
Introduction

This book is a synthesis of a vast body of information produced by historical archaeologists, historians, their students, and the interested public about the Spanish West Florida Presidio Period (1698–1763). East of the Apalachicola River, this early Spanish period of Florida is well understood. Research by archaeologists and graduate students from the University of Florida (UF) and Florida State University (FSU), together with projects carried out by the Florida Division of Historical Resources, the City of St. Augustine, and cultural resource management (CRM) firms, has produced an extensive body of scholarship on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Spanish East Florida. Their tradition of excellence extends to efforts of interpreting and sharing this knowledge with the public. However, the early colonial Spanish occupation in the Florida panhandle *west* of the Apalachicola River has also been studied by many excellent researchers, but this research is not well known. The main purpose of this book is to pull together the wealth of available information about West Florida in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to complete “the rest of the story” of early colonial Spanish Florida.

Before delving into this synthesis of Spanish West Florida, it is important to understand that the historical archaeological research conducted in West Florida was and is a bit different than research elsewhere, owing to the early and continual inclusion of the general public in almost all the endeavors. This inclusion started in the mid-1960s with Hale G. Smith, then chair of the Anthropology Department at FSU, where I was a student between 1963 and 1969 earning my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. At that time, Smith was one of a handful of historical archaeologists in the country, and he focused on the rich early Spanish legacy of north and west Florida (Smith 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1994). In the 1950s, Smith, historian Mark Boyd, and archaeologist John Griffin conducted research at the large Apalachee mission of San Luis de Talimali in Tallahassee, and they published their seminal work in 1951 (Boyd et al. 1951). Smith (1948, 1949) also conducted research on other seventeenth-century Spanish missions in north Florida. In early 1964, at the request of Norman Simons, assistant curator of the Pensacola Historical Society museum, Smith viewed a

collection of Spanish pottery from a site on Santa Rosa Island near the pass into Pensacola Bay. Smith immediately recognized that the site must be that of the Spanish presidio Isla de Santa Rosa, Punta de Sigüenza that existed there between 1723 and 1756. He conducted extensive excavations there in the summer of 1964 with his students and many members of the Pensacola Historical Society (Smith 1965). Several local and state organizations helped support Smith with housing and funding. The Santa Rosa project marked the beginning of the public's involvement in West Florida historical archaeology. Previously, in 1963, Smith had been asked by the Gulf County Florida Historical Commission and other local interest groups to locate an early Spanish site on the peninsula of St. Joseph Bay near the mouth of the Apalachicola River. Smith found the site of another Spanish presidio, San José de Panzacola, that existed there between 1719 and 1722. In 1965, Smith conducted an eight-week excavation at the San José site with his students and many members of the public, especially members of the Port St. Joe-Gulf County Historical Society. They hoped that the site would be developed for the public as part of a new state park on the peninsula. The park was established, but the site was not developed.

By 1967, the University of West Florida (UWF) was established in Pensacola. One of the special aspects of Pensacola is its long Euro-American history, beginning with the ill-fated Luna settlement in 1559. The public there is well aware of this history, and consequently, history was one of the initial primary academic programs at UWF, and the library special collections section specialized in gathering historical documents and publications about West Florida. In 1980, I started an anthropology-archaeology program at UWF, and within a few years we were conducting research in the Pensacola area. Starting an archaeology program from scratch meant that while we had students to teach and train and wonderful sites close at hand, funding for the myriad of necessary activities to conduct professional archaeology was non-existent. In the city, colonial deposits lie just beneath the asphalt, and at that time, they were being increasingly impacted by growth and development. Like almost all archaeologists of my generation, I had been trained and was experienced in pre-Columbian archaeology, but because of the damage to and significance of the historic archaeological deposits being destroyed in Pensacola, I backed into the historic era. With almost no money, but willing students and local citizens eager to help, I reached out to the general public in the newspaper, asking for help from anyone who was willing. The idea worked, and including the general public has been and still is the secret to our success.

