

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur De La Salle

Encyclopedia Article

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur De La Salle

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Contents

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur De La Salle Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur De La Salle.....	3

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1643-1687

French explorer who was the first European to follow the Mississippi south to the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle left France for New France (Canada) in 1667. He conducted many expeditions, including an exploration of the Great Lakes aboard the *Griffon* in 1679. Although many of his voyages wound up unsuccessful, he achieved what no European had before: a voyage south on the Mississippi River to the Gulf Coast in 1682. Five years and several calamitous adventures later, La Salle's men became so enraged with their leader that they shot him dead and left his body where it fell in the wilderness of what is now Texas.