

People of One Fire

Studying the Indigenous Peoples of the Southeastern United States

January 11, 2014

NEW AND FORGOTTEN DISCOVERIES ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC COAST

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William Bartram's eyewitness account leads to likely location of Fort Caroline It's on the south channel of the Altamaha River in Glynn County, Georgia



Computer generated image of Fort San Mateo & Fort Caroline

From 1562 until 1821 the river that the French called the May River was always called the Mayo or Seco River by the Spanish. Until the early 1700s, it was also called the May River by the British then called the Altamaha River. No map until the late 20th century ever labeled the St. Johns River in Florida, the May River. The French Protestants never claimed any land south of the St. Marys River, which is today the boundary between Georgia and Florida. The tip of Amelia Island, FL that juts out into St. Marys Sound was named Cape François by the French. Late 20th century historians in Florida claimed that all European map makers had been mistaken and that the St. Johns was the Maya River. However the French sent at least six expeditions up the May River to the Georgia Mountains. They would know.

Excerpt from "The Travels of William Bartram"

"The north channel, or entrance, glides by the heights of Darien, on the east bank, about ten miles above the bar, and, running from thence with several turnings, enters the ocean between Sapelo and Wolf islands. The south channel, which is esteemed the largest and deepest, after its separation from the north, descends gently, winding by M'Intosh's and Broughton islands; and lastly, by the west coast of St. Simon's island, enters the ocean, through St. Simon's Sound, between the south end of the island of that name and the north end of Jekyl Island."

On the west bank of the south channel, ten or twelve miles above its mouth, and nearly opposite Darien, are to be seen, the remains of an ancient fort, or fortification; it is now a regular tetragon terrace, about four feet high, with bastions at each angle; the area may contain about an acre of ground, but the fosse which surrounded it is nearly filled up. There are large Live Oaks, Pines, and other trees, growing upon it, and in the old fields adjoining. It is supposed to have been the work of the French or Spaniards. A large swamp lies betwixt it and the river, and a considerable creek runs close by the works, and enters the river through the swamp, a small distance above Broughton Island."*

William Bartram - 1776

* Bartram was probably looking at the ruins of four-sided Fort San Mateo.



Detail of the Map of Florida Françoise in René de Laudonnière's memoir
 Drawn by Pierre du Vall, Royal Geographer to the King of France

How could they have gotten it so wrong?

Like 99.9% of all Americans, I always assumed that the ill-fated French colony of Fort Caroline was in present day Jacksonville, Florida. Well . . . the fort was still there and it is owned by the National Park Service. Then in 2010, I began the long research process for a book on 16th century colonial architecture. I read "Three Voyages," an annotated English translation of the memoir of Captain René de Laudonnière, the commander of Fort Caroline. The author's interpretation of De Laudonnière's geography just did not make sense. You see, my childhood was in Waycross, GA near the coast. Our family then moved to the Georgia Mountains. I was intimately familiar with the Georgia coast, the mountains and the 300 miles in between. How could six French expeditions paddle southward on the St. Johns River in order to reach the gold fields of the Georgia Mountains? Then I found out that the Fort Caroline that visitors see, was a fake. Archeologists had searched for Fort Caroline since the 1930s and not found a French artifact. Lyndon Johnson provided funds to build a fake Fort Caroline at the 12 year old Fort Caroline National Historic Site in return for Florida congressmen supporting the Civil Rights Act. Read what Captain de Laudonnière said in his memoir. His words leave only one possible location . . . on the Altamaha's south channel near Six Mile Creek.

Richard L. Thornton, Architect & City Planner
 Editor of the People of One Fire



Native Americans near the mouth of the Altamaha River planting crops
 Engraving by Theodor De Bry based on sketch by Jacques Le Moyne

The early French Huguenot explorers WERE different!

The only graphical depictions that we have today of the Native peoples of the South Atlantic Coast and their architecture during the 16th century are lithographs by Dutch Protestant Theodor De Bry, based on sketches by French Huguenot, Jacques Le Moyne. LeMoyne was at the Charlesfort site in South Carolina for a month in 1562 and at Fort Caroline for about 1 1/2 years. The only 17th century book that provides a detailed description of the indigenous peoples of the Southeast's interior was written by a French Huguenot minister, the Rev. Charles de Rochefort. That says it all.

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Fort Caroline's location from René de Laudonnière's memoir

The French language memoir of Captain René de Laudonnière (1529-1574) was published in 1586. An English translation was published by his friend, Richard Hakluyt two years later. The most recent version of his memoir, **Three Voyages**, was published by Floridan, Charles C. Bennett in 2000. Bennett's version presents itself as a translation of the original French version, but actually is an editing of earlier versions. There are subtle omissions and changes of the original text that would have negated a location in the state of Florida.

1. "Cruising from this place (Cape François) northward, he came to a very large and beautiful river. . . . On our arrival, we called this river the May, because we had discovered it on May 1." [Barrett, p. 18, p. 22]

The Altamaha River is the second largest river on the Atlantic Seaboard of North America. Its mouth is 1.5 miles wide. De Laudonniere stated that the May River was about 40 leagues (80 miles) north of Cape François. [Bennett, p.59]

Captain de Laudonniere mentioned that Cape François was near the 30th longitude. The latitude of St. Augustine is 29.9°. In the 1930s Florida historians assumed that St. Augustine was Cape François and the St. Johns River was the May River. However, the mouth of the St. Johns River is only 34 miles north of the mouth of St. Augustine Bay.

All French, Spanish, Dutch and English maps consistently showed Cape François to be far to the north of St. Augustine. Because it appeared to be a marsh when viewed from the sea, most 15th & 16th century European explorers did not realize that the St. Johns was a river. It was not shown on maps until the mid-1600s.

2. **Bennett** [p. 59]: "On Thursday, June 22 . . . We landed near a little river that is 30 degrees distant from the equator and 10 leagues north of Cape François, measuring from the south, and about 30 leagues from the May River."

De Laudonnière: "Nous avons atterri à une petite rivière, laquelle est distante de trente degrez loin de l'equater, et dix lieues au dessus du cap François, tirant à la part meridionale, et environ trente lieus au dessus de la rivière de May."

Translation: "... a small river, which is thirty degrees far removed from the equator, over (about) ten leagues south of Cape François, and over (about) thirty leagues south of the May River." *Note that Bennett changed "south" to "north" of Cape François!*

De Laudonnière described the St. Johns River. This river had a shallow entrance that was impassible to large ships, but deepened further inland. This was exactly the situation of the St. Johns River until the 1850s, when its entrance was dredged by the Corps of Engineers.

