The French Arrive

Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France and champion of
the cause of the Huguenots, visualized the new land across
the sea as a place where his unhappy countrymen might live
according to their own ideals and at the same time build up
a new dominion by colonization, thereby extending the pos-
sessions of France. It was a dream of colonization upon the
republican principle of freedom of thought; but in it also
was another idea — that of conquest. Coligny had already
attempted to plant such a colony in South America, in the
harbor of Rio Janeiro, but it had perished. However, he
did not despair, and early in 1562 he despatched another ex-
pedition of two vessels from Havre de Grace to seek a place
of settlement for the colony that was to follow. The com-
mand of these vessels was given to Jean Ribault, a native of
Dieppe and a Huguenot.

* Ribault's name was spelled in different ways by the
historians of the 16th and 17th centuries. French—Ribauldus
(rare), Ribaud, Ribault, Ribaut; the form with the "I" is the

Second in command of this expedition was Rene Goulaine
de Laudonniere, likewise a Huguenot. Ribault steered a new
course across the Atlantic north of the West Indies and came
in sight of the Florida coast near the present site of St. Au-
gustine on the last day of April. The weather being favor-
able he sailed northward and just before sunset came to the
mouth of a large river (the St. Johns), but did not enter it.
He anchored outside the bar.

At dawn the next day, which was May 1, 1562, Ribault
and several officers and soldiers crossed the bar in their
shallops (large rowboats with a number of oarsmen) for the
purpose of exploring the river. They soon saw natives com-
ing down to the bank of the river in a friendly manner, even
pointing out to them the best place to land. Ribault and his
party went ashore. An Indian approached and Ribault gave
him a looking-glass. He ran with it to his chief, who took off
his girdle and sent it to Ribault as a token of friendship. The
two parties now approached each other. The natives greeted
the white men with dignity and without indication of fear.
After the greeting, the Frenchmen retired a short distance,