

Jean Ribault Claims Florida for France

In 1562, Jean Ribault (jawn re BOW) was sent from France to Florida in order to explore the area and begin a new colony. His lieutenant was René de Laudonnière. Ribault sailed with three ships that carried one hundred fifty people: Huguenots, or French Protestants. France wanted to control this new land and drive out the Spanish settlers.

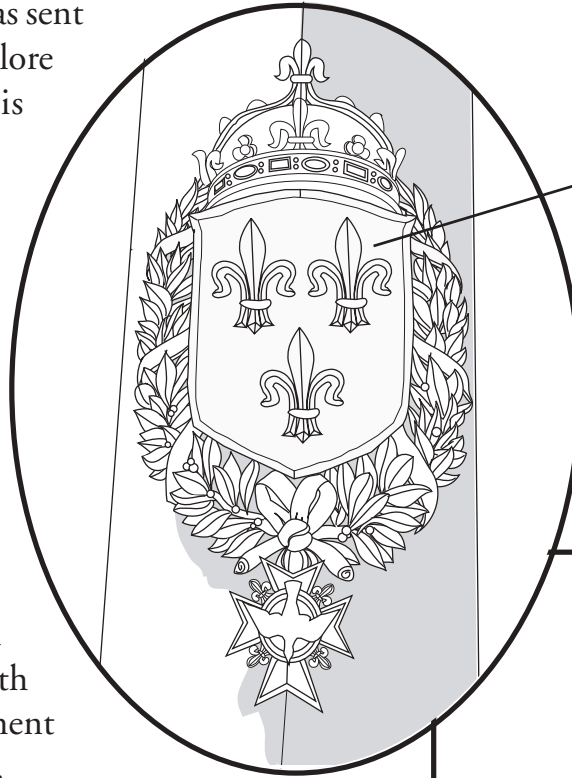
Ribault landed near the St. Augustine area. He sailed further north to the St. Johns River. Because he did not like the river's Spanish name, he renamed it the "River of May." (Today, it is known again as the St. Johns River.) At the mouth of the river, Ribault built a stone monument to mark his visit and claim it for France.

Afterwards, Ribault continued north to a place in South Carolina that he called Port Royal. Here, the Huguenots built a fort and named it Charlesfort, in honor of their king. Before long, the supplies began to dwindle, so Ribault sailed back to France to gather more.

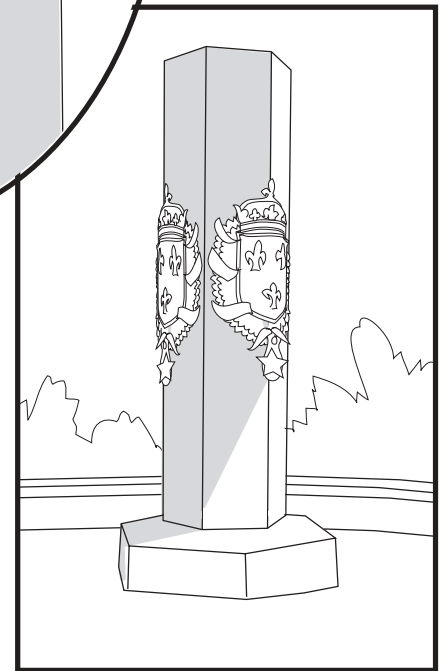
Much to his dismay, religious conflict had broken out and he was unable to raise any money for supplies. Ribault went to Queen Elizabeth of England for help. She had him arrested for establishing a French Colony in Spanish Territory. He was put in a London prison.

René de Laudonnière builds Fort Caroline

During the time that Jean Ribault was in prison, René de Laudonnière (wren AY day law dun YAIR) was sent to rescue Charlesfort in South Carolina. Laudonnière led an expedition of 304 Huguenot colonists. The Huguenots were excited about moving to a new colony where they would have freedom to worship. Life was difficult for the Protestant Huguenots in Catholic France.



The symbol of France is the Fleur-de-lis (lily flower).



Ribault built a stone monument on St. Johns Bluff near Jacksonville to claim the territory for France.

