

1541: Spanish conqueror Hernando De Soto leads the first European expedition into Arkansas, likely crossing the Mississippi near Commerce Landing, south of Memphis. **1673:** Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet, a trader, travel south on the Mississippi River, intent on missionizing and exploring. In July 1674 they turn back north, having reached the Quapaw villages of "Akansae" or "Kappa" near the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers. **1682:** Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle claims the Mississippi valley for King Louis XIV of France, dubbing the country "Louisiana." In February, La Salle's party pauses near present-day Memphis to build Fort Prud'homme, then continues south to the mouth of the river. **1686:** La Poste d'Akansas (Arkansas Post) is established by La Salle's lieutenant, Italian mercenary soldier Henri de Tonty, as a trading post. **1699:** Arkansas Post is abandoned, due to sluggish business.