

GREAT EPOCHS IN  
AMERICAN HISTORY:  
DESCRIBED BY FAMOUS WRITERS  
FROM COLUMBUS TO WILSON.

VOL. 2.

THE PLANTING OF THE FIRST COLONIES  
1562-1733

By

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## **Introduction**

### ***(The Planting of the First Colonies)***

After the discoverers and explorers of the sixteenth century came (chiefly in the seventeenth) the founders of settlements that grew into States—French Huguenots in Florida and Carolina; Spaniards in St. Augustine; English Protestants in Virginia and Massachusetts; Dutch and English in New York; Swedes in New Jersey and Delaware; Catholic English in Maryland; Quaker English and Germans in Pennsylvania; Germans and Scotch-Irish in Carolina; French Catholics in Louisiana; Oglethorpe's debtors in Georgia.

To some of these came disastrous failures—to the Huguenots and Spaniards in Florida, to the English in Roanoke, Cuttyhunk and Kennebee. Others who survived had stern and precarious first years—the English in Jamestown and Plymouth, the Dutch in New York, the French in New Orleans. Chief among leaders stand John Smith, Bradford, Penn, Bienville and Oglethorpe, and chief among settlements, Jamestown, Plymouth, New York, Massachusetts Bay, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New Orleans

and Savannah. The several movements, in their failures as in their successes, were distributed over a century and three-quarters, but since the coming of Columbus a much longer period had elapsed. From the discovery to the arrival of Oglethorpe lie 240 years, or a hundred years more than the period that separates our day from the years when America gained her independence from England.

Each center of settlement had been inspired by an impulse separate from that of others. Alike as some of them were, in having as a moving cause a desire to escape from persecution, religious or political, or otherwise to better conditions, they were divided by years, if not by generations, in time; the settlers came from lands isolated and remote from one another; they were different as to race, form of government, and religious and political ideals, and, once communities had been founded, each expanded on lines of its own and knew little of its neighbors.

The Spaniards who founded St. Augustine continued long to live there, but of social and political growth in Spanish Florida there was none. Spain, in those eventful European years, was fully absorbed elsewhere in Continental wars which taxed all her strength, especially that furious war, waged for forty years against Holland, and from which Spain retired ultimately in failure. In those years also was overthrown Philip's Armada, an event in which the scepter of maritime-empire passed from Spain to England.

Of the French settlements the chief was New Orleans, French from the beginning, and so to re-

main in racial preponderance, religious beliefs, and political ideals, for a century and a half after Bienville founded it—so, in fact, it still remains in our day. But elsewhere the French gave to the United States no permanent settlements. Numbers of them came to Florida, only to perish by the sword; others in large numbers settled in South Carolina, only to become merged with other races, among whom the English, with their speech and their laws, became supreme.

On Manhattan Island and in the valleys of the Hudson and lower Mohawk settled the Dutch a few years after the English at Jamestown. They erected forts on Manhattan Island and at Albany, Hartford and near Philadelphia; they partitioned vast tracts of fertile lands among favorite patroons; they built up a successful trade in furs with the Indians—and sent the profits home. Real settlements they did not found—at least, not settlements that were infused with the spirit of local enterprise, or animated by vital ambitions looking to growth in population and industry. After forty years of prosperity in trade they had failed to become a settled and well-ordered colonial state, looking bravely forward to permanence, expansion and eventual statehood. The first free school in America is credited to their initiative, and they were tolerant of other religions than their own, but they planted no other seeds from which a great State could grow.

As Coligny before him had sought to plant in Florida a colony of French Huguenots, so Raleigh,

who had served under that great captain in the religious wars of the Continent, sought to found in Virginia a Protestant state. Much private wealth and many of his best years were given by Raleigh to the furtherance of a noble ambition, but all to futile immediate results. Raleigh's work, however, like all good work nobly done, was not lost. Out of his failure at Roanoke came English successes in later years—John Smith at Jamestown, the Pilgrims at Plymouth.

