

THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

MARIE BANKHEAD OWEN, Editor

EMMETT KILPATRICK, Co-Editor



Published by the
STATE DEPARTMENT
OF
ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Price \$2.00 annually; single copies, 50c

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No. 3

FALL ISSUE

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CONTENTS

Editorial	258
Annals of Louisiana from 1698 to 1 ⁷ 9 22, by M. Penicaut	261

EDITORIAL

It has been decided by the management of the Alabama Historical Quarterly to devote one entire issue of the magazine to a reprint of "Annals of Louisiana from 1698 to 1722," by M. Penicaut, which include Alabama. The original of this rare document was found at the time it was published in New York in Volume 6, of B. F. French's "Historical Collection of Louisiana," in 1869, in the *Bibliothèque Du Roi, Paris*. In view of the fact that B. F. French's publication is inaccessible to the average student of Alabama history a reprint of this historical narrative of Alabama's earliest French Colonial history is deemed a useful service. The Alabama State Department of Archives and History during its entire existence has devoted its efforts towards the propagation of Alabama history and the preservation of all of its official and private records. It is gratifying to realize that the subject has never been of more widespread interest than at the present time. It is hoped that in the early future this State shall follow the example of some of the other States in the Union which stipulates that no student may graduate from its high schools who cannot pass an examination in their state history. By making Penicaut's story available through the school libraries to the older pupils of the public schools as well as the general public, a keener interest may be aroused in the subject. At any rate this magazine is very glad to devote its Fall issue to the reproduction of this narrative that has been tucked away on the shelves of old libraries for three quarters of a century.

Jean Penicaut, the author, states at the outset of his Annals that he was born in La Rochelle, France, in 1680 and was therefore but nineteen years of age when he reached our shores. He was a ship carpenter by occupation but evidently possessed a fair education. He came to that part of the South then called the Province of Louisiana, embracing later through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, all that area from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Mexico to the Lake of the Woods. His "Annals", however, are concerned mainly with what is now Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. He came to this country with Iberville and his brother Bienville and shared the hardships and burdens of exploration and colonization with those two dauntless French-Canadians. Louis XIV was the King of France at the time and had

sent his expedition to establish sovereignty in the name of his kingdom over the area which was named in his honor—Louisiana.

Penicaut became a man of family and a slave holder, living finally on a tract of land near Natchez, Miss., which he purchased in 1720. The following year he returned to France on the advice of Bienville, then Governor of the Province of Louisiana, to secure treatment for an affection of his eyes. He returned, however, to the Province and was among the few Frenchmen who escaped the Indian massacre of 1729. The date and place of his death are unknown but the record that he left in his *Annals of Louisiana* is his own imperishable monument.

Attention of the reader is called to the fact that all footnotes and annotations in this reproduction were made by the editors of the B. F. French Company, who translated and published these "Annals" seventy-five years ago. The Editor of the *Quarterly* has not attempted to make any additional notes or elucidations in view of current history.



LOUIS XIV

King of France, 1638-1715.

Original painting by S. B. de Saint André, hung in Musée National, Versailles, 1670. Copied by Maltby Sykes, Alabama portrait painter, hanging in the French Room, World War Memorial Building, Montgomery, Alabama.

A N N A L S

of

L O U I S I A N A

From 1698 to 1722.

By M. PENICAUT.

Translated from a copy of the original manuscript deposited in the
Bibliotheque Du Roi, Paris.

CHAPTER I.

1698. I was born at *La Rochelle*, France. When I was fifteen years of age, I felt a strong desire to see foreign countries; and, to gratify my passion for travelling, I entered the service of his Majesty, in 1698, on board of the frigate *Le Marin*, commanded by M. Le Comte de Surgeres, and sailed from *La Rochelle* on the month of September of the same year, in company with the flag-ship *La Badine*, commanded by M. D'Iberville (who had received orders from the King to sail to the Gulf of Mexico, and take possession of Louisiana), and from *Brest* on the 24th of October. We had favorable winds as far as *Cape Francois** (St. Domingo), where we remained some
1699. days to take in fresh supplies, and sailed again, on St. Thomas' day, for the Gulf of Mexico, where we arrived on the King's day.

