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### France versus Spain in Florida, 1562-1564 (Prize essay)

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## FRANCE VERSUS SPAIN IN FLORIDA 1562-1564

[This essay was awarded a first prize in the Irving Bacheller-Florida Historical Society essay contest for Florida high school students, held at Rollins College under the direction of Alfred J. Hanna, on February twenty-second last. Its author, Donald Jaegar, is a student of Dade City High School. The other prize winners were: Thelma Baker of Orlando, Pyrle Dillingham of Delray Beach, and Laura Belle Fisher of Tampa. These three wrote on *The Conquistadores of Florida, 1513-1561.* ]

An old grizzled Indian with a blanket thrown loosely about his shoulders got up slowly, and kicking the unburned fagots into a fire began to speak.

“Warriors, you who do not know me, hear my name, Saturiba. I come from many marches to the north, a land of flowing rivers and singing birds. It was indeed a land of delight until the white man entered with his fire sticks and cutting knives. I come from Walaka, the river of many lakes. I, the son of Mica am driven to you for refuge. I, who was chief of many tribes I will tell you of the invasion of the white man into Walaka and you may judge whether I shall stay with you as a brother warrior.

“Many, many, moons ago came a dark, swarthy people, from across the great waters. They came like gulls, in great boats with white wings, which they spread to catch the wind, to drive them onward. We received these people with presents of corn, grapes, and the best of all we had. In return for this they plundered and pillaged our people, scattering them afar. They set their villages like a curse on nature along the banks of the rivers of our birth. They endeavored to show us a new God, a creature of wonder, who saw all. He was, they said, born many moons ago, by the white man’s reckoning, fifteen hundred and

seventy seasons ago. Many of us turned to the following of this wondrous God, I among them.

“Then, many seasons after the first dark hued ones had come from beyond the great waters, another people came, a short, quick, wiry people, people of great courage, wisdom and kindness. Of these will I tell you and of our struggle with them against the people of dark skins.

“The dark ones were as they told us, Spaniards, and the short ones were French. The French came first forty-nine seasons after the first Spaniards came. The first came with a warrior whose name was Jean Ribaut. He landed at our river of many lakes, but going farther on set up a village called Charles Fort in honor of their chief. However, these people, whose leaders were weak, could not make a living and they soon built a boat with wings and went away.

“Two seasons later came others of these people, whose chief’s name was Rene Laudonniere. This colony, as their villages are called, fared little better than the other. When they were almost vanquished, help came from a friendly nation’s ships which were passing by, and the colony stayed on.

“Then came back the first French warrior Ribaut, from across the sea. He was pursued by a dark-hued Spaniard, Menendez by name, but escaped uninjured. These two warriors were of different faith; the French were of the Protestant faith and the Spanish of the Roman Catholic. The difference in these I do not know. However, I know the French were the better people. They were received kindly by our people and they treated us well.

“Then, on the same day one season later, the French, under the leadership of the great warrior Ribaut, set out by sea to attack the Spaniard Menendez. The Spanish set out by land to attack the French

village Fort Caroline, under the leadership of the same Menendez. Unfortunately the French were wrecked, and the murderer Menendez captured the French village, shooting most of the people and hanging the rest with the inscription: 'Not as to Frenchmen, but as to Protestants.'

"Ribaut, when he surrendered himself to the dog of a Spaniard, Menendez, was on an inlet which was impassable. He and his men were murdered in cold blood because of their religion. Some of them refused to surrender and were later captured by Menendez, but were unharmed at this time.

"Then three seasons after this, came an avenger for the French, in the person of a brave chieftain named Dominic De Gourgues. He was joyfully received as a deliverer from the hateful Spaniards, by my brother chief, Olcatora and me. We allied ourselves to him and attacked and recaptured the village of Fort Caroline which had been called San Mateo by the hateful Spaniards. The brave Dominic then retaliated by hanging the people of this Spanish rat's nest on the same trees his brother countrymen had hung. Above them he hung this inscription of vengeance: 'Not as to Spaniards but as to traitors, robbers and murderers.'

"Our brave friend, after avenging his friends, set sail amid our sorrowings, in the great boats.

"After this going away, I swore to come to you of the Great Swamps and ask you to receive my tribe of the North and me, Saturiba, as of your tribe, a mighty and kindly people."

Guttural grunts of "How", "How", came from the impassive chiefs surrounding the dying fire. Then at a signal from Laktchampa, the great chief, the low chant of "Friendship to the Stranger" began. As the volume increased, the tom-tom boomed, and the chiefs stamped and danced in time with its deep-toned rhythm.

In the third circling around the fire, Saturiba was included in the strange procession. He and his people had found safety within the camps of the strangers. The fiery Spaniard, the lithe Frenchman and the bloody struggle for their home, was forgotten.

**DONALD JAEGER**