

## In Search of Sixteenth--Century St. Augustine

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The city of St. Augustine has issued an open invitation to anyone and everyone to come celebrate the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our city. Many will arrive with expectations of experiencing the sixteenth-century and need direction on where to go. The energy of the town flows down St. George Street and the monumental Castillo de San Marcos, but none of the structures north of King Street existed in the 1500s. In fact, there are no standing ruins or relics from the sixteenth-century to be found in modern day St. Augustine. The following top 10 list is offered up to those wanting to connect with St. Augustine's intangible past through tangible experiences.

### Sixteenth-Century St. Augustine Top 10 To Do and See:

#### **1. Before You Visit, Perform a Dutiful Deed**

St. Augustine himself said, "Who can map out the various forces at play in one soul? I am a great depth, O Lord. The hairs of my head are easier by far to count than my feelings, the movements of my heart." The motives that have brought people to St. Augustine for thousands of years are uncountable, and Menendez along with Spanish settlers bring their own complex reasons. While some motives may be more obvious—military strategy, service to God, promise of enterprise—some motives are not as obvious. For example, not many people realize one of the more altruistic reasons Menendez came to Florida was to find his son Juan lost in the New World.

Consider the motivations of Martin Yztueta, a Basque architect who Manucy (1985:52) called "single most important influence affecting building practice, especially in the planning and construction of major structures." Yztueta channeled many of the architectural elements of his region back in Spain into structures in St. Augustine. Many other occupations were taken up by the 400 people living in St. Augustine by 1580, including moonlighting soldiers that brought their own regional influences and vocations to the New World (Lyon 1977):

barber, surgeons, bellow maker, boarding house mistress, carpenters, drummer-crier, fisherman, stock raiser, merchants, notaries, pilot, priest, sawyers, shield maker, blacksmith, cobbler, tavern keeper, pitch maker, match cord maker, charcoal burner, Indian trader.

No one in the sixteenth century arrived to St. Augustine without a sense of purpose. Challenge yourself to do something out of duty. Don't just dare yourself to do something reckless, do an act out of purpose. If public speaking is a challenge, give a talk for a local service group. Or try something new in the spirit of family or friendship. Bring this experience with you and let it resonate at the places you visit where people have previously come to perform dutiful deeds.

#### **2. Start in Jacksonville**

Menendez didn't land in St. Augustine because of currents, or gold, or any mythical fountain. He landed in St. Augustine to take out the French for Spain. Prior to Menendez's arrival, the French sailed up the St. Johns River on May 1, 1561 and soon settled Fort Caroline. Just twelve days after founding St. Augustine on September 8, 1565, Menendez men marched up to sack Fort Caroline. Today one can visit the Fort Caroline replica fort and visitors center managed by the National Park Service. The exhibits help set the context for Spanish arrival and is a most appropriate stop before turning your car south on I-95 to your destination: sixteenth-century St. Augustine.

#### **3. Run to the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park**

The Fountain of Youth is a St. Augustine institution. Opened in the 1930s, the park has hosted millions of school groups and families during their landmark fieldtrips. What most people who visited the park in their youth don't realize is that the Fountain of Youth is likely the landing site of Pedro Menendez on September 8, 1565. It may even be the site where men came ashore on September 7, 1565 and fortified an existing Timucuan house, thus creating the first wooden fort of St. Augustine. Dr. Kathleen Deagan from the University of Florida has conducted archaeological testing at the site for over 30 years and has found evidence for many prehistoric and historic features dating to the mid 1500s. As the

450<sup>th</sup> approaches, visitors can see the outlines of underground walls and wells laid out by Dr. Deagan, cheer on volunteer boat builders and they construct a replica *chalupa*—Spanish boat—on site, or talk with Pedro Menendez interpreter who lives every day of the year in September of 1565.

#### **4. Pay Respects to Menendez's Coffin**

Nombre de Dios, owned and managed by the Catholic Diocese, is a religious shrine open to the public. While the grounds are beautifully landscaped and contain their own inventory of significant archaeological deposits, it is the free museum on site that cannot be missed. It contains the only known artifact directly attributable to our founder: the coffin of Pedro Menendez. When Menendez died in 1578 he was initially buried in the wooden casket in Santander, Spain. In the 1920s Menendez was moved to his hometown of Aviles and the casket given ultimately to the Mission. Just opposite the coffin is the only place on the planet where you can hear the Timucuan language spoken. A push button display allows you to hear the Lord's Prayer read by beloved Florida historian Dr. Michael Gannon.

#### **5. Drive Down to Matanzas**

In 1565 after Menendez sacked Fort Caroline, the Spanish pursued the French Huguenot survivors south of St. Augustine as far as the Matanzas Inlet. While the exact locations are unknown, you will be in the vicinity of the 1565 massacre site, burials of approximately 300 Huguenots, and 1569 wooden watchtower. The demise of the Huguenots is interpreted at the Fort Matanzas visitor center and signs along a hiking trail managed by the National Park Service. Visitors today can see the coquina block fort that stands on the banks of the Matanzas River built much later in the 1740s and take a free boat ride over to the site.