Over the course of the next 40 years, public archaeology in Pensacola became the backbone of our academic program, and it has created a citizenry educated in history and archaeology through hands-on participation, media

publicity, public products, and organized assistance by a large local support group, the Pensacola Archaeological Society (PAS). The academic program blossomed into an independent department with a large master's program, a research institute, and a state-wide public archaeology network. UWF historical archaeology includes not only terrestrial historical archaeology but also shipwrecks dating back to the 1559 Luna expedition (Smith 2018). The information from each of the eighteenth-century sites included in this synthesis was produced with members of the public working side by side with our students and faculty in the field, laboratories, computerized databases and mapping, writing, and publications. The following synthesis of the Spanish West Florida Presidio Period (1698–1763) is possible only because of the strong academic and public partnership in Pensacola and West Florida.

Historical Context

Beginning in the early sixteenth century, the Spanish orchestrated several exploratory missions and settlement attempts in Spanish Florida, including Ponce de Leon in 1513 and 1521, Narváez in 1528, and Soto in 1539 (see appendix I, <http://doi.org/10.5744/9781683402558-Appendixes>). As a result, the Spanish Crown had knowledge of the navigable qualities of Pensacola Bay and the potential of surrounding lands for many years before Tristán de Luna y Arellano led a carefully planned colony of settlers and soldiers to its shores in the year 1559. Aside from establishing Pensacola as a base from which to assist in the protection of treasure ships and convoys (*flotas*) across the Gulf, Caribbean, and Atlantic seaboard, Luna was also under orders to establish a settlement on Port Royal Sound on the mid-Atlantic coast and to mark a route between the two new settlements, following Soto's previous path through Coosa (Worth 2018a: 2).

Tragically, Pensacola was beset almost immediately by a hurricane that stripped the colonists of food, basic supplies, and most of their ships. What followed was a two-year struggle for survival before Pensacola was abandoned in late 1561. The Luna *entrada* was the costliest in a string of failures to explore and settle Spanish Florida, and in 1561, King Philip announced that Spain no longer had an interest in settling the southeastern part of North America (DePratter and South 1990: 4; Quinn 1979: 200). In addition, the king proclaimed that any future undertakings would concentrate only on the area north of Santa Elena because of its position near the turning point of the silver-laden *flotillas* bound for Spain (McGrath 2000: 114).

Outside of La Florida, the discovery in the 1540s of vast quantities of gold and silver deposits with large Native populations as a nearby labor source in New Spain and Peru immediately became the beating heart and lifeblood of the

Spanish Empire. Spanish colonial policies in the Americas were doggedly mercantilist, and from the earliest days of colonial expansion in the Caribbean and across North, Central, and South America, these policies were laser focused on exploiting resources and defending the transportation of vast quantities of gold and silver extracted from mines. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the Spanish king decided that a presidio on Pensacola Bay was necessary to help protect the treasure fleets in the Gulf and Caribbean from piracy as well as to check expansion by the British and French. The Crown now called again upon New Spain to settle and hold the northern Gulf coast of La Florida in order to protect the wealth flowing from more lucrative areas of her empire.

In contrast to riches found elsewhere, the coastal area of Spanish West Florida offered neither mineral wealth nor centers of potential human labor. However, Spanish navigators and cartographers had long praised the area's defensible position along the northern Gulf coast, Pensacola Bay's navigable assets, and even the beauty of the bay and its surrounds. These qualities meant that Pensacola Bay was not forgotten and remained a contender as a suitable location for a military outpost that finally materialized when Presidio Santa María de Galve was established there in 1698.

For two hundred years prior to the establishment of Presidio Santa María, Spain poured human labor, money, and military might into a network of support settlements and garrisoned outposts focused on mining centers and other avenues of resource extraction. As the work of colonization and extraction continued, the Crown struggled to contain European rivals who posed a constant threat to her colonial territories and the vast quantities of gold and silver taken from them. One of those mining regions, the famed Potosí mines of northern Peru, sits high in the Andes (13,300 feet), naturally protected by steep terrain and a trek of almost 500 difficult miles from the coast. In contrast, the Zacatecas silver mines in central New Spain are easily accessible from both the Gulf of Mexico and overland routes from the north. Both the French and British had their eye on the Zacatecas silver mines as part of their expansions in eastern North America, as shown in figure 1.1.

