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ment in the New World would provide a safe haven for Coligny and his fellow persecuted Huguenots. Also, a successful colony would place France in the enviable position of what would be known today as "trading in emerging countries."

Meanwhile Jean Ribaut had risen through the ranks to become one of Coligny's most dependable officers, having captured Calais from the English and supervising French interests in Scotland. So it was natural that Coligny would entrust this important mission to his valued captain.

Jean Ribaut planned his expedition well. He was well provisioned with guns and supplies. He knew how to appease any Indians he encountered with gifts and friendship. He brought along several stone monuments, or markers, to establish

Someone decided that one of their lot should be killed and those remaining could eat his flesh.

French claims along the coast. Equally careful was he in choosing the site for the French settlement, and wasted no time in having his men construct an impressive fort measuring 160 by 130 feet and surrounded by a moat.

By mid-June Ribaut was off again for France with the promise that he would return in six months with supplies and more colonists, presumably some of them women. He asked for volunteers to stay behind at the new fort which he had named Charlesfort (for the young French king). All the men wished to stay, but Ribaut chose 28 to remain.

Those chosen to stay turned out to be the least fortunate ones. Whether through weak leadership, dependency on the friendly Indians or confidence that their captain would return as promised, the men at Charlesfort did not plant crops to see them through the winter. Game and fish were abundant, but not sufficient for a complete diet. By winter, the nearby Indians had already given them all the corn

and grains they could spare. A delegation was selected to explore farther up the river and seek food from other Indians who, it turned out, were generous indeed, offering two canoes full of food. Unfortunately, fire broke out in the colony shortly thereafter, destroying most of those supplies.


Morale and discipline soon broke down. Captain Pierria, the leader selected by Ribaut, responded by hanging one man and marooning another, named La Chere, on a neighboring island without supplies.

This was too much, and the soldiers mutinied. They murdered Captain Pierria and rescued the hapless La Chere. Nicholas Barre was selected as the new leader and immediately the men set to work building a boat that could take them home to France. The Indians, who probably wanted to be free of these men who were a drain on their resources, helped build the 20-ton sloop from available material. The combined efforts used moss hanging in abundance from trees as caulking, and the Frenchmen contributed their own shirts and bedding as sails. Provisions came from the local Indians. Hopes were high as they set sail in April 1563.

One young man remained behind. Guillaume Rouffi may have been psychic as he watched his comrades prepare for the long voyage across the Atlantic. He elected to stay with the Indians. His ingenuity at saving his own skin under several circumstances is recorded as he changed names and religion to suit the occasion. When last heard of, he was an Indian interpreter for the Spanish.

The high hopes of the homeward-bound Frenchmen were soon dashed as the winds died on the open ocean long enough for all their food and water to be used up. The men ate their leather shoes and belts. As they lay helplessly on the ship, certain that nothing worse could happen and that death was near, someone decided that one of their lot should be killed and that those remaining would eat his flesh to stay alive. Lots were cast and it fell to the unfortunate La Chere, who had been rescued by his comrades from banishment on an island, to be killed and eaten. Winds drove the half-crazed survivors to within sight of Europe, where

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they were picked up by a passing English vessel. The sickest were put ashore, but the rest were taken to England where the saga of the first French colony in the New World was told, although the English court already knew about Charlesfort from another first-hand account.

What had happened to Ribaut? When he successfully reached France, his country was torn apart by a civil war between the Protestants and Catholics. Ribaut was forced to seek refuge in England, where in return for aid to the colonists Queen Elizabeth the First asked him to deliver Florida to English claim.

The very colonists he was asked to betray were in dire misery on the high seas.

Little did Ribaut know that while this interview was held in May 1563, the very colonists he was asked to betray were in dire misery on the high seas. A loyal Frenchman, Ribaut could not agree with the queen's proposal, tried to escape to France and was thrown into prison. More than likely, while in prison he wrote his memoirs, which were published in England.

As France took a temporary respite from internal conflict, Admiral de Coligny mounted another expedition to Florida. With Ribaut in prison, he chose Rene de Laudonniere, Ribaut's second in command on the voyage to Port Royal, as leader. Their mission

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was to build Fort Caroline on the Riviere de Mai (the St. John's River). The expedition arrived at its destination almost a year before Jean Ribaut, since released from prison, was able to leave from Dieppe with supplies and reinforcements in 1565. At almost the same time, King Philip of Spain sent his own expedition, under Pedro Menendez de Aviles, to destroy Charlesfort (which they did not know was abandoned) and obliterate the French in the New World. But Ribaut won the race to Fort Caroline, so the Spaniards went ashore near St. Augustine. Ribaut left a small garrison to protect Fort Caroline, and set sail down the Florida coast to meet the Spanish. Bad weather caused him to miss the Spanish ships, and Ribaut's ships were struck and wrecked by what was probably a hurricane, stranding Ribaut's forces on the beaches south of Menendez's soldiers. Menendez used this opportunity to move north and strike Fort Caroline. Women and children were spared, but all the Frenchmen were killed, except those who escaped into the woods. Among those who survived were Laudonniere, the cartographer Le Moyne, and Jean Ribaut's son, Jacques.

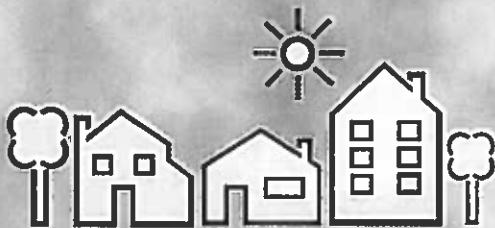
Menendez then turned south to meet the remaining French forces. The outnumbered Frenchmen surrendered, and all those who would not renounce Protestantism were killed. Jean Ribaut was with a second group which, not knowing the fate of the first, surrendered to Menendez's mercy, of which there was none. Jean Ribaut was executed not far from the place where he had first set foot on Florida sand. ▀

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