Oldest of permanent English settlements in America is Jamestown, but the English failures at Cuttyhunk and Kennebec antedate it by a few years, and the failure at Roanoke by a quarter of a century. At Jamestown, ten years after the arrival of the first settlers, a legislative assembly was organized—a miniature parliament, modeled after the English House of Commons, and the first legislative body the new world ever knew. Here, too, in Jamestown began negro slavery in the United States, and in the same, or the next, year. Thus legislative freedom and human slavery had their beginning in America at the same time and in the same place.

Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, next among the English settlements, followed in due time the failure of Gosnold at Cuttyhunk and the description of New England John Smith wrote and printed in 1614 after a voyage of exploration along her coast. After several years Plymouth contained only about 300 souls, but the Bay colony, founded ten years later, increased rapidly. By 1634 nearly 4,000 of Winthrop's

followers had arrived, many of them college graduates. From this great parent colony went forth Roger Williams to Rhode Island, Hooker to Hartford, Davenport to New Haven, so that by the middle of the seventeenth century five English colonies had been planted within the borders of New England.

Long after all these came the Maryland and Pennsylvania settlements, founded by Lord Baltimore and William Penn as lords proprietor, owners of vast tracts of land and possessing privileges more extensive than ever before were bestowed on British subjects. In the new century arrived Oglethorpe, with his insolvent debtors, soon to find Spaniards from St. Augustine hostile to his enterprise. But Oglethorpe was a soldier as well as a colonizer; he had served in Continental wars, and, after laying siege to St. Augustine further aggressions from that source ceased.

Thus at last, in the New World, the English race, their flag, their language and their laws, had displaced the Spaniards in that world-important contest for dominion and power, of which the second issue was soon to be fought out on many bloody fields with France.

F.W.H.

## The Founding of St. Augustine and the Massacre by Menendez (1562-1565)

### *The Account by John Doyle\**

In 1562 the French Huguenot party, headed by Coligny, made another attempt† to secure themselves a refuge in the New World. Two ships set sail under the command of Jean Ribault, a brave and experienced seaman, destined to play a memorable and tragic part in the history of America. Ribault does not seem to have set out with any definite scheme of colonization, but rather, like Amidas and Barlow, to have contented himself with preliminary exploration. In April he landed on the coast of Florida. . .

*\* From Doyle's "English Colonies in America." By permission of the publishers, Henry Holt & Co.*

*† Coligny's first attempt was made in 1555, when two shiploads of Huguenot immigrants (290 persons), under Villegagnon, were sent to Brazil. This settlement was soon destroyed by the Portuguese.*

After he had laid the foundations of a fort, called in honor of the king Charlefort, Ribault returned to France. He would seem to have been unfortunate in his choice alike of colonists and of a commander. The settlers lived on the charity of the Indians, sharing in their festivities, wandering from village to village and wholly doing away with any belief in their superior wisdom and power which might yet have possessed their savage neighbors. . .

France was torn asunder by civil war, and had no leisure to think of an insignificant settlement beyond the Atlantic. No supplies came to the settlers, and they could not live forever on the bounty of their savage neighbors. The settlers decided to return home. To

*Menendez's expedition of 1565 followed the earlier Spanish expeditions by Ponce de Leon, Narvaez and De Soto. It sailed from Cadiz and comprized eleven ships. Twenty-three other vessels followed, the entire company numbering 2,646 persons. The aim of Menendez was to begin a permanent settlement in Florida. On arrival he found a colony of French Huguenots already in possession, having been there three years. A conflict was inevitable, and one which forms a most melancholy chapter in the early history of American colonization. Menendez hanged Huguenots, "not as Frenchmen, but as heretics," while Gourgues hanged Spaniards "not as Spaniards, but as traitors, robbers and murderers." After the conflicts closed the Spaniards maintained themselves in St. Augustine until 1586, when St. Augustine was completely destroyed by Sir Francis Drake. Two years later the Armada of Spain was overthrown in the English Channel, largely as the work of Drake.*

do this it was needful to build a bark with their own hands from the scanty resources which the wilderness offered. Whatever might have been the failings of the settlers, they certainly showed no lack of energy or of skill in concerting means for their departure. They felled the trees to make planks, moss served for calking, and their shirts and bedding for sails, while their Indian friends supplied cordage. When their bark was finished they set sail. Unluckily in their impatience to be gone, they did not reckon what supplies they would need. The wind, at first favorable, soon turned against them, and famine stared them in the face. Driven to the last resort of starving seamen, they cast lots for a victim, and the lot, by a strange chance, fell upon the very man whose punishment had been a chief count against De Pierria. Life was supported by this hideous relief, till they came in sight of the French coast. Even then their troubles were not over. An English privateer bore down upon them and captured them. The miseries of the prisoners seem, in some measure, to have touched their enemies. A few of the weakest were landed on French soil. The rest ended their wanderings in an English prison.

