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The Effects of Huguenot Settlements Upon the French Colonial Empire

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PREFACE

Considering this paper for a Seminar in Early Colonial History, I became particularly interested in the French colonization efforts in the New World. My interest stems from the fact that I am a teacher of American History in the Public School system of the State of Utah. Due to the meager information contained in the textbooks used, most Americans know very little about the beginning of the French settlements and their impact upon the French Colonial Empire. Americans have heard of the French cities of Quebec, Montreal, New Orleans, and some others. They are aware that on the plains of Abraham the fate of the French Colonial Empire in North America was sealed. England became the supreme colonial power in that area.

At first, I had thought to trace the location and growth of these early French settlements and their struggle for survival. However, as I began my research and collection of information, the story of the Huguenot settlements in the New World and their persecutions in Europe began to intrigue me. I began to wonder what influence these Huguenot settlements may have had on the building of the French Colonial Empire in the New World.

The French religious wars between the government of France and the Huguenots had caused severe persecutions of these Huguenots, and political factions began to flourish along with deep hatred for each other, both of which were far reaching.

Philip II of Spain did not like these Huguenot heretics settling upon land in the New World claimed by Spain. He intervened and was the
final contributing cause to the failure of the colonization attempt of 1564 in the Carolinas.

Charles I of England using as a pretense the Huguenot persecutions declared war on France. This war spread to the French colonies in North America and eventually France, in 1763, did lose her colonial empire in the Canadian area to England.

It is my desire to stimulate thinking as to what influence the Huguenots' colonization attempts may have had on the fate of the French Colonial Empire in the New World.
INTRODUCTION

To determine whether the Huguenot colonization had any influence on the loss of the French Colonial Empire in the New World only the major colonization attempts will be studied and analyzed. The French loss of Acadia in 1763 sealed the fate of the French colonization in North America. After this the main migration of the Huguenots to the New World was through other European countries. Arthur Hirsch, in The Huguenots in Colonial South Carolina, listed these migrations to America.

This study will not be concerned with the Huguenot civil wars in France, except where these wars have indicated a relationship to the French colonization attempts in the New World. Neither will the French explorations in the Great Lakes area and the settlement at New Orleans be considered. The explorations in the Great Lakes area were principally an extension of the fur trade and the efforts of the Jesuits to teach Christianity to the Indians. The New Orleans settlement will not be considered until research in that area has been completed.

This study, therefore, will consider only four major colonization attempts involving Huguenots into the New World--first, ventures made at Port Royal and Quebec in Acadia; second, the attempt in Brazil; third, the venture in Florida; and fourth, the Carolina attempt. Also included in this study will be a general overview of the French Colonial policy.

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This overview is intended to relate the attitude at different times of the French government as to their colonial design.
ORIGIN OF HUGUENOTS

The persecution of the French Protestants (Huguenots) and their journeys form a familiar chapter in the history of migrations. It is estimated that the total exodus of the Huguenots from France vary from 300,000 to 1,000,000.\(^2\) In order to understand the problems involved in this study, it should be determined who the Huguenots were and some background for their migration.

The name Huguenot is of unknown origin; however, it is believed to be a diminutive for the personal name, Hugo, which was applied to the Protestants of France during their religious struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These French Huguenots had adopted the doctrine of Calvinism. In spite of the early opposition of the French King, Francis II, the Huguenots prospered and grew. Under Henry II (1547-1549) they became a strong political force headed by the King of Navarre. A Huguenot conspiracy to compel Henry II to dismiss the Guises, an opposing faction of Catholic faith, was discovered. Because of this conspiracy, many Huguenots were killed, or imprisoned, or they fled the country. Even under the encouragement to allow religious freedom by Catherine de Medicis, Queen Mother of France (1559-1589) and woman of influence with the French Crown, a series of religious wars followed. Later Catherine began to fear the Huguenots and joined the Guises. Beginning with the massacre of St.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 2.
Bartholomew (1572) a number of battles were fought until the Edict of Nantes (1598) by Henry IV of Navarre ended the strife temporarily. Since the Huguenots were permitted to keep their fortified cities, Richelieu the Cardinal Minister, feared that the Huguenots would form a kingdom within France. He crushed the Huguenots in a war from 1624-1629, and forced them to give up all of their fortresses. Although the Huguenots were permitted a certain freedom of conscience, the persecution continued. Civil rights were denied and troops were sent to compel them to abjure their faith. The Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, and 50,000 Huguenots fled to other countries.³

It is also interesting to note that seventy-five to one hundred years before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, hundreds of Huguenots were leaving France on account of the opposition directed against them in local politics, restraints in trade, and other reasons, both social and political. Even before the repeal of the Edict of Nantes it was becoming clear to the Huguenot leaders that they were forced to face the prospects of a large exodus from France. The employers of labor were beginning to make arrangements for their industries to be moved to places of safety.⁴

The Huguenots were welcomed in all parts of Western Europe. Thus we have a large migration of a hardy race; skilled in numerous trades, expert in the culture of wine, silk, and oil; perturbed in spirit by persecution; inured by labor, fatigue, and privation; and yet enthusiastic.


⁴Hirsch, p. 3. Hirsch explains this by a footnote at the bottom of this page.
because of their religious zeal.5

Especially cordial was the reception of the Huguenots in England. She gave asylum to all who fled. In fact for more than one hundred years she had encouraged the Huguenots of France to migrate to England. So great was the migration that the English government granted complete religious tolerance and French churches were founded. Hirsch states that:

It is estimated that 120,000 Huguenots went to England, either temporarily or permanently. They were refugees of all ranks, soldiers and sailors, ministers, merchants, and mechanics, teachers and traders, lawyers, and laborers (see Smiles, Huguenots, 230). Among the refugees were a large number of professional men . . . . 7

Although the Huguenots were heartily welcomed in England, there were reasons for their wanting to migrate to America. It was looked upon as a place inhabited by peaceful natives and a place of salvation where the children of Europe could live in comparative peace and innocence, free from the rigid requirements of antiquated religious limitations.8

5 Ibid., p. 3.
6 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
7 Ibid., p. 3. Footnote at bottom of this page.
8 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
FRENCH COLONIAL DESIGN

As the Huguenots began to think seriously of migration, the French Colonial design in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was like that of other European countries. They clung tenaciously to the mercantilist view of the value of establishing colonies:

According to this theory, the aim of nations was to become self-sufficient unities. Colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country only, and were to be carefully regulated and exploited for profit. The home governments had very little interest in the development of self-supporting colonies or in the institution of local government. France's primary objective in North America was the promotion of fur trade and fishing. These should yield immediate revenue for the royal treasury and could be administered from the head of government in France.  