The mouth of the St. Johns is about 21 miles (10 leagues) south of the north tip of Amelia Island (Cape François) and 62 miles (30 leagues) south of the mouth of the Altamaha River. There is NO river between St. Augustine Bay and the mouth of the St. Johns River. Bennett altered the original text to conceal the fact that the May and St. Johns Rivers were different.

3. "I had not sailed three leagues up the river (May) . . . where I discovered a mountain of modest height." [Bennett, p. 62.

There are ridges approximately 80 feet in elevation that flank the delta of the Altamaha River. In 1564 it would have been impossible for De Laudonnière's large ship to sail through the mouth of the St. Johns River and up the river six miles.

4. "In our first year it would be much more important to live in a place with an abundant food supply . . . we should set ourselves up around the River of May, since in our first voyage we had found it to abound in corn." [Bennett, p. 68]

The settlers at St. Augustine found present day northeast Florida to not be well suited for growing corn at a large scale. Throughout the first 2/3 of the 17th century, the Natives around the mouth of the Altamaha furnished most of the corn and vegetables for St. Augustine.

5. "Upstream somewhat, we found a creek of substantial size." [Bennett, p. 69]

De Laudonnière described the large, freshwater creek that was closest to the mouth of the May River on its south channel. This stream is now called Six Mile Creek.

6. "My house was on the north side of the plaza . . . toward the river . . . The entrance to the fort was placed on the southwest side." [Bennett, pp. 72-73]

Fort Caroline was built on the south side of the May River.

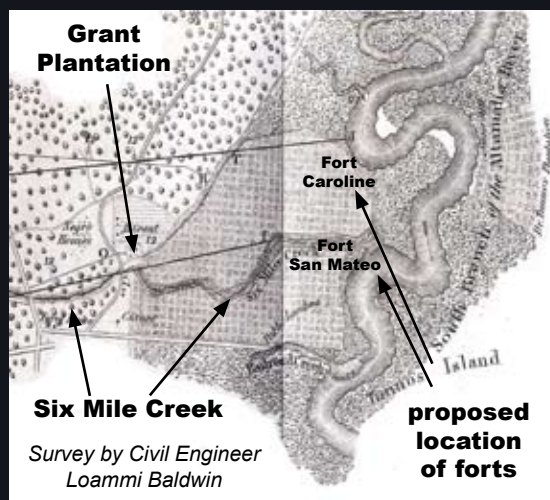
7. De Laudonnière described several expeditions that paddled northwestward up the May River to reach the Appalachian Mountains, the capital of the Utina Province, the Thamagogs or the Island of Edeleno. Charles Bennett deleted "northwestward" in his text or changed it to "north" when describing the location of the Appalachian Mountains. Around 1610, the Spanish established Mission Santa Isabel de Utinahica near the confluence of the Altamaha and Ochopee Rivers in southeast Georgia. *Utinahica* means "Place of the Utina."

Confusion between French league and Spanish league

lieue ancienne (French league until 1674) = 2.018 English miles = 3.2477 km

lengua vieja (Spanish league until 1568) = 3.4629 English miles = 5.573 km

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, many university published books on the early colonial history of Florida equated the French and Spanish leagues. They were different.



Six Mile Creek

Section of 1836 survey for a canal

This survey shows both the proposed sites of Fort Caroline and Fort San Mateo as being in rice cultivation. However, today the terrain at both sites is irregular and has distinct vegetation forming a triangle and a pentagon.

According to its Comprehensive Plan, Six Mile Creek is one of Glynn County's longest and largest fresh water creeks. The eastern part of its channel became the Brunswick and Altamaha Canal in the 1840s. The canal received little usage.

This map by the French king's own geographer, Pierre Du Val, accompanies both the French publications of René de Laudonnière's memoir about Fort Caroline and its 1588 English translation by Richard Hakluyt. It was omitted by the "new" translation, Three Voyages, published by Charles C. Bennett in the year 2000.

Lake Tama at the Forks of the Altamaha
Upper Latitude: 32°12'25"N
Lower Latitude: 31°54'23"N
Longitude: 82°54'02"W