The needs of the abandonment of the colony did not reach France till long after the event. Before its arrival a fleet was sent out to the relief of the colony. Three ships were dispatched, the largest of a hundred and twenty tons, the least of sixty tons, under the command of René Laudonniere, a young Poitevin of good birth. On their outward voyage they touched at Teneriffe and Dominica, and found ample evidence

at each place of the terror which the Spaniards had inspired among the natives. In June the French reached the American shore south of Port Royal. As before, their reception by the Indians was friendly. Some further exploration failed to discover a more suitable site than that which had first presented itself, and accordingly a wooden fort was soon built with a timber palisade and bastions of earthen work. Before long the newcomers found that their intercourse with the Indians was attended with unlooked-for difficulties. There were three tribes of importance, each under the command of a single chief, and all more or less hostile to the other. In the South the power of the chiefs seems to have been far more dreaded, and their influence over the national policy more authoritative than among the tribes of New England and Canada. Laudonniere, with questionable judgment, entangled himself in these Indian feuds, and entered into an offensive alliance with the first of these chiefs whom he encountered, Saurionna. . .

A new source of trouble, however, soon beset the unhappy colonists. Their quarrels had left them no time for tilling the soil, and they were wholly dependent on the Indians for food. The friendship of the savages soon proved but a precarious means of support. The dissensions in the French camp must have lowered the newcomers in the eyes of their savage neighbors. They would only part with their supplies on exorbitant terms. Laudonniere himself throughout would have adopted moderate and conciliatory measures, but his men at length became impatient and

seized one of the principal Indian chiefs as a hostage for the good behavior of his countrymen. A skirmish ensued, in which the French were victorious. It was clear, however, that the settlement could not continue to depend on supplies extorted from the Indians at the point of the sword. The settlers felt that they were wholly forgotten by their friends in France, and they decided, tho with heavy hearts, to forsake the country which they had suffered so much to win. . .

Just, however, as all the preparations for departure were made, the long-expected help came. Ribault arrived from France with a fleet of seven vessels containing three hundred settlers and ample supplies. This arrival was not a source of unmixed joy to Laudonni re. His factious followers had sent home calumnious reports about him, and Ribault brought out orders to send him home to stand his trial. Ribault himself seems to have been easily persuaded of the falsity of the charges, and prest Laudonni re to keep his command; but he, broken in spirit and sick in body, declined to resume office.

All disputes soon disappeared in the face of a vast common misfortune. Whatever internal symptoms of weakness might already display themselves in the vast fabric of the Spanish empire, its rulers showed as yet no lack of jealous watchfulness against any attempts to rival her successes in America. The attempts of Cartier and Roberval\* had been watched,

\* *In the valley of the St. Lawrence as described in Volume I.*

and the Spanish ambassador at Lisbon had proposed to the King of Portugal to send out a joint armament to dispossess the intruders. The king deemed the danger too remote to be worth an expedition, and the Spaniards unwillingly acquiesced. An outpost of fur traders in the ice-bound wilderness of Canada might seem to bring little danger with it. But a settlement on the coast of Florida, within some eight days' sail of Havana, with a harbor whence privateers might waylay Spanish ships and even attack Spanish colonies, was a rival not to be endured. Moreover, the colonists were not only foreigners but Huguenots, and their heresy served at once as a pretext and stimulus to Spanish zeal.