#### **6. Get Lost on Anastasia Island**

On your way back from Matanzas, turn off Anastasia Boulevard and AIA and ponder lost sites. While the first wooden fort of St. Augustine was located north of town at Fountain of Youth and Nombre de Dios, in 1566 the Spanish moved to the island and built a second then third wooden fort. The sea claimed the forts and eventually the settlers moved back to the mainland in 1572. According to the Florida Master Site File, only two sites on the island can be attributed to the sixteenth-century and neither date to the 6 year period the Spanish lived solely on the island. The two sixteenth-century sites are the coquina quarry located at Anastasia State Park entrance (free and open with interpretive signs) and the privately owned Griffin site further south. We know settlement continued on the island even after the fort moved to the plaza. The 1589 Boazio map depicts several structures and activity areas visible to Drake as he approached to sack the city in 1586. A systematic survey of the island might one day shed light on gaps in the archaeological record.

#### **7. Walk the City Walls of 1572**

One of the great treasures in town is Aviles street, purported to be the oldest platted street in America. Affixed to the eastern gate post is a wonderful map that shows the old city walls. Visitors should remember there are no standing structures from the sixteenth-century that have survived, but beneath the ground there is evidence of structural walls, wells, and trash pits. Some places familiar to residents—Lester's Gallery, Trinity Episcopal Church, Ximenez-Fatio House, Palm Row, Francisco Ponce de Leon site, Cathedral Parish School, St. Francis Barracks, the hospital/chapel/cemetery of Soledad, and the Church of Los Remedios are just a few of the sites studied by Dr. Deagan and our city archaeologist that can claim sixteenth-century affiliation. Within the old walls you can also view the oldest above ground feature in town, the Cofradia coquina Spanish well (ca. 1614).

#### **8. Seek Out Our City Archaeologist**

St. Augustine was one the first cities in the United States to pass an archaeological ordinance in 1987. The ordinance is truly unique for its application to private property within identified archaeological zones and fee schedule. Not many cities can boast their own archaeologist and Carl Halbirt is out in the field every week preserving St. Augustine's past through recording sites before they are destroyed. Many of Carl's digs are open to the public and he accepts volunteers to the city program through the St. Augustine Archaeology Association, local chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society.

A visit to Carl often reveals every step of the scientific method in progress. He forms hypotheses in the field to test out at the sites he visits. He implements the city's archaeological ordinance and works with many departments, both city and state. Many visitors daily can observe Carl as he recovers data from the field (artifacts, things made and used by people) that is then sorted and sometimes analyzed before coming out of the screen. Carl crafts many interpretations in the field based on the artifacts and features he's finding and shares them with the volunteers and visitors each day. All scientists have to publish their finding, and when Carl talks to the public that's actually one of the best ways to share information about the site. The only stage of the scientific process not demonstrated on site is curation. Everything Carl excavates is prepared and placed in permanent storage. This includes field notes, photographs, artifacts, maps and drawings. Many of those recording documents are started in the field, but volunteers in the lab help complete the process. If you can't find Carl in the field, make a virtual visit by searching his name at *The St. Augustine Record* ([www.StAugustine.com](http://www.StAugustine.com)) that regularly features Carl's digs or better yet the City Archaeology Program website ([www.digstaug.com](http://www.digstaug.com)).

### 9. Visit FPAN

The Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) formed in 2005 through an act of state legislature. The Northeast Regional Center of FPAN opened in 2006 and is hosted by Flagler College. Center staff are dedicated to providing education and outreach to residents and visitors of northeast Florida, as well as assisting local and state government. You can visit FPAN at their physical address, 125 Markland Place behind the library on Flagler College campus, or make a virtual visit to their website, blog and Youtube channel. For St. Augustine's 450<sup>th</sup> commemoration the center has focused on providing educational materials of all ages to make more aware of the state's unique buried past. *Timucuan Technology* lesson plans provide context for who and what resources were here before the Spanish arrived, and the *Coquina Queries* curriculum explores ruins built out of coquina—Florida's Pet Rock—that tell the history of our state. Before you visit St. Augustine be sure to download the free "Explore Archaeology Off the Beaten Path" map that leads visitors to archaeological sites open and interpreted for the public.

### 10. Raise the 450<sup>th</sup> Literacy Rate!

I suggest anyone completely new to the topic of Spanish Colonial history in America begin with Tony Horwitz's (2008) very readable and entertaining *Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World*. Those further along in Spanish Colonial literacy consider the reading list below. See you in 2015!

#### For Further Reading

##### **Electronic**

City of St. Augustine Archaeology Program

[www.digstaug.org](http://www.digstaug.org)

Florida Museum of Natural History

Historical Archaeology: Menendez Fort and Camp [www.flmnh.ufl.edu/histarch/menendez.htm](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/histarch/menendez.htm)

On-Line St. Augustine Exhibit

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/staugustine/intro.htm>

Florida Public Archaeology Network

[www.flpublicarchaeology.org](http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org)

##### **Books and Articles**

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