



Digging into the Colonial Past: Archeology and the 16th-Century Spanish Settlements at Charlesfort-Santa Elena



(Library of Congress and the National Park Service)

At the beginning of the 16th century, France and Spain engaged in a series of wars. The conflict between these two powerful kingdoms spread across the globe as the French and Spanish governments fought to increase their power, wealth, and prestige in Europe.

This competition transferred to "the new world" of the Western Hemisphere, as European nations became interested in the wealth available in areas like the Caribbean. During this time of conquest and competition, France attacked Spanish ships and posed a threat to Spanish interests in North America, creating an unstable environment.

Both France and Spain raced to settle and control the southern coast of North America. On a small island off the coast of present-day South Carolina lie the ruins of Charlesfort, the French

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outpost for a year, which later became Santa Elena, a Spanish colonial town from 1566 to 1587. The site has been abandoned now for more than 400 years.

For more than a century, historians and archeologists have worked to piece together the story of Santa Elena. Today, documents have been found that reveal the thoughts and motivations of Spanish colonists. Excavations uncovered artifacts and outlines of homes and fortifications. This valuable evidence lets us peek into the lives of the Spanish colonists and Spain's ambitions for North America in the 16th century.



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Where this lesson fits into the curriculum

Time Period: Mid- to late 16th century

Topics: This lesson plan can be used in units on pre-colonial history of the Americas or European exploration and conquest. The lesson could also be used to enhance the study of archeology and American Indians.

Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

This lesson relates to the following National Standards for History from the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools:

US History Era 1

- **Standard 1A:** The student understands the patterns of change in indigenous societies in the Americas up to the Columbian voyages.
- **Standard 1D:** The student understands the differences and similarities among Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans who converged in the western hemisphere after 1492.
- **Standard 2A:** The student understands the stages of European oceanic and overland exploration, amid international rivalries, from the 9th to 17th centuries.
- **Standard 2B:** The student understands the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the Americas.

US History Era 2

- **Standard 1B:** The student understands the European struggle for control of North America.
-

Relevant Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

This lesson relates to the following Curriculum Standards for Social Studies from the National Council for the Social Studies:

Theme I: Culture



- Standard B: The student will compare ways in which people from different cultures think about and deal with their physical environment and social conditions.
- Standard C: The student will give examples and describes the importance of cultural unity and diversity within and across groups.

Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change

- Standard C: The student will compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past.
- Standard D: The student will identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, textbooks, photos and others.
- Standard E: The student will demonstrate an understanding that people in different times and places view the world differently.

Theme III: People, Places, and Environments

- Standard A: The student will construct and use mental maps of locales, regions, and the world that demonstrate understanding of relative location, direction, size and shape.
- Standard G: The student will describe how people create places that reflect ideas, personality, culture, and wants and needs as they design homes, playgrounds, classrooms and the like.

Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity

- Standard C: The student describes the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.

Theme IX: Global Connections

- Standard B: The student will give examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups and nations.

Relevant Common Core Standards

This lesson relates to the following Common Core English and Language Arts Standards for History and Social Studies for middle and high school students:

Key Ideas and Details

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.2

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.6

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.9

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.10



About This Lesson

This lesson is based on the National Historic Landmark registration file "[Charlesfort-Santa Elena](https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NHLS/text/74001822.pdf)," [https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NHLS/text/74001822.pdf] and other materials. It was published in 2014. It was written by Jaclyn Jecha, a historian and education specialist, under a contract with the Santa Elena Project Foundation, with assistance from Dr. Paul E. Hoffman from Louisiana State University. The lesson was edited by Teaching with Historic Places staff. This project was initiated by the National Park Service Archeology Program through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kingdom of Spain and supported by the Spanish Embassy. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into the classrooms across the country.

Objectives

1. To explain several reasons why the Spanish attempted to colonize eastern North America in the 16th century;
2. To construct a historical narrative and timeline of the settlement at Santa Elena using archeological information, maps, and artifacts;
3. To compare and contrast primary and secondary sources, and explain the value and limitations of each;
4. To analyze a collection of historical artifacts and describe how they contribute to our knowledge of the past.

Materials for students

The materials listed below can either be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied, and distributed to students.

1. Four maps of Santa Elena, including one historical map of the Atlantic world and three modern maps of the southeastern Atlantic coast, the Santa Elena and Port Royal Sound area, and Parris Island;
2. Four readings about Spanish colonization in North America and archeological work at Santa Elena, based on the historical record and archeological excavations;
3. Six images including three artists' depictions of historic Santa Elena and three photos of archeological artifacts and an archeological excavation.

Visiting the site

Charlesfort-Santa Elena, a National Historic Landmark, is located within the United States Marine Corps Recruit Depot on Parris Island in Port Royal, SC. The USMC

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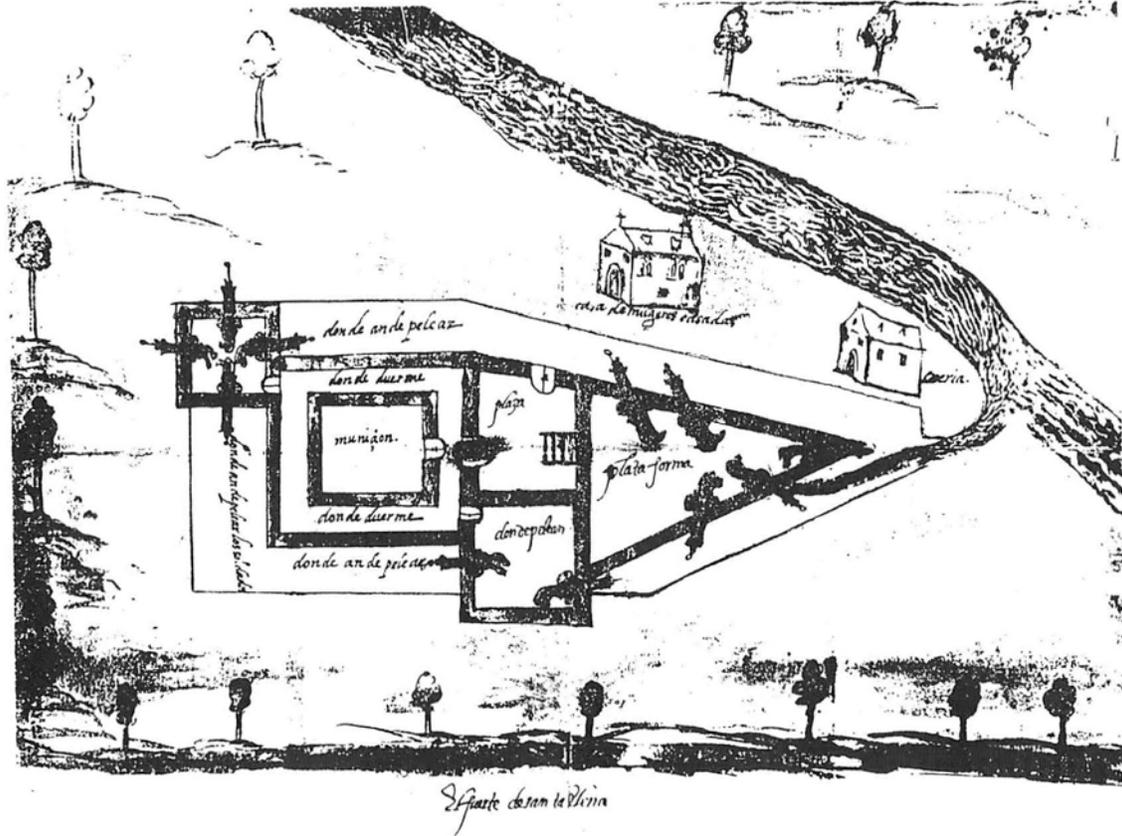
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Parris Island Museum is located in the base at Bldg. #111, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island. The Parris Island Museum is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except on Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. For more information, visit the Parris Island Museum [website](#) or call 843-228-2951.