The first land we discovered were two islands, to one of which M. de Surgeres gave his name. This island is five leagues in length, and about a quarter of league in width. We cast anchor in the roadstead between this and the other island, which M. O'Iberville called *Cat Island*, because we found on it a great many cats. This island is seven leagues in length and

*M. D'Iberville was joined here by the frigate *Le Francois*, commanded by the Marquis de Chateumorand, who returned to St. Domingo from Louisiana on the 21st of February, 1699, without taking any further part in the expedition.

about one quarter of a league in width, and distant about one league from *Surgeres Island*.* We killed, there, a prodigious number of wild geese, which are called *outards* in this country, and are of a larger size than our geese in France. We found fish and oysters so abundant, that the crews of the two ships were greatly incommoded by eating too much of them. We saw no marks or vestiges of human habitations in either of these islands. There was an abundance of fresh water, of a palatable quality, although the islands are situated some five leagues distant from the main-land. We embarked, Feb. 27th, about one hundred men in two long-boats and a pinnance, to traverse the coast east and west, as the coast of Florida lies in that direction. We found a bay (*Biloxi*) about two leagues in circuit, and about five leagues from the island *Surgeres*. Within this bay there is an elevation
 1699. of the land, where M. D'Iberville conceived the idea of constructing a fort, at which we worked unceasingly until it was finished. At the entrance of this bay there is a small island, about a league in length and an eighth of a league in width, called *Deer Island*, from the great number of those animals we found there. We worked eight days at the fort without seeing any of the natives. A party of our men being out hunting, the report of their guns was heard by some of them who were in the woods. They were greatly astonished, and resolved, among themselves, to approach and see what it could be. Perceiving some of our Frenchmen—who were engaged in cutting down trees contiguous to the fort, for the purpose of erecting houses—they examined them for a long time from their place of concealment behind the trees, wondering at the color of their faces, and the manner of their clothing. Some of the soldiers, seeing them, made signs with their hands to approach without fear. They then spoke to them in the *Iroquois* language—as the greater portion of our men were Canadians, and were familiar with the language of that nation. After a long parley, they approached us, after being reassured, and were conducted to M. D'Iberville, who received them very kindly, and gave them something to eat and drink. But, either their taste was not suited, or from fear of us, they refused to eat

*Now called Ship Island, on account of the good anchorage it affords to ships coming from Europe.

or drink anything offered to them. They appeared wholly intent with gazing at us, and greatly astonished at seeing people whose skin was white, wearing long beards, and some without hair on their heads, such as they saw among us, and so different from themselves, whose skin is of a swarthy color, with heads covered with long black hair, which they are careful to preserve, and without beard. This nation called themselves *Biloxi*; and it was for this reason that M. D'Iberville gave the name to the fort we had built at this place (*Biloxi*). They remained with us two days. M. D'Iberville gave them several presents—such as awls, knives, mirrors, rings, beads, and vermilion. He showed them the use of these articles, which they carried to their village as presents to the chief. Very soon the rumor of the arrival of the French spread among the neighboring nations; and, in about eight days, great numbers of them came, with their chiefs at their head, to smoke the *calumet** and sing the song of peace, according to the Indian custom of treating all strangers who arrive amongst them, and with whom they desire to form an alliance and friendship. The *calumet* is a stick, about a yard in length, or a hollow cane, ornamented with the feathers of the paroquet, birds of prey, and of the eagle. These feathers, arranged around the stick resemble somewhat the fans used by French ladies. At the end of this stick is a pipe, to which the name of *calumet* is given. The chiefs of the savages, composed of five different nations, called *Pascagoulas*, *Colapissas*, *Chicachas*, *Pensacolas*, and *Biloxis*,* came with great ceremony to our fort, singing, and holding out to M. D'Iberville the *calumet*, who smoked it after the manner of the Indians. They then, as a mark of honor, rubbed his face with

**Calumet* means a pipe. It is a *Norman* word, derived from *Chalumeau*, which was the name of a rustic pipe or musical instrument used among the shepherds at their rural feasts and dances. The name of *calumet* was first given to this Indian pipe by the Normans, who settled in Canada at an early period, which it has ever since remained.

