

CITY OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA  
SESQUICENTENNIAL

MAY FIRST

1562 ♦ 2012

*450 years of french history in*

*Florida*

*Florida's Governor, Jacksonville's Mayor, and the Superintendent of the Duval County Public School System ask through enthusiastic support letters for the public to join in the commemoration of Jean Ribault's 1562 arrival at the St. Johns River.*

*The Jacksonville City Council celebrates the 450th anniversary through a resolution that celebrates the first colony of men and women seeking religious freedom in the New World.*

Introduced by Council  
Member Yarborough &  
Co-sponsored by CM  
Anderson, Bishop, Boyer,  
Brown, Carter, Clark,  
Crescimbeni, Daniels, Gaffney, Gulliford, Holt,  
Jones, Joost, Lee, Love, Lumb, Redman, Schellenberg

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RESOLUTION 2012-110

A RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE 450TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
LANDING OF JEAN RIBAUT IN THE NEW WORLD; COMMEMORATING  
THE EVENTS THAT LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST  
EUROPEAN COLONY OF MEN AND WOMEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE  
PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM; DESIGNATING MAY 1, 2012 AS  
JEAN RIBAUT DAY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

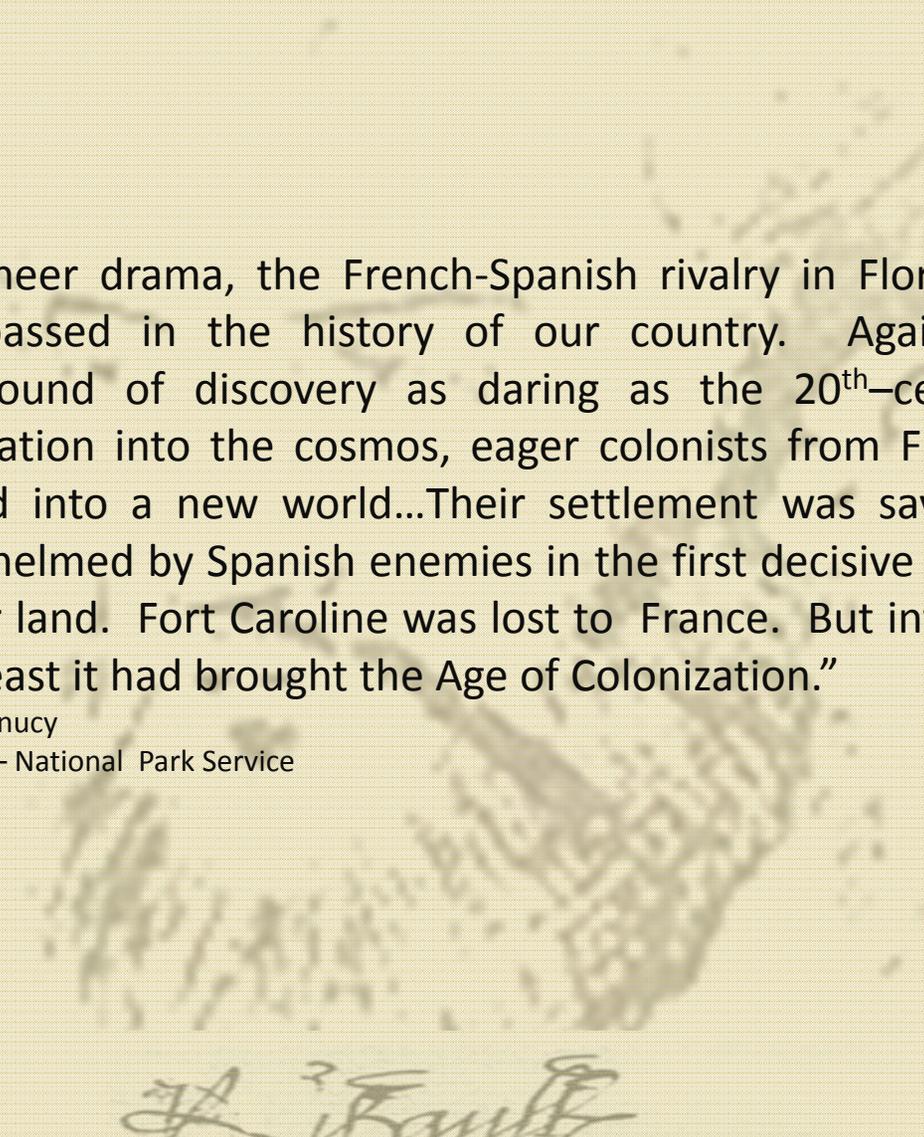


*The Saga of Jean Ribault  
and the French Colony in North Florida*

**Celebrate 450  
America's First Coast**

**At Jacksonville**

**Script and Visuals by Emily Lisska, Lyn Corley and Ted Corley  
Jacksonville Historical Society**



“For sheer drama, the French-Spanish rivalry in Florida is unsurpassed in the history of our country. Against a background of discovery as daring as the 20<sup>th</sup>-century penetration into the cosmos, eager colonists from France, pushed into a new world...Their settlement was savagely overwhelmed by Spanish enemies in the first decisive battle for our land. Fort Caroline was lost to France. But into the Southeast it had brought the Age of Colonization.”

Albert Manucy

Historian – National Park Service

*A. Manucy*

# 1561

The year was 1561, a pivotal time in the age of exploration. Tensions mounted in France and religious persecution and hostility threatened the powerful nation with civil war—a war that was certain to tear the country apart.



Tratado de Tordesillas attributed to Portugal e aCastela 1494



Wikipedia

**Gaspard de Coligny**



Wikipedia

**Catherine de Medici**

In stepped French Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, a devoted Protestant, who pled the case for colonization in the New World by the French Protestants, known as Huguenots. Coligny convinced the French Queen Regent Catherine de Medici to sponsor the exploration of sites for settlements. The colonies would provide safe haven to worship freely and could expand the boundaries of the ambitious European nation. The land west across the Atlantic Ocean was the destination.

# 1562



In 1562, the French nation's most renowned navigator and sea captain, Jean Ribault, a Huguenot, was selected to lead the voyage for settlement in the New World.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Ribault". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and somewhat stylized, typical of the 16th century.

The explorers left Havre-de-Grace, France on February 18, 1562, with Captain Ribault, Second-in-Command Rene de Laudonniere, and their fleet of three ships.