The seventeenth century saw the beginning of trade development in North America by the French, but colonization and settlement lagged behind. Companies established for the fur trade paid good dividends, but made little progress in promoting settlements. It seemed incompatible to obtain maximum profits from the fur trade and to establish and develop permanent settlements. The fur trade could thrive only in a country that would remain as a wilderness.  

However, the real fundamentals of the French colonial policy were:

... Absolute paternalism, close union of church and state, trade monopoly. So close was the supervision exercised by this paternalistic French government that practically nothing was left to private determination.

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10 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
and initiative. Moreover, under this theory of government, since it would be impossible for the king to excise direct control, it became a practice to farm out, either to persons or to companies, a monopoly for power to plant colonies, establish missions, and exploit trade dependency.\textsuperscript{11}

This French paternalistic colonial design could not easily be put into effect because the country was torn by numerous Civil wars between the French Catholics and Huguenots. However, upon the signing of the Edict of Nantes, April 13, 1598, the country had religious freedom, civil rights, and revival of trade enjoyed by both Catholics and Huguenots. At this time the French King Henry IV had as his chief counselor, a man named Sully who was a Protestant. It was under Sully that Henry encouraged colonization.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 13.

In 1604, the first attempt was made to plant a French colony in the New World in which the Huguenots were to be a part. Sieur de Monts was the organizer of this company; however, he encountered a problem in obtaining a commission to organize because of religious differences among the co-founders. The Parliament of Normandy refused to register de Monts' commission because of his conversion to Calvinism, and they didn't want a heretic in charge. However, Henry IV, who once had been a Protestant, interceded; and the commission was granted. He did command that religious instructions were to be in the charge of a priest. Champlain, who was a member of the company, envisioned this colony as a stepping stone to the long sought passage to China. 13

This company left Le Harve, France, in two ships on March 7, 1604. The personnel abroad was comprised of a group of one hundred and twenty artisans. They were considered above average because of being skilled persons and not the usual personnel from jails and the adventurers.

The religious problems between the Catholics and the Huguenots continued to be prevalent as an argument between a priest and a pastor diversified the personnel aboard for the voyage even to the point of scandal. 14


De Monts charged Champlain with the responsibility of finding a suitable place for the settlement. Champlain had been previously here on an earlier exploration and was the best known geographer for this particular area. The main considerations in selecting a place for settlement were fish, game, good soil, timber, minerals, and safe anchorage. This first colonization attempt almost failed before the actual landing took place. The colonists had remained aboard the ship while Champlain was exploring the surrounding area. Since he had been gone for a long time, they thought that perhaps he had met with an accident. The colonists were about ready to sail when he returned. Upon Champlain's return he and de Monts left Point Mounton where the colonist's ship had been anchored, and going from point to point finally on June 25 decided upon St. Croix which was an island for the site of the colony. Champlain describes:

Vessels could pass up the river only at the mercy of the cannon on the island and we deemed the location most advantageous, not only on the account of the intercourse which we propose with the savages of these coasts and the interior . . . . We hoped to pacify them in the course of time and put an end to the wars which they carry on with one another, so as to derive service from them in the future and convert them to Christian faith.\textsuperscript{15}

The colonists began at once to erect dwellings, among which a mill and oven were built. Gardens were laid out and seeds planted. The real obstacle to the project was mosquitoes which were pests that they were not quite used too in such severity. The work progressed very well and de Monts decided to explore farther south for the possibility of other

\textsuperscript{15}Colby, pp. 35-36.
settlements. He entrusted this to Champlain who sailed as far south as the Isle of Haut where he saw a great river which he envisioned as a possible passage to the route to China. He sailed up the river as far as what is now known as Bangor, Maine. A shortage of food caused him to sail back to St. Croix for the winter.

The eight months of winter were the most wretched to those who were used to the mild winters of France. The store house had no cellar and all the liquids froze, except the sherry. Champlain writes:

> Cider was served by the pound. We were obliged to use very bad water and drink melted snow as there were no springs or brooks. It was impossible to keep warm or to sleep soundly. The food was salt meat and vegetables which impaired the strength of every one and brought scurvy. Before spring came two-fifths of the colonists had died; and of those who remained, half were on the point of death. Not unnaturally all this produced discontent in Sieur de Monts and others of the settlement.17

Six weeks later the spirits of de Monts was revived when a ship arrived with fresh supplies. De Monts left to find a more suitable place for his colony. After exploring up and down the coast, he chose Port Royal; and in August 1605, he transported his colony to that area. Port Royal was a much better place for a settlement. The place had a good supply of water. It was surrounded by meadows, and the place was protected from the northwest wind which is normally very cold in the winter. The winter of 1605-1606 was much milder with less snow. The death rate was only twenty percent.18

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16 Ibid., p. 36.
17 Ibid., p. 37.
18 Ibid., pp. 40-42.
Pontgrave, another member of the company, arrived in June 1605 and had left his settlers at St. Croix. He explored with Champlain to the south, returned and transported his colonists to Port Royal. If he and Champlain had been more interested in agricultural rather than fur trade, plus attempting to find a passage to China, perhaps France would have settled in what is now the New England area and areas farther south. All the leaders decided they should not be too far away from the fur peltry area; therefore, they passed up this area and returned to Port Royal. Further explorations to the south to look at the coast of Florida was stopped because of ship-wreck. This prevented the French from putting settlements on Long Island three years before the actual settlement of the Dutch in that area.

