

# THE FOUNDING OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles (1519–1574)

September 1565

On Thursday, just as day appeared, we sailed towards the vessel at anchor, passed very close to her, and would certainly have captured her, when we saw another vessel appear on the open sea, which we thought was one of ours. At the same moment, however, we thought we recognized the French admiral's ship. We perceived the ship on the open sea; it was the French galley of which we had been in pursuit.

Finding ourselves between these two vessels, we decided to direct our course toward the galley, for the sake of deceiving them and preventing them from attacking us, so as not to give them any time to wait. This bold maneuver having succeeded, we sought the river Seloy and port, of which I have spoken, where we had the good fortune to find our galley, and another vessel which had planned the same thing we had.

Two companies of infantry now disembarked; that of Captain Andres Soyez Patino, and that of Captain Juan de San Vincente, who is a very distinguished gentleman. They were well-received by the Indians, who gave them a large house belonging to a chief, and situated near the shore of the river. Immediately Captain Patino and Captain San Vincente, both men of talent and energy, ordered an entrenchment to be built around this house, with a slope of earth and fascines, these being the only means of defense possible in that country, where stones are nowhere to be found.

Up to today we have disembarked twenty-four pieces of bronze guns of different calibers, of which the least weighed fifteen hundredweight. Our fort is at a distance of about fifteen leagues from that of the enemy (Fort Caroline).

The energy and talents of those two brave captains, joined to the efforts of their brave soldiers, who had no tools with which to work the earth, accomplished the construction of this fortress of defense; and when the general disembarked, he was quite surprised with what had been done.

On Saturday, the 8<sup>th</sup>, the general landed with many banners spread, to the sound of trumpets and salutes of artillery. As I had gone ashore the evening before, I took a cross and went to meet him, singing the hymn *Te Deum Laudamus*. The general marched up to the cross, followed by all who accompanied him, and there they all kneeled and embraced the cross. A large number of Indians watched these proceedings and imitated all they saw done.

The same day the general took formal possession of the country in the name of His Majesty, and all the captains took the oath of allegiance to him, as their general and governor of the country. When this ceremony was ended, he offered to do everything in his power for them, especially for Captain Patino, who during the whole voyage had ardently served the cause of God and of the King; and, I think, will be rewarded for his assiduity and talents in constructing a fort in which to defend ourselves until the arrival of help from Santo Domingo and Havana.

The French number about as many as we do, and perhaps more. My advice to the general was not to attack the enemy, but to let the troops rest all winter and wait for the assistance daily expected; and then we may hope to make a successful attack.

God and the holy Virgin have performed another great miracle in our favor.

"Memoir of Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida*, Second Series (1875), II:215–221.