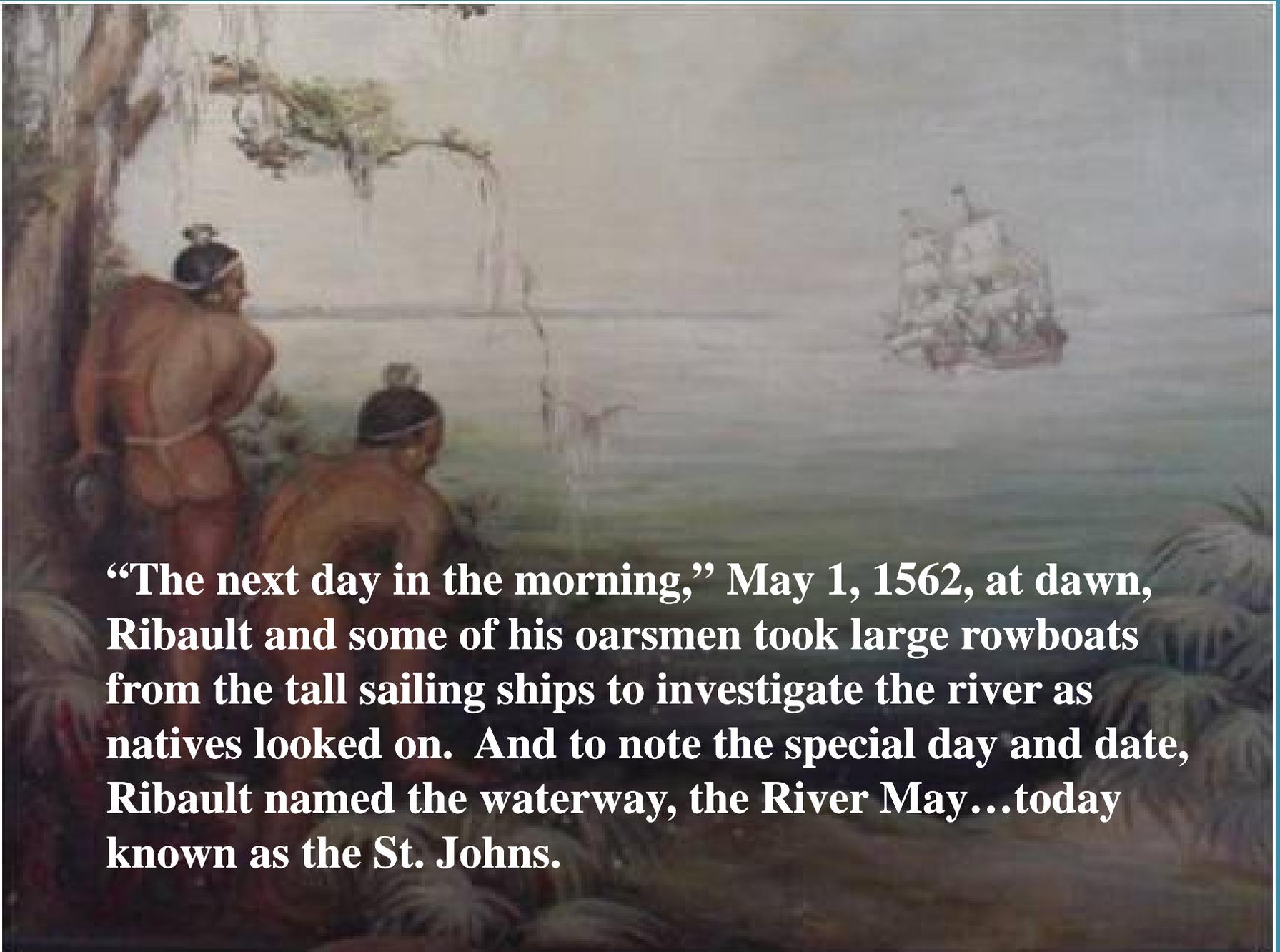
Jacques le Moynes

They navigated a new course to the New World that was previously thought impossible.

As the sun set on April 30th, Ribault spotted a bubbling turbulence along the Florida Coast and realized he was at the mouth of a unique and majestic river - a river that flowed north - a deep-water port. The deep water was critical for colonization and trade to support the colony.



George Herbert McCord



**“The next day in the morning,” May 1, 1562, at dawn, Ribault and some of his oarsmen took large rowboats from the tall sailing ships to investigate the river as natives looked on. And to note the special day and date, Ribault named the waterway, the River May...today known as the St. Johns.**

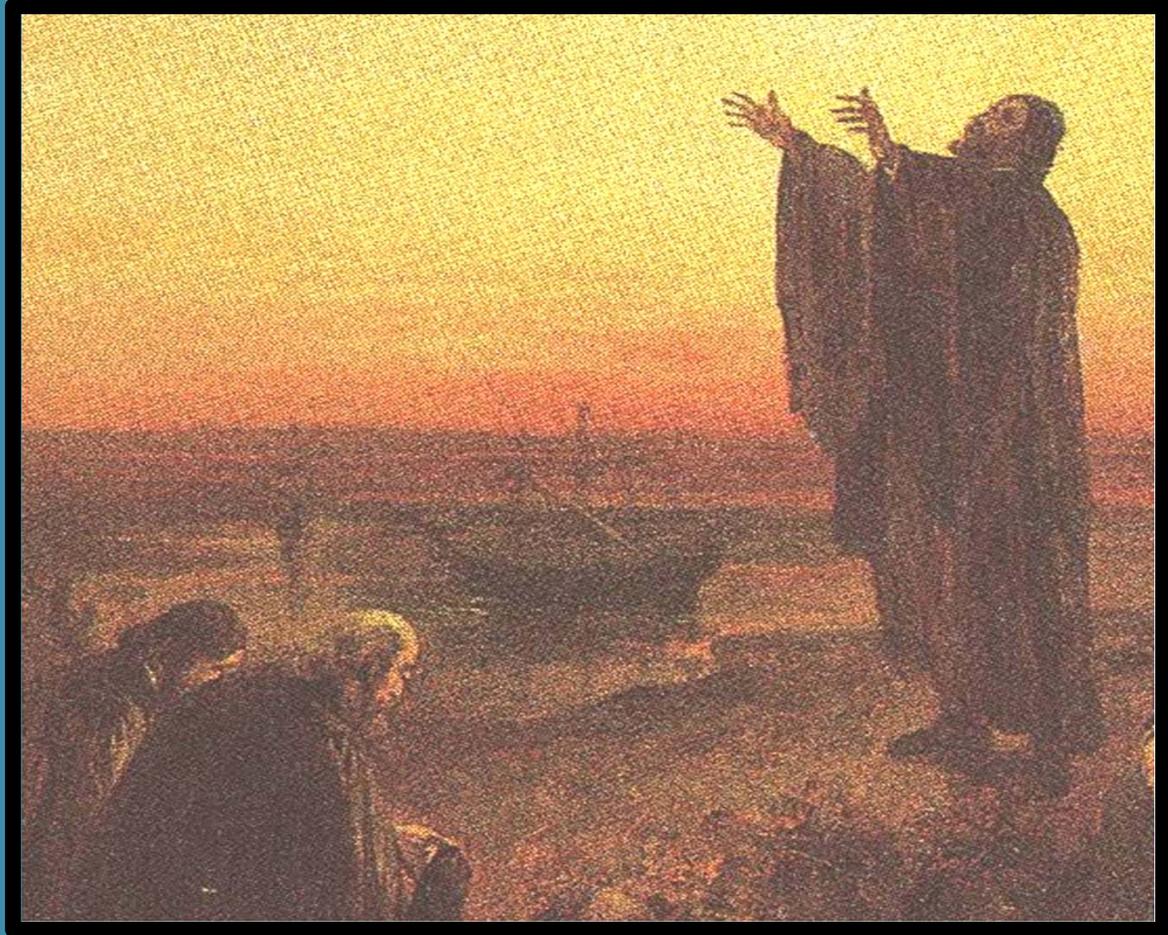


Jacques Le Moyne

Soon after entering the flowing waterway, Ribault and his men saw natives, the Mocama-speaking Timucuas, heading toward the riverbank. These statuesque and scantily clad natives motioned the best docking site. “Without any more doubt or difficulty” the French landed and offered gifts to Chief Alimacani’s tribe. Alimacani eagerly removed his red leather girdle and sent it to Ribault. This remarkable act of assurance prompted Ribault to approach the chief and a bond was forged.

# First for Religious Freedom in the New World

The natives watched in rapt silence as the French fell to their knees offering a prayer of Thanksgiving for their safe arrival. As they uttered the first Protestant prayers in the New World, the Huguenots became the first people seeking religious freedom on land that is now the United States.



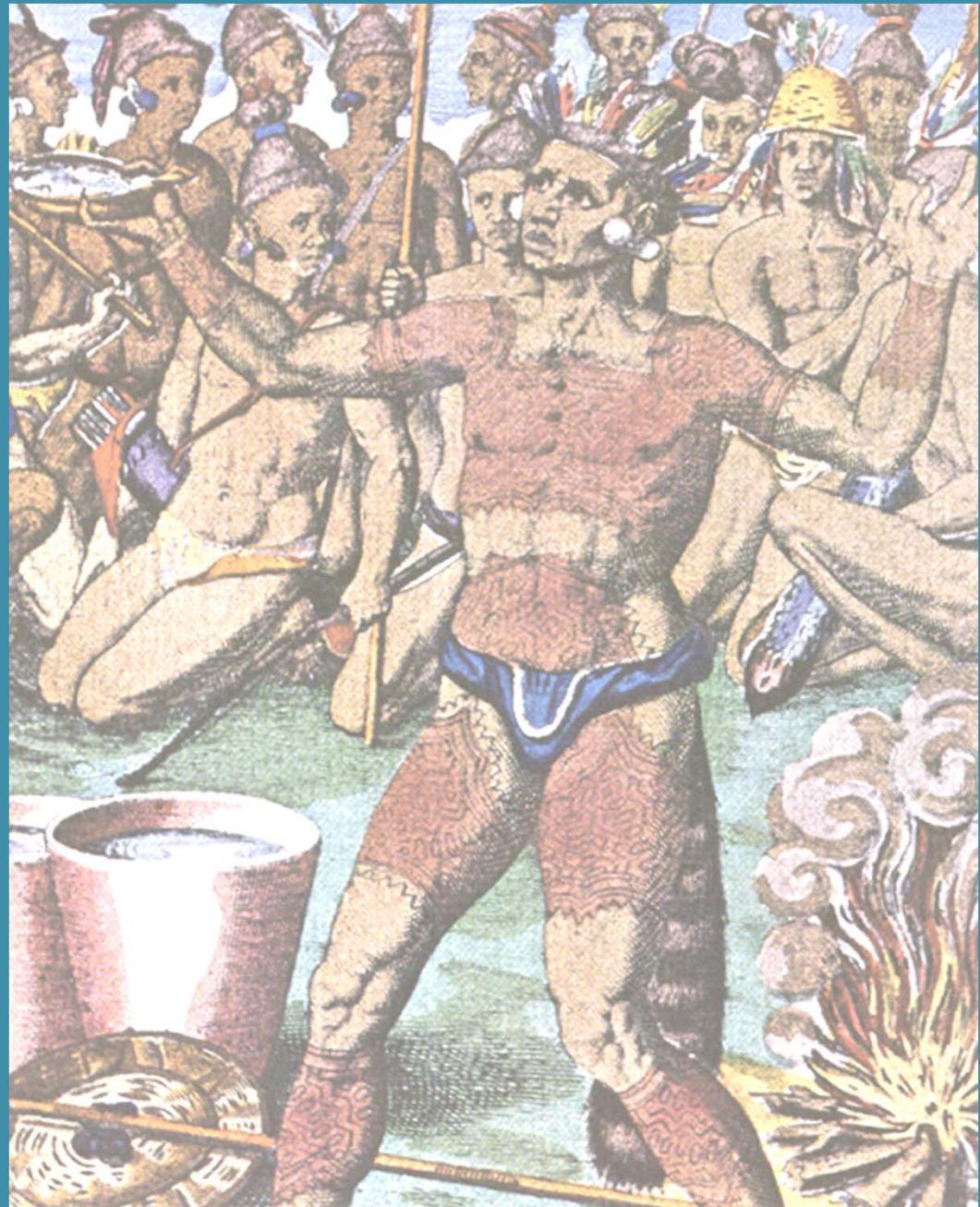
Edwin White "Landing of Huguenots in Florida" Mount Holyoke College