Visit the Charlesfort-Santa Elena [site description](#) in the American Latino Heritage Travel Itinerary for additional information.



Getting Started



(Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain)

What does this drawing show? Why do you think so?



Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1:

Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?

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Setting the Stage

While the textbook history of Europe's colonization of North America usually begins with Roanoke Island, Jamestown or Plymouth, it was in fact the Spanish who first arrived in North America. Spain began exploring the Americas in 1492 and landed in present-day Florida just decades after Columbus, claiming the entire continent for Spain. Colonization of the eastern seaboard began in the 1560s and the Spaniards competed with the French for control of the "new world."

La Florida, the land mass north of the Caribbean, continued to be a priority for the Spanish even as constant warfare between France and Spain existed throughout the sixteenth century. There were moments of peace, but they were usually short-lived. After 1560, the English also became a threat to the Spanish empire. They attacked Spanish ships and towns throughout the Caribbean and North America.

Spain wanted to protect the Straits of Florida because that strategic region had favorable currents and supported important shipping lanes, which imported and exported goods from the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean. However, hurricanes often destroyed Spanish ships and this brought the Spanish crown to consider settlements on the mainland to provide defense and assistance to shipwrecked sailors. In addition, the Spanish hoped to explore the land and find mineral wealth.



Locating the Site

Map 1: North and South America, 1562



(Library of Congress)

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Questions for Map 1

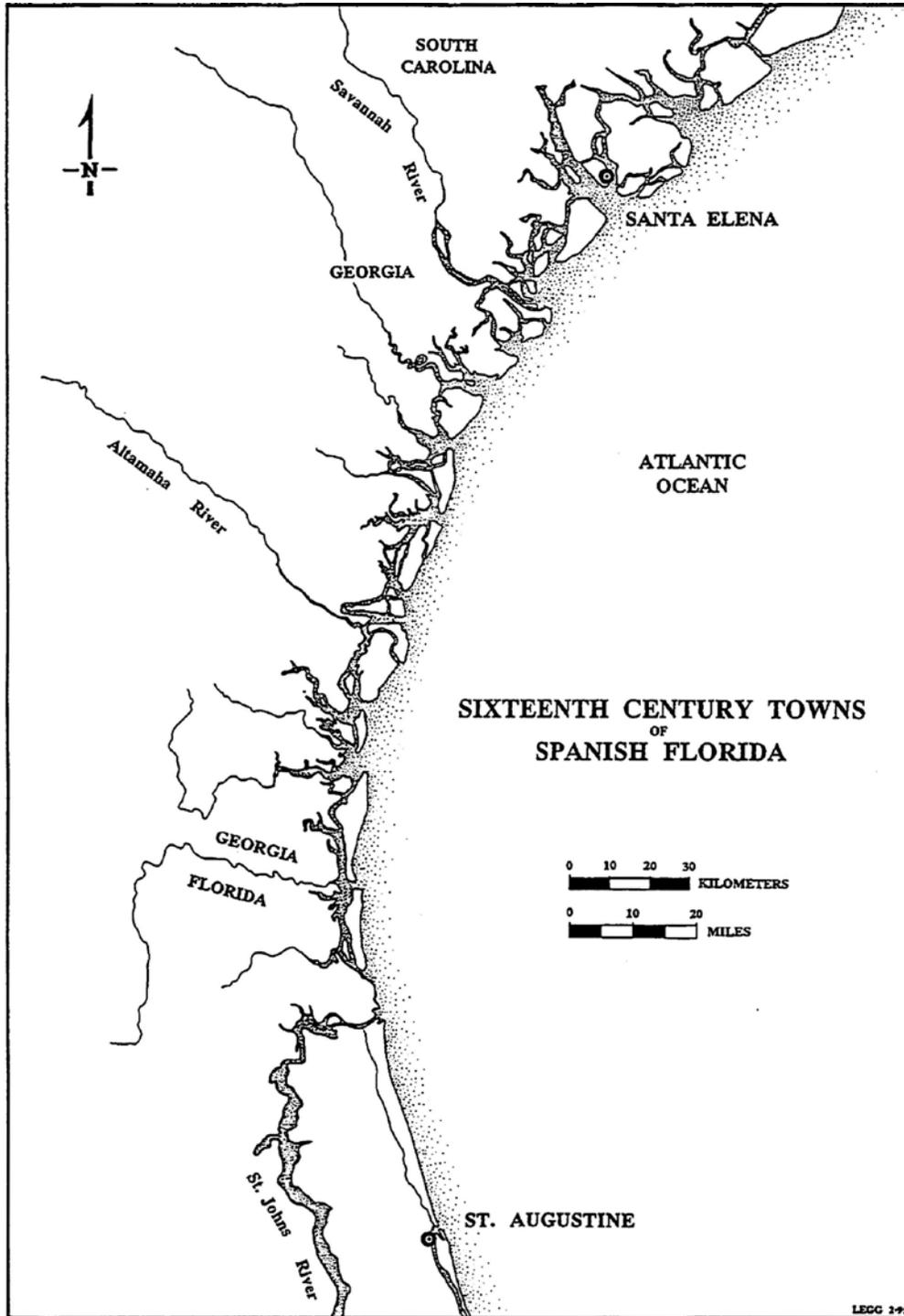
1) Use a modern map of the world to locate the present-day state of Florida and the nations of France and Spain. Where are they on Map 1?