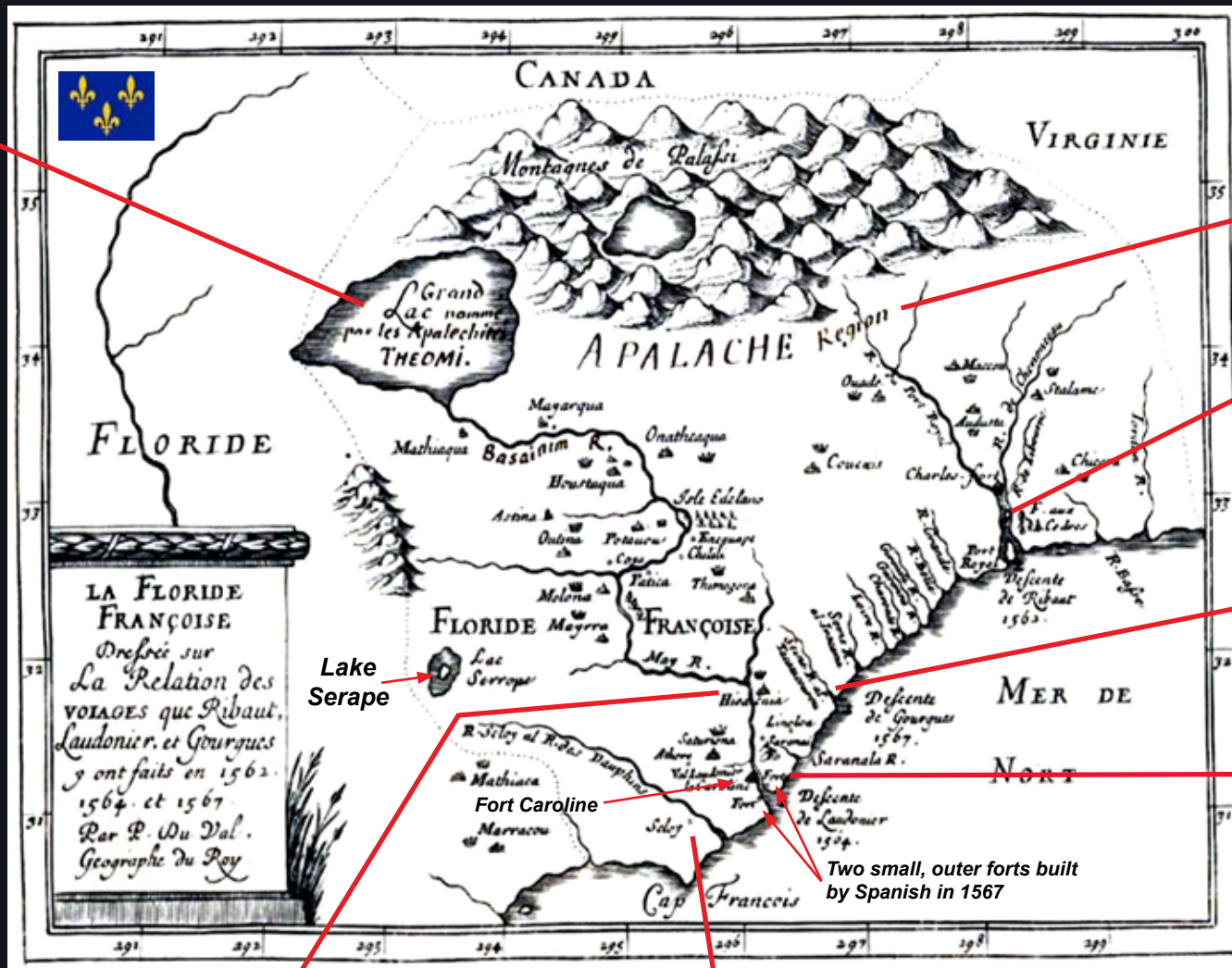


Shallow Lake Tama formerly covered most of present day Telfair, Wheeler & Montgomery Counties, GA until the 1700s. It was probably created by a log jam on the Altamaha River below the Forks of the Altamaha or a ancient meteor crater. The Hernando De Soto Expedition crossed just northwest of it in March of 1540. The remnant of the lake is called Gum Creek Swamp. The Little Ocmulgee River flows out of it.

Lake Serape
It is now the Okefenokee Swamp. Apparently, like Lake Tama, in the 1500s & 1600s the Okefenokee resembled Lake Okechobee, Florida



Edelana Island
On the Altamaha River three miles downstream from its confluence with the Ochopee River. Utinahica, the capital of the Utina People was six miles up the Ochopee River.



The boundaries of the Native province of Apalache exactly matched the region of north and central Georgia where Late Woodland Napier Style pottery is found. According to French ethnologist, Charles de Rochefort, these Highland Apalache founded a colony in NW Florida, which evolved into a different ethnic group, known today as the Apalachee Indians.

Site of Charlesfort, built by the French in 1562 and the Spanish colonial capital of Santa Elena, built in 1567.

All French and Spanish maps place the Native village of Tacatacuru on the Medway River, at the site of Sunbury, Georgia, not in Florida. Both the National Park Service and recent books state that this village was in Florida.

South Channel Altamaha River
Latitude: 31°19'31"N
Longitude: 81°26'45"W

The latitude matches this map exactly!

Native town of Selay

Selay was located on the SW side of the Satilla River in Camden Co. Georgia. No Spanish map ever put it on St. Augustine Bay. De Laudonnière stated that Selay was 16-20 miles south of his fort. St. Augustine is 37 miles south (straight line) of Fort Caroline National Memorial. Florida historians didn't understand that the first location of St. Augustine was across the Satilla River from Selay. It was moved south 75 miles during the winter of 1566, because of a mutiny and Indian attacks.

Fort Caroline National Memorial Jacksonville, Florida
Latitude: 30°23'02"N
Longitude: 81°29'51"W



Coast from Ponte Vedra Beach, FL to Jekyll Island, GA
(map tinted to show St. Johns River before Mayport Naval Base)

René de Laudonnière did not even see the mouth of the St. Johns River because in 1562, it was a maze of marshes and shallow creeks. In fact the mouth of the St. Johns River was not shown on maps until the early 1700s. Jacques Le Moyne knew about the broad St. Johns Basin in the interior of Florida, but thought that it flowed northward to join the St. Marys River. Late 17th century maps showed short a short tidal creek at that location.



All Colonial Era maps consistently equated the May River with the Altamaha River in Georgia

Seventy-five years later, it still seems inexplicable as to why the civic leaders of Jacksonville, Florida decided that Fort Caroline's ruins were in their midst. Colonial Era maps placed Fort Caroline on the Altamaha River. De Laudonnière described the geography between Cape François and the May River as a continuous band of tidal marshes, islands, deepwater sounds and river outlets. The coast of Florida between the St. Johns River and the mouth of St. Augustine Bay is essentially one long beach.

The mouth of the St. Johns River was inaccessible to sea craft until the 1850s, when it was dredged and widened by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. During the American Revolution, three flat bottomed galleys, built by Georgia Patriots to sneak through shallow marshes, could not enter the mouth of the St. Johns River at high tide. The original name of Jacksonville was Waterford because people and livestock were able to walk across the river. In contrast, de Laudonnière stated that the galleons of the Spanish fleet anchored in the inner sound of the May River.



The Indigenous Peoples from Port Royal Sound, South Carolina to Altamaha Sound, Georgia

"Many of the feather headdresses worn by the Timucua Indians (as drawn by De Bry) looked like those worn by the Tupi-namba from Brazil. The wooden clubs in the engravings were also straight out of the Amazon. After reexamining all the evidence, I now question whether Jacques le Moyne actually did any paintings of Florida Indians." Quote from Jerald T. Milanich, "The Devil in the Details" Archaeological Institute of America, Volume 58 Number 3, May/June 2005

The answer to Dr. Millanich's query is that the Native Americans at Port Royal Sound, SC and on the coast of Georgia were culturally and genetically different than those in Florida. Le Moyne probably never saw a indigenous village in Florida. There is more. None of the Caucasian anthropologists, who have studied the indigenous peoples of this region have ever bothered to translate their political titles and place names (such as Tupi-ke). Most of the proper nouns on the islands, north of the Altamaha are Muskogean or Itza Maya words. Those on the mainland are predominantly Tupi around Altamaha and Port Royal Sounds. The Tupi were from South America!



As DNA testing became more sophisticated after 2010, Creek Indians began receiving surprising results. Their partial Maya heritage was no surprise, but those, whose families originated in southern Georgia or SE Alabama, often carried significant amounts of Tupi-Guarani DNA.

Some researchers in the People of One Fire asked, "Why would Creek Indians from this part of the Southeast carry South American DNA, but not all Creeks?" The answer was slow in coming. At first it seemed to be caused by lab errors.

Then we read the memoir of René de Laudonnière. He mentioned that the tribes around Port Royal Sound, SC worshiped the sun god, **Toya**. They also held a festival similar to, but not the same, as the Creek Green Corn Festival. Toya is a South American deity; Tupi, to be specific. These people were not Muskogean as anthropologists had assumed. Their village names could not be translated by Creek dictionaries. The kings were called a **paracus**, not the Maya-Creek title of hene-mako. The Paracus were the indigenous people of the Peruvian coastal desert, who created the famous Natzca lines. This did not make sense.