The need to protect the mineral wealth extracted from the vulnerable Zacatecas mines compelled the establishment of a string of presidios across northern New Spain. Maritime presidios were established to police the shipping lanes across the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and up the Atlantic coast of Florida. From the beginning of Spain's systematic extraction of gold and silver from her colonies via a system of coerced physical labor, the transportation of that wealth to Spain guaranteed that the treasure ships immediately became the target of pirates, especially those sanctioned by the British and French. All treasure extracted from New Spain and Peru was first shipped

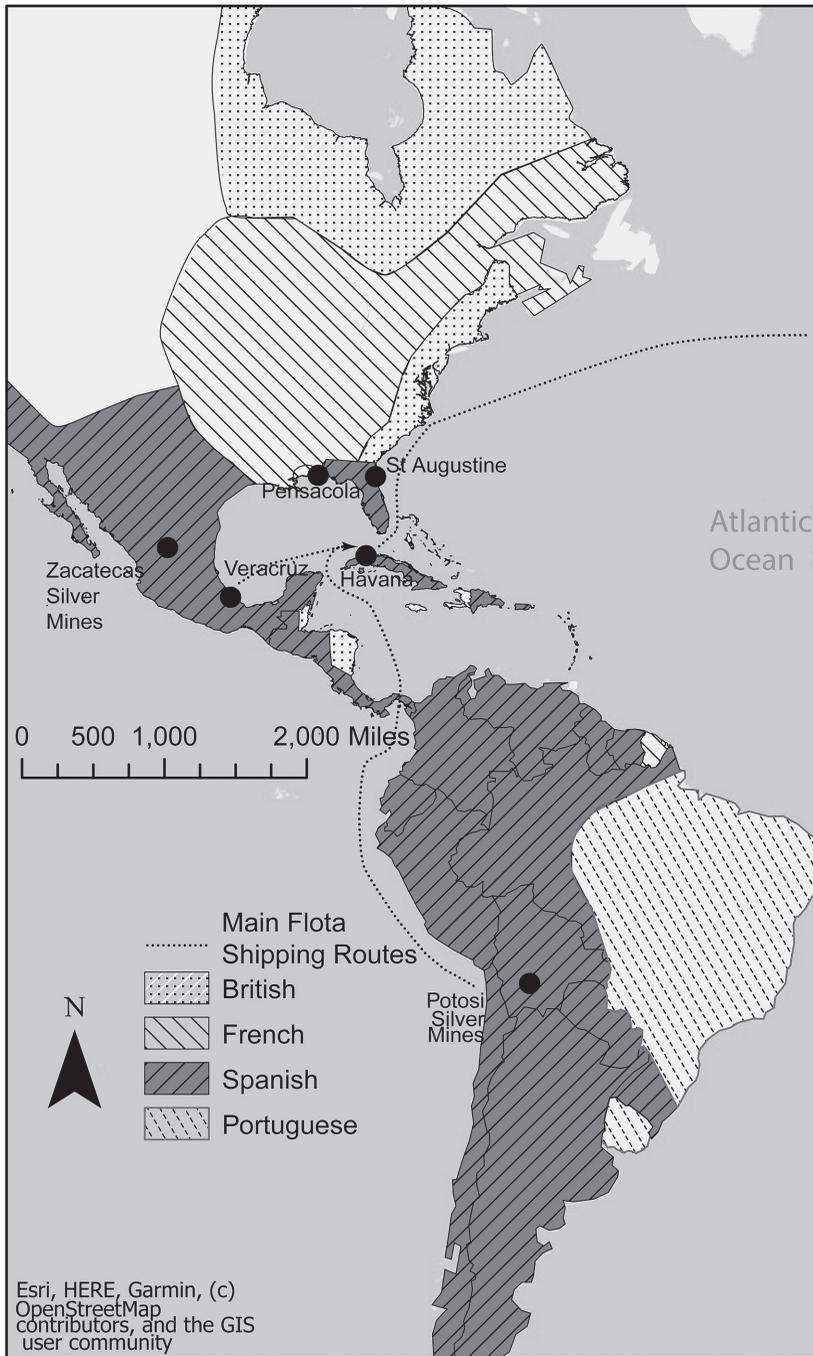


Figure 1.1. European colonial land claims in the Americas 1700 AD. Courtesy of the Archaeology Institute, University of West Florida.