2) Why do you think 16th-century European nations wanted to colonize southeastern North America? What reasons might a Spaniard or Frenchman have for crossing the ocean and settling on the east coast of that continent?

3) Based on your comparison of a modern map with Map 1, in what ways is Map 1 inaccurate? How is it accurate? Why do you think the maps are different?



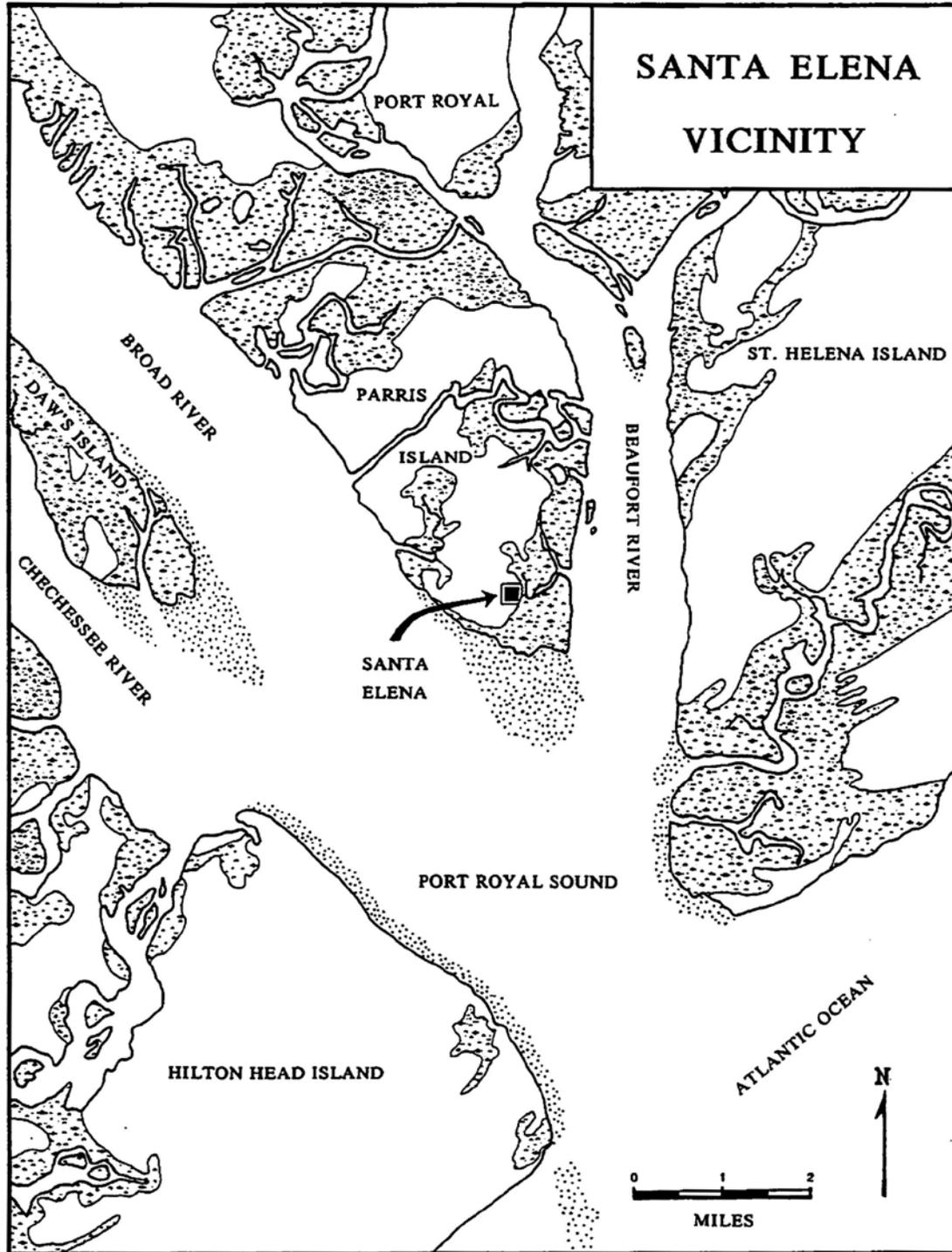
Map 2: 16th-Century Towns of Spanish Florida



(DePratter, Chester B. and South, Stanley, "Discovery at Santa Elena: Boundary Survey" (1995). Research Manuscript Series. Book 223. pg. 3)



Map 3: Santa Elena and Surrounding Area



(DePratter, Chester B. and South, Stanley, "Discovery at Santa Elena: Boundary Survey" (1995). Research Manuscript Series. Book 223. pg 6)

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Questions for Maps 2 & 3

- 1) Compare Map 2 with a modern map of the United States. What states are labeled on Map 2? What part of the U.S. does Map 2 depict?

