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VIRGINIA DARE NOT FIRST WHITE YOUNGUN BORN IN U.S!

By HAMPTON DUNN

JACKSONVILLE --- The Fort Caroline National Memorial tear here marks the site of the first European colony on the North American continent this side of Mexico. It represents France's bold bid to get into the great competition for New World territory.

The French hero who touched down here on May Day, 1562, was Huguenot Jean Ribaut. He called what is now St. Johns River, the River of May. He presented the friendly Timucuan Indians a column in honor of King Charles IX (see photo). He then went on to South Carolina, where he left a small garrison and returned home.

Ribaut's mariner on that trip, Rene de Laudonniere, headed up a new expedition of some 300 Huguenots who landed at the St. Johns site on June 25, 1564 and founded Fort Caroline.

Take it from present day Congressman Charles E. Bennett, a scholar and researcher into the history of the French exploits here, eight or ten white children were born at the fort. Since this was more than two decades before Virginia Dare saw the light of day in the Virginia colony, it disputes the historical legend that Virginia was the first white child born in this country. She was the first child born of English parents.

Ribaut's folks had a rough time surviving in the new world, and the Spanish did not want them on "Spanish land." An armada led by Pedro Menendez de Aviles sailed under orders from King Philip to wipe out the French and to get a foothold for the Spanish in Florida. He did both, establishing St. Augustine on Sept. 8, 1565, and smashing Fort Caroline a few days later.