Ribault Mural by Lee Adams

**Ribault crossed the river and met with another friendly group of natives, led by Chief Satouriba. There, they offered the natives small gifts and robes for the chief and his “brotheren”.**

Exploration of the area convinced Ribault, as he wrote in his journal, that this was the “fairest, fruitfulest, and pleasantest land in all the world.” Ribault also writes in his account that the Indian men and women’s bodies were so beautifully painted that not even the best artisans of Europe “could amend it.”



## *Claiming the Land for France*



Ft. Caroline National Memorial

On May 2, Ribault and his men planted a column in honor of their King, Charles IX, claiming the land for France. The column indicated loyalty to the King and gave promise of their return to settle the land. Ribault's journal clearly outlined his attraction for a settlement at the River May. He recorded that the natives were of a "gentle, good and amiable nature," the place was of "good climate and healthful," and the River May was "goodly" and "great," providing the deep-water port that he sought.



Ft. Caroline National Memorial

Ribault's journal stated that he chose men to remain with the natives and charged them to be "gentle and show humanity" toward the natives so they might live peacefully with them when the colonists returned.

# Charlesfort



Jacques LaeMoigne

Ribault and his men headed up the Atlantic coast on May 3rd, claiming more land for France. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the French planted a column at today's Parris Island and built a fort at the site calling it Charlesfort.

THE VVHOLE AND  
true Discoverye of Terra Florida,  
(englished the Flourishing lande.) Con-  
teyning aswell the wonderfull straunge na-  
tures and maners of the people, with the mer-  
ueylous commodities and treasures of the  
country: As also the pleasaunt Portes,  
Hauens, and wayes therevnto Neuer  
founde out before the last

yeere 1562.

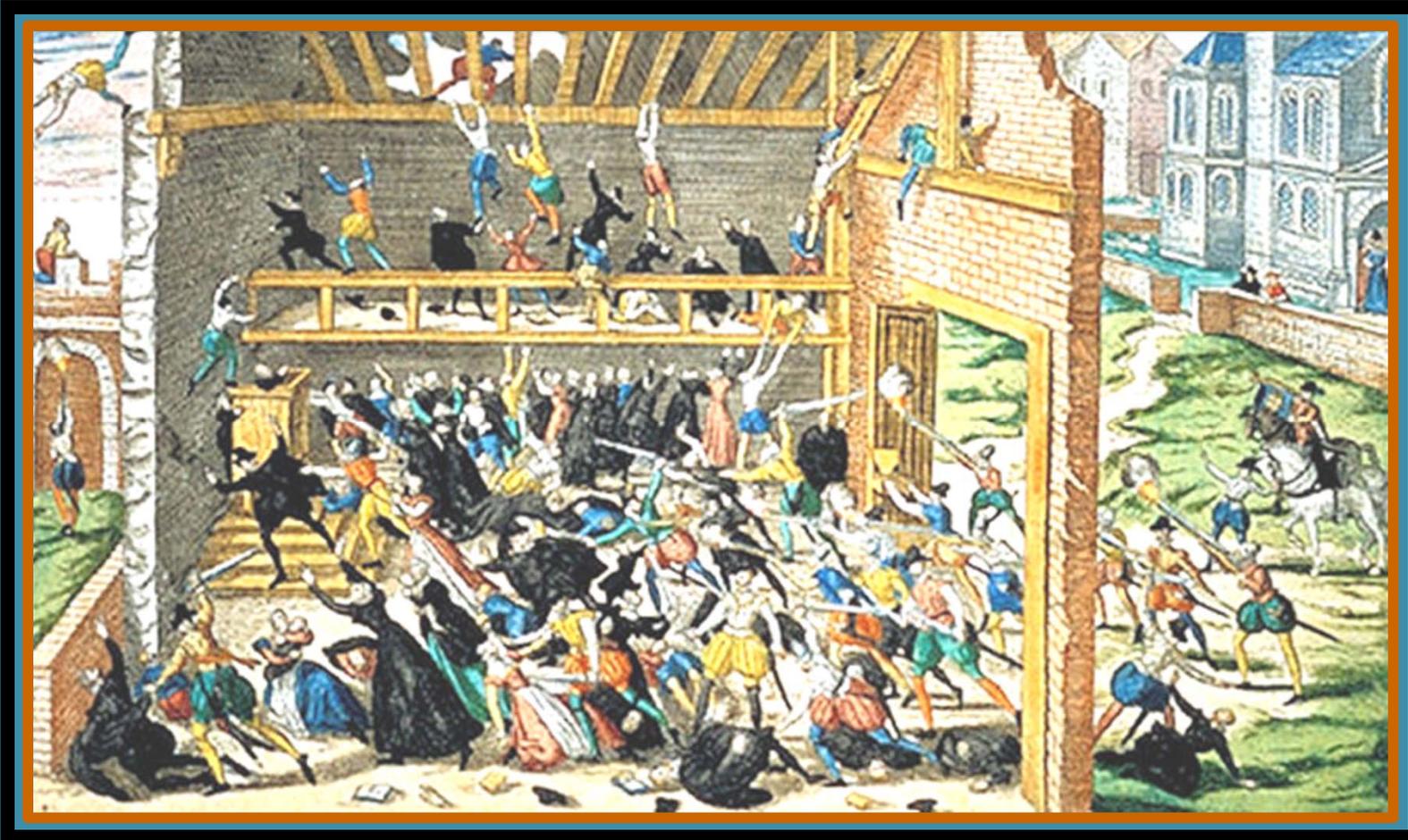
Written in Frenche by Captaine Ribault  
the first that whollye discovered the same.  
And nowe newly set forthe in Englishe  
the .xxx. of May. 1563.



Printed at London by Rouland Hall  
for Thomas Hacker.

Jean Ribault

As Ribault and his men set sail on the return trip to France for supplies and reinforcements, he penned in his journal that thirty men chose to stay behind at the fort.



Wikipedia

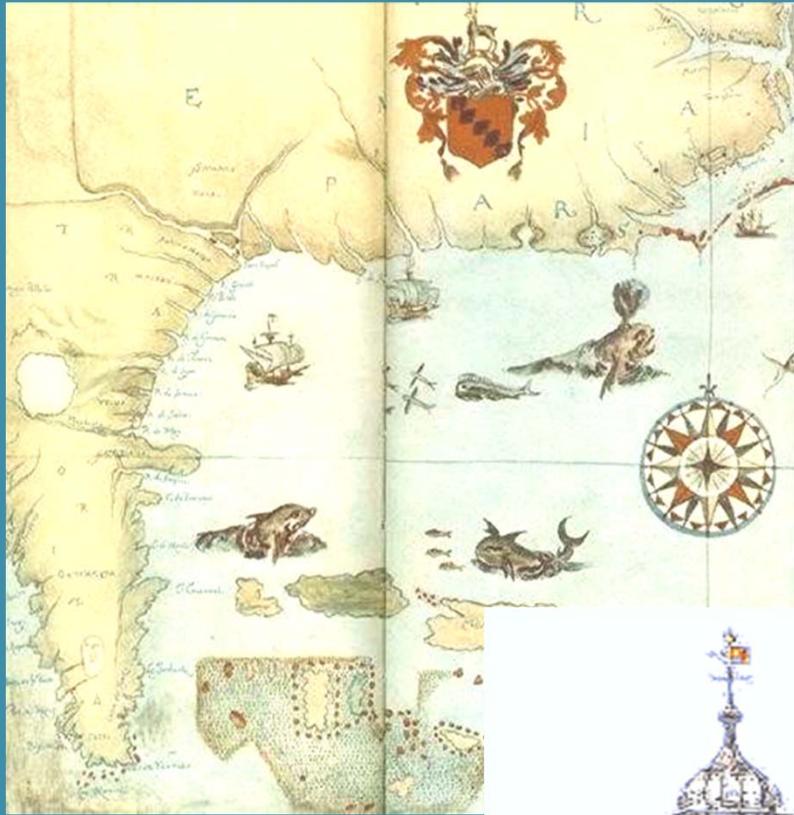
Upon arrival in France, Ribault found that the nation had erupted in civil war. His quest for a quick return was delayed as he sought support from Queen Regent Catherine and King Charles IX, now distracted monarchs.