Further reading of De Laudonnière's book mentioned the **Alecmani**, who lived upstream from Fort Caroline about 20 miles. That is a Tupi word from South America that means "Medicine People." The French said that the Alecmani cultivated large orchards of chichona trees. That is what quinine is made from. They traded the chichona bark to other tribes. It made them very wealthy.

By the 1700s the location of the Alecmani capital on the Altamaha River was part of the Creek Confederacy and named Alek Talula, which meant Doctor Town. By then, Alek was the Creek word for a medical doctor. Today the community is known as Doctortown. Apparently, the Alecmani merged with the Creeks. Aleck Mountain in the Nacoochee Valley contains a stone ceremonial enclosure and is said to have been the home of a band of Creeks, who were expert physicians.

Jacques Le Moyne was one of the few survivors of Fort Caroline. He fled the fort at night while it was under attack. There is little chance that he was able to carry his water colors along. What Theodor De Bry used as the basis of lithographs would have been sketches drawn from memory by Le Moyne, many years later.

Florida Françoise ~ The Religious Wars

The colony was conceived in 1561 as a innovative solution to religious turmoil in France by Protestant Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, ten year old King Charles IX and the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, a devout Catholic. Protestant subjects from predominantly Catholic regions, plus moderate Catholics from throughout the kingdom would found a New France in North America. Their example of working in harmony for the betterment of the nation would then spread back to France and quell tensions. Spanish colonial expansion would be blocked in the process.

Just as this dream was beginning, intermittent high profile burning of Bible sellers, Bible printers and professors turned into massacres of men, women and children. The Protestants were eventually driven from the government and increasingly became viewed as enemies of the crown. Compromise became almost impossible.

Southern France was a thorn in the flesh of the Roman Catholic hierarchy throughout the Middle Ages. During the last centuries of the Roman Empire it had been predominantly Arian (Unitarian) and its coastal cities contained many Jews. The Cathar (Albigensian) sect arose in its mountainous terrain during medieval until slaughtered in the 13th century. Both the Inquisition and the Dominican monastic order originated during this "Crusade."

On May 4, 1493 Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull which divided up the East Indies into territories to be owned by Spain and Portugal. At the time, it was thought that Cristobal Colon had discovered a new route to Southeast Asia. No other countries were to be allowed by the church to claim colonies there. Earlier, Alexander had been the notorious Rodrigo Borgia, the godfather of a Castilian family that had elbowed its way into power in Italy. He was a divorcee and womanizer. He continued to live with his mistress and illegitimate offspring while serving as Pope. The Medici family hated him. Catherine Medici had no intention of honoring the edict of a pope, who had died in 1503. Spain thought that the edict still ruled.

Many thousands of Sephardic Jews fled from Spain and Portugal during the 1490s and the 1500s and settled in either Navarre, southern France or later, Scotland and the Netherlands. The Sephardim in France typically changed their names to French forms and presented themselves in public as at least nominal French Huguenots (Protestants.) It is a "dirty little secret" that many of the most prominent French Huguenot families in South Carolina and Georgia today carry "Frenchified" Sephardic family names. The Sephardim did much to stimulate the economies of Gascony, La Province, Alsace-Lorraine and the region around Lyon. They also played a major role in the 17th century colonization of the Southeast and Caribbean Basin.

When evangelists from Lutheran states in Germany first entered France in the 1520s they were banned from preaching and expelled. The Protestants based in Geneva, Switzerland formed a congregation version of Protestantism that was far more adept at covert operation.



On March 1, 1562 as the first French colony was being established at Port Royal, SC, a massacre occurred in France that sparked civil war. While traveling between Paris and his home, the Duke of Guise ordered his troops to attack a Protestant worship service in a converted barn. About 200-400 men, women and children were killed. Protestant congregations soon armed themselves, while Protestant nobility began forming professional armies. Catholic mercenaries were soon driven out of several parts of France. Spain then sent troops into France and Waldensia. By the time the fleet of the first colonizing expedition reached France in late 1562, it was impossible for the Huguenot members of the ship's crews to enter France. Most sailed on to England. They remained in England until an armistice was signed. An inquisitive, young Queen Elizabeth spent long hours in conversation with the Huguenot leaders in order to learn more about the New World.



Although viewing themselves as the scions of Christianity, the Spanish Catholic troops derived their attitudes toward women from their former Muslim lords. Young, literate, Protestant women such as Anne Charbonniere (left) were treated especially brutally. Also tortured to death or burned were Bible sellers, printers, professors and the entire families of Protestant lay leaders. (right)

Florida Françoise ~ The First Voyage

France was unique in that the king was officially the head of the Roman Catholic Church in France. When King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England, he was merely copying his next door neighbors. The French king could have easily gotten a divorce from his bishops, had he so wished. Henry VIII was anti-Lutheran and initially, had no intention of breaking off from the Roman Catholic Church. However, his excommunication opened the door for more radical religious reformers to become established in England. Eventually, the majority of Englishmen no longer considered themselves to be Roman Catholics. During the initial period of Protestant evangelism in France, the king did not feel threatened because most of these Protestants considered themselves to be loyal subjects. This is very clear in the memoirs that survive about the 16th century French colonizing efforts.

As in most Catholic countries at that time, it was illegal for anyone but the nobility or clergy to own Bibles. The King of France first became alarmed when printed Bibles began appearing all over the nation. He feared that the next step would be the spread of political ideas. The Catholic church's elite agreed with him. A literate population was a threat to their power.

The French version of the Inquisition was under the direct command of the king. It first concentrated its efforts on trials of Bible merchants, Bible printers and professors who expressed Protestant sympathies in classroom lectures. Those responsible for spreading the dangerous messages in the Bible to commoners were usually burned to death in a stack of Bibles.

A little known fact is that the House of Bourbon first rose to power in France as Protestants. Originally based in southern France and the Kingdom of Navarre, they traced their lineage to a son of Emperor Charlemagne. Among their Protestant relatives during the time of the colonization attempts were the King and Queen of Navarre, the admiral of the French Navy and the cardinal of Amiens in Normandy. That's right! A Catholic cardinal was a Protestant.

A large reinforcement of supplies and colonists arrived just as the original colonists were planning to depart Fort Caroline. Had not the Spanish Empire intervened, most of North America would probably speak French today and the French Revolution would have probably never happened. England would have stayed a prosperous, second tier state like Sweden or Denmark. Florida would probably have become the name of a powerful nation.