De Monts advised Pontgrave that if supply ships did not arrive at Port Royal by the middle of July, he was to send the colonists back to Cape Breton or Gaspe where they would find trading ships home. Since a ship did not arrive by the time specified, all inhabitants, except two who remained because of inducement of extra pay to guard the stores, were removed from St. Croix. While the colonists were enroute to Cape Breton, they met Ralleau, de Monts' secretary, in a shallop. He told them that Pautrincourt, another member of the company, had arrived. The two ships had separated at Cansean in hopes of intercepting

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20 A heavy boat with one or more masts. A small light boat with or without mast, a dinghy.
the returning colonists. The colonists returned to Port Royal and re-established the colony. Further attempts at exploration were made to the south; however, the farthest point south was made to Martha's Vineyard. Exploration of the land was discouraged by the Indians' killing four Frenchmen.

On August 11, 1607, Port Royal was abandoned for the second time. The privileges of trade that had been granted by the King to de Monts were withdrawn; the parliament was hesitant to confirm the commission because de Monts leaned towards the Huguenots. Because of this, de Monts did not attempt to resupply Port Royal and withdrew the colonists. 22

During the summer of 1608, Champlain acting under the authority of de Monts landed on the banks of the St. Lawrence River which is the site of the present city of Quebec. However, for many years the place was barely a trading post. Protestant Huguenots and Catholics alike traded and lived at the post. One of the main topics of the long winter nights was religion. De Monts' company held a monopoly for trading and the Huguenots merchants in France enjoyed this venture. Consequently, from time to time the post was enlarged by the Huguenots. 23

Poutrinocourt returned to Port Royal in 1610 with new settlers and with a Jesuit Priest. However, ill-success that attended the former settlement was awaiting this endeavor. Bitter dissension broke out

22 Colby, pp. 97-98.
among the colonists which the presence of the Jesuit fathers did not contribute to the allay.

Henry IV was assassinated in 1610 and the merciless figure of Marie de Medicis appeared upon the French scene and the Huguenot leaders were denied a free hand in Port Royal. Further, Madame de Guercheville, a lady of honor to the queen, was an intense devotee of the Church of Rome, and an enthusiastic admirer of the Jesuits. The missions that this society had been carrying on with wonderful success for more than a half a century in Asia and South America shared her warmest interest. Since plans for similar work were being entertained for the northern continent of the New World, Madame de Guercheville was ready to give her influence and wealth for the furtherance of this idea. A golden opportunity presented itself to her. De Monts was in his native town of Pons being appointed to the government of that city. Pons was one of the strong places secured to the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes and great pains were being taken since the end of the civil war to repair the fortifications. De Monts was in pressing need for money to complete these repairs. The city was poorly garrisoned and its citizens, sharing increasing uneasiness since Henry IV death were anxious to augment this military force. Consequently, Madame de Guercheville persuaded de Monts to transfer his commission to her, and the title to the proprietorship of half a continent passed from the hands of a Huguenot into a subservient tool of the Jesuits. 24

Acadia was now the new chosen field for the beginning of missions of the Catholics in New France of the New World. In January, 1611 an

expedition set forth from France for the harbor of Port Royal. But this time no Huguenot ministers accompanied the colonists; among the chief passengers were two Jesuit priests, a van-guard of the spirited army of occupation that was to follow. In 1613, another ship came over bearing reinforcements of missionaries to plant a second station on the Acadia part of the New World. They chose the island of Mount Desert off the coast of Maine.

Samuel Argall, an English freebooter, cruising in these waters at the time of the arrival of the colony of 1613, destroyed the colony at Port Royal established by Poutrincourt and this colony. It is said that one of the Jesuit priests aboard the French vessel guided Argall to Port Royal.25

For a time Acadia was lost to the Jesuits; however, in 1621 the Duke of Montomorency, an open enemy of the Huguenots, became the new Viceroy of New France. He did not exclude the Huguenots from the colony. In fact, because of dissatisfaction with the management of the trade with Acadia, he conferred the monopoly upon a body of merchants to be known as the Compagnie Montmorency. A strong Huguenot, Guillaume de Caen, sieur de la Mothe of Dieppe was to head the company. De Caen was an enterprising merchant and under his capable administration the company flourished, spent large sums for ships and storehouses. In 1627 it boasted of an annual revenue of one hundred thousand francs.

One of the conditions imposed upon the monopoly was the transportation and maintainance of six friars of the order of St. Francis for the

25 Baird, pp. 105-106.
religious instructions of the colonists and the natives in the New World. De Caen was faithful to this agreement, but claimed for himself and his fellow-religionists all the liberties which the Edict of Nantes promised them. There were no great objections to this until in 1626 when three Jesuit fathers came to reinforce the Franciscans. De Caen and his followers gave them a cold reception. The new priests lost no time in stirring up strife with the hated heretics. The Jesuits most objectable complaint was that the Huguenot sailors at Quebec were regularly assembled by De Caen for prayer and singing of psalms and that the Romanist were forced to be present. The followers of Loyola especially detested it since their own rules exempted them from chants and other choral services observed by religious orders in the Catholic Church. The governor of Quebec was ordered to forbid these disorderly practices.

In 1616 another change in the vice-regency of New France took place; and Montmorency was succeeded by his nephew, Duke de Ventdour. The new viceroy, devoted to the Jesuits, sent over five members of the order. This meant that the time was drawing near when the powerful Society of Jesuits would carry out its plans to close Acadia to heresy. The area would be the exclusive field for the missions for the Church of Rome.

