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Juan Ponce de Leon

You may have heard of people like Christopher Columbus being the best explorer of the new continent. Well there are many other important explorers such as Juan Ponce de Leon. Juan Ponce de Leon was a Spanish explorer. He was the first to establish a European colony in Puerto Rico. In 1513 he led his crew to the south eastern coast of present day U.S., which he named Florida because the time was around Easter which translates to pascua de florida.

Juan Ponce de Leon’s exact birth date is unknown but is estimated to be around 1460. He was born in the village of Santervàs de Campos, in the northern part of the Spanish province of Valladolid. Ponce was born into a wealthy family and spent most of his time in the royal court. He was rich because of his parents owning and operating plantations and mines. Although he was a wealthy child, most of his riches come from his later success as a Spanish explorer.

He began exploring after he was encouraged by the Spanish crown to go claim land for them in the newly discovered continent on the other side of the world. They wanted him to go get land and riches for them so he was sent to America. His first expedition was to go to the land of current day Puerto Rico. While there he formed the first European colony on Puerto Rico. After leaving Puerto Rico he sailed to the peninsula of Florida in hopes of finding the fountain of youth. The fountain of you would restore the youth of anyone who swam in its waters.

After his failed attempts at finding the fountain he returned to Spain to report his findings to the crown. There he was rewarded with the title of military governor. He got permission to colonize and claim the area of Bimini and Florida. He also organized a small army to subdue the uprising of the natives that happened in his absence. After he came back the soldiers put down the uprising of the native Americans.

Ponce tried to have another voyage to Florida in 1521. Instead of landing in Florida he ended up in Havana, Cuba. After suffering from a shot from a bow he died from his injuries during a Native attack. He died on his returning voyage. Where now Puerto Rico’s 3rd largest city, Ponce, is named in honor of him.