When they arrived at the mouth of the St. Johns River in Florida, they stopped there and built a triangle-shaped fort for protection. They called it Fort Caroline. At first, the colony prospered. The French ships were well stocked with cattle, supplies, and tools. On board were farmers, artisans, women, and children.

Laudonnière set out to explore the interior of this new territory. Initially, he established good relations with the Timucuan Indians. Soon, however, supplies ran short and the French colony was unable to get food from the natives. Some of the colonists no longer believed in Laudonnière's leadership. They stole boats and sailed south to become pirates and raid Spanish treasure ships. Most of the colonists at Fort Caroline decided to go home to France. The French colony was in trouble.

Jean Ribault returns to Florida

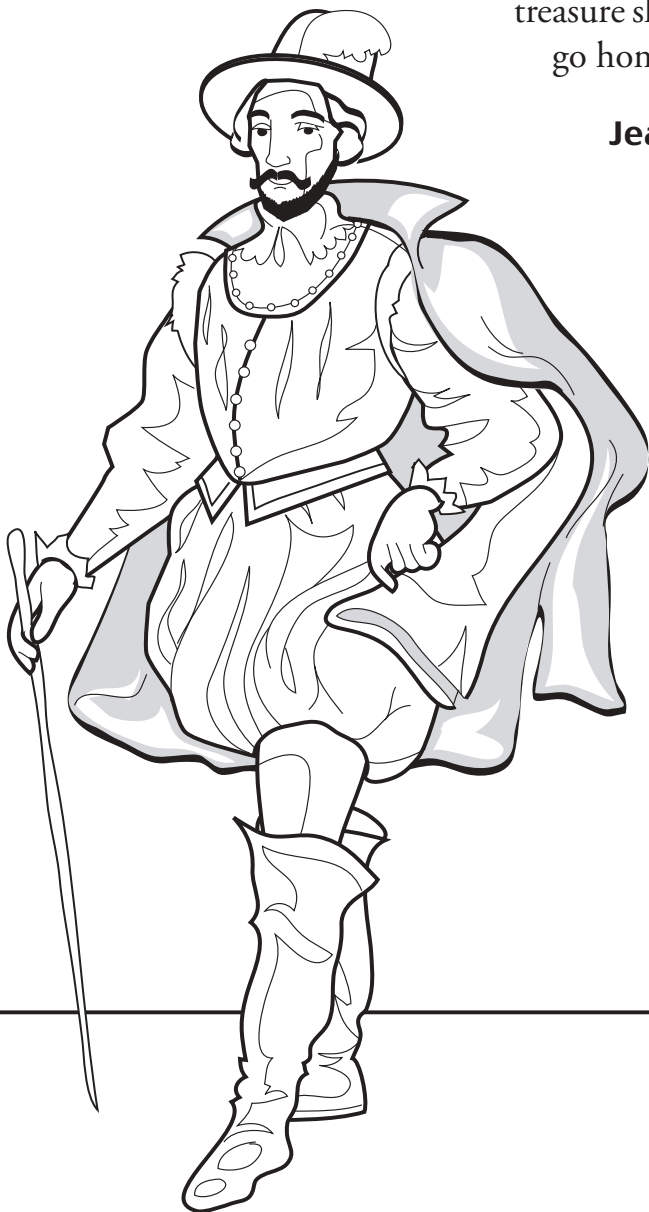
After Ribault was released from prison, the king of France sent him back to America with 500 soldiers. Ribault planned to rescue and take control of Fort Caroline.

Meanwhile, a Spanish explorer named Pedro Menendez de Aviles arrived in Florida. Menendez wanted to drive the French out of Florida. He built a fort at St. Augustine, just south of Fort Caroline, and prepared his men for battle.

Ribault tried to capture St. Augustine, but his ships were destroyed in a severe storm. Menendez and 500 of his men marched north from St. Augustine and destroyed Fort Caroline. Then Menendez located Ribault and the other shipwrecked French sailors and killed them too.

René de Laudonnière was wounded in the Spanish attack. He managed to escape to France where he documented the events of his tragedy. Laudonnière died in 1582.

No further French settlements were established in Florida.



Laudonniere brought over 300 French Huguenot colonists to Florida.