# 1563



Ribault's fame continued to grow after his journal of the New World voyage was printed in 1563 and distributed throughout Europe. It was then that he turned to Elizabeth I of England who pledged support for a return trip.

Wikipedia



With the growing friction between France and England, instead of the support Ribault was pledged, Elizabeth ordered Ribault jailed in the Tower of London.

# 1564



*Laudonnière*

Wikipedia

The year was now 1564 and colonists were ready to leave France...this time to establish a colony at the site Ribault selected two years earlier at the River May.

# Return to the River May



Jacques LeMoynes

With Ribault detained in the Tower of London by Elizabeth I, Rene de Laudonniere was selected to lead the colony. In June 1564, the French arrived at the mouth of the River May, today's Mayport, at the very site where the column had been placed two years earlier. Laudonniere and his men were stunned to find the Timucuas worshipping the column.

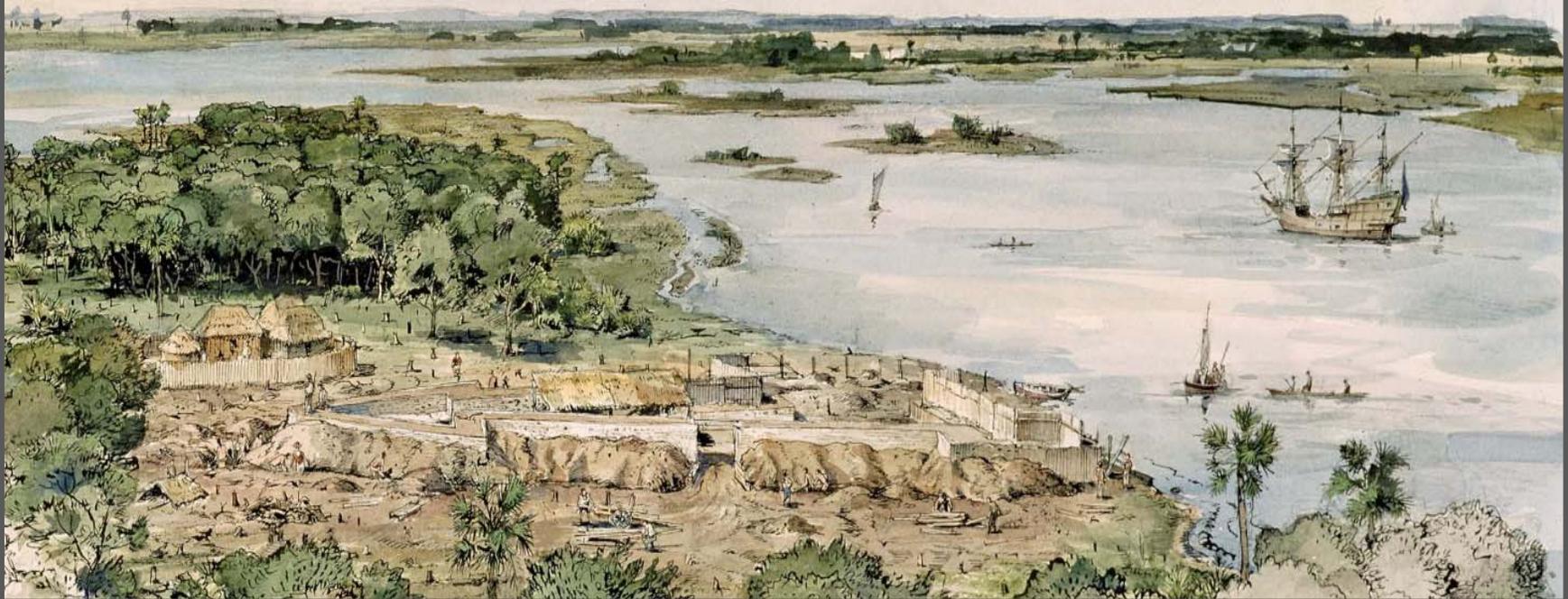


Ft. Caroline National Memorial

Laudonniere negotiated with the natives who had befriended the French two years earlier. After talks, the location of the fort and the colony was decided.

# *Founding of La Caroline*

Laudonniere chose land overlooking the river that he and Ribault had selected for the site of the first French colony in the New World, La Caroline. Of the estimated 300 who sailed, there were 110 sailors, 120 soldiers and four women among the settlers. Also among the ranks were leading French families, laborers, and artisans. The overwhelming majority was Huguenot, but there were Catholics, Moors and agnostics. La Caroline also included the first record of free African colonists in the New World.



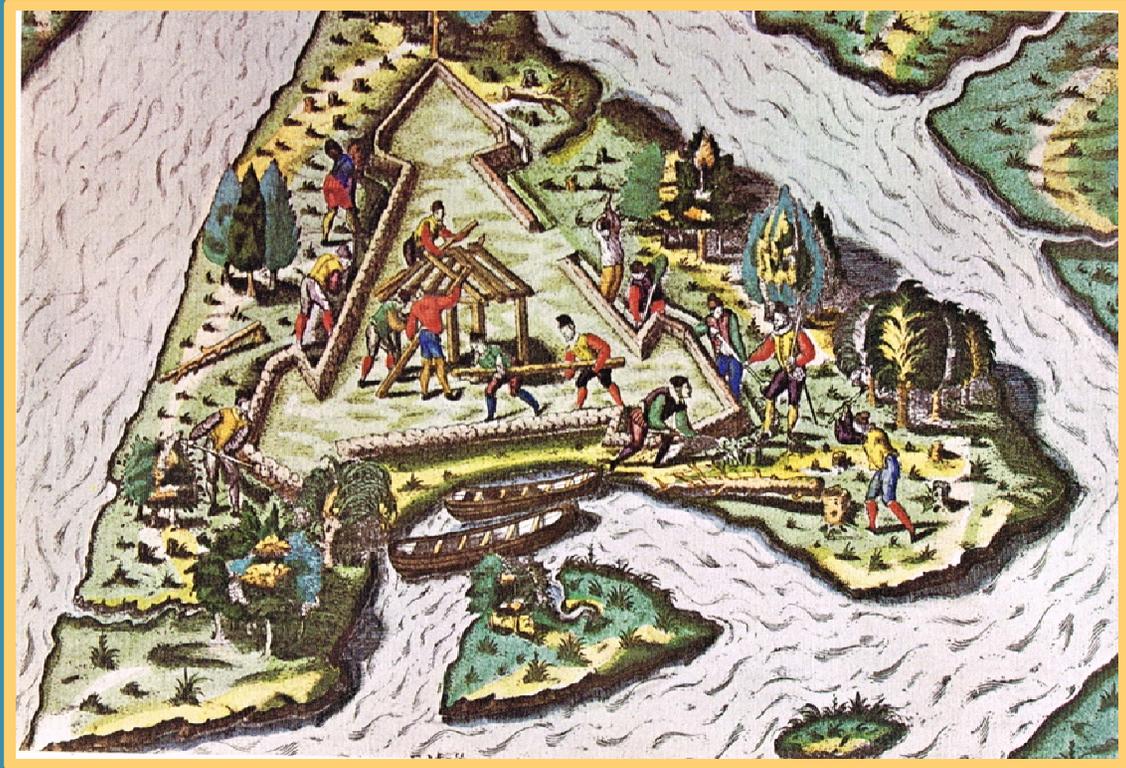
# First Colonial Thanksgiving



Silver Burdett Ginn

On June 30, 1564, the sounding of trumpets called the colonists together in assembly to give thanks to God for their successful voyage and the colony's auspicious beginning. They sang a song of Thanksgiving, some scholars referring to this event by the settlers as the first colonial Thanksgiving in America.