*These tribes, as well as most of those who lived on the east side of the *Mississippi* river, spoke the *Mobilian* language, although each tribe also conversed in dialects peculiar to themselves. See "Gallatin's Comparative Vocabulary of fifty-three Indian Nations;" "Hawkins' Vocabulary of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Cherokee Nations, in MS., in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia;" Benj. Smith Barton's "Comparative_vocabularies of the Chickasaw, Conchac, and Mobilian."

white earth, as they also did the faces of the brother of M. D'Iberville, and several other officers. The feast of the *calumet* continued three days, during which time they danced and sung three times a day. The third day they erected a post in front of the gates of the fort, around which they danced; they then sought M. D'Iberville, who underwent the following ceremony: One of the Indians having presented his back, he mounted upon his shoulders, whilst another sustained his feet. They carried him to the place where the post was erected, keeping time to the sound of their *chichicois*—which are large gourds filled with small shells, making a rude sound, when shaken, though not very loud. They have another instrument, made from an earthen vessel, about the size of a small brass kettle, over which is extended a deer-skin, somewhat in imitation of a drum, which they beat upon with two sticks, and which gives out as much noise as do our drums. When they arrived before the post, they seated M. D'Iberville upon a deer-skin on the ground. One of the chiefs then seated himself behind his back, and patted him as you would a child that you desired to put asleep. They had spread upon the ground more than three hundred deer-skins, upon which the officers and soldiers were seated. After all were properly placed, 1699. the Indians, with their bows and arrows, which they carried in bundles on their backs, and wooden shields covered with beaver-skins in their right hands, went, by turns, to *strike the post* with their shields, at the same time singing over their deeds and actions in the wars in which they had been engaged. It is even permitted to everybody, women as well as boys, to go through the same ceremony.

The French then proceeded to the royal magazine, by order of M. D'Iberville, and brought knives, beads, vermilion, guns, lead, powder, mirrors, combs, kettles, cloaks, hats, shirts, breechings, rings, etc. The breechings are made of stuff five quarters of a yard, cut in two, lengthwise, passed around the hips, and thus cover their nakedness. The leggings are made of half a yard of cloth, cut in two, and sewed together like a pair of stockings, through which they pass their legs. Pickaxes and hatchets were also presented them. After which, M. D'Iberville then returned to his lodgings, leaving the savages in the square of the fort, who divided among themselves the presents distributed to

them, scrutinizing them all with astonishment, and but little comprehending the uses of most of them. It really gave us pleasure to witness their embarrassment. Some went to tell M. De'Iberville, who returned with the other officers to the square of the fort, and who could not restrain themselves from laughter. He directed that the use of each article should be pointed out to them. We then showed them how to wear their shirts, hats, breechings, and leggings. We sewed up their breechings and leggings so that they could wear them upon their hips; for our Canadians, 1699. of whom I have already spoken, were *au fait* in these matters. We placed powder in the pans of the guns which had been given to them, which were then loaded, and afterwards fired, but, when they saw the flash of the powder, they let go the gun, which fell to the ground, from the fear they had of them. M. D'Iberville ordered the men to fire off blank cartridges before them, which reassured them; and, as he found some among them bolder than the rest, one of the Indians made a sign that he wanted the guns reloaded, indicating that he would fire them. In place of leaning forward, as is customary, he held the gun to his shoulder, leaning backwards; the consequence was, the concussion knocked him head over heels, the gun going in one direction the the Indian in another. It was some fifteen days after this accident before any of them would again touch a gun. We fixed handles in their hatchets and pickaxes, and showed them how to use them. They testified to us, by signs, that they were highly pleased. Nevertheless, up to that time, their canoes, with which they went from place to place upon the river, were made by setting fire to the foot of a cypress tree, the fire continuing in the interior until it fell to the ground. They then burned it off at the desired length. When the tree was burned sufficiently for their purpose, they extinguished the fire with moist earth, and scraped it out with large shells, which are very thick. They then washed them with water, in such a manner as to give them a fine polish. These canoes are sometimes twenty-five or thirty feet long, but they make them of various lengths, according to the uses for which they are intended.