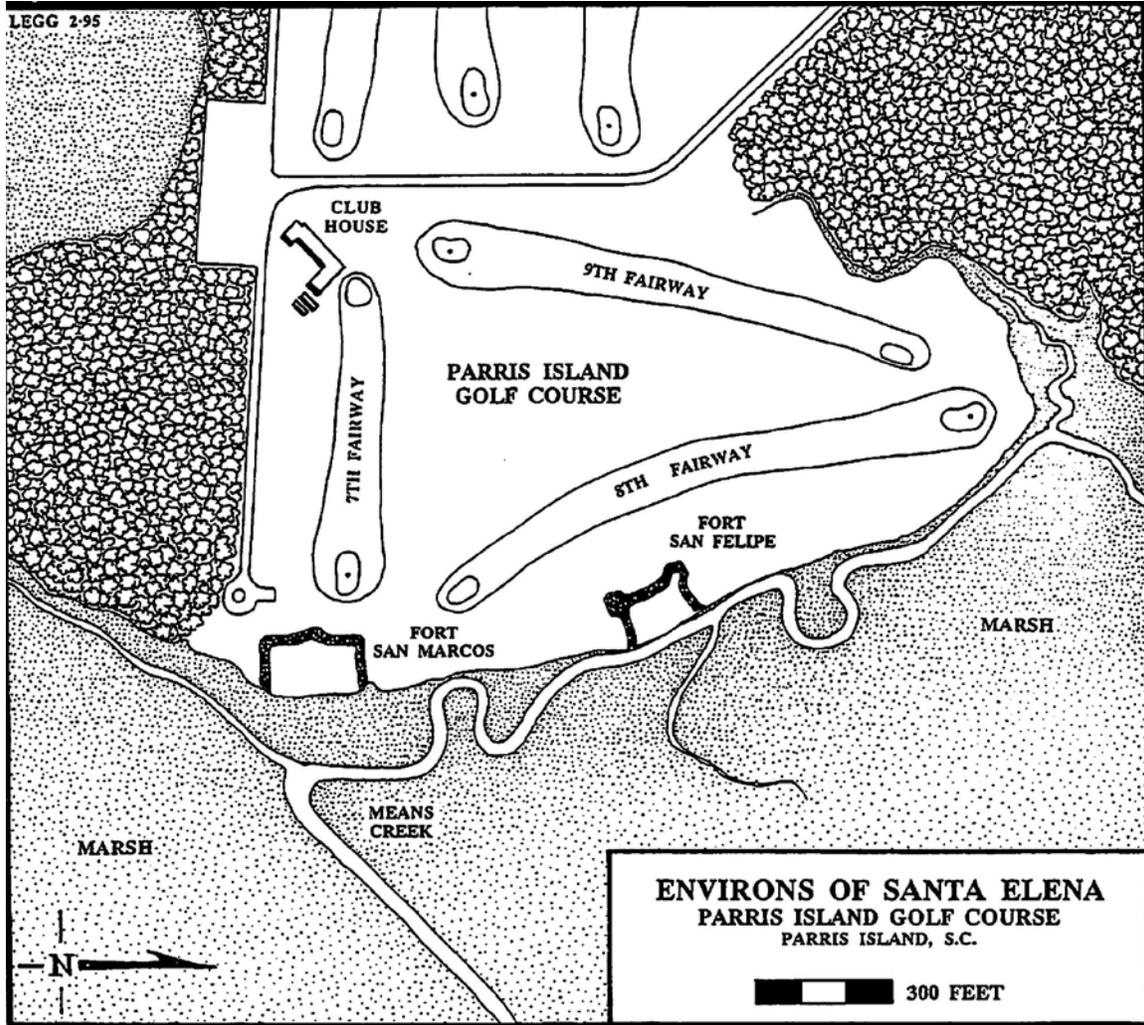
- 2) What cities can you find on Map 2? Where in Map 2 is the location of the place shown in Map 3?

- 3) Which features in Map 3 are land? Which are water? How do you think 16th century colonists used these features?

- 4) Spanish and French colonists competed to settle on Parris Island in the 1500s. How do you think 16th century colonists used the land and water at this place?



Map 4: Parris Island golf course and archeological site



(DePratter, Chester B. and South, Stanley, "Discovery at Santa Elena: Boundary Survey" (1995). Research Manuscript Series. Book 221. pg. 7.)

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Questions for Map 4

- 1) Locate Fort San Marcos and Fort San Felipe on the map.
- 2) How would you describe their location to someone who is visiting the site?
- 3) What challenges might archeologists face when digging and studying at the Santa Elena site? Why?



Determining the Facts

Reading 1: A History of Spain's Santa Elena

In 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon sailed to North America, claimed it for Spain, and named the land he discovered. He called the land *La Florida* ("Place of Flowers") because his crew arrived there at the time of *Pascua Florida* ("Flowery Easter"). The place the Spaniards called La Florida was much bigger than the state of Florida today. Spanish Florida included present-day Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Virginia and Louisiana. The location was important to the Spaniards because of how close it was to the Caribbean. La Florida was next to the major trade route from the Caribbean to Spain. Settling there would mean Spain could use it as a base to protect their other nearby colonies from the French.

Throughout the 16th century, Spain and France both fought for territory in the Americas in a series of wars. For both Spain and France, a settlement in La Florida would give a strategic advantage over the other. Unfortunately, the Spaniards had trouble establishing a settlement in La Florida.

The French knew the Spanish failed in La Florida and also knew how important it was strategically. They decided to establish their own settlement at Port Royal Sound, using Parris Island for a military advantage. The settlement would not only provide a way for the French to attack Spanish shipping, but it would also provide land to grow tropical crops they could not grow anywhere else.

In 1562, the French attempted to create a settlement along the Atlantic coast at Port Royal Sound. The fort they built was named Charlesfort. A few months after arriving, the French abandoned the fort because the settlers did not have enough supplies. In 1564, the French returned and settled at Fort Caroline on today's St. John's River in the state of Florida.

In 1565, after hearing about France's settlements at Charlesfort and Fort Caroline, the Spanish decided to try to settle in La Florida again, including at Port Royal Sound, where they would eventually settle Santa Elena. There were many advantages to settling at Port Royal Sound. The site of Santa Elena provided a military advantage, favorable trade winds and some protection from hurricanes. The Spaniards hoped it would also provide rich farmland, a land passage to the Spanish Empire in modern-day Mexico and access to an American Indian population to increase the population within the empire.

Pedro Menéndez de Avilés was the Spanish government's appointed *adelantado* or, an individual responsible for the conquest of a new area. *Adelantados* were given contracts by the government outline exactly what they were supposed to do on a specific mission. Menéndez was responsible for settling in Spanish Florida. When his settlement contract was finalized, the French still occupied Fort Caroline. The Spanish government discovered the exact location after they captured three French ships sent to prey on the Spaniards in the Caribbean. The Spanish Governor of Cuba sent the information to the king. The first thing Menéndez was supposed to do after arriving in Florida was remove the French from the territory.

Menéndez and the Spanish ships arrived at Fort Caroline in September of 1565 and successfully took the fort from the French. With the French threat gone, the Spanish claimed La



Florida as their own and began preparations to establish a capital. Menéndez established settlements at St. Augustine and Fort Caroline (renamed Fort San Mateo) in 1565 and at Santa Elena in the spring of 1566.

Two years later, additional Spanish settlers arrived at Santa Elena and a *concejo*, or city government, formed. The *concejo* issued town lots and farming plots to settlers. Some scholars believe the Spaniards built 40 houses grouped around a central plaza, as well as nearby Fort San Felipe, by 1569. Menéndez brought his wife and their household to the settlement in 1571. The settlers faced hardships including food shortages, difficulties growing crops in sandy soil and growing hostilities with the American Indian tribes, the Orista and Guale American Indian tribes.

After several years, Pedro Menéndez returned to Spain to fight for King Philip against the Dutch. While he was there, Menéndez died on September 17, 1574, passing his estate to his daughter Maria and the title of *adelantado* of La Florida to his son-in-law, Hernando de Miranda.

When Hernando de Miranda arrived in Santa Elena, the relationship between Spanish settlers and the Orista and Guale Indians continued to get worse. Some Spaniards stole food from the American Indians when settlers faced a food shortage. This stealing pushed the Indians to attack Spanish ships and soldiers. The Spanish settlers left Santa Elena as a result of this attack. American Indians destroyed the fort and burned the settlement.