The French settled squarely in the middle of Timucua tribes where Chief Satouriba's men eagerly helped construct La Caroline. Journals tell of the efforts of the French to build homes, share beliefs with the natives, search for resources to support the physical needs of the men and women, and find mineral wealth on the land. Active day-to-day life ensued in the colony including the birth of the first European child recorded in colonial American history.



Jacques Le Moyne



Ft. Caroline National Memorial

To survive, supplies were necessary and shipments had not arrived. Additionally, Laudonniere misused the friendship, trust and political balance among tribes yet depended on these natives for food. Eventually, his power plays alienated many natives. Adding to the colony's troubles were mutineers who headed south and attacked Spanish ships along the trade routes.

# First Port of Trade

The year 1565 was one of despair and inadequate provisions, and the colonists slowly prepared to return to France. The surprising arrival of English slaver and trader, John Hawkins, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> helped restock the colony and delayed the planned departure. The Hawkins' visit established the River May as the first recorded port of trade recorded by international powers. Cannons, food supplies, wearing apparel and a ship were strategically exchanged.



# *New Colonists*

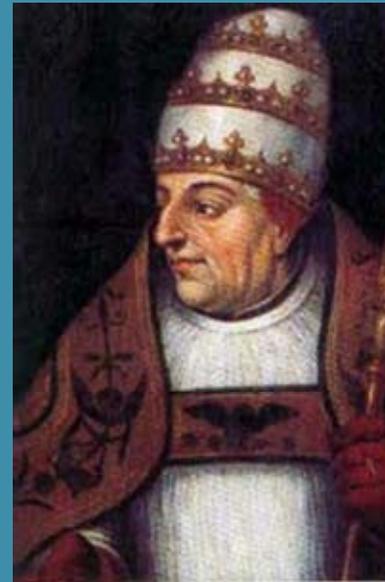
With a negotiated release of Jean Ribault, he was now free to rush reinforcements and supplies to La Caroline. Hundreds of soldiers and settlers on seven sailing ships left Havre de Grace, France on May 23rd and arrived at the River May on August 28th.



**Still, Laudonniere likely realized the only alternative for survival was a temporary return to France for provisions and reinforcements. So, at the end of August 1565, the exhausted colonists boarded ships and waited for headwinds to set sail for France. Anxiety mounted when the colonists spotted ships on the horizon --- were the sails Spanish or French? Soon fear turned to joy as Jean Ribault's ships were identified. The provisions and reinforcements had arrived!**

# Spain's Intervention in Colonization

Ribault was aware that Spain's King Philip II had commissioned Pedro Menendez to vanquish the Huguenot presence in Florida. As Ribault crossed the Atlantic Ocean, Menendez was on his heels. Menendez raced across the Atlantic to claim the land he believed rightfully belonged to Spain based on Pope Alexander VI's 1493 Papal Donation and Ponce de Leon's 1513 claim. From his sailing vessels on August 28th, Menendez chose a landing site and named it St. Augustin in honor of the feast day. He deposited supplies on the nearby Anastasia Island and headed north to the mouth of the River May.



**Alexander VI**



**Philip II**



**Pedro Menendez**

Wikipedia

Wikipedia

Wikipedia

# First International War on America's Soil



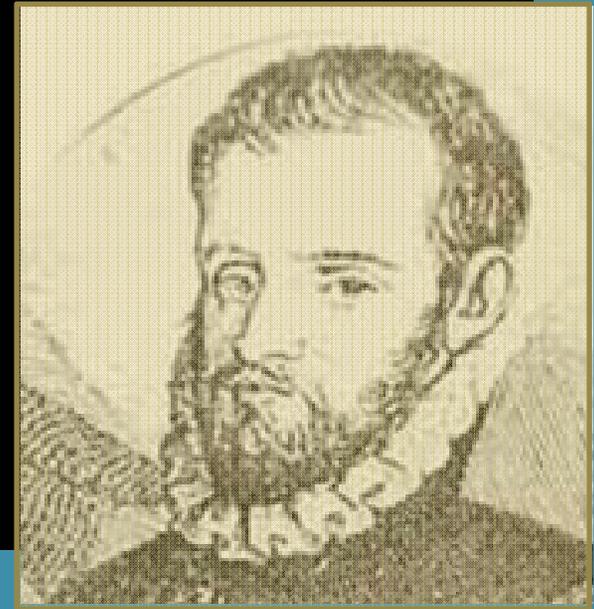
National Geographic Magazine

Arrival of the Spaniards at the River May was not a surprise. As the opposing vessels reached hailing distance Menendez demanded unconditional surrender, and the French replied that they would die first. Menendez fired on the French ships. The French cut anchor and set sail--- their ships easily out-distancing the lumbering Spanish vessels. The Spanish gave up the chase and returned to the River May with plans to attack the colony. Unable to enter the river, Menendez turned back to St. Augustin. Strategies for war were set by the two powers. This incident marked the beginning of the first international war on America's soil.



*Jean Ribault*

Ribault, the superior mariner, elected to attack Menendez on the high seas. Instead, Ribault found Menendez entrenched at Anastasia Island.



*Pedro Menendez*



“Triton” by Wm. Trotter – Atlantic Beach, FL

Ribault waited for high tides to cross the sandy bar at the island, but raging storm winds forced his ships south. The battered vessels lay in utter destruction.