A few months later the Huguenot De Caen lost the monopoly of trade with the New World. A new company was formed to be known as the Company of New France with Cardinal Richelieu, the minister to Louis XIII of France, heading the new company. One of the conditions for the exclusive privileges and powers granted was that every emigrant transported to the New World must profess to be Roman Catholic. From this vast region—the whole continent of North America as claimed by France—heresy
was to be rigidly and forever excluded. The ultimate triumph of the Jesuits in suppressing heresy and the exclusion of the Huguenots came when Cardinal Richelieu conquered La Rochelle, the last Huguenot stronghold in 1628.\textsuperscript{26}

To the statesman and to the Jesuits this exclusion was a master stroke of policy. Because previously in France the Catholics and the Huguenots had lived in some areas in comparative peace and harmony and both had prospered, the Jesuits did not want this to prevail in the future in the New World. There were to be no compromises with heresy in the vast territory which the Jesuits now controlled in the New World. Coming generations of colonists must be shielded from the malign influences that had been at work in France ever since the days of Calvin.

It is interesting to note that in 1627 Cardinal Richelieu, the chief minister to the King of France, was devising a scheme as part of a general policy to build a world empire for France. Thus France would be able to dispute with England and Holland over the profits to be obtained from the New World. This company called the Company of New France had its headquarters in Paris with most of the stockholders Parisians. This company was to maintain absolute control over its territories under the king, exercising a perpetual monopoly over the fur trade and a fifteen year monopoly over all other trade of the colony. The only exceptions to the trade monopoly were the cod and whale fisheries. The colonists might trade with the Indians, but had to turn over all furs at a fixed price. The company had the power to tax, to create

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 106-112. Bell, pp. 78-79.
courts, and to appoint all administrative officials. Since the crown of France gave this power, the company was to fortify the colonies, to send three hundred faithful Roman Catholic colonists each year, to provide three priests for supervision of religious activities, and to convert the Indians to Christianity. Because the company officials and the crown of France were favorable to Catholics and the Society of Jesuits, the colonization of Acadia by the Huguenots was practically closed forever. 27

The prize almost eluded the Jesuits. While Richelieu was organizing his Company of New France, a project was being entertained in the British Court with the ultimate view of the conquest of the French possessions in the New World. England laid claim to North America by the right of discovery and in 1621 James I acting upon this assumption made over to one of his subjects, a Scottish gentleman, Sir William Alexander later the Earl of Stirling, the whole territory east of the St. Croix River and south of the St. Lawrence. This grant included all Acadia and the peninsula lands. For several years nothing was done by the English to make good these pretensions. England and France were at peace and the proprietorship in a distant wilderness was not enough to provoke a war. But in 1627, England entered the contest for the acquisition of land in Acadia. Charles I declared war on France declaring himself to be the protector of persecuted Protestants in France. Though the relief expedition of Lord Buckingham to the Huguenot stronghold, La Rochelle, failed, such was not the case in Acadia.

Sir William Alexander saw the opportunity to obtain possession of his grant; and under his auspices a squadron was fitted out for the conquest of the New France. It was easy to find good material for the expedition. England was now a main refuge of many Huguenot sailors and soldiers and all were ready for such an adventure. Acadia soon fell with the possession of Port Royal and the fort at Quebec under Champlain surrendered in July 1629. The Huguenot, Kirk, in command of the expedition accepted the surrender of the territory. The Jesuits who had come to occupy the mission field which they hoped to secure against the intrusion of heresy found themselves prisoners of the very men who they had hoped to ban from Acadia forever.

It was in May 1633 that Champlain, again appointed governor, took from the hands of the Protestant De Caen, who had been put in charge by the English, the keys of the Fort of Quebec. Two Jesuit missionaries, who had come over with De Caen were already in possession of the convent cult before the capture by the English. After this Acadia was closed by the Jesuits to Protestantism.
SUMMARY OF COLONIZATION IN ACADIA

From this time forward, Acadia was closed to Protestantism and the Huguenots. The privilege of a permanent residence was granted to only Frenchmen professing to be Catholics. 28

In this prohibition, a religious intolerance pronounced the failure and the doom of the French colonial system in the New World particularly in the North America part. Baird in The Huguenot Emigration to America, Volume I states, "The exclusion of the Huguenots from New France was one of most stupendous blunders that history records." 29 The French government's repressive policy pursued for the next fifty years tended to awaken and strengthen among the Protestants a desire to emigrate to foreign lands. They were industrious, thrifty, and anxious at most any sacrifice to enjoy the liberty of conscience denied them in France; and they would have rejoiced to build up a French state in the New World. No other desirable class of people of France were inclined for emigration. 30

The Jesuits became so worried about the arrival of so many Protestant Huguenots in the New England colonies, and naturally enough it was apprehended that in any invasion of the French provinces on part of New England and New York, because of war between England and France, these

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28 Ibid., pp. 108-117.

29 Ibid., p. 116.

30 Ibid., pp. 116-117.
renegades would be the foremost assailants. Because occasionally the Huguenot refugees in these British colonies were joined by Huguenots from Montreal or Quebec, strict laws were passed prohibiting any Acadians from leaving Acadia. They did not want them to join the heretics in the south for any invasion.

Five times from 1627 to 1763 the English, with the help of the English colonies seized Acadia and each time it was ceded back to France. However, by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1763 the area of Acadia became a part of the British Colonial Empire in the New World and in North America.  

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31 Ibid., p. 123.

32 Ibid., p. 129.
COLONIZATION IN BRAZIL

Now that the French have lost their colonial beginnings of an empire in Acadia in the New World then let us examine the Huguenot colonial attempt in Brazil.

Gaspard de Coligny, a French military hero, became interested in the Huguenot cause and wanted to help them find a place where they could have freedom of worship. Coligny, as the Admiral of France, was aware of the possibilities of establishing colonies on the coast of Brazil.\(^{33}\) The French had been trading in Brazil since 1504. During the forty year period before the attempt to settle a colony in Brazil, the French had built up considerable trade. The principal traders and shipbuilders were two brothers, Ango and Louis. They had a whole fleet of ships which traded between Dieppe, Harve, and Brazil.\(^{34}\)

Coligny chose Nicholas Durrand de Villegagon to be the leader of the expedition.\(^{35}\) Villegagon had previously approached Coligny with the idea of organizing an expedition on the grandeur of Cortes of Spain. However, the idea of helping the Huguenots had grown only with Coligny. In order to be in charge, Villegagnon had pretended to be a reformer.