Shortly after, the Spanish crown ordered the reoccupation of Santa Elena. This time, the governor was Pedro Menéndez Márquez, the nephew of Menéndez de Aviles. However, Márquez was not given the title *adelantado*. Without a crown-appointed *adelantado*, La Florida was now under direct royal control. After Santa Elena was abandoned in 1576, the capital of La Florida was moved to St. Augustine. The Spanish rebuilt Santa Elena in 1577, but St. Augustine continued to be the capital.

Sometime later, American Indians told the Spaniards of a settlement north of Santa Elena in modern-day North Carolina. The new settlers were under the control of an Englishman, Walter Raleigh. Raleigh established the Roanoke Island colony in North Carolina in 1585. The English were now considered a threat to Spanish settlement in North America.

The threat of the English would continue with Sir Francis Drake's large fleet sacking and burning Santo Domingo and Cartagena in the Caribbean. There were rumors that Drake and his fleet were headed north to St. Augustine and Santa Elena. However, he missed the settlements at St. Augustine and Santa Elena. Drake sailed farther north to Roanoke, rescued the stranded colonists in North Carolina, and sailed back to England.

The threat of additional English attacks forced the Spaniards to reconsider their settlements in La Florida. On August 16, 1587, Governor Pedro Menéndez Márquez took his royal orders to Santa Elena and evacuated the settlement, destroying the fort and houses as he left. The population moved to St. Augustine, effectively ending the Spanish's settlement at Santa Elena. Drake passed over Santa Elena and attacked St. Augustine, destroying the town and the fort. Despite that, the Spanish rebuilt there and today St. Augustine is the oldest permanent city founded by Europeans in North America.



Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Life at Santa Elena

While the Spanish government looked to expand its empire in the 16th century, many Spaniards were willing to risk it all in order to find new opportunities in the Americas. The journey across the Atlantic Ocean lasted for weeks and was extremely risky. There were the threats of storms, disease, pirates and rival countries like France attacking their ships. Once they arrived in the Americas, colonists continued to face difficulties including trouble growing food in poor soil. However, many were willing to face the challenges in order to create a new life and support their country's efforts to expand its empire.

The lives of settlers at Santa Elena were a lot like the lives of the Spaniards in Spain during the 16th century. Throughout their Empire, the Spaniards created towns that resembled towns in Spain. Standards for laying out Spanish colonial towns were officially outlined in the Laws of the Indies in 1573 by King Philip II. Santa Elena followed the Spanish standards before they officially became law. The laws stated that a plaza would be at the center of the town surrounded by a church, government buildings, and private residences for the elite. Other buildings, like shops and houses for poorer people, would be away from the plaza with farmland surrounding the town.

The church was in the center of the town right off of the plaza because the lives of the settlers were centered around the Catholic church. Feasts and religious services were very important to Spanish settlers. In fact, one of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés' responsibilities at Santa Elena, set forth by the king, was to spread the Catholic faith to the Native population.

The Santa Elena settlement had tradesmen such as blacksmiths, tailors, and farmers, in addition to a social structure that separated nobility and commoners. The houses of the nobility were set on 100' by 200' lots closer to the center of town and held some of the finest goods they could afford. On the other hand, a commoner's home was on a 50' by 100' lot and usually had one room with only one window and a thatched roof. The houses were made out of daub, a plaster that covered small vertical branches. Commoners lived simply with just one bed, trunk, table and a few chairs.

Food was always an issue for settlers in the Americas. A new environment, growing season and soil were challenging and the settlers needed a large food supply in order to survive. Crops that grew in Spanish soil, like barley, wheat and grapevines, did not survive in the sandy soil of Santa Elena. Local predators, like bears, killed livestock brought over from Europe. Settlers eventually learned to grow the same crops as the local American Indians: corn, beans, and squash.

Some supplies came from places like Cuba. Menéndez traveled away from Santa Elena for household goods and construction supplies. He also brought other supplies like flaxseed and hempseed, along with lentils, salt, garbanzo beans and rice, all typically used to make the Spanish *cocido* stew. However, along with supplies, the ships brought diseases like typhus. Many crew members aboard supply ships died at sea and on one occasion most of the town was infected after a ship arrived.

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American Indians were vital to the Spaniard's survival because they knew the land. Menéndez established friendly relations with the Orista and Guale Indians, but with his absence and then his death in 1574, the relationship between the settlers and American Indians began to change. Food shortages forced Spanish settlers to steal food and there were rumors the Spanish killed some American Indians.

Because of rising tensions, American Indians attacked the Spaniards and the hostilities increased and moved closer to the town of Santa Elena. In response, the settlers moved from their homes to the defensive fort for protection. The American Indians attacked and burned down the town, which ultimately resulted in the abandonment of Santa Elena in 1576. Santa Elena did rebuild the next year, but it was abandoned again ten years later in 1587. The Spaniards decided they could not defend both Santa Elena and St. Augustine. They moved their settlers and resources to St. Augustine, and did not return to Santa Elena.

The lives of the Spanish settlers in La Florida were difficult, but many survived and continued to live in the Americas. Their experiences eventually produced a new *criollo* or *Floridano* culture from blending new and old, American and European, traditions.



Questions for Reading 2

1) How did the lives of settlers at Santa Elena resemble the lives of Spaniards in Spain? In what ways were they different?

2) What do you think were the most important buildings to the Spaniards in Santa Elena? What do you think were the least important? Why?

3) What do you think the Spaniards' town plan reveals about Spanish society and culture? Why do you think so?

4) What factors led to Santa Elena's abandonment? If you had to argue for one factor being the one that contributed the most to the Spanish decision to abandon Santa Elena, what would it be? Why?



Determining the Facts

Reading 3: Archeological Excavations

Investigations by archeologists and historians have taught us much about the history of Parris Island. Reports on excavations on Parris Island and research in archives tell us how that place once looked and how the people there once lived. But what we know today about Santa Elena is not what the experts always thought.

Until the mid-20th century, archeologists and historians assumed the site was French, not Spanish. One of the first primary sources of evidence used to write about the history of Parris Island was a series of French illustrations from the 16th century. These illustrations were drawn by Jacques Le Moyne, a Frenchman who lived at the site when France controlled it.

The first wave of researchers at Parris Island in the 1800s believed the site of Santa Elena was French and not Spanish. They did not have written evidence that Spaniards settled at Parris Island. The first excavations happened in the 1850s. They occurred before the United States outlawed slavery and it was enslaved laborers who excavated the Santa Elena site. During that excavation, they discovered a historic artifact: a gate. The researchers leading the excavation assumed the gate was part of the French settlement, Charlesfort, because they knew about the Le Moyne illustrations.