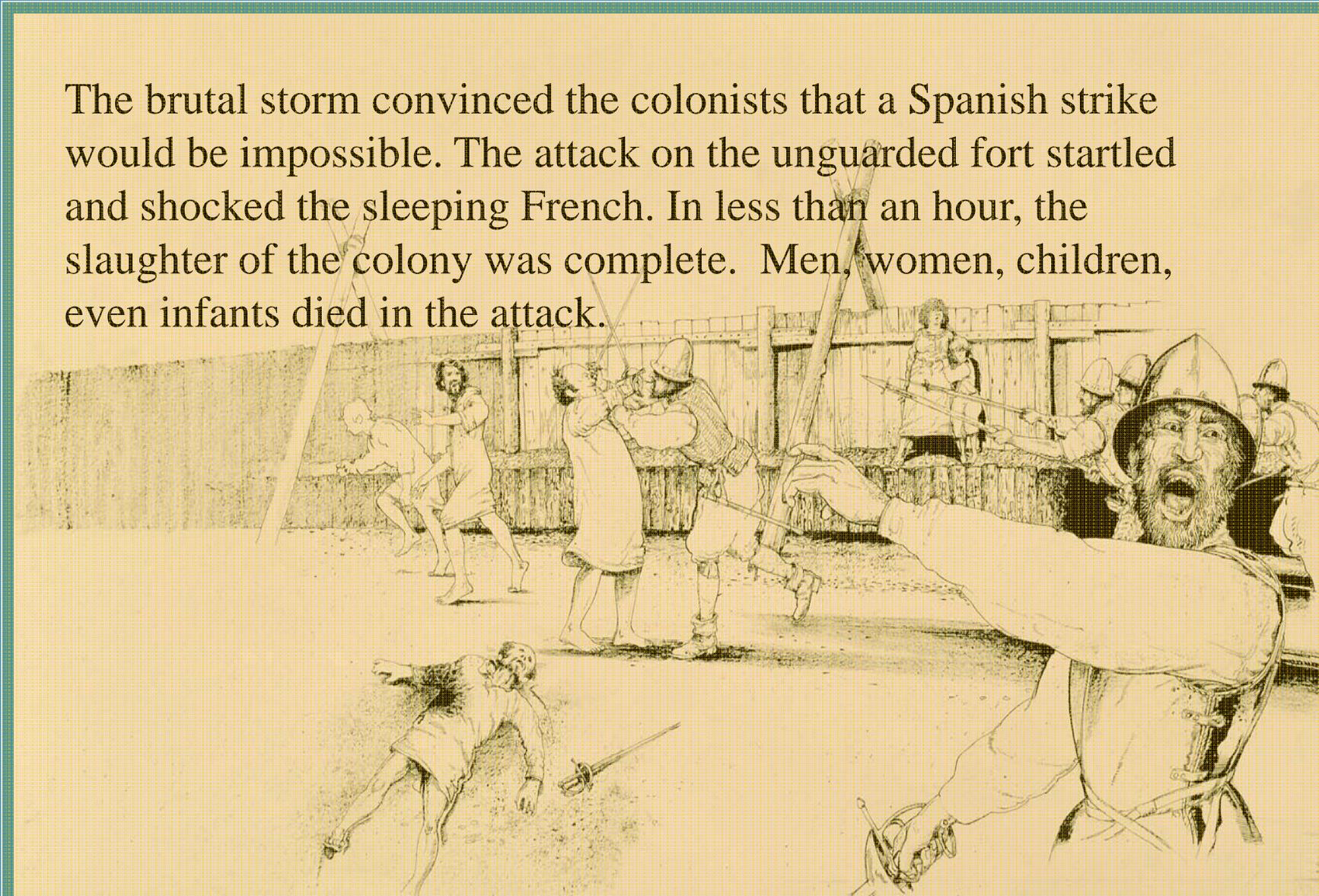


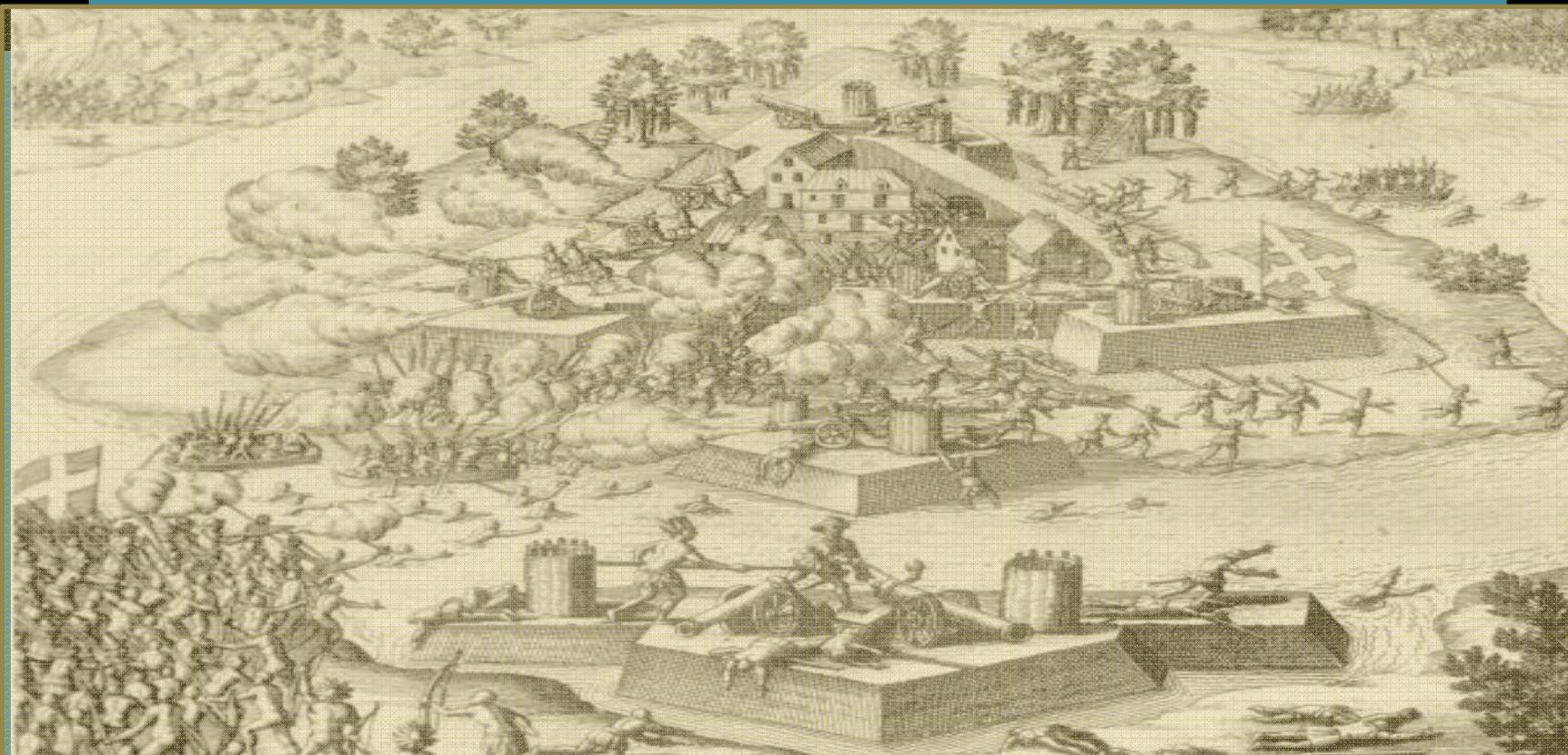
Photographed at MOSH – Jacksonville, FL

Meanwhile, Menendez made a bold move. On September 16th, the Spanish, assisted by French traitor Francis Jean, led hundreds of fighting forces on a northward march to La Caroline. The mission in the midst of a storm required nearly four days. Making their way to the vicinity of La Caroline, they camped at the site known as Spanish Pond. In the early morning darkness of September 20<sup>th</sup>, the Spaniards readied to attack the fort.

# Attack on La Caroline

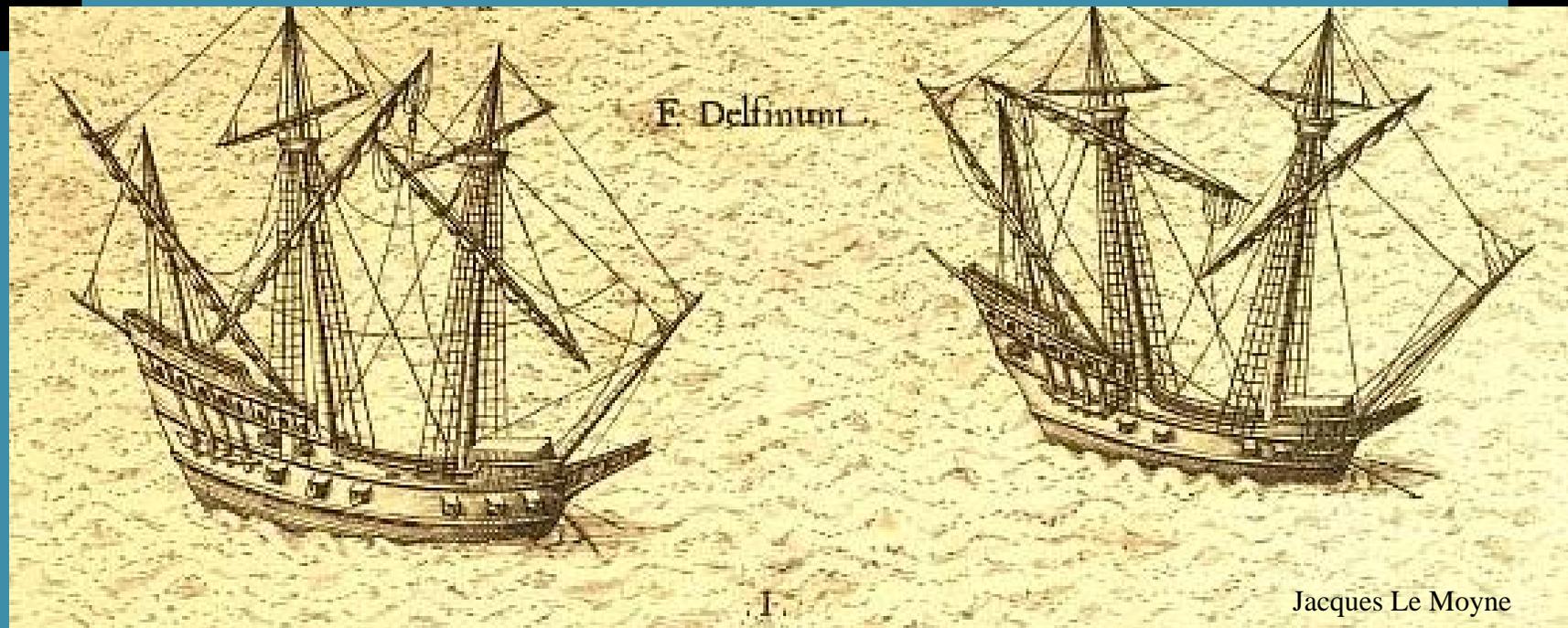
The brutal storm convinced the colonists that a Spanish strike would be impossible. The attack on the unguarded fort startled and shocked the sleeping French. In less than an hour, the slaughter of the colony was complete. Men, women, children, even infants died in the attack.