The man to whose lot it fell to support the monopoly of Spain against French aggression was one who, if we may judge by his American career, needed only a wider field to rival the genius and the atrocities of Alva. Pedro de Menendez, when he had scarcely passed from boyhood, had fought both against the French and the Turks, and had visited America and returned laden with wealth. He then did good service in command of the Spanish fleet in the French war, and his prompt cooperation with the land force gave him a share in the glories of St. Quentin.† A second voyage to America was even

† *St. Quentin is a town in northeastern France, near which on August 10, 1557, the army of Philip II, Spain, won a great victory over the combined armies of France and England.*

more profitable than the first, but his misconduct there brought him into conflict with the Council of the Indies, by whom he was imprisoned, and heavily fined. His previous services, however, had gained him the favor of the court. Part of his fine was remitted, and he was emboldened to ask not merely for pardon, but for promotion. He proposed to revive the attempt of De Soto and to extend the Spanish power over Florida. The expedition was to be at Menendez's own cost; he was to take out five hundred colonists, and in return to be made Governor of Florida for life and to enjoy certain rights for free trade with the West Indies and with the mother country. . .

The military genius of Menendez rose to the new demands made upon it. He at once decided on a bold and comprehensive scheme which would secure the whole coast from Port Royal to Chesapeake Bay, and would ultimately give Spain exclusive possession of the South Seas and the Newfoundland fisheries. The Spanish captain had a mind which could at once conceive a wide scheme and labor at the execution of details. So resolutely were operations carried on that by June, 1565, Menendez sailed from Cadiz with thirty-four vessels and four thousand six hundred men. After a stormy voyage he reached the mouth of the St. John's river. Ribault's party was about to land, and some of the smaller vessels had crossed the harbor, while others yet stood out to sea. Menendez hailed the latter, and after some parley told them that he had come there with orders from

the king of Spain to kill all intruders that might be found on the coast. The French being too few to fight, fled. Menendez did not for the present attack the settlement, but sailed southward till he reached a harbor which he named St. Augustine. There the Spaniards disembarked and threw up a fortification destined to grow into the town of St. Augustine, the first permanent Spanish settlement north of the Gulf of Mexico. Various attempts had been made, and with various motives. The slave-hunter, the gold-seeker, the explorer had each tried his fortunes in Florida, and each failed. The difficulties which had baffled them all were at length overcome by the spirit of religious hatred.

Meanwhile a council of war was sitting at the French settlement, Charlefort. Ribault, contrary to the wishes of Laudonniere and the rest, decided to anticipate the Spaniards by an attack from the sea. A few sick men were left with Laudonniere to garrison the fort; all the rest went on board. Just as everything was ready for the attack, a gale sprang up, and the fleet of Ribault, instead of bearing down on St. Augustine, was straggling in confusion off an unknown and perilous coast. Menendez, relieved from immediate fear for his own settlement, determined on a bold stroke. Like Ribault, he bore down the opposition of a cautious majority, and with five hundred picked men marched overland through thirty miles of swamp and jungle against the French fort. Thus each commander was exposing his own settlement in order to menace his enemies.

In judging, however, of the relative prudence of the two plans, it must be remembered that an attack by land is far more under control, and far less liable to be disarranged by unforeseen chances than one by sea. At first it seemed as if each expedition was destined to the same fate. The weather was as unfavorable to the Spanish by land as to the French by sea. At one time a mutiny was threatened, but Menendez succeeded in inspiring his men with something of his own enthusiasm, and they persevered. Led by a French deserter, they approached the unprotected settlement. So stormy was the night that the sentinels had left the walls. The fort was stormed; Laudonniere and a few others escaped to the shore and were picked up by one of Ribault's vessels returning from its unsuccessful expedition. The rest, to the number of one hundred and forty, were slain in the attack or taken prisoners. The women and children were spared, the men were hung on trees with an inscription pinned to their breasts: "Not as to Frenchmen, but as to Lutherans."

The fate of Ribault's party was equally wretched. All were shipwrecked, but most apparently succeeded in landing alive. Then began a scene of deliberate butchery, aggravated, if the French accounts may be believed, by the most shameless treachery. As the scattered bands of shipwrecked men wandered through the forest, seeking to return to Fort Caroline, they were mercilessly entrapped by friendly words, if not by explicit promises of safety. Some escaped to the Indians, a few were at last