

The Expedition of Juan Ponce de Leon

EVEN BEFORE SPAIN HAD GROWN RICH
FROM THE GOLD OF THE AZTECS AND INCAS,
A MAN NAMED JUAN PONCE DE LEON
HAD REACHED WHAT IS TODAY'S STATE OF FLORIDA.
BEFORE BECOMING AN EXPLORER,
PONCE de LEON HAD LED AN AMAZING LIFE.
IN SPAIN, HE HAD SERVED IN THE PALACE OF THE KING AND QUEEN
AND HAD HELPED HIS COUNTRY DEFEAT
THE MUSLIM KINGDOM OF GRANADA.
HE HAD SAILED WITH COLUMBUS ON HIS SECOND VOYAGE TO THE NEW WORLD,
HAD BATTLED NATIVE PEOPLE ON TWO DIFFERENT CARIBBEAN ISLANDS,
AND HAD BECOME VERY RICH FROM THE GOLD
FOUND ON ONE OF THESE ISLANDS
THAT THE SPANISH NAMED...
IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIS WEALTH
AND EXPERIENCE AS A SOLDIER
THAT PONCE de LEON WAS CHOSEN BY THE KING
TO BE THE GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO
AND TO LEAD THE FIRST EXPEDITION
INTO THE UNEXPLORED LANDS
THAT LAY JUST TO THE NORTH OF THE SPANISH COLONIES
IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA.
BUT THIS TIME,
THE KING NOT ONLY WANTED PONCE de LEON TO SEARCH FOR GOLD

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AND CLAIM NEW LANDS FOR SPAIN,
HE ALSO WANTED HIM TO LOOK FOR A MAGICAL SPRING
CALLED THE "FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH,"
FROM WHICH IT WAS SAID
FLOWED THE "WATER OF LIFE;"
WATER THAT HAD THE POWER TO CURE DISEASES
AND TO MAKE OLD PEOPLE YOUNG AGAIN.
PONCE de LEON'S EXPEDITION BEGAN WHEN HE SAILED NORTHWEST
FROM PUERTO RICO IN 1513.
DURING HIS VOYAGE, HE STOPPED AT...
THE ISLAND ON WHICH COLUMBUS
HAD FIRST LANDED IN THE NEW WORLD.
HE EXPLORED OTHER ISLANDS AS HE SAILED NORTH,
BUT HE COULD NOT FIND THE "FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH."
IN APRIL, HE LANDED ON THE MAINLAND OF NORTH AMERICA
IN A PLACE WHERE MANY BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS GREW.
BECAUSE HE WAS THE FIRST EUROPEAN TO LAND HERE,
PONCE de LEON CLAIMED THE LAND FOR SPAIN
AND NAMED IT "FLORIDA,"
WHICH MEANS...
DURING HIS EXPEDITION,
PONCE de LEON EXPLORED A LOT OF THE COAST OF FLORIDA,
BUT HE NEVER FOUND THE "FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH"
OR ANY GOLD.

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A FEW YEARS LATER, HE CAME BACK TO FLORIDA
TO START A NEW SPANISH COLONY, BUT IT FAILED;
AND HE DIED A LITTLE LATER FROM WOUNDS HE SUFFERED
IN A BATTLE WITH THE NATIVE PEOPLE.
