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Extensions of Remarks

RECOGNIZING THE 450TH ANNIVERSARY OF FRENCH HUGUENOT CAPTAIN JEAN RIBAUT'S LANDING IN FLORIDA

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2012

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Sesquicentennial, or 450th anniversary, of the French expedition commanded by Huguenot Captain Jean Ribault landing in Florida at what is now Jacksonville, my hometown. Seeking the right to worship freely and with the support of the French Crown, Ribault sailed toward the New World and dropped anchor along the North Florida coast. His arrival on April 30, 1562, marked the beginning of French history in Florida.

The next day, May 1, the crew sailed north and came to "a leaping and breking of the water, as a streme falling owt of the lande unto the sea." They had discovered the mouth of a majestic river that Ribault named the River of Maye. We now call that river the St. Johns River, but the Village of Mayport and Naval Station Mayport owe their names to the original River of May.

Greeted by indigenous, Mocama-speaking Timucua Indians, Ribault and his crew entered the river, rowed ashore, and planted a column in honor of their King, Charles IX, claiming the land for France and marking a spot for future settlement. This French landing predates the settling of Jamestown by 45 years and occurred 58 years before the Mayflower arrived in Plymouth.

Two years later on June 22, 1564, a second sailing expedition, under the command of Rene Goulaine de Laudonniere, established the first French colony in the present-day United States of America near the mouth of the river. It was named

was built in the colony or land of Charles to protect settlers. While there undoubtedly will be continued debate as to where and who claimed the first celebration of thanksgiving, we do know that the French Huguenots of the la Caroline colony celebrated a day of thanksgiving on June 30, 1564, and shared a meal with the Timucua Indians. Today, this landmark is operated by the United States National Park Service as Fort Caroline National Memorial.

Beginning with this first settlement and continuing until today, France and Florida have built a long-lasting relationship through consular representations, trade, cultural and educational exchanges, and tourism, all of which benefit both the French people and the people of Florida.

Florida has a long, rich maritime history dating back at least 12,000 years, but the documented history of the French coming to this long, flat peninsula is also cause for celebration. Many exciting activities are planned including the rededication of the Ribault Monument at Ft. Caroline National Memorial and the French Navy mooring two goelettes, the Etoile and the Belle Poule, in downtown Jacksonville. Consul General of France in Miami, Gaël de Maisonneuve, and other French and American dignitaries will be on hand for this historical celebration.

It is my honor to bring this historic commemoration to the attention of the United States Congress and to invite Members to join in