First Voyage (1562)

The mission of the first colonizing fleet, under the command of Captain Jean Ribault, was to identify ideal locations for establishing settlements. The two ships, furnished by the king, left France on February 2, 1562. Ribault was careful to avoid routes taken by Spanish ships and arrived on the coast of Florida about two months later. He probably saw land at what was then already called Cape Canaveral. They cruised northward looking for a suitable location. At a cape that seemed to jut out into the river



This 1603 map by Dutch cartographer, Jodocus Hondius, still recognized the claim of France to the region that is now South Carolina and southeastern Georgia. It also shows the May River to be one and the same as the Altamaha River. The North Carolina portion was based on John White's map.

The Frenchmen were not impressed by the coastal areas of the Florida Peninsula. This is an important point. They immediately recognized that it was sparsely populated and had very few cultivated fields. In his memoir, René de Laudonnière devoted several paragraphs to this concern. The French Huguenot leaders were looking for a location that could feed a colony that within 2 years could have over 1,000 residents. They expected to trade metal tools for the extra food they needed until the French farmers could develop productive farms.

The French Huguenot attitude contrasted starkly with the Spanish in Florida, who forced or manipulated the Natives into serfdom, in order to produce the food they needed. Vast amounts of Native American food was rewarded with religious trinkets and coarse clothing.

The two French ships stopped to obtain fresh water in a deep bay just north of a sandy cape that protruded into the ocean. They named this prominent feature Cape François or the French Cape. Deciding that the very visible location would be an appropriate boundary for New France, they erected a carved stone column with the king's coat of arms on it. This was the accepted legal method in Europe of monarchs claiming new territory.

The bay to the north of the cape was described as being extremely deep and expansive enough

Florida Françoise ~ Charlesfort

to provide a harbor for many sea craft. However, when they sailed their smallest ship up the river that flowed into the bay, they found that it quickly became too shallow for ships. The bay and the river are now called St. Marys Sound and the St. Marys River.

The fleet then sailed about 10 French leagues (*lieue anciens*) which equals about 21 miles. They came to another deep bay in which many dolphins were playing. They named this deep sound the Bay of the Dolphins. It is now called St. Andrews Sound. It is extremely deep. One of the United States' principal nuclear submarine bases is here; Kings Bay Naval Base. The length of Cumberland Island, which runs between St. Marys Sound and St. Andrews Sound, happens to be about 21 miles. There is no such island south of Jacksonville.

The ships sailed northward another 20 leagues until they arrived at another large bay. This bay was different, however. It was fed by a very large river and obviously supported a substantial native population. The crew disembarked and set another large stone column on the tip of the south side of the large river. The leaders of the expedition then sailed across the channel to a principal Native American town. Here they were entertained by a friendly king and invited to settle amongst his people. When they arrived back at the south side of the deep channel it was May 1st. They named the river, the May River.

The mouth of the St. Johns River was not very wide until dredged to create the Mayport Naval Base. The land for the base was given to the U. S. government by the City of Jacksonville, who requested that the base be named Mayport after the original name of the St. Johns River. At this point a fabricated history crossed the line into apparent legitimacy. By the end of World War II, very few people knew that the fib had only been concocted in the late 1930s.

The two ships continued sail northward, surveying and naming the mouths of the numerous rivers on the Georgia coast. About 8 miles past the mouth of the Savannah River, they came to what they described as the most ideal and beautiful harbor in North America. They called it Port Royal and decided to establish a colony there. The third stone column with the coat of arms of the King of France was placed on an island along the western shore of the sound.

A small, rudimentary fort, named Charlesfort, was constructed in about a month to hold a garrison of 28 men. Some of the leaders of the expedition explored the surrounding terrain and bartered for food to feed the garrison, until a larger body of colonists could be brought from France. The commander of the garrison proved to be tyrannical and incompetent. The quantity of food left with the garrison also proved to be inadequate. Shortly after the garrison bartered with a friendly local king for more food, the storehouse burned to the ground. Not only did the garrison lose all of their food, but also the tools that they were trading for food, and spare clothing. A nearby friendly king gave them live oak acorns, which are quite edible, but apparently, there was drought that year and the crops did poorly. Apparently, they did not know how to fish, catch crabs or dig for mussels.



(Above) Charlesfort was constructed on the west side of Parris Island, SC. The stone monument claiming the region for the King of France was placed on an island on the west shore of Port Royal Sound. (Below) Charlesfort was a rudimentary structure, consisting of a low earthen rampart and reinforced planks, plus raised earthen bastions on each corner for small cannons.



Florida Françoise ~ The Second Voyage

After the tyrannical commander exiled a popular member of the garrison to a small island, where he would starve to death, the Frenchmen mutinied and killed the officer. They then made a sail out of what clothing they could spare and attached it to a small boat. They then headed in to the ocean to return to France. When near death from starvation, they drew straws. The unlucky man was killed and eaten by the others.

Several maps published in the late 1500s and 1600s state that René de Laudonnière first saw the Appalachian Mountains in 1562 and named them after the Apalache Indians living there. It is very clear from reading his memoir that he never visited the Appalachian Mountains, but planned to do so after the Third Expedition arrived. Several members of his garrison did travel all the way to the mountains on the Altamaha and Oconee Rivers in 1564 and 1565.

Neither De Laudonnière nor his men originally named the Appalachian Mountains. The label *Apalachien*, located in the southern Appalachian Mountains, appears on a map of the Americas published by the famous Spanish cartographer, Diego Gutiérrez in 1562.

Second Voyage (1564)

The second colonial expedition, under the command of Captain René de Laudonnière, sailed from Havre de Grâce on April 22, 1564. The fleet of three ships first landed in the Canaries, then sailed across the Atlantic to Dominica. In Dominica they replenished their food and water supplies before sailing to the coast of the Florida Peninsula. The fleet arrived at the Dolphin (Satilla) River on June 22, 1564. De Laudonnière remembered that the mouth of the May River was the only location in La Florida, where he observed large scale agriculture.

The king invited de Laudonnière to visit the monument, set to claim the land for the King of France. It had become a religious shrine! The column was surrounded by food offerings. De Laudonnière intended to locate the fort near a freshwater stream on the south channel of the river. He needed a location that had sufficient water for a town of a 1000 people. The streams closer to the mouth of the river contained brine water. He also did not want to be in a location that could be seen by Spanish warships. However, the water near the fort should also be deep enough to float sea-going barques that could supply the occupants of the fort.

