

## Section

# 2

## The French Challenge

### Main Ideas

1. The French under La Salle established a settlement on the Texas coast, but it failed.
2. The French presence in Texas led the Spanish to create new missions in the region.
3. The first Spanish missions in East Texas failed.

### Why It Matters Today

In the 1600s people from France, Spain, and other European nations settled in the Americas. Use current events sources to learn more about immigration to Texas and the United States today.

### Key Terms and People

- La Salle expedition
- Fort St. Louis
- Alonso de León
- Damián Massanet
- San Francisco de los Tejas

## The Story Continues

Diego de Peñalosa was bitter. The former Spanish governor of New Mexico had been found guilty of several crimes and exiled from all of New Spain in the 1660s. He went to England and then to France, seeking to undermine Spain's power in the Americas. To the French king Peñalosa proposed that France build a colony on the Rio Grande and slowly move into Texas. The king liked the idea. Peñalosa's hopes of leading the expedition soon died, however. The king picked another river and another explorer for the colony.



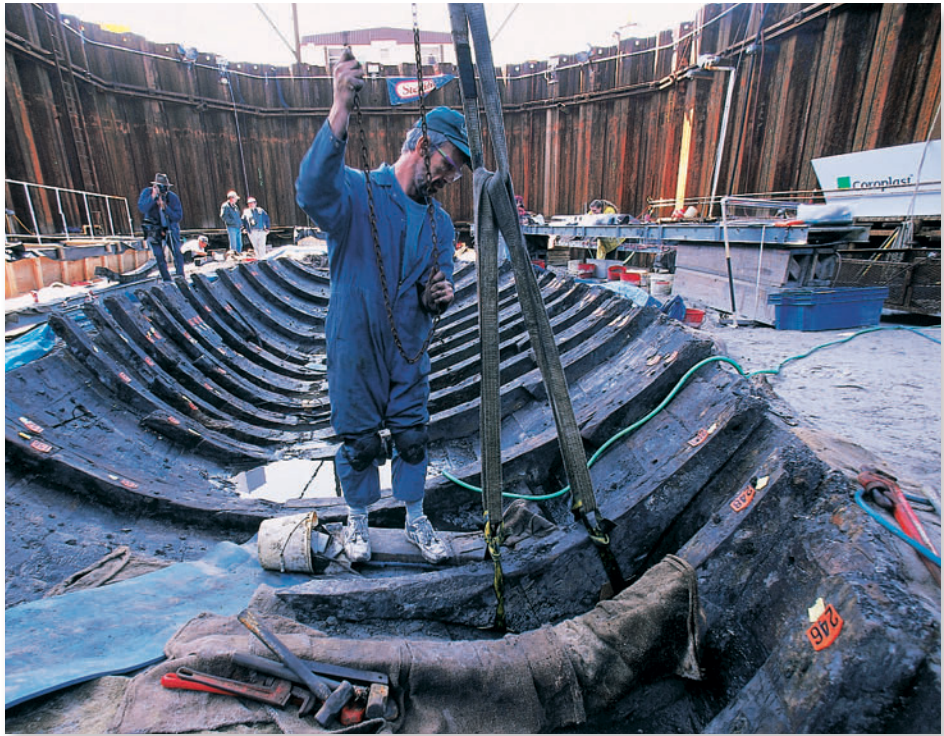
**TEKS:** 2C, 21B, 21C, 21D, 22D

### myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the arrival of French settlers in Texas and the Spanish reaction to them.

## ★ La Salle's Expedition

By the 1600s Spain was no longer the only European power in North America. England was beginning to establish colonies along the East Coast. France also posed a threat to Spain's control of the borderlands. To the north France had claimed Canada. French fur trappers were exploring the Great Lakes and the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers. In 1682 French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle expanded France's empire. He canoed down the Mississippi River to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico. There he planted the French flag and claimed all of the land drained by the Mississippi for France. This land extended from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.