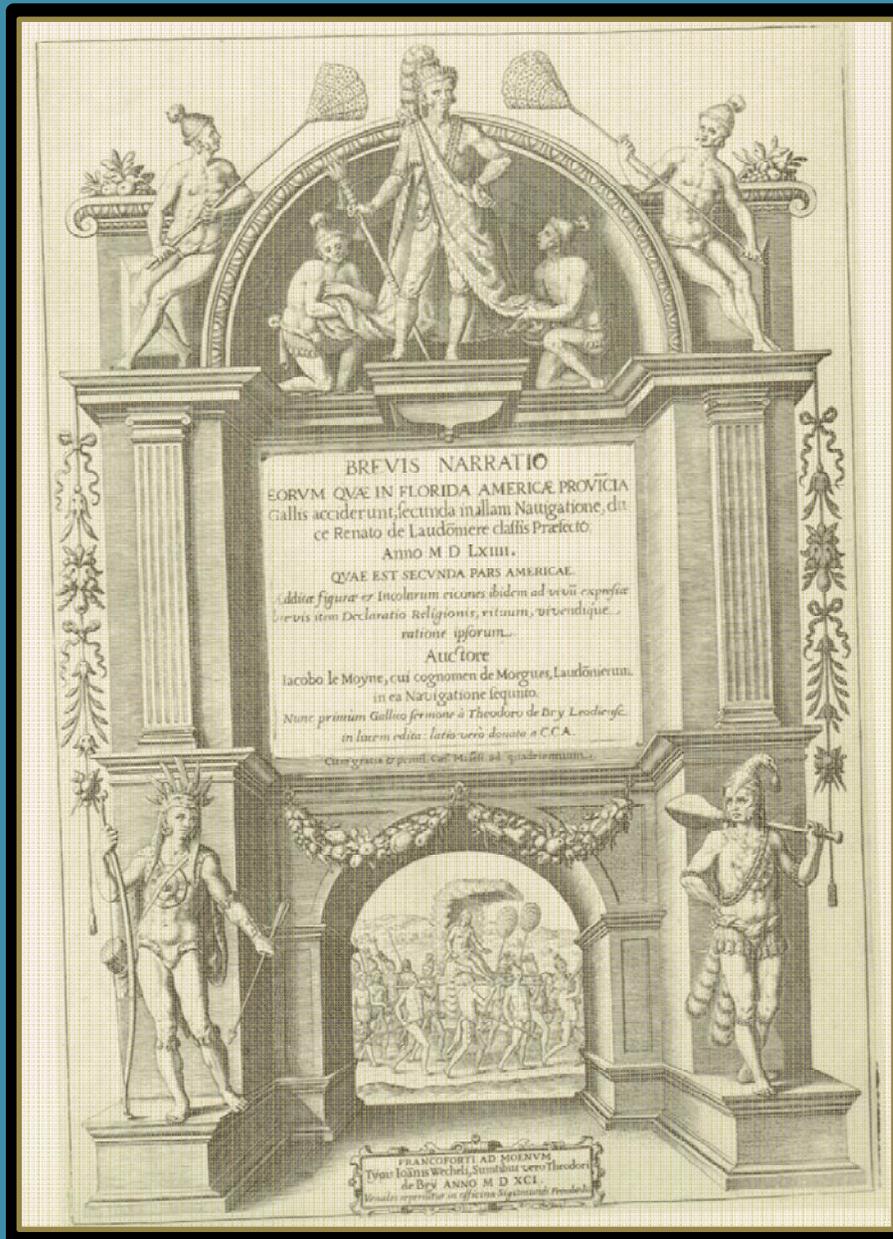


Floridamemory.com

Late in the attack, Menendez gave the order to spare the remaining women and children who were taken captive to St. Augustin. The Spanish claimed the vanquished fort and renamed it San Mateo as it was the feast day of St. Matthew. The river would temporarily take on the name as well.



During the attack, Laudonniere made an escape through a break in the fort's western wall. Along with other survivors, he moved through the underbrush into the marshes. They boarded two ships, fended off repeated Spanish bombardments, and reluctantly set sail for France, with the fate of Jean Ribault and his men unknown.



Laudonniere and three other survivors recorded their stories of survival at La Caroline. Jacques LeMoyne, the first commercial artist for the New World, the carpenter and lay preacher, Nicholas Le Chelleux, and Ribault's son, Jacques, a ships captain wrote accounts that stirred deep emotions in Europe.

Title Page of de Bry, America, Pt II



Photo of Matanzas Beach

In the meantime, three separate shipwrecks battered and scattered the French. Two groups marched north along the Atlantic coast toward La Caroline. Another group fortified at Canaveral.



F.L. MATANZAS NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Near today's Matanzas Inlet, the progress of one party stopped. Menendez appeared on the opposite side. A lengthy parley ensued and the French surrendered understanding that their lives would be spared.



Ft. Matanzas National Memorial

Menendez required the French to row across the small body of water in groups of ten. Tied in pairs, they were led out of sight behind the palmetto scrub and put to death with swords and axes. The Spaniards spared Catholics, artists and musicians sending them under guard to St. Augustin. The date was September 29, 1565.

## Ribault and Menendez Meet at Matanzas



Wikipedia

A second group, including Jean Ribault, was discovered by Menendez at the inlet.

Negotiations between the parties lasted nearly two days. Finally, reminding Menendez that the French were not at war with the Spanish and believing that their lives would be spared, they put down their arms and crossed over to the dunes to meet the Spanish.



Ft. Matanzas National Memorial

Once tied, they were asked if they were Catholic or Lutheran. Ribault replied that all were of the new religion. The French were given the opportunity to renounce their faith or “die in the sand.” Spaniard, Solis de Meras, wrote in his journal Ribault’s last words, a prayer based on Psalm 132.



Floridamemory.com

On October 12<sup>th</sup> Menendez ordered the execution of the “prisoners of war.” Fifers, drummers, trumpeters and four who claimed to be Catholic were spared. Menendez then traveled south to attack more French encamped at Canaveral. Realizing the importance of Ribault’s execution and boasting his success, Menendez wrote to Philip of Spain that “Ribault could accomplish more in a year than another in ten.”

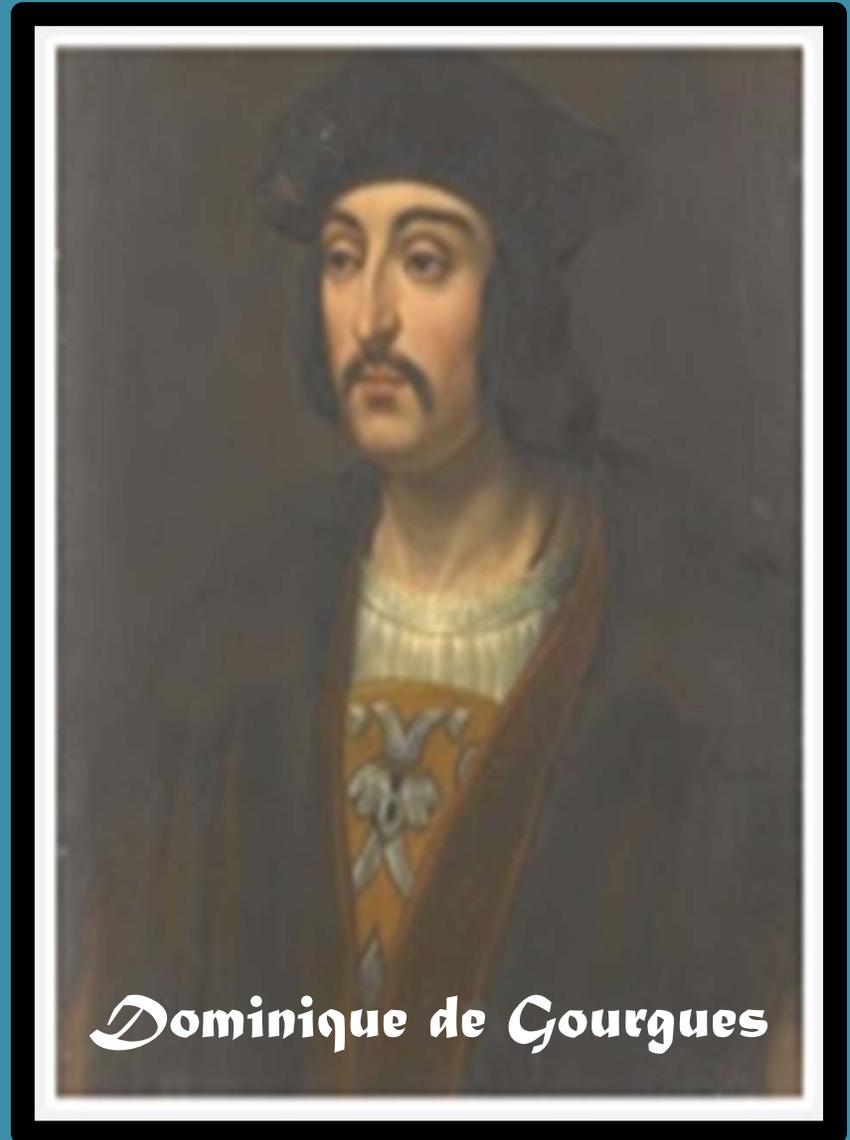
By the end of the episode, hundreds of French lay dead at the hands of Pedro Menendez and the Spanish. While the name Menendez is synonymous with bloodbath among some North Floridians, most know him instead as the founder of St. Augustin. Menendez used the area that would become the oldest city in America as little more than a supply dump in his battles against the French. An entire bloody chapter of European colonization occurred on North Florida soil more than a half century before the much celebrated history of the Jamestown colony. A whole colorful chapter in Florida history would pass before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth.

