

HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

CHAPTER I

THE OPENING OF OUR HISTORY

March 27, 1513, was Easter Sunday, *Pascua Florida* in the language of the Spaniard. Along the stretch that we now call the Florida east coast north of Canaveral the weather was stormy and the sea was running high. Off shore three caravels lingered with sails reefed down, for land had been sighted that day and the adventurers aboard, wishing to investigate, hove to for the weather to calm. They loitered northerly along the coast a week; then they headed in, and in the night, April 2, came to anchor near the beach.

Here the commander with his principal officers formally landed, probably at sunrise of April 3d. Throwing the royal banner of Spain to the breeze they declared allegiance to the crown and proclaimed possession of the country, which they supposed was an island, in the name of Ferdinand, their king. Following the custom of that day to commemorate important events with the names of feast days or patron Saints, in this case, because the discovery was made on Easter Sunday, they named the new land Florida.

This scene on the beach was the landing of Juan Ponce de Leon and the opening of the positive history of the white man in North America. Fortunately, Ponce de Leon recorded the location of his landing and as it is the only record the observation 30 degrees and 8 minutes latitude must forever designate the locality where he first landed on the soil of Florida. Laid down on the map today, the location is about 11 miles south of the pier at Pablo Beach and within 25 miles of Jacksonville straight away.

* It would appear that the existence of flowers here had nothing to do with naming the country. The native flora of the coastal beach section is there today, and one would wonder what Ponce de Leon, coming from verdant Porto Rico, could have seen to cause the enthusiasm attributed to him by history writers. The embellishment of the record to the effect that