The Captain initially planned to build the fort immediately adjacent to the freshwater creek and the river channel. However, his officers convinced him that the lack of trees at this location might indicate periodic flooding or tidal waters. Therefore, de Laudonnière staked out the fort a short distance away at a location that was more elevated and had trees growing.

Although relations with nearby Native American provinces remained friendly throughout the fort's occupation, de Laudonnière's memoir makes it clear that he was more concerned about an attack by some of the region's inhabitants than he was the Spanish. He assumed that



Paracus (King) Satouriona shows René de Laudonnière that a stone monument, erected by the French in 1562, is now a religious shrine. Note that the indigenous men in Georgia averaged about a foot taller than Europeans at that time. Members of the de Soto Expedition also noticed that once entering into present day Georgia, that the Native men were a foot taller than them.

because the fort could not be seen from the ocean, but his lookouts could see ships from the top of a hill south of the fort, he was safe from a Spanish surprise attack.

While most of the men were working feverishly to finish the fort, others built two barques. One was large and equipped with sails. It would be used to explore the coastal islands. The other was smaller with one sail. It would primarily be used to explore the inland sections of rivers. The smaller barque was also suitable for transporting supplies from ships anchored in the mouth of the Altamaha River to the fort. Large war ships could not reach the fort.

Even while the fort was under construction, de Laudonnière began sending out exploration parties to make friendly trade contacts with indigenous provinces. These were small groups of men, who were not likely to intimidate or tax the food reserves of their hosts. Most headed northwestward up the May River or northward up the coast. Some traveled by canoe and others by foot. There is no mention of horses in the memoir of the French commander.

The French quickly discovered a vigorous trade network between the southern Appalachians and the South Atlantic Coast. **The primary trade routes were the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers.** It is interesting that the French map makers soon forgot that the Savannah existed, or else confused it with the short rivers that flowed into Port Royal Sound, SC.

Fort Caroline ~ Regional trade and its architecture

At least two of the six major trade expeditions were able to travel all the way to the Southern Appalachians. They brought back samples of its mineral wealth and the invitation of the leaders there for de Laudonnière to visit them.

De Laudonnière stated in his memoir that it was his intention to establish the capital of New France at the headwaters of navigation for the May River. That location on the Altamaha River system would be Oconee Heights, where the University of Georgia is located. He planned to personally visit the Appalachians as soon as a large fleet commanded by Jean Ribault arrive. Approximately, 600 colonists were passengers in that fleet. Ribault's fleet eventually arrived, but disaster would soon follow its appearance.

The most valuable commodity in the Southeast was greenstone from the region around the present day towns of Dahlonega, the Nacoochee Valley and Blairsville, GA. This greenstone had physical properties that made it a superior material for fabricating wedges and axes.

It was the original Apalache in northern Georgia who controlled the Gold Belt, not their former colony in Florida. Georgia gold is some of the purest in the world. The Highland Apalache worked gold nuggets and gold dust obtained from streams into chains and foil.

For most indigenous people, however, copper, was a more common luxury item. In vicinity of present day Copper Hill, Tennessee and Blue Ridge, GA copper nuggets of varying size were harvested from the soil surface then beaten into ingots. The ingots were then beaten into tools, pendants and bracelets. Silver was obtained from the western edge of the Cohutta Mountains and also in certain areas of the North Carolina Mountains. It was primarily beaten into pendants. High quality tin was obtained from north central South Carolina.

The architecture of Fort Caroline

The location of the fort was described as being about 10 to 12 French leagues (10-13 miles) from the ocean. Tidal elevation changes were not as noticeable at the site than closer to the ocean. Also, the water had less brine in it. The fort was near a large freshwater creek, which was of sufficient depth that small boats and barks could be docked there.

René de Laudonnière never provided specific dimensions of the fortification. He only stated that it was triangular and contained raised earthen bastions on each apex. The three sides of the fort were tilted off a true north-south axis, but approximately were oriented southwest, southeast and north.

On Theodor de Bry's drawing, the entrance was shown on the southwest face. Drawings by other artists show it on the southeast face. De Laudonnière's text specifically mentions a gate on the west side being constructed. The southeast side was protected by the large freshwater creek. The north side faced the river. A small moat was dug on the southwest side, which was



Mountain Apalache extracting gold from a stream - Lithograph by Theodor De Bry (1591)
A substantial portion of De Laudonnière's book is devoted to discussion of the Native American provinces in Georgia between the coast and the mountains. He specifically stated that the headwaters of canoe navigation for the May River were a two days walk from the gold deposits in the mountains. The Appalachee River in North Georgia flows from the gold belt into the Oconee River near Athens, GA. The Oconee is one of the two principal tributaries of the Altamaha River. There is absolutely no way that the St. Johns River could be the May River. One still wonders how Florida historians could read these passages and believe that Fort Caroline was on the St. Johns River.

most exposed to land attack. Additional timbers reinforced the wall facing the river.

The cores of the walls were constructed with gabbions. These were cylindrical baskets woven from saplings and filled with earth. The earth came from moats that were excavated around the periphery. The gibbons were coated with packed earth and squares of turf. The veneers of the walls were sheaved with heavy sawn timbers. The timber walls extended about 4 1/2 feet above the earthen ramparts. They were reinforced by heavy timber springs, which would absorb the shock of musket balls and small caliber cannon balls.

A barn for storing munitions was built on the south bastion after the initial construction of earthen walls was completed. A central plaza about 60 feet square was laid out in the center. De Laudonnière ordered the barracks built on the north side of the plaza. On the south side of the plaza a large, two story guardhouse was constructed. It blew over in a storm because of being too tall. A shorter guardhouse was then constructed. A munitions storehouse was built on another face of the plaza, while De Laudonnière's house was built on the side of the plaza nearest the river. His house had a continuous veranda on all sides. An oven was constructed outside the walls of the fort, so that cinders would not set the thatch roofs on fire. For unknown reasons, one of the lieutenants built a house outside the fort.

*Fort Caroline ~ Its last days***The last days of Fort Caroline**

A seditious faction revealed itself in the summer 1565. The faction's leaders demanded that Fort Caroline be abandoned and that the entire garrison sail in the small barques to Mexico and surrender to Spanish authorities. This demand is powerful evidence that at least some of these men were Spanish agents. After de Laudonnière refused, he was seized and placed in irons. A band of mutineers soon left the fort and began pirating Spanish ships.

By late summer of 1565, the Fort Caroline garrison was diseased and starving. The fleet of Captain John Hawkins stopped by the fort for a friendly visit. He had been told the location by some French Huguenot sailors in his crew. Hawkins offered to take the men of Fort Caroline back to France, but de Laudonnière declined, fearing that the English planned to privateering against Spanish ships along the way. However, the captains agreed on a barter.