1699. When our fort was finished, M. D'Iberville returned to France (3d of May, 1699) leaving M. deSauvol in command;

M. DeBienville King's lieutenant; M. le Vasseur de Bous-souelle, major; De Bordenac, chaplain; and other officers.

After the departure of M. D'Iberville, we made preparations to go right and left in search of the *Mississippi*. We took with us some Indians as guides; coasting along in an easterly direction, we found a wide bay, called the *Bay of the Pascagoulas*; because, within this bay, there flows a river, upon the borders of which the *Pascagoulas* are established, at a distance of about twenty leagues inland, and it is from that nation the bay and river take their name. This bay is about five leagues east of *Fort Biloxi*, about one league across, and three in circuit. At its entrance there is an island, about one league distant, called *Round Island*, on account of its form. It is sterile, and uninhabited. Pursuing our course, along the coast in an easterly direction, and about a league from the bay, we came to a small river, called at the present time, by the same name we then gave it, *Fish River*, by reason of the great quantity of fish we found there. A league from the river, we found *Liveoak Point* (*Pointeaux-Chenes*), an excellent place for the chase, as game of every description abounds there. Three leagues from this point, we came to a river, called *Aderbane*, ten leagues distant from *Biloxi*. This name was given to it on account of a Frenchman, named Aberbane, who was lost there by drowning. It yet preserves the name. Three leagues further on, we came to *Oyster Point*, so called from the abundance of that shell-fish found there. This point is opposite to an island one league off, to which we crossed and landed. We were somewhat astonished to find upon this island a prodigious number of human bones, forming a mound of considerable elevation. We since learned that these were the bones of a once numerous nation, who being pursued by their enemies, took refuge on this island, where nearly all perished from some terrible disease that broke out among them; their bones were brought together and heaped up, after the custom of the Indian tribes. This nation was called *Mobile*, a few of whom at present survive. The island is covered with two species of forest trees, cedar and pine, of a very agreeable odor. M. DeBienville, our commanding officer, named it *Massacre Island* (*Dauphin*). It is about seven leagues long, by a quarter of a league wide. Coasting along the island to return, we crossed a pass, about half a league wide, at the head of which was another island, called *Horn Island*, because

one of our men there lost his powder horn. This island is about three leagues from the main-land, and of the same length and width of *Massacre Island*. It is barren, and is covered with the same species of trees as the other. When we made the head of this island, we sailed for the island *Surgeres*, where we had a grand hunt, after which we crossed over to the fort, for the purpose of resting for a few days.

At the end of fifteen days, we set out again, in search of a pass through which we could go to discover the *Mississippi* river, to the west of our fort. The coast, here, all along, is very flat. We found a bay, about one league in width by four in circumference, forming, in shape, a half circle. We called it the *Bay of St. Louis* because it was on the day of St. Louis that we arrived there. It is about eight leagues west of *Fort Biloxi*. We landed, and found game of every kind in great abundance. We killed, here, more than fifty deer. At the end of three days, we set out again, and, at about three leagues distance, found a small stream, where the tide ebbs and flows. Our Indian guides told us this stream would take us into a large lake; but, as we did not well understand them, we made signs to them that we wanted to pass outward. At two leagues, we found a small island, about a quarter of a league from the sea, to which we gave the name of *Heron's Pass*, on account of the vast number of those birds found there. We left the sea on the larboard side, and, at three leagues, we came to an island, which we called *Pea Island*, because a sack of peas was left there through forgetfulness. We hurried off an hour before daylight, to get rid of the annoyance of swarms of small flies, or *cousins*, which the Indians call *Maragouins*, and which puncture even to the drawing of blood. The stream we had met with corresponded with this place; and, four leagues further on, we discovered a large lake, which M. DeBienville named *Pontchartrain*. This about twenty-eight leagues in circumference, and seven wide. Its embouchure, at the entrance, is a quarter of a league from one side to the other. Both sides of the pass, or entrance, is covered with shells, and in such quantity that they form an elevation, which was the reason it was called *Pointe-aux-Coquilles*. When one has passed through this channel, on looking ahead, you see, at the distance of a league and a half to the left, a projection of land, called *Pointe-aux-Herbes*, where the boats were placed under shelter; because, in this

place, the water is shallow, and, in heavy gales, canoes are sometimes lost there. Six leagues further on is a small river, called by the Indians, *Choupicatcha*, which the French afterwards called *Orleans* (*Bayou St. John*) because since that time, as will be seen in its proper place, the city of New Orleans was built near this river, about a league from the lake. Five leagues further, turning always to the left on the lake shore, we found a bay of still water, which the Indians called *bayou*, which is a kind of drain, or gully, through which the waters of the higher grounds are carried off. We encamped here, as our Indian guides told us we could cross over from this place to the *Mississippi* river *