\(^{33}\)Walter Besant, *Gaspard De Coligny (Marquis De Chattillon)*. (New York: American Book Co., 1879), pp. 45-53. Besant says that Coligny for his military victories for France was given the important post of Admiral of France.

\(^{34}\)Ibid., pp. 55-56. Bell, pp. 60-62.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., pp. 57-60. Besant also describes the character of Durand De Villegagnon who led the expedition to Brazil.
He still had ideas of leading an expedition against Spain or England, both of whom were at war with France. With the help of Coligny he obtained approval from the King of France the necessary authority to dispatch an expedition to the Brazilian coast. He received a grant for two ships, provisions, ten thousand francs for the first expenses, title of viceroy for any new conquests, and the power to recruit labors, workmen, and all kinds of artisans.

Everything was ready for the new colony expedition except the colonists themselves. These were difficult to find. It must be remembered that up to this time France had never been a colonizing nation. She was in the sixteenth century, like other countries, almost entirely ignorant of the idea of colonization. To sail away to the Brazilian coast, to trade with the natives, to fight the Portuguese, and to bring home the spoils of war was an adventure familiar to the French sailors; but to go away altogether, with or without wife and children, to never see France again, and to make a new home elsewhere even under the most promising conditions was something they could not comprehend. However, he did persuade a few cadets of the country-dwelling Huguenot families to join him. These were a minority compared to the Catholics who also joined. Among the Catholics were two priests and a doctor whose opinions were wavering. Included in the group were a small body of Scottish soldiers who had followed Villegagnon from Scotland.

36 Ibid., p. 61.

37 Ibid., pp. 58-59. These were some of the Scottish soldiers who had assisted Villegagnon in the 1550's to help the Queen of Scots to escape from Scotland to France. This assistance in the escape was made at the request of the Crown of France.
Since there were not any colonists forthcoming, Villegagnon ordered a proclamation made in the streets of Paris for any that wanted to join the expedition. A few of the spendthrift class from the streets of Paris joined. Villegagnon was now in despair. Here he was ready to go but with only a handful of colonists. He appealed to the King of France to take all criminals and such who were under the sentence of death. The king agreed and sufficient rogues from the jails of Paris, Rouen, and other great cities were taken to fill up the ships with passengers.

This was indeed a strange crew to build a New France across the ocean, a handful of Huguenots, a few fighting Scotsmen, a few Catholics, a scattering of broken-down spendthrifts, and a collection of criminals. Villegagnon made two grave mistakes. He forgot that the foundation of a new society is the family. He proposed to establish a colony with only half of mankind. Therefore his first mistake was that no women sailed with him. The second mistake was that he did not take enough provisions. He did take grains of all kind, but he forgot that during the first few years of settlement there would be little chance of cultivation.38

After three months at sea during which a series of tempests were encountered and twice putting back to refit, the voyage to the coast of Brazil was made. On November 10, 1555 the two French vessels entered the Bay of Rio de Janeiro. An island, named Coligny who was patron of the colony, now called Villegagnon Island, was selected for settlement.

The island was mostly rock; it lacked fresh water; the soil was poor and grain crops could not be grown very easily. A fort was to be constructed on the island.

The problems of the new colony began to multiply. Among the first was the alienation of the natives. This was perhaps a fatal error as they would later be dependent upon these natives for supplies. They disappeared into the forest after harshness was imposed in being forced to assist in the building of the fort.

Next, famine began to be experienced. The supplies brought with them were exhausted and there were no bread nor wine. Roots of all kinds were devoured for food. Many grievous diseases broke out and the medicine was soon exhausted.

Even under these circumstances Villegagnon would not allow any relaxation of the labors on the fort. It must be completed before anything else. The convicts began to murmur—it was better to hang than to rot on a rock and toil all day in the hot sun. They plotted to kill Villegagnon; but he was informed by one of the Scots and the plot was foiled. Four of the leaders were hanged, but the principal leader and twenty-five others escaped to the mainland. They lived with the natives filling them with hatred of Villegagnon.

Other ships laden with supplies and men arrived from France. These personnel were not real colonists as they did not come to do any work, but were of the adventurer type.

In the beginning there were nothing but religious dissensions to add to the woes of the colonists. The viceroy kept his promise of freedom of religious opinions. However, this religious promise began to run throughout France and thousands of Huguenots thought it well to
seek another country. Brazil began to appeal to them. Also Villegagnon thought, that if Coligny's colony was to have a durable existence, to induce these Huguenots to migrate in large numbers. With this idea in mind he wrote Calvin a letter asking that Protestant ministers be sent from Geneva to minister to the spiritual needs of the Protestants in the colony. Calvin responded by sending two zealous and learned ministers. A French gentleman, Dupont de Corguilleray was appointed to take charge of those who wanted to volunteer. Only eleven volunteered; however, as they traveled through France, many joined them, the majority being Huguenots.

They set sail from Honfleur. Among the three hundred that comprised the crew and passengers were five women and Jean de Lery, the future historian of the adventure in Brazil.

Perhaps Villegagnon either lied to Calvin when he pretended zeal for the Reformed Church as his views were wavering upon the arrival of the newcomers. However at first he showed some signs of sincerity. He appointed a council of state and informed the ministers he would not oppose their preaching. He watched and apparently was well-pleased at the frequent conversions. He presided at the conversations between them and one of the priests. He was present at the table for the Lord's supper. They were beginning to think that the viceroy was another convert. His apparent conversion only lasted for a few weeks.

One of the priests who had been converted married one of the women who had been imported, but in a few days repented of his conversion and reported to Villegagnon as his spiritual advisor. The viceroy perhaps

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39 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
began to think he had gone too far. Acts of less serious nature had compromised other officers of the crown and now his viceregal position might be in danger. In new conversations Villegagnon completely reversed himself and became hostile to Protestantism. Nothing was heard in the unhappy colony but theological disputes. All the affairs of the new colony were neglected as the chief threw himself into the ardor of defeating the ministers in arguments.

