



The Wrecking of La Salle's Ship Aimable and the Trial of Claude Aigron (Charles N. Prothro Texana Series)

Robert S. Weddle

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When Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle, landed on the Texas coast in 1685, bent on founding a French colony, his enterprise was doomed to failure. Not only was he hundreds of miles from his intended landfall—the mouth of the Mississippi—but his supply ship, *Aimable*, was wrecked at the mouth of Matagorda Bay, leaving the colonists with scant provisions and little protection against local Indian tribes. In anger and disgust, he struck out at the ship's captain, Claude Aigron, accusing him of wrecking the vessel purposely and maliciously.

Captain Aigron and his crew escaped the doomed colony by returning to France on the warship that had escorted the expedition on its ocean crossing. Soon after reaching France, Aigron found himself defendant in a civil suit filed by two of his officers seeking recompense for lost salary and personal effects, and then imprisoned on order of King Louis XIV while La Salle's more serious accusations were being investigated.

In this book, Robert Weddle meticulously recounts, through court documents, the known history of Aigron and the *Aimable*, and finds that despite La Salle's fervent accusations, the facts of the case offer no clear indictment. The court documents, deftly translated by François Lagarde, reveal Captain Aigron's successful defense and illuminate the circumstances of the wreck with Aigron's testimony. Much is also revealed about the French legal system and how the sea laws of the period were applied through the French government's L'Ordonnance de la Marine.

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