Next morning, having secured our boats in this cove, we started on foot to go to the banks of the river. We passed, three quarters of a league, through a cypress forest. These trees are only found in low and swampy countries, which grow to a prodigious height, and bear a fruit resembling an olive. After this forest, we passed through a cane-break, which bears a kind of oats, of which the Indians make bread, of an agreeable taste. They also make a soup from it, which they call *sagamite*. Having crossed these canes for a quarter of a league, we arrived on the borders of the *Mississippi*, at which we were greatly rejoiced. We regarded this beautiful river with admiration, which is at least half a
 1699. league wide at the place where we first saw it, about forty leagues from its entrance into the sea. The water is of a light color, very good to drink, and very light. The country, on its banks, appeared to be everywhere covered with splendid trees of every description, such as oak, ash, elm, and many others, the names of which we did not know. We encamped that night on the river's bank, under the trees, upon which a vast number of wild turkeys roosted. We killed as many of them as we wanted by moonlight, as they

*Previous to the exploration of this river by Father Marquette and Joliet, the natives of the North sometimes called it *Meshacebe* (or *Great River*). *Namese-Sipon* (or *River of the Fishes*). In some places Tapata, and, where it entered the Gulf of Mexico, *Ri*. The Indian name, says Garcilaso de la Vega, on the authority of Juan Coles, one of DeSota's followers, was *Chucagua*, and, by the Gentleman Elvas, *Rio Grande*; afterwards by the Spaniards, *LaPalisade* and *Rio Escondido*; by the French, *Mississippi*, *Colbert*, and *St. Louis*.

were not in the least disturbed or afraid of the firing of our guns. I can truly say, that I never saw turkeys in France so fat and large as these were, as their net weight was about thirty pounds! The next day, we returned to our boats, and our companions, whom we had left as a guard, were highly delighted to learn we had slept on the banks of the mighty river. We continued on our way, along the borders of *Lake Pontchartrain*, in order to make the circuit of it, and, at the distance of about five leagues further on, encamped on the borders of a *manchac*, which signifies, in the French language, a strait, a pass, or a rivulet, flowing from the *Mississippi*.

Through this pass we entered another lake, a short distance from the first, which we now called *Lake Maurepas*; it is about ten leagues in circumference, and two across. The following day we continued our route, coasting along the shores of *Lake Pontchartrain*, and, at about one league from *Manchac*, found another river, called, by our Indian guides, *Tangibao*,* which means white corn (*bled-blanc*). The water of this river is very agreeable. Three leagues beyond, following the same channel, we found a *bayou*, or tranquil water, called *Castein Bayou*, which signifies the place of the passes. Next day, five leagues from this *bayou*, we came to a river falling into the lake, called, by the Indians, *Taleatcha*, which signifies the *River of the Pearls*. Here we found those shells previously mentioned, with which the Indians scrape out their canoes after burning. Beautiful pearls are sometimes found in those shells. We presented some two dozen, or more, to M. de Bienville, our commander. This river is only about three leagues from *Pointe-aux-Coquilles*. At this place we left *Lake Pontchartrain*, and ascended it for the distance of half a league to another of its branches, which passes *Pea Island*, which is about three leagues from the forks of the river. We encamped here, by reason of the accommodations afforded by the river, the water of which was excellent to drink, and a great convenience to our men, as the water of *Lake Pontchartrain* is brackish, and is affected by the ebb and flow of the sea.

*It also took its name from a tribe of Indians that lives on its banks.