Meantime the Genevese ministers were prohibited from preaching more than one-half hour. The newcomers began to murmur because of being constantly harassed by religious arguments; made to work on the fort when they came to work on the land; living on bread made from roots; and having to drink bad water from the cisterns on the island. They were encouraged to desert to the mainland by others already there. Villegagnon attempted to suppress this by stern measures. He caused the surprised leader to be beaten to death by a stick. The man's friends did desert to the mainland. He became more suspicious and imposed other more stern measures among which was prohibiting all forms of Huguenot worship.

This was more than the Huguenots, who had come over on his solemn assurance of religious freedom, could bear. They informed Villegagnon that they would obey him no longer and as soon as possible wanted to return to France. Since the Huguenots were too strong to appeal by force, he informed them that if they did not obey, they would not eat. The Huguenots replied that if they did not eat, they would not work and ceased to labor at the fort. They entered into an agreement with and

40 Ibid., p. 67
received an abundance of food from the natives. The ministers even went on preaching. Villegagnon, who had broken his most solemn pledge, found the state of things intolerable. Since he could not crush his opposition and could no longer endure them on the island he invited them to stay on the mainland until he could convey them back to France. They remained on the mainland for two months. Even on the verge of starvation, the Genevese never attempted to cultivate the fertile soil. As there were no peasants among them, they were too proud to farm.

At the end of this period a French ship arrived in the Bay. The Captain brought the news that in many ports ships were being made ready to bring thousands of Huguenot refugees to take possession of this new land for religious freedom.

What a dilemma this presented to Villegagnon. A barren rock upon which the Catholics were sullenly working at the fortifications; no provisions and no wine; and in every mind's mind the thought the colony was doomed. On the mainland the Huguenots were waiting to go home and would carry news of his perfidy. Those thousands of Huguenots must not come over, yet if they did not the colony would be doomed. He tried different vexation delays to keep the Huguenots from leaving, but in the end they left.

In France at first no one believed the Huguenot's story of Villegagnon's treachery. The Catholics never did believe it. The story appeared incredible.

When the ship carrying the Huguenots back to France was about eighteen leagues from the mainland of Brazil, five of the men changed their minds and requested permission to return. Their request was
granted and they were put in a small boat without sails, mast, oars or food. Within five days they drifted ashore. They proceeded to the fort and obtained clemency from Villegagnon if they did not preach their religion.

Villegagnon became suspicious of the five and determined to put into effect the royal proclamation against heretics. The five were interrogated and since they were true to their belief, four were thrown from a cliff into the sea and the other one thrown in prison. This so terrified the remaining colonists that they deserted by some taking refuge in the woods and others roamed along the sea shore awaiting a French ship to take them off because they knew the colony was doomed.41

Villegagnon knowing he would have to defend himself in France against both Catholic and Protestant resolved to return to France. The colony would all be gone in a short time and he did not want to be around at the end. He placed his nephew, Bois le Comte, in charge. He, Villegagnon, never made any preparation for the defense of the colony. He spent the rest of his life in France and in Europe writing rancorous books against the Huguenots and fighting them. To the Protestants he remained a murderer and traitor; and to the Catholics who knew the truth, an object of loathing.

After Villegagnon's departure, the days of the colony were few and sad. The new governor, le Comte, was unfit to cope with the difficulties of the colony. He had four or five hundred men to defend the fort and many of the refugees on the mainland were ready to return to

41 Ibid., pp. 67-72. Bell, pp. 59-60.
the colony, but the new governor regarded them as worse enemies than the Portuguese. The Protestants on the island were ready to serve him faithfully, but he prohibited their religious services. He even alienated the Catholics. He was cut off from all help from France as the Huguenots had given up hope for the colony.

Soon the Portuguese attacked and captured the Island. This was accomplished with the help of the Jesuit settlement of St. Vincenette. The father there had gathered a large force of natives--about six thousand--and provided twenty-six ships. The loss of the colony was a blow to the Huguenot cause as it is estimated by the historian Jean de Lery that thousands of Huguenots would have soon crossed over to Brazil thus giving France a firm foothold in the southern continent of the New World.

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42 Ibid., pp. 72-75. Ibid., p. 60.
43 Baird, p. 57.
SUMMARY OF COLONIZATION IN BRAZIL

Coligny's first experiment in colonization had failed and France's dream of a colonial empire in the southern continent of the New World had also vanished. For the time being the Huguenots' hope for a place of refuge lay prostrate. Even though the baseness of one man had ruined a dream and a scheme which had promised so much for France in the New World there were others in the Protestant ranks, tried and trusted, who stood ready for a call from Coligny for a second adventure. The harbors of Bretagne and Normandy swarmed with men ready to follow. The times were never brighter for such an opportunity. The Huguenots had become a recognized power in France with two Princes of the blood—Antoine, King of Navarre, and his brother, Louis, Prince of Conde—at their head. This rise of power had grown in spite of the persecutions which had increased in intensity since 1525 which was the year of the martyrdom of Jean Leclere, the first conspicuous martyr of the Reformation in France. Each year of the following thirty-seven years witnessed sufferings of the Huguenots in every part of France. Edict after edict of the government had pronounced more penalties of death, imprisonment, and confiscation of goods. Enforcement of these laws had numerous incidents of violence by a lawless population. The Edict of July, 1561 was the most severe. It inflicted punishment by imprisonment and confiscation

44 Ibid., p. 57.
of property upon all who should attend any heretical worship, public
or private. The passage of this edict increased the feelings between
the two religious parties which would soon break into open hostilities.
Catherine de Medicis, now regent of the kingdom during the minority of her son Charles IX, turned to Coligny for advice. He counseled toleration. Catherine heeded his advice and the Edict of January 1562 came forth. Under this edict and for the first time the new religion was recognized as legal and was granted some degree of protection. Previous penalties were renounced until a general Council of Church could be called for settlement of questions of religious faith. It was during this lull that Coligny chose for his second effort to attempt another colonization.