During World War I, the United States Marine Corps began to use Parris Island as a training site. The Marines uncovered pottery from the 16th century when they built their training grounds on the island in 1917. Major George Osterhout of the U.S. Marine Corps and his team excavated the site after the war. Osterhout was not a trained archeologist, but he kept careful records of their excavations. He wrote about what they discovered and decided the pottery found at the site looked like it was from Southern France.

Though Osterhout continued to excavate the site and called it a French settlement, other scholars began to publish articles that claimed the Santa Elena site was Spanish. In 1957, National Park Service archeologists examined the artifacts discovered by Osterhout. These trained archeologists compared the Parris Island artifacts to other 16th century artifacts found in the state of Florida. These archeologists decided that the artifacts from Parris Island were from Spain or created by Spaniards. They determined that the excavated fort site that Osterhout called French was actually Fort San Marcos, built by Spaniards in 1577.

After the discovery that the Parris Island artifacts are Spanish, new archeological excavations revealed more about the site. Archeologists would also find French artifacts that indicated both the French and the Spanish settled at Santa Elena. These artifacts give historians and archeologists a window into the lives of Spanish and French settlers. The excavations reveal how the settlers lived and created a timeline for occupations of the settlement, beginning in 1562 with the French at Charlesfort.

Archeologists found the location of the French fort after discovering French ceramics at the site. These ceramics included *faience*, a tin-based pottery, and French stoneware. Archeologists decided that Santa Elena's first Fort San Felipe was also the site of the French-occupied Charlesfort. The French left Charlesfort in 1563 and the Spaniards built Fort San Felipe on top of it. At Fort San Felipe, archeologists discovered French and Spanish artifacts mixed together.

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New construction of a second Fort San Felipe began in 1570, but the actual location is still a mystery. Because of American Indian attacks, the fort was abandoned in 1576. In 1577, after the Spaniards returned to Santa Elena, they built the first Fort San Marcos. Archeologists believe that it was abandoned in 1582 or 1583. Its current location may be under the golf course that is now on the original site of San Marcos. Fort San Marcos, although abandoned, was brought back to life with a second attempt in either 1582 or 1583.

Archeologists believe that those with power and money, during both periods of occupation, lived in the northeast and southeast corners of the site. Some archeological data shows that a road most likely formed the eastern boundary of a plaza that also included a church and government buildings.

The archeological features are well preserved despite how old the site is and the modern buildings and features that have been built up around and on top of the old settlement. Today, a golf course covers most of the Santa Elena site. When it was constructed, the course was created by placing a layer of topsoil over the archeological site, preserving the remains of the houses and forts. Additional modern features of the site include a golf clubhouse and a paved road. Monuments to the first French settlers and to the Spanish presence have been placed at the site.

While the discoveries on the island can tell us much about early Spanish and French settlements on Parris Island, other archeological evidence at the site also includes pre and post contact American Indian artifacts, evidence of early 18th and 19th century plantations, and historic material from the U.S. Marine Corps training camp.

The archeology at Santa Elena is not finished; there are still more stories to tell. In 2014, after more than one hundred years have passed since the first excavations, archeologist Chester DePratter expressed the belief that only 2-4% of Santa Elena has been uncovered.



Determining the Facts

Document 1: Archeological Artifacts

KITCHEN

Ceramics

Glass

Knives

ARCHITECTURE

Nails

Spikes

Tacks

Locking bar
brackets

Pintles

Latches

Lime

Lime mortar

Oystershell
mortar

Fired clay daub

FURNITURE

Drawer pulls

Drawer pull
brackets

Tacks

Brass Nails

Rivets

Chest lock

ARMS

Musketballs

Lead sprue

Bandolier bag

Bullet mold

Pike point

Crossbow parts

Crossbow bolt points

Goatsfoot lever parts

Arquebus parts

Matchlock musket parts

Sword

Armor

Armor buckles

Armor hinges

Armor hooks and eyes

Artillery carriage ring

Cannonballs

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CLOTHING

Buckles

Ball Buttons

Atauxia

Acero

Aglets

Hooks and Eyes

Bordado

Bells

Copper stars

Scissors

Bale seal

Thimbles

Pins

Iron wire

PERSONAL

Beads

Ornaments

Crucifix

Earring

Coins

Dice

Gaming discs

Keys

Bone finials

Book hinges

ACTIVITIES

Woodworking gouge

Auger bits

Auger bit crescent "keys"

Barrels

Barrel bands

Iron chain links

Shears (pruning)