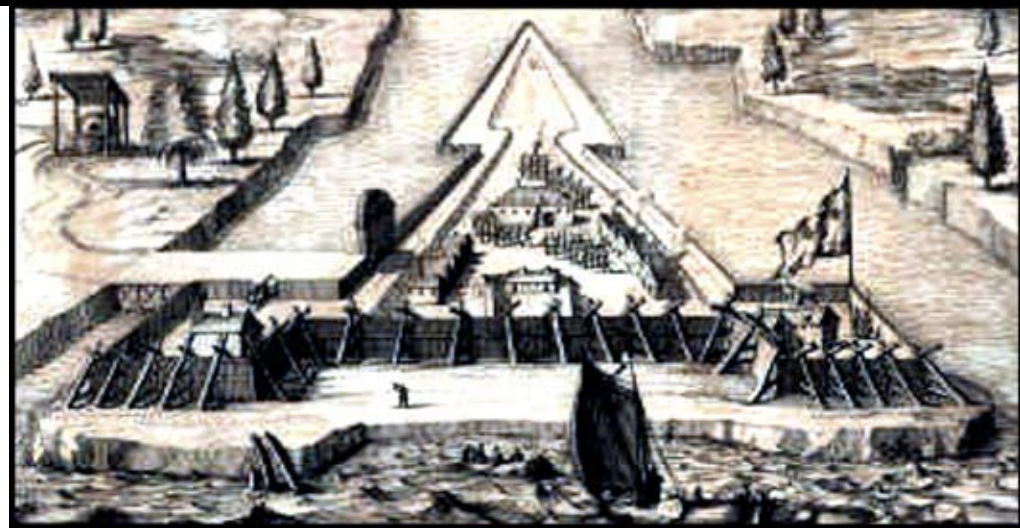
The English traded a large barque for two large cannon, two medium sized cannon, 1000 pounds of iron and 1000 pounds of gunpowder. The Frenchmen immediately began outfitting their ships for the sail back to France. They also began dismantling the fort.

On August 28, 1565 the French ships were just about to leave for home, when they spied the sails of Jean Ribault's large fleet. Officers from this fleet arrested de Laudonnière. Some of the mutineers had lied about the commander's actions.

On August 28, 1565 the French ships were just about to leave for home, when they spied the sails of Jean Ribault's large fleet. Officers from this fleet immediately arrested de Laudonnière. Some of the mutineers had lied about the commander's actions. Once officers at the fort had vouched for his integrity, he was released, but not given back his command. The king, himself, had ordered de Laudonnière replaced by Jean Ribault. While de Laudonnière was incapacitated from an illness, Ribault removed all the food reserves from the ship to the lieutenant's house outside the fort. This was the first of many mistakes that Ribault would make that led to an unimaginable disaster.

On September 4, six large Spanish warships appeared in mouth of the May River. They had been guided to Fort Caroline's location by a traitor, François Jean. The ships captains shouted words of friendship to the four French ships, but at dawn the next day, the Spanish ships began drifting toward the French ships. The French crews cut their lines and sailed for open water, as the Spanish fired cannons at them. The French escaped.

Over the protest of all his senior officers, Jean Ribault stripped an only partially repaired Fort Caroline of all its experienced soldiers and loaded them on to his vessels. The Spanish fleet had ducked into the inner harbor of the Dauphin (Satilla) River at Seloy and deposited an army. The fleet then sailed to St. Augustine Bay and deposited a company.



Drawing of Fort Caroline by Pierter Van der Aa (1706)
This drawing probably comes closest to the actual appearance of the fort. Others were fanciful.

De Laudonnière was bedridden. His acting commander relieved his guards of duty because of the severe weather. The Spanish army had marched overland. They attacked at night without warning. One man happened to be outside the walls when they attacked. He gave the alarm. Otherwise the entire garrison would have been captured without a fight.

Most of the men were elderly or teenagers. Only three, counting the invalid de Laudonnière, had combat experience. Many were wearing night shirts. There were two breaches in the walls that had not been repaired yet because of the torrential rains. The Spaniards were inside the walls in a matter of seconds. A small party formed in the plaza then fought their way to the wall nearest the marshes. In the darkness they were able to escape the Spaniards.

The next day, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés ordered all of the adult Protestant males hung from the trees around the fort. The lives of approximately 60 women, children and teenagers were spared. All buildings and timber palisades in the fort were burned.

Taking the bait, Ribault had raced southward to battle the Spanish ships, but was blown past them into the arms of a hurricane. All the French ships wrecked below St. Augustine Bay. Over half of the French combatants were drowned. Most of the survivors voluntarily surrendered to a small group of Spanish soldiers, whom they greatly outnumbered. They assumed that under the rules of chivalry, they would be treated decently. They were starving.

After the main Spanish army under the command of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés arrived, he gave each captive the opportunity to convert to Catholicism. Almost all refused. They were then rowed across a river in small groups and killed with swords and lances. Jean Ribault was among those executed. A few Protestants were spared because they had special skills.

The Search for Fort Caroline and Fort San Mateo

Menéndez decided to construct a town near the village of Selo, probably on the Satilla River. It was called St. Augustine. After the garrison began erection of a fort, Menéndez left to see to affairs in the Caribbean. In the absence of their commander, his troops continued the time-honored tradition of Spaniards behaving badly among the indigenous people. Rapes, thefts, beatings and tortures became commonplace around Selo. Then the garrison mutinied and demanded to be transported back to the Caribbean or Spain.

When Menéndez returned the first St. Augustine, he was able to squash the mutiny, but soon realized that all of the Native provinces around the mouth of the May River were about to attack. He abandoned the first St. Augustine that winter and combined his forces at a fortification on the northern end of Santa Anastasia Island that adjoins what is today called St. Augustine Bay. Here the Native population was sparse and less sophisticated politically. Work began almost immediately to the north at Port Royal Sound, SC in the establishment of a capital for the Province of Florida. The town was to be called Santa Elena.

During this period a considerable number of Spanish soldiers and priest were killed around the mouth of the Altamaha River. Probably, in 1566 or 1567 Menéndez sent troops back to the site of Fort Caroline. Tradition has it that the fort was rebuilt in its original form. However, the evidence suggests that Forts San Mateo and San Felipe were identical trapazoids. When Bartram views the fort in 1776, it was a trapezoid. This form may have been a product of 17th century construction. The new fort was named San Mateo. In addition, two smaller forts were built at mouth of the Altamaha River, which contained cannon for firing on ships.