## CONNECTING TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### **La Belle**

In 1686 La Salle's ship *La Belle* wrecked in Matagorda Bay. Divers found *La Belle* in 1995. Archaeologists wanted to examine the ship, so engineers designed an enormous steel structure to hold back the bay's water. Scholars spent months examining *La Belle*. The ship and its artifacts were then taken to a laboratory at Texas A&M University for further study. Some discoveries from the shipwreck are displayed at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin. **How did scholars arrange to study *La Belle*?**

La Salle named the region Louisiana for his king, Louis XIV. After exploring the area, he returned to France and asked the king for permission to establish a settlement near the river's mouth. La Salle pointed out that the settlement would strengthen France's claim to Louisiana. The colony would serve as a military base from which to conquer the Spanish silver mines of New Spain. It would discourage other Europeans from moving into the area. The French also would gain a port for the valuable fur trade and perhaps even trade with the Spanish colonies.

King Louis agreed to La Salle's proposal. Because they knew a colony so close to Texas would anger the Spanish, the French kept their plan a closely guarded secret. They hoped to sneak up the Mississippi River and establish the colony before the Spanish found out.

The **La Salle expedition** left France in the summer of 1684. It had four ships and about 300 soldiers and settlers. The expedition ran into trouble when Spanish pirates captured one ship. Then some of the sailors deserted. They later told the Spanish of La Salle's plans. Despite these problems, La Salle sailed on. He became lost, however, and the ships missed the mouth of the Mississippi. The group finally came ashore in February 1685 at Matagorda Bay on the Texas coast. While entering the bay, one ship ran aground with valuable supplies aboard. Then another ship returned to France. The colonists were left with very little food and few other supplies. They were ill prepared for life in the wilderness.

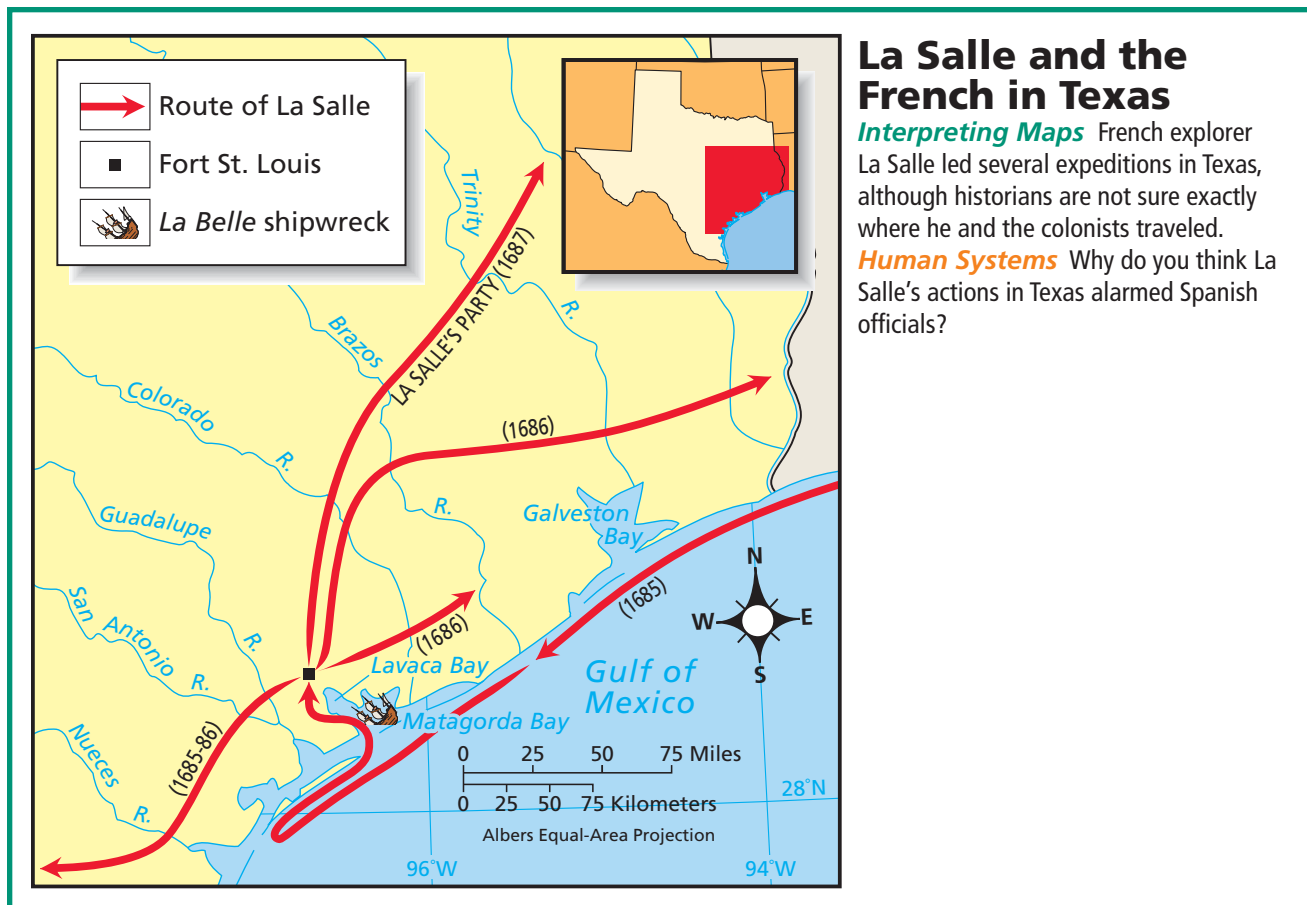
**Reading Check Finding the Main Idea** What was the purpose of the La Salle expedition?