The colonization expedition left the port of Le Havre on February 18, 1562. Jean Ribaut was the leader of the expedition. Nearly all the volunteers were Huguenots. Among these was René de Laudonnière, a veteran navigator, who was second in command and Nicolas Barré who had accompanied Villegagnon to Brazil.

In order not to engage the Spanish, Ribaut took a more direct route across the Atlantic and on April 30, 1562, the two unwelid ships arrived off the coast of Florida. They sailed northward for one day till they reached the mouth of a large river which they named River of May, now St. Johns. Ribaut landed and took formal possession of the land.

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46 Ibid., p. 59. Coligny to convince the Queen of a need for toleration presented a list of Protestant churches numbering two thousand one hundred fifty that asked for freedom and protection in the exercise of their religion.

47 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
and erected a pillar of stone with the royal arms of France engraved upon it. Not satisfied, Ribaut continued exploring up the northern seaboard passing what is now the northern limits of present Florida claiming the land for France. Off the coast of present day South Carolina they noticed a broad channel which they named Port Royal. Here Ribaut decided to lay the foundation for the new colony. The site of this colony was a small island known to the Spaniards as Santa Cruz and now called Parris Island. Ribaut renamed the island and the surrounding area Charles-fort in honor of his king. The site chosen for the fort is not far from the present town of Beaufort. Ribaut did not wait to see the building of the fort completed. His work was chiefly one of exploration and he must make his report to the king. Further larger supplies of men and means for a more permanent settlement must be secured. Leaving a few men for completion of the fort Ribaut with Laudonnière and others sailed for France and arrived at Dieppe five months from the time they had left Le Havre.

While Ribaut had been on his voyage, the First Civil War had broken out in France between the Huguenots and the Catholics. Ribaut found Coligny in the field fighting. The moment was unfavorable to ask the king for re-enforcements for the colony. Ribaut joined Coligny and after the return of peace in 1563 took refuge in England for some reason.

The men Ribaut had left at Port Royal met a miserable fate. Being undisciplined and improvident, they fell into disputes and murdered

their Captain, Albert, whom Ribaut had left in charge. After consuming all their supplies, and after subsisting for awhile upon the charity of the Indians, they in desperation built themselves a boat and after incredible suffering reached France.

Coligny was unaware of the wretched failure of his second attempt (this first attempt in North American Continent) to establish a colony in the New World. Now that peace had stopped the First Civil War he resumed his efforts in colonization. Informing the king that no tidings had been received from the men left by Ribaut in Florida, he obtained permission to outfit three ships, of sixty, to go in relief. Laudonnière was chosen as chief of the expedition.

This second expedition sailed from Le Havre in April 1564. They arrived at the mouth of the St. John's River in July of the same year, where Ribaut had first set up the arms of France. Proceeding up the river for six miles Laudonnière chose a site for a town on a bluff and began to build a fort which he named La Caroline. The locality is now known as St. John's Bluff.

The brief history of this expedition and the third one which joined them in September, 1565 was to be one of disaster and disappointment. Approximately fourteen months from the day Laudonnière landed upon the bank of the St. John's River another of Coligny's colonization experiments terminated in a horrible massacre.

The French re-enacted the same mistakes and experienced the same misfortunes of previous colonization undertakings. They neglected the cultivation of the soil, yielded to the temptations to search for gold, 

and fell out among themselves. Laudonnière, even after trying to be neutral, allowed himself to be drawn into alliances that proved to be disastrous in the interior wars of the Indians. Laudonnière lacked the firmness to be a successful leader. He easily pardoned insubordination and conspiracy. He did not enforce the work policy. He was lackadaisical in requiring the young nobles to work for their bread and was easily rebuffed by them when they were to work on the fortifications. The Protestants, who were a majority, complained of the indifference of Laudonnière to their religion. They were ready to return home. The direct calamity that befell the enterprise was famine. By the second summer scarcity prevailed as no crops had been planted and though the river teemed with fish, the colonists depended upon their Indian neighbors for food which they could not condescend to obtain for themselves.

Reluctantly Laudonnière decided to abandon the colony and return to France. Only one of the three vessels that brought them over could be made seaworthy. On August 1, 1565 as the colonists were making ready their departure, a fleet appeared off the mouth of the St. John's River. The fleet of four ships was commanded by the famous English navigator John Hawkins. He was friendly and willingly gave the French the most pressing necessities from his own naval stores. He offered to transport them to France, but Laudonnière refused and purchased one of Hawkin's ships. Scarcely had Hawkins left when another fleet appeared.

This was Jean Ribaut.  

It deemed that an unfavorable report had reached Coligny of Laudonnière's character and he decided to recall him. At the same time he decided to send a larger force for the occupation of Florida and Caroline. This force consisted of seven ships and not far from one thousand men. A large number of these men were Huguenots and a Huguenot clergyman also accompanied them. The four larger ships remained anchored at the mouth of the river while the three smaller ones sailed up to La Caroline. Laudonnière was summoned and cleared himself to the satisfaction of Ribaut.  

Five days after the arrival of Ribaut, information was received that another fleet was in sight. On the third of September 1565 the uncertainty of whom the fleet represented was discovered. Ribaut's larger vessels at the mouth of the river were seen leaving their anchorage and heading for the open sea. They had recognized the approaching fleet as Spanish.  

France and Spain for the present were at peace. Spain had denied the right of discovery of the French in the New World especially in Florida. This area belonged to Spain by the right of discovery; and even though Spain had been unsuccessful in conquering the territory, they did not propose to surrender to a rival power. Least of all was Philip II of Spain going to allow any heretics to be established upon

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51 Ibid., pp. 68-69.
52 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
53 Ibid., pp. 70-71.
these shores. He sent a fleet for the express purpose of dispersing these Huguenots. The fleet consisted of fifteen vessels, several of large tonnage, and twenty-six hundred men, Spanish and Portuguese. The fleet was under the command of Pedro Mendez de Abila.