In early April of 1768 a combined army of Frenchmen and Native American allies launched a surprise attack on the Spanish forts that guarded the mouth of the Altamaha. Dominique Gourgé, a Catholic noble, commanded the army. The outer forts were massacred first. Then the main fort was assaulted. All Spaniards not killed in combat were hung from the same trees that 3 1/2 years earlier, the French Huguenots had been murdered on. Four Spanish forts were also massacred in the interior of the Southeast, while De Gourgé was unaccounted for.

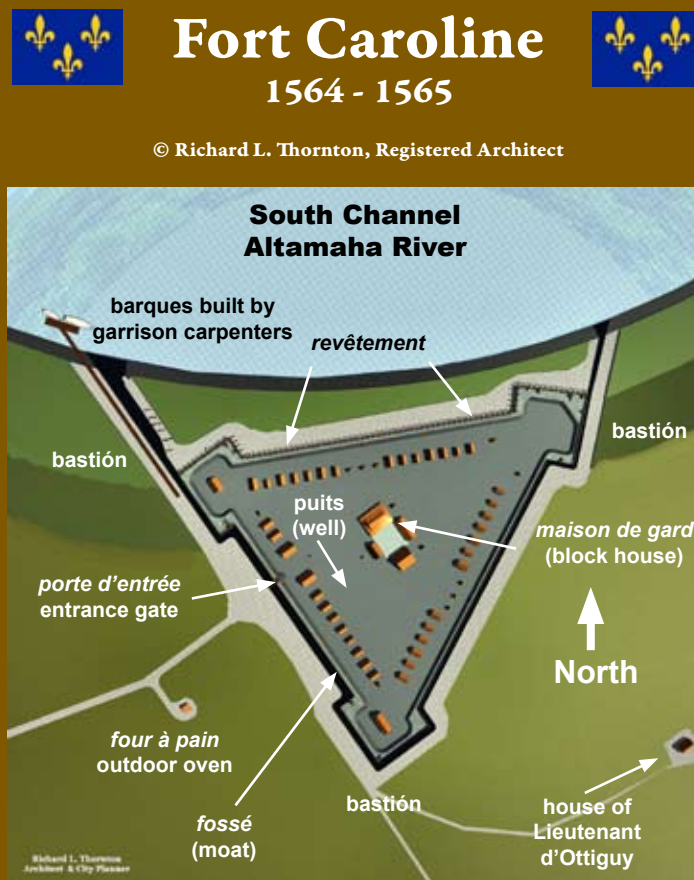
Fort San Mateo was burned. It is not clear if it was rebuilt again, but this is probable. The Spanish mission system came under devastating attacks from Sephardic Jewish pirates and Native American raiders in the mid-1600s. Some new Spanish forts were built in this era.

The search for the true location of Fort Caroline began in spring of 2011. It seemed an almost impossible task because of the vast complex of tidal creeks, islands and marshes at the mouth of the Altamaha River. The big break came in the fall of 2013 when a People of One Fire historian, Marilyn Rae, discovered the two paragraphs in Bartram's Travels that strongly suggested that the famous botanist had visited the ruins of Fort Caroline or Fort San Mateo. From then on it was simply a matter of analyzing high resolution satellite imagery, both taken with visible light and infrared, until likely spots for the fort's ruins could be identified.

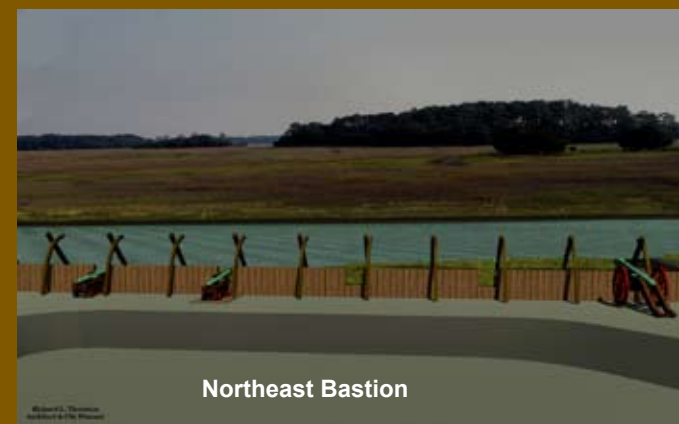
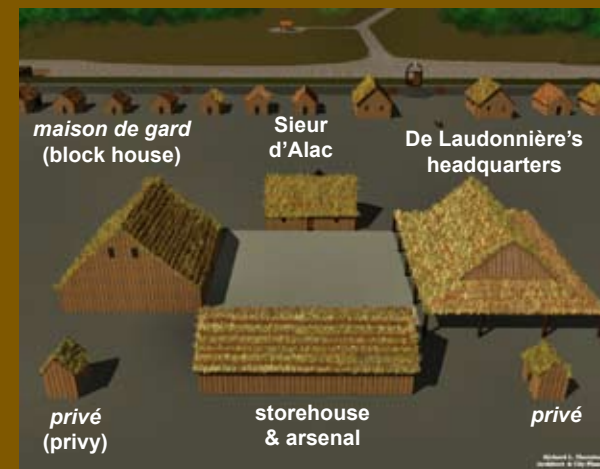


(above) The Altamaha River Basin near Darien, GA is a complex labyrinth of river channels, tidal creeks, marshes and islands. René de Laudonnière intentionally chose a location that could not be seen from the ocean and that was close to tillable land. (below) All books stated that Fort San Mateo was built on top of Fort Caroline. It turns out that this was an inaccurate speculation. Fort Caroline was designed to eventually hold 600-1000 people. The fortress was much too large for a small Spanish garrison. The Spanish built a trapezoidal fort to the east that was exactly the size of Fort San Felipe, being constructed simultaneously in Santa Elena, SC. This explains why the front of Fort San Mateo was portrayed in a painting to be facing a half-moon shaped island and narrow creek, while the paintings of Fort Caroline portrayed it facing the bend of a large river.





Fort Caroline's appearance was much more rudimental than portrayed in 16th and 17th Century paintings.





The Capture of Fort San Mateo by Theodor De Bry

Neither Theodor De Bry nor his friend, Jacques Le Moyne, ever saw Fort San Mateo. The conqueror of Fort San Mateo, Dominique de Gourges, never saw Fort Caroline prior to its destruction. Out of this lack of eyewitness authenticity grew the belief that Fort San Mateo was reconstructed from the ruins of Fort Caroline. Instead, the evidence points toward Fort San Mateo being a separate structure built nearby. Apparently, Fort San Mateo and Fort San Felipe in Santa Elena, SC were architectural twins.



Fort San Mateo

1566 - 1568?



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