Lead fishing weights

Lead fishing weight curls

Fishhooks

Brass working by-products

Brassworking anvil

Riveted sheet brass

Brass discs

Iron discs

Mica discs

Stone arrowheads

Iron chisels

Iron wedges

Bone awls

Iron cotter pins

Iron discs and rings

Iron eye pins

Boat anchor

Iron stake

Unidentified iron objects

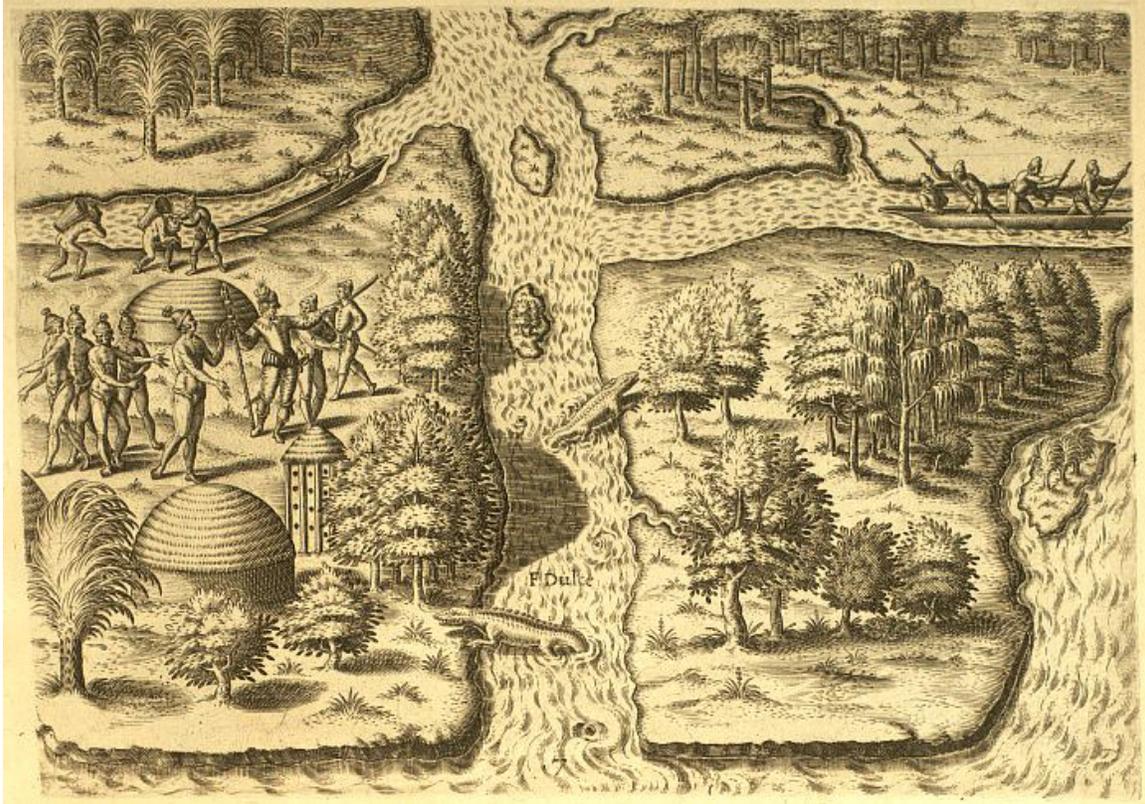
Spanish period Indian pottery

South, Stanley; Skowronek, Russell K.; and Johnson, Richard E., "Spanish Artifacts from Santa Elena" (1988). Anthropological Studies. Book 9. pg. 20.



Visual Evidence

Illustration 1: French colonists near Parris Island, present-day South Carolina

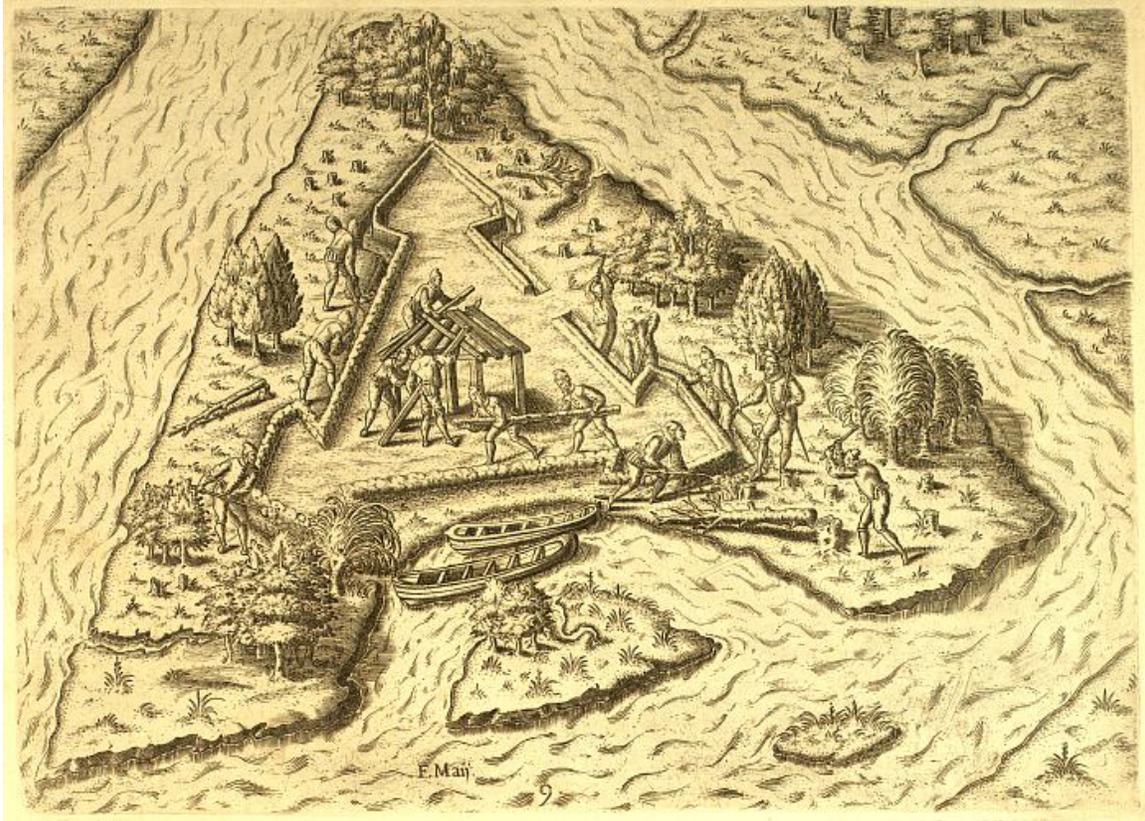


(The Florida Center for Instructional Technology, University of South Florida)

Caption: "The colony at Charlesfort ran short of food. The men left at Charlesfort canoed through alligator-infested rivers to get help from American Indians. Plate VII."



Illustration 2: French settlement at the mouth of St. John's River, present-day Florida



