

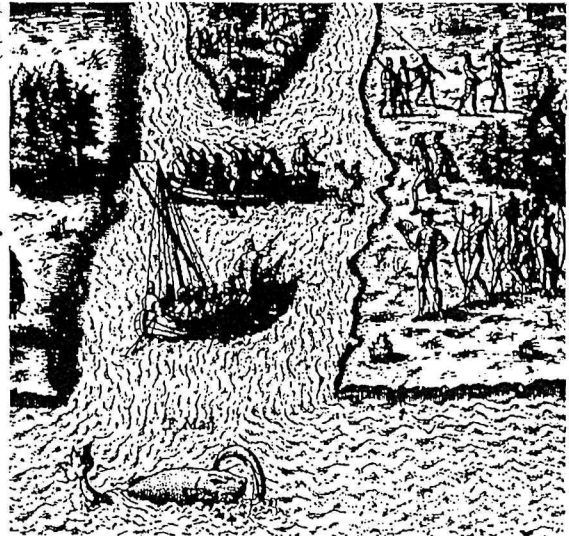
RIBAULT MONUMENT

Fort Caroline National Memorial
Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

THE ORIGINAL

The 46,000 acre Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve encompasses numerous components of America's natural and cultural heritage. Situated primarily between the Lower St. Johns and Nassau Rivers, the Timucuan Preserve was established in 1988 and includes Fort Caroline National Memorial. A significant feature in the Memorial is the **Ribault Monument** on St. Johns Bluff.

On May 1, 1562 two small French ships approached the mouth of the St. Johns River. Led by the French Huguenot **Jean Ribault** ("Ree-bow"), this force came ashore the next day and claimed this new found land for its king, **Charles IX**.



"We came ashore and on a sandy hill on the river just inside its mouth we placed a stone column bearing the coats of arms of our king. Since we had arrived on the 1st of day of May we named the river the River of May. After praising God for a safe voyage thus far we sailed northward in search of other adventures."

Thus was the original **Ribault Monument** placed in this part of the New World. Ribault placed one other monument on present-day Parris Island, South Carolina at the site of the short-lived colony of **Charlesfort**. In the spring of 1564 Spain's King Philip II sent a fleet of ships from Cuba under the command of Hernando Manrique de Rojas to find and remove any symbols of French claims to *his* New World properties. Rojas located and removed the Charlesfort column but could not locate the River of May one.



Just one month after Rojas's departure a French force returned to Florida - this time to colonize. Led by **Rene de Laudonniere**, the group of 300 colonists and sailors arrived in late June. Laudonniere's entourage discovered that the native people - the Timucuan - had decorated it with fruits of their harvest. On land approximately five miles inland from the river's mouth they constructed their colony - **La Caroline** - and a fort to protect it.

Spanish forces arrived in Florida fifteen months later. Luck and circumstance allowed the Spanish to gain the upper hand and they captured the French colony on September 20, 1565. Documents left from this expedition by **Pedro Menendez de Aviles** do not indicate if the Spanish ever found or removed the monument left by Ribault. For the past 400 years speculation about its whereabouts has continued..

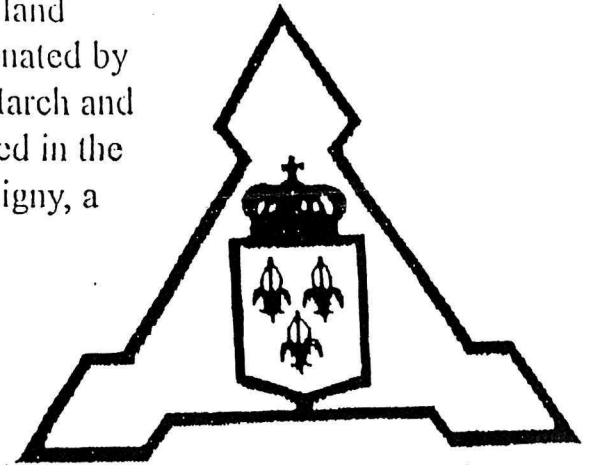
Ribault Monument....The Replica

In the early 1920s a movement began within the Florida Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution to mark the location of Ribault's first arrival in the New World. The DAR's intentions were to highlight the beginnings of European colonization of Florida by Protestants - for the sake of religious freedom - and to remind their fellow Americans that this colonization effort preceded the more famous Plymouth colony by some 50 years. The time seemed ripe since the 300th anniversary of the arrival of Huguenots in the New World (from Belgium) was being observed in 1924. The Ribault Monument Committee successfully lobbied to tie their efforts in with the Huguenot-Walloon Tercenary Commission. To mark Ribault's 1562 arrival in Florida the U. S. Post Office issued a special five cent commemorative stamp and the U. S. Mint issued a commemorative silver coin.

The Florida D.A.R. commissioned the renowned Florida sculptor, **Charles Adrian Pillars**, to design a monument similar to the one pictured in the famous illustration by the French colonist, Jacques le Moyne. Financial support was generous and news items about the movement occupied prominent space in the daily press.

Ground was broken on January 11, 1924 on a piece of land located inside the river mouth on its south bank and donated by **Mrs. Elizabeth Stark**. The cornerstone was laid in March and the formal unveiling occurred on May 1, 1924. Included in the impressive guest list was Col. William Gaspard de Coligny, a lineal descendent of Admiral Coligny of France who sponsored the Florida expeditions of Ribault and Laudonniere.

Situated where it was, the monument became a favorite site for Easter sunrise services in the 1920s and 1930s.



When the U.S. Naval Station was established at Mayport in 1941 the monument became inaccessible to the general public. Initially it was moved in January, 1942 to a new location on the base. Eventually, once the public complained about the monument's inaccessibility, it was again moved. Its new resting spot was outside the base at a position along Wonderwood Road.

The Florida D.A.R. decided at its annual meeting in 1957 that Ribault's monument deserved greater attention by the public. Suggestions by two local groups to move it to a new beaches location were made. Since Fort Caroline National Memorial was soon to open to the public on St. Johns Bluff it was decided by secret ballot to work with the National Park Service in determining a suitable location for it there. **Mrs. Garrett Porter** donated property along the bluff and the monument was moved to its current location on July 8, 1958.

Today, as it has everyday since it was first dedicated in 1924, the monument continues to commemorate the landing of Jean Ribault and his brave band of French Huguenot explorers. In its own silent way it continues to remind thousands of annual visitors that these shores were once claimed by Frenchmen for their king.