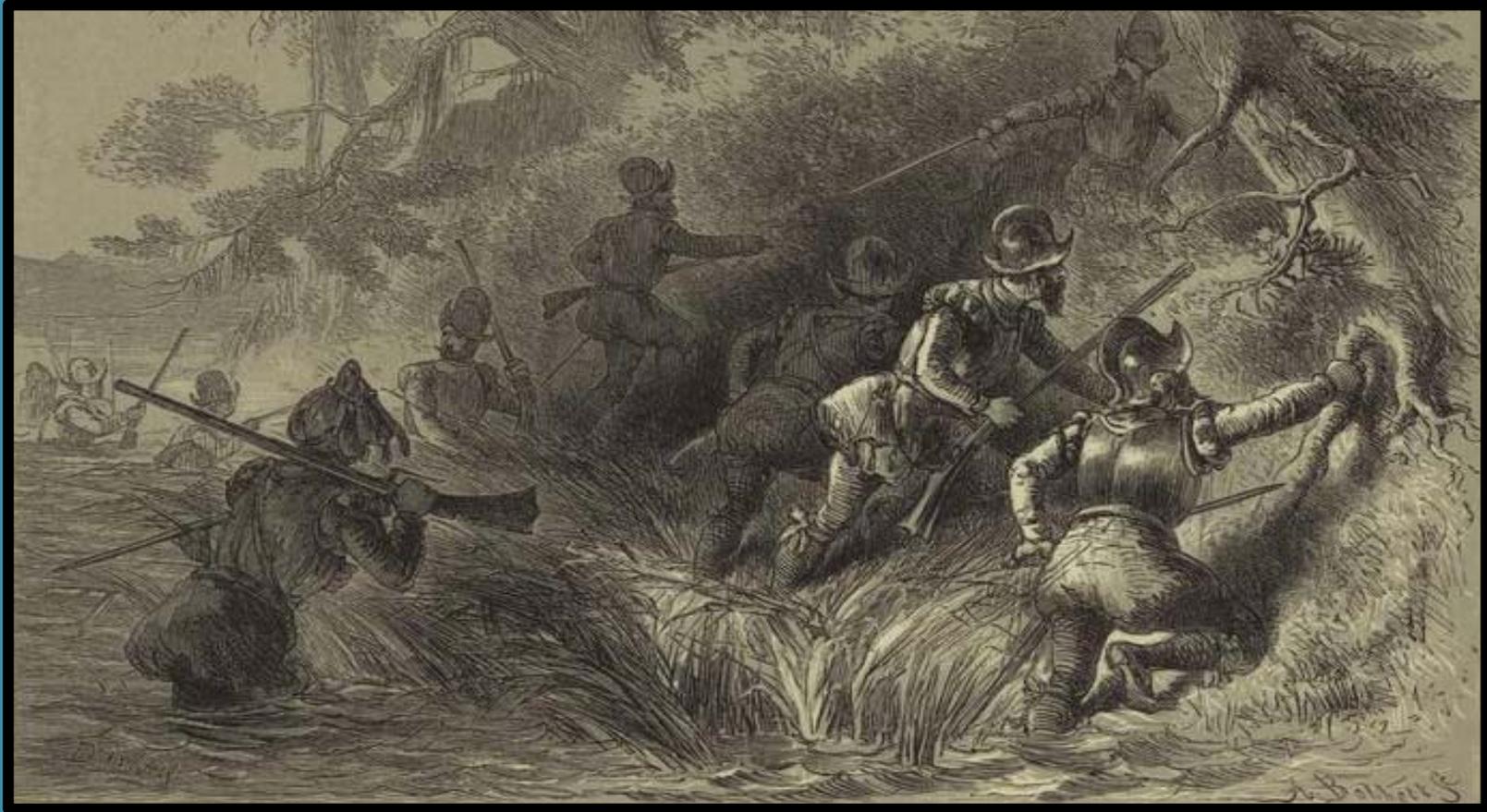


# 1568

## Attack on San Mateo

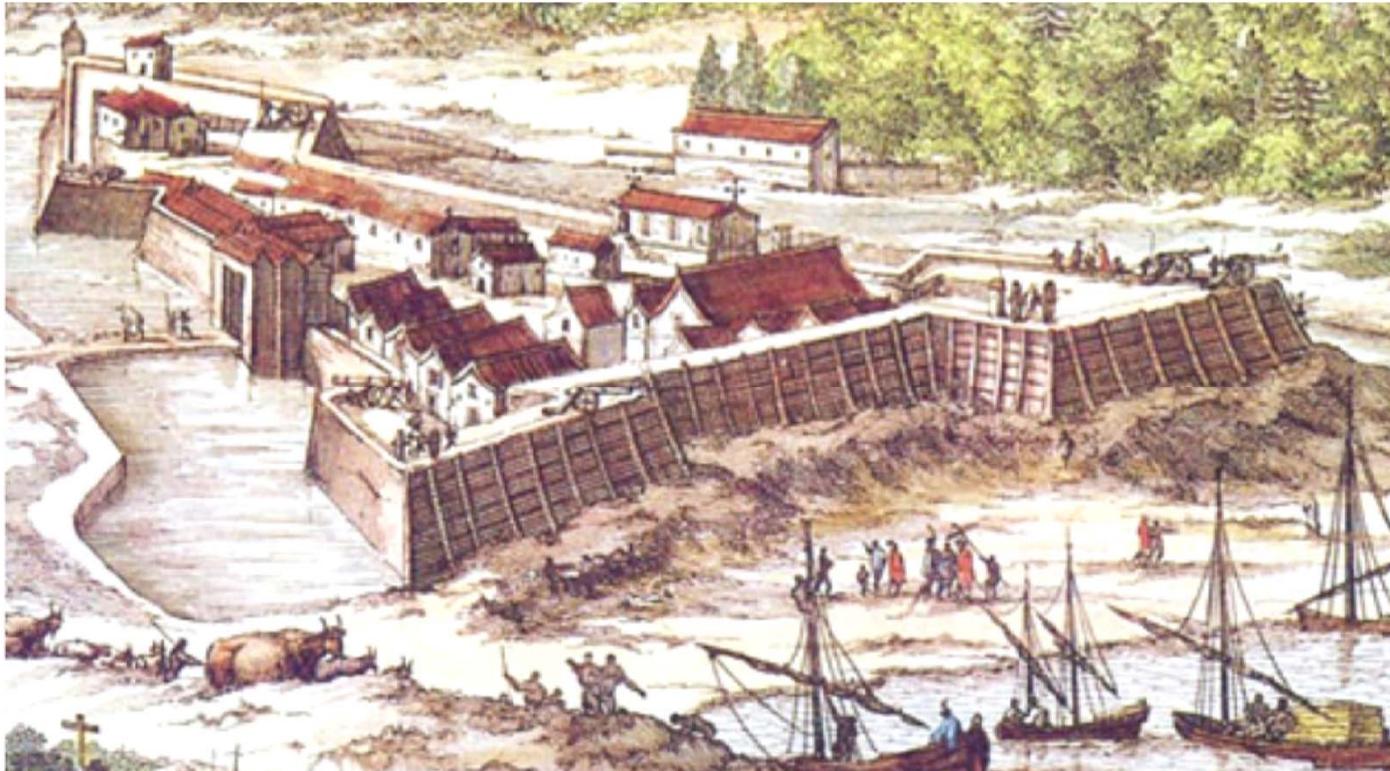
Three years after the demise of La Caroline, Frenchman Doiminique de Gourgues set sail with a fleet toward the site of the colony. His goal was to avenge the honor of France with the destruction of the renamed Spanish fort, San Mateo.





New York Public Digital Library

Gourgues, French troops and Indian allies made three separate attacks on the Spanish. Few Spaniards escaped and the remainder were put to death in retribution of the 1565 murders of their French countrymen.



Ft. Caroline by Arnoldus Montanus

The story of the 1564 settlement of French Huguenots along the St. Johns River is too infrequently told. The settlement represents the first colony of European men and women seeking religious freedom on land that became U.S. soil.



These efforts by Laudonniere, Ribault, and the French colonists “set a new pattern for religious freedom in America—a pattern to be imitated until religious liberty and personal freedom became the great trademark of the United States.” (Congressman Charles E. Bennett)