## ★ Fort St. Louis

La Salle and the others quickly realized they could not live on the coast's marshy lowlands. They moved inland several miles and built a settlement called **Fort St. Louis** near Garcitas Creek. The settlement consisted of several simple houses and a five-room fort made of timbers from the wrecked ship. One of the rooms in the fort served as a chapel. For protection, the settlers put eight cannons on the fort's walls.

As the settlement was being built, La Salle led a small group west toward the Rio Grande. They may have been searching for Spanish mines or food supplies. La Salle was away from the fort from October 1685 to March 1686. He probably reached the Rio Grande before he realized that Fort St. Louis was west of the Mississippi.

Meanwhile, life was not going well at the settlement. Hunger and disease killed many settlers. In addition, the colonists had to defend themselves against attack by the Karankawa Indians, whom La Salle and his men had angered. By the end of July 1685, more than half the settlers were dead. The situation became worse as the colony's leaders quarreled. La Salle returned in March 1686 to a colony in crisis. The colonists' condition grew more desperate when the last remaining ship, *La Belle*, wrecked during a storm and stranded the settlers.







*The first mission in East Texas, San Francisco de los Tejas, was a simple building like this reconstruction.*

La Salle decided to go to Canada for help. However, the eastward journey through the wilderness to the Mississippi was difficult, and the expedition ended in failure. In early 1687 La Salle and 17 men went east again. While they marched through southeast Texas, tensions mounted. The men argued about how poorly things had turned out. Violence resulted, and La Salle was murdered by one of his own soldiers. Only six members of La Salle's party made it back to Canada.

Back at the settlement, fewer than 30 people were left, mostly women and children. Karankawa Indians attacked and overran the fort in late 1688 or 1689. They killed all of the adult settlers and destroyed the fort. Five children were taken captive by the Karankawas. The children were kept by the Karankawas until they were rescued later.

The La Salle expedition had ended in disaster. Despite its failure, the expedition gave France a claim to Texas. It also challenged Spain's empire north of the Rio Grande.

**Reading Check Analyzing Information** Why did Fort St. Louis fail?


## The Spanish Search for La Salle

Soon after the founding of Fort St. Louis, the Spanish tried to drive the French from Texas. Officials sent six expeditions by land and five by sea. Attempts at locating the settlement in 1686 and 1687 failed, but the Spanish learned much about the geography of southeast Texas.