Failing to take the French by surprise, Mendez landed his men at a place thirty-miles south of the St. John's River near the present city of St. Augustine. Meanwhile the French were discussing the best course of action. Laudonnière wanted to strengthen the fort and to secure Indian aid to harass the enemy. This seemed to be the best course of action to all except Ribaut who wanted a naval engagement. He would fall upon the Spanish ships, disarm them, then attack and destroy the forces on the shore. Since Laudonnière was not in command, his plan was not accepted by Ribaut. Baird in The Huguenot Emigration to America, Volume I says, "Had his advice been taken La Florida Française, would have remained a French country!" 54

The four large French vessels reappeared and Ribaut ordered all his soldiers aboard with as many of Laudonnière's men who were fit for service. Laudonnière's fears for the ill-judged expedition were soon realized. A furious storm (probably a hurricane) broke upon the coast and Ribaut's ships were driven far beyond the spot of Mendez's landing. They were driven as far south as present day Cape Canaveral and were miserably wrecked on the dangerous shore. 55 Mendez was now free to begin his attack upon La Caroline. Leaving the bulk of his army at the fort

54 Ibid., p. 72.

55 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
built--St. Augustine--he took five hundred men for the attack. Within three days the fort at La Caroline was reached.  

The fort was surprised and all the sick and wounded, except women and children, were put to the sword. Laudonnière and some others escaped. The fugitives finally reached the coast and were taken aboard one of the smaller vessels which Ribaut had left in the river. This vessel joined another and the two finally made the voyage to France.  

Ribaut and his shipwrecked companions finally made their way with difficulty to La Caroline and found it occupied by the Spanish. Returning southward Ribaut found himself in the vicinity of the Spanish fort at St. Augustine. Ribaut asked for terms to surrender his forces. Mendez informed him of the fate of the men at La Caroline and said such would be the fate of those who professed the Protestant religion. Ribaut reminded Mendez that France and Spain were at peace. Mendez admitted that this was true, but not in the case of heretics and he would carry the war to them with all possible cruelty. Ribaut suggested to his men that they surrender and throw themselves upon Mendez for mercy. Two hundred rejected and fled into the woods. One hundred fifty did surrender. Mendez after tying their hands behind their backs had them put to the sword and hung their bodies upon the trees. Mendez then followed the two hundred to Cape Canaveral where they were attempting

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56 Ibid., p. 74. Footnote at bottom of page: "It was occupied by some two hundred persons--invalid soldiers, artisans, women and little children. (Delaborde, Coligny, I., 447, note)"

57 Ibid., pp. 73-74.

58 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
to construct a vessel out of the ship-wrecked fragments. Mendez, realizing that these men would sell their lives dearly, entered into negotiations with them and treated them as prisoners of war. He kept his word until Philip of Spain remanded them to the galley. 59 This was the end of Coligny's dream of Huguenot colonization in the New World.

In 1567-68 the French under Dominiquez de Gourgues, with the help of the Indians, obtained revenge on the Spanish at Carolina-fort. His revenge was exacted in the same manner that the Spanish had previously meted out to the French. 60

The loss of colonies in Acadia, Brazil, Florida, and Carolinas prevented the fulfillment of the Huguenot dreams of colonies for themselves in the New World. They did migrate to the New World through other countries, but only as a part of the colonization efforts of that country.

59 Ibid., pp. 75-76.

60 Besant, pp. 142-146.
CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the attempts of the Huguenots to establish colonies for themselves did influence France's attempt to build and then lose a colonial empire in the North and South American continents. The severe persecutions of the Huguenots in France did cause many thousands of a hardy breed of people which make good colonists to migrate to other countries. These, if permitted, would have been the backbone of many French colonies in the New World. When they were permitted and somewhat encouraged to migrate as a part of the French colonial design, they were hampered by leaders who were not wholly sympathetic and these leaders by their actions discouraged others to follow and those who had migrated wanted to return to France. In France proper, there were those leaders, who rose to power and positions of influence, who hampered the migration because of a desire to crush the heresy at home and abroad thus causing civil wars and unrest for many years. The Huguenots in their efforts to escape this fled to other countries. In essence one could conclude.

In Acadia, the rise to power of certain influential persons opposed to the Huguenots and who made it possible for the Jesuits to become dominant in Acadia stopped the migration of the Huguenots to Port Royal and Quebec. Further, Charles I of England, using the Huguenot persecutions in France as an excuse, declared war upon France. Subsequent wars between these two countries eventually led to cessation of the French claims in North America to the English. Although the Huguenot persecutions were not the direct cause of these subsequent wars between England and France, the first conflict was started on account of the Huguenot
persecutions; however, the end was a struggle for power and control of a colonial empire. It also must be taken into account that because of these persecutions that thousands migrated to England who later migrated to the English colonies. Georgia, an English colony, was principally settled as a refuge for Huguenots.

A definite reason for the loss of the colony in Brazil was the fear and jealousy which led to poor leadership. Thousands of Huguenots were preparing to come to Brazil when local dissension there was causing a final breakup of the colony. These dissensions made it comparatively easy for the Portuguese assisted by Indian allies converted to the effort by the Jesuits to eradicate the French from the area. It is doubtful, because of a decline as a world power, Portugal would have made much of an effort to bother this settlement if it could have been re-enforced by waiting Huguenots.

The attempt of the Huguenots to settle in Florida and the Carolinas was thwarted by Civil Wars in France between the Huguenots and the French government. The final crushing blow to this attempt was made by Philip II of Spain who did not want any heretics of this religious group in any part of the New World claimed by Spain. Also contributing to this failure was the lack of good leadership for the Huguenots.

In my opinion the Huguenot persecutions in France were a basic underlying reason that contributed a major part to the loss of the major portion of the French Colonial Empire in both North and South

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61 Hirsch, p. 3.

62 Baird, p. 57.
American continents of the New World. This lead to poor leadership; lack of enthusiasm on the part of the French government to wholly support these attempts as Spain had in her areas; and the intervention of powers such as England, Spain, and Portugal which led to the loss of the colonies in Acadia and complete eradication as in Brazil, Florida, and Carolinas.
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