family

The **Father Marquette National Memorial** is located just west of St. Ignace on a bluff overlooking the Straits of Mackinac. A floor map shows the explorer’s route down the Mississippi, and outdoor wall panels tell the story of Father Marquette. For more information, telephone (517) 373-3559 or visit on-line at www.michiganhistory.org.

The **Museum of Ojibwa Culture** is located on the site of the St. Ignace mission. There, a gravestone and statue commemorate the Jesuit priest and explorer. For more information, telephone (906) 643-9161.