**Alonso de León**, a Spanish governor, led another expedition in 1689. A Franciscan priest, Father **Damián Massanet** (mas-ah-NAY), traveled with him. Although they did not find the French fort, the expedition found two French survivors living among a group of American Indians. De León took them back to Mexico City to be questioned. Spanish officials then ordered De León back to Texas to search for the fort. When he finally found the settlement, he recorded what the Spanish saw.

**Analyzing Primary Sources**  
**Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** What did the Spaniards find that suggested that the French wanted to establish a permanent colony?

### TEXAS VOICES

 "We found three dead bodies strewn [scattered] in the field, one of which seemed to be a woman by the clothes that still clung to the bones. . . . We looked for more dead bodies, and could not find them, which caused us to conclude that they had been cast into the arroyo [creek] and that the alligators, many in number, had eaten them."

—Alonso de León, quoted in *Documents of Texas History*

In addition to the French settlement, the Spanish met the Hasinai on their travels. The Spaniards called the Indians *Tejas* (TEH-hahs), after the Hasinai word for "friend." Father Massanet believed that the Hasinai were interested in the establishment of a mission. After further exploration, the Spanish reported what they had learned to the viceroy.

**Reading Check Summarizing** What did the Spanish accomplish in the search for the French settlement?

## ★ Spanish Missions in East Texas

Alonso de León and Father Massanet had been impressed by the land and the Tejas. Upon their return to Mexico City, each advised the viceroy on how to set up missions in the region. De León wanted to build presidios alongside the missions to provide a strong military presence. Massanet argued that soldiers would only interfere with the work of the missionaries. Spanish officials soon approved Massanet's plan.

In early 1690 De León and Massanet returned to Texas with several missionaries and about 100 soldiers. Arriving in the land of the Tejas, the Spanish claimed the region for their king. They then picked a site west of the Neches River. The Spanish set to work building a mission. After only a few days, they finished building **San Francisco de los Tejas**. De León and Father Massanet soon returned to Mexico, leaving three missionaries and three soldiers at the mission. Both the Tejas and the missionaries were hopeful about the mission's future.

In 1691 Father Massanet returned to the mission with Domingo Terán de los Ríos, the first governor of Spanish Texas. Disputes arose between the two men, however, creating tension between missionaries and the government. The tension grew worse as droughts and floods ruined the mission's crops. Supplies were scarce, and the Spanish had to live on corn cakes. The Tejas at the mission ate cow skins to survive.

The Spanish became even more discouraged after discovering that the Tejas did not want religious instruction. After an outbreak of disease, the Tejas turned on the Spanish, blaming them for bringing the deadly disease. The Spaniards realized that they had to leave. On the night of October 25, 1693, the Spanish burned the mission to the ground. They buried the mission bells and fled to Mexico.

**Reading Check Finding the Main Idea** Why did the Spaniards leave East Texas?

**That's Interesting!**

### Mud Volcanoes

Many Spaniards traveled along the San Marcos River to reach the East Texas missions. Some travelers saw an odd sight along the way—mud volcanoes. One priest noted, "These move when we ride near them on horseback and even discharge some water." These "volcanoes" were actually marshy patches that "erupted" under pressure. They are known as quaking bogs. Today visitors to Palmetto State Park can still see mud volcanoes.



## Section 2 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

### 1. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following in Texas history:

- La Salle expedition
- Fort St. Louis
- Alonso de León
- Damián de Massanet
- San Francisco de los Tejas

### 2. Analyzing Information

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show why the Spanish decided to build a mission in East Texas.

Reasons for a mission

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Finding the Main Idea

- a. Why did La Salle establish Fort St. Louis, and what happened to it?
- b. What steps did Spanish officials take to stop French settlement in Texas?

### 4. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

**Identifying Cause and Effect** Write a short article about the founding and failure of the East Texas mission.

Consider the following:

- why it was established
- the challenges it faced