The next day we left *Pea Island*, and passed through the little *Rigolets*, which lead into the sea about three leagues from the *Bay of St. Louis*. We encamped at the entrance of the bay, near a fountain of water that flows from the hills, and which was called, at this time, *Belle-Fountain*. We hunted, during several days, upon the coast of this bay, and filled our boats with the meat of the deer, buffaloes, and other wild game which we had killed, and carried it to the fort (*Biloxi*). On arriving there, we gave to M. de Souvol, our commander-in-chief, a detailed account of the discovery of that river, incomparably beautiful, as well on account of its size as of its charming borders. M. De Bienville presented to him the pearl we had found in the shells of *Pearl River*, which he said he would give to M. d'Iberville; we never afterwards heard of those pearls, and did not know whether they were of a fine quality or not. Some days after our return, the Indians, whom we had as guides, expressed to M. de Souvol a desire to return to their village, and wished we would go with them. M. de Sauvol gave them to understand that it would give him great pleasure to comply with their request. We set out in one of our long-boats, manned by ten or twelve Frenchmen; and, after leaving the fort, encamped at the mouth of the river, of the same name as themselves (*Pascagoulas*), which empties into the bay of that name. We ascended the river twenty leagues from its entrance into the sea, and, on the third day, arrived at their village. As it was near the end of August, and the weather very warm, all the Indians there were as naked as when born—that is, the men and boys; but the women and girls had a little moss fastened to their thighs, which covered their nakedness, the rest of their body being entirely naked. This moss is an herb of a long, fine fibre, growing upon the trees, which the French of this part of the country called *Spanish-beard*, by way of derision, and which the Spaniards, in retort, called the *French-wig*. We were perfectly well received by their grand chief, and by all the inhabitants of the village. They gave us something to eat and drink—among other things, bear, deer, and buffalo meat, and all kinds of fruit, of which they have an abundance, such as peaches, prunes, watermelons, pumpkins, and all of an excellent flavor. The pumpkins are far superior to those in France; they are cooked without water, and the juice which comes from them is as sweet as syrup made from sugar. As regards the watermelons, they are nearly the same as in France. The fish are

larger and better; but the prunes are not so good; there are two sorts—white and red. They served us, also, with their *sagamite*, which is a boiled dish, made of corn and beans. Their bread is made from corn and a species of grain, which grows upon the cane. They have wooden as well as earthen plates, and we observed that they were very well made.* Their women, also, make earthen pots, in which they cook *sagamite*, at one time, sufficient for two or three families. In this manner they arrange, among themselves, so as not to be obliged to cook every day, each one taking turn about. Their cabins were made of earth, and of a round shape, somewhat like our windmills, the roofs being generally covered with bark; but some were covered with a species of leaf, which is called, in this country, *Latanier* (*palmetto*), a shrub peculiar to the country.

1699. One thing I have particularly observed among these savages, to wit: that, however, abundant provisions may be with them, they never eat to excess; but, very improperly, they always eat with their fingers, although they have spoons made from the horns of the buffalo. Their meat is generally smoked, or buccaneered, as they say in that country. They have, nevertheless, a kind of gridiron, under which they kindle a slow fire, merely drying the meat, the smoke contributing to this effect as much as the heat of the fire.

The Indians, when they dance, beat a noise with their drums and *chichois*, and form into bodies of twenty or thirty together. A dancing-master keeps at the head of each band. At the sound of a whistle, they break from their ranks, intermingling with each other, always observing a particular cadence; at another blow of the whistle they form into rank again, and whirl around with wonderful uniformity.

We slept at the house of the grand chief, upon beds of canes covered with buffalo-skins. The next day we went to visit their fields, where they cultivate the corn. The

*The pottery of the Southern Indians, especially the *Natches*, was artistically made. Many beautiful specimens may be found in private cabinets in the South, not inferior to the best specimens of Mexican and Peruvian art.

women were at work with the men. The Indians have flat sticks, with which they break up the grounds, for they do not understand the mode of using utensils as we do in France. They scrape the ground with a stick, and cut down the brushwood and weeds, which they leave in the sun to dry, which, after a time, they burn, and after they are burnt to ashes, they take a large stick, with which they dig a hole in the ground, and place seven or eight grains of corn in each hole, and cover it with earth. When the corn is about one foot high, they take great care of it, as we do in France, and remove all the weeds, an operation which is performed two or three times during the season. They even, at the present time, use their wooden instruments in preference to those of iron, which we have given them, because they are lighter. After remaining some time in their village, we returned to the fort.