

# The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas history

*Spanish Explorer Alonso de León finds ruins of French settlement Fort St. Louis on Texas coast*

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On April 22, 1689, Spanish explorer Alonso De León discovered the ruins of French settlement Fort St. Louis on the Texas coast. The fort had been established by René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, in the summer of 1685.

In February 1685 La Salle, seeking the mouth of the Mississippi River, had landed 280 colonists, including 100 soldiers, at the mouth of Matagorda Bay in Spanish-claimed territory. The explorer made a temporary camp on Matagorda Island while he sought a more secure location farther up the bay.

In April, he chose a site on an eminence overlooking the "Rivière aux Boeufs" ["Cattle River"]. Though disease devastated his men, La Salle saw the building well under way by autumn, when he set out to explore the surrounding country.

In January 1687, he departed on his last journey, leaving at the fort scarcely more than 20 men, women and children in the charge of the Sieur de Barbier.

In late 1688 or early 1689, the Karankawa Indians gained entry to the fort under guise of friendship and murdered all the occupants but five children.

Meanwhile, news that the French had founded a settlement on the northern Gulf Coast had agitated New Spain in the mid-1680s. As a result, De León led four expeditions between 1686 and 1689 seeking to find and destroy the French installation.

The fourth expedition left Coahuila on March 27, 1689, with a force of 114 men, and found the deserted settlement on April 22.