

Timeline of the French Colonization Attempts in Florida and the Loss of the 1565 French Fleet

18 February 1562 Jean Ribault, with René Laudonnière second in command, departs France with two ships and around 150 men for the first colonization attempt in Florida.

1 May 1562 The French make landfall at the present-day St. Johns River (Jacksonville, Florida), which they name the River of May, and spend several days exploring the countryside and trading with the local Timucuan Indians. They leave a stone column marking this as French territory, before continuing to sail to the north.

11 June 1562 The French ships depart for France, leaving behind another stone column and around 30 men at Charlesfort, present-day Parris Island, South Carolina. The men left behind eventually make a desperate attempt to sail back to France, suffering cannibalism before being rescued off the coast of England in late October 1563.

July 1562 Ribault and Laudonnière return to find France engulfed in a religious civil war, and are unable to return with supplies for the men left at Charlesfort. Ribault flees to England after the fall of Dieppe.

19 March 1563 A truce is mediated in France, resulting in end of the First War of Religion.

30 May 1563 Ribault publishes *Whole and True Discoverye of Terra Florida* in London

Early June 1563 Ribault is imprisoned by Queen Elizabeth in the Tower of London, where he remains until the fall of 1564 or possibly early 1565.

22 April 1564 Captain René Laudonnière leads the second colonization attempt in Florida, departing La Havre with three ships and 300 settlers.

24 June 1564 The French under Laudonnière arrive at the River of May and begin construction of Fort Caroline in present-day Jacksonville.

28 July 1564 With the establishment of Fort Caroline, Laudonnière orders his ships to return to France, with a request for a re-supply fleet to arrive by spring 1565.

December 1564 Sixty-six mutinous settlers hijack two sailing barks and sail from Fort Caroline to commit piracy in the Spanish Caribbean, alerting Spanish authorities to the French settlement in Florida.

June 1565 With virtually all food supplies exhausted, relations with Timucuans broken down and turned violent, and losing hope of reinforcements from France, Laudonnière decides Fort Caroline must be evacuated.

14 June 1565 Ribault begins the voyage across the Atlantic with a re-supply fleet carrying 500 soldiers, 200 sailors, and as many as 300 colonists, along with armament, munitions, livestock, equipment, and supplies.

29 June 1565 Pedro Menéndez departs Spain with a fleet to intercept Ribault. His armada is beset by storms and is reduced to five damaged ships and 500 soldiers, 200 sailors, and 100 colonists.

3 August 1565 An English fleet lead by John Hawkins visits Fort Caroline. The French, facing "hideous famine," trade cannon and gunpowder for food and a ship in which they plan to sail to France.

28 August 1565 Just as Laudonnière and his men are loaded and ready to abandon Fort Caroline and depart for France, Ribault arrives with the re-supply fleet. On that same day Menéndez arrives at the coast of Florida, around Cape Canaveral, landing 4 days later to seek information from Indians as to the location of the French.

4 September 1565 Menéndez' fleet of five ships arrives off River of May and encounters Ribault's four largest ships. They exchange cannon fire and the French ships cut their anchor lines to make a quick escape.

7 September 1565 The Spanish, unable to disembark at the well-defended River of May, return to St. Augustine and land troops to dig entrenchments and begin fortifying defensive positions.

8 September 1565 Menéndez lands and formally founds the settlement of St. Augustine. His men begin unloading the two largest ships in order to send them back to Hispaniola. Meanwhile, Ribault launches a preemptive strike, loading almost all of his forces in his four largest ships and setting sail to attack St. Augustine.

11 September 1565 Within hours of the departure of Menéndez' two largest ships, Ribault's fleet arrives at St. Augustine and almost captures Menéndez in a smaller vessel which barely makes it across the St. Augustine bar. Unable to enter the inlet with his heavy ships, Ribault pursues the recently departed Spanish ships to the south.

12 September 1565 A fierce storm strikes the coast, driving the French fleet south towards Cape Canaveral and shipwrecking them all.

18 September 1565 Menéndez takes advantage of the storm, which he knows will prevent the French fleet from returning north even if they remain afloat, and marches his men overland to Fort Caroline.

20 September 1565 Fort Caroline is taken by Menéndez' troops in a surprise attack at dawn. Around 130 Frenchmen are killed outright, 45 to 60 more (including Laudonnière and Ribault's son Jacques) escape, and around 50 women and children are spared. The fort is manned by Spanish troops and renamed Fort San Mateo.

25 September 1565 The French survivors from Fort Caroline scuttle their smaller vessels, and set sail for France in the two remaining ships from Ribault's fleet, which had stayed at the Fort.

29 September 1565 Two groups of French shipwreck survivors slowly make their way north overland from their shipwrecks in the Canaveral area, seeking refuge at the now captured Ft. Caroline. The first group encounters Menéndez' troops in the vicinity of Matanzas Inlet. After surrendering unconditionally to the Spanish, as many as 200 Frenchmen have their hands bound behind them and are "put to the knife."

11 October 1565 The second group of shipwreck survivors, including Jean Ribault, encounter Spanish troops near Matanzas Inlet. Half of them flee back to the south, while the others unconditionally surrender. Of those only a handful were spared and between 70 and 150, including Ribault, were put to death.

1 November 1565 Menéndez marches south towards Canaveral with 250 men to a makeshift fort occupied by the remaining French survivors. Negotiations led to the surrender of some 75 Frenchmen who were promised safety and taken prisoner, though another 20 or so fled, taking their chances with the local Surruque Indians.

Winter 1970-1971 A group of metal detectorists, led by Douglas Armstrong, discover a series of archaeological sites identified as 1565 French shipwreck survivor camps on land now part of Canaveral National Seashore.

July-August 2014 LAMP archaeologists, funded by the State of Florida and NOAA, and in partnership with the National Park Service, the Institute of Maritime History, and the Center for Historical Archaeology, launch a survey in search of the lost French fleet of Jean Ribault adjacent to the shipwreck survivor camp sites.