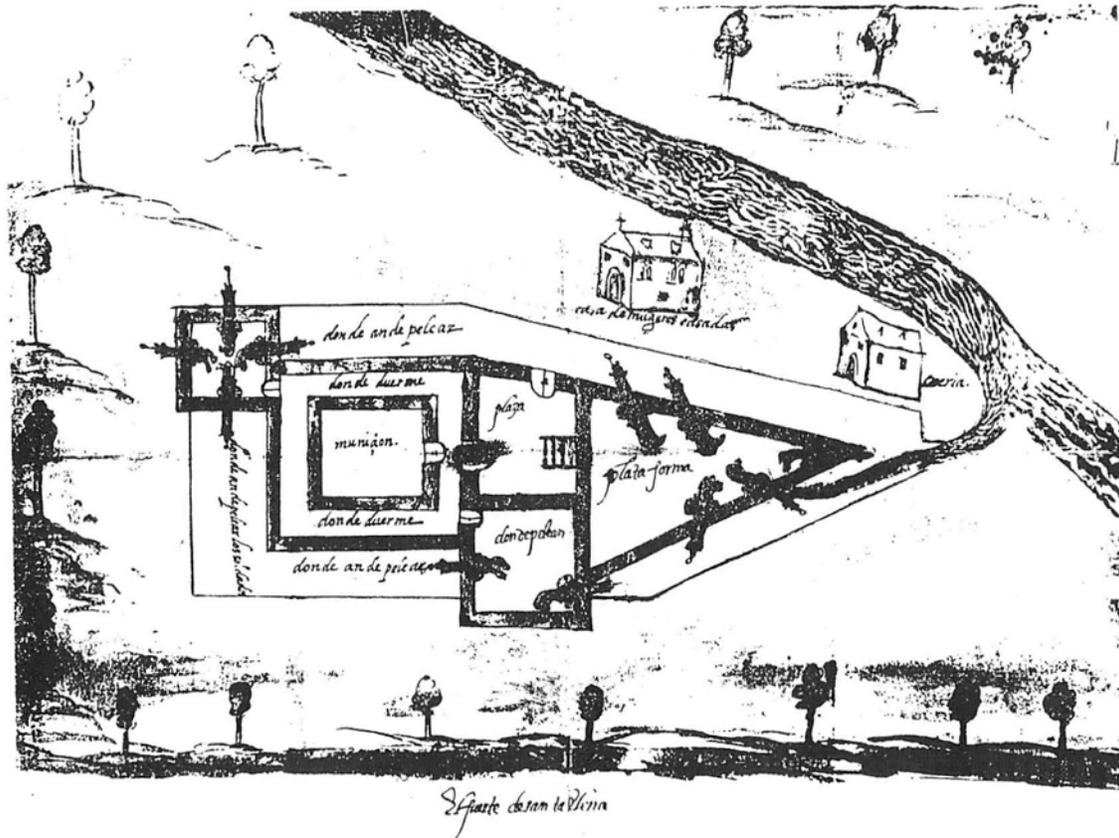
(The Florida Center for Instructional Technology, University of South Florida)

Caption: "The French built Fort Caroline. The fort was built on the bank of the St. Johns River. Trenches were dug along the other two sides of the triangular fort for protection. Plate IX."



Visual Evidence

Drawing 1: 1578 plan of Fort San Marcos



(Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain)



Questions for Drawing 1

1) What kinds of buildings are shown in this drawing? What other objects or landscape features did the artist depict?

2) Based on this drawing, what do you think was important to the Spanish colonists? What did they care about? What do you think they were afraid of? Why? (Refer to Reading 2 if necessary)

3) This is one of two illustrations of Santa Elena from the time of the settlement. Do you think this is a credible source of information about Santa Elena? Why or why not? Explain your answer.



Visual Evidence

Photo 1: French Artifacts from the Charlesfort-Santa Elena site



(Photo by Stan South, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Stoneware left during the 1562-1563 French occupation, taken from the Charlesfort-Santa Elena Site.



Visual Evidence

Photo 2: Spanish Artifacts from the Charlesfort-Santa Elena site



(Photo by Joe Joseph, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Archeological materials at the Charlesfort-Santa Elena Site, including 16th-century Spanish majolica.

Teaching with Historic Places

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Digging into the Colonial Past: Archeology and the 16th-Century Spanish Settlements at Charlesfort-Santa Elena

Questions for Photos 1 & 2

- 1) What do you see in Photo 1? What do you see in Photo 2? How is this evidence similar?

- 2) What kinds of evidence do these photos offer archeologists and historians to determine different cultures created them? How is the evidence in the photos different?

- 3) Based on the archeological evidence in Photo 2, what can you determine about colonial life for Spanish settlers? Explain.

- 4) What other historical research or types of artifacts might help historians and archeologists learn more about the Santa Elena colony? Where would you look to uncover new information?



Visual Evidence

Photo 3: Excavating Charlesfort-Santa Elena



(Photo by Mark Barnes, courtesy of the National Park Service)

*Excavation showing the first Fort San Felipe moat (on the left) and the Charlesfort moat (on the right).
Oyster shells on the right rest on the bottom of the Charlesfort moat.*



Questions for Photo 3

1) What is a "moat?" How do you think it was useful for settlers here? (Refer to a dictionary and Reading 2 if necessary)

2) Based on the photo, how do you think archeologists decided this site to be a moat? What evidence do you see?

3) What evidence not shown in Photo 3 might archeologists have used to determine this site to be a moat? How would that evidence support the theory that this place is a moat?

4) What do you think professional archeologists consider when digging at an archeological site? What precautions do they need to take? Why?

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Putting It All Together

In this lesson, students learned about life at Santa Elena, the 16th-century Spanish settlement on present-day Parris Island, South Carolina. They also learned about archeological excavations and how they allow us to learn about the past through artifacts and architecture. Use the following activities to take your students further in their study of archeology, local history, writing narratives, and historic preservation.

Activity 1: Creating a Historical Argument

In many U.S. history textbooks, American history begins in 1607 with the settlement of Jamestown or Plymouth Rock, settled by the Pilgrims in 1620. Other historians point to the settlement on Roanoke Island in 1585 as the first North American settlement. French settled at Charlesfort in 1562 and the Spanish settlement of Santa Elena began in 1566. And, before Western Europeans settled in North America, Vikings explored the area. However, all of the European settlers encountered American Indians who had lived on the land well before any Europeans arrived in the region.

Have students use historical evidence they find online, in library books, or in this lesson plan to argue which settlement in North America should be considered the one to which today's Americans should trace their heritage. You can divide your students into groups to have them collectively choose a time and place or have each student work independently on this project. Decide how you want your students to present their research, in ways such as a persuasive essay, a debate, an oral presentation, or a poster board presentation.



Activity 2: Town Planning

The Spaniards were very particular about the planning of Santa Elena. They used the plaza as the center of the town and a grid pattern for the streets. Important buildings such as the church and government buildings were located on the plaza while homes and shops were farther away. In some cases, how wealthy you were also determined your physical location in the town. Examine how your town or closest large city is laid out. Local historical societies and city and state government records will provide the strongest resources for research. Students may also find information online through the Library of Congress or the National Archives.

Have your students ask the following questions: Over time, has the city or town changed its layout? How? And, why? Did certain groups settle in specific places in the town? Has the original population stayed the same or changed over time? Have other features become more important? Have values changed? Compare it with another town or city to see if that town or city has/had the same values. Have students present their findings to the class with visual aids, creating or reproducing maps, drawings, photographs, charts, graphs, illustrations, etc. to support their answers to those questions.



Activity 3: Analyzing Artifacts

Have students create an artifact portfolio using online collections and/or digital exhibits. Based on their sources of artifacts, have students choose a historic site or time period, then choose 5-10 artifacts from a specific site or period. For each artifact, have students write a paragraph about what the artifact might reveal about the era and society in which it was created, who might have owned it, how it was used, and the place it was found.

Have students choose artifacts that they believe go together, either by theme, historical era, or society. For example, students could look at Ming Dynasty art or artifacts found at the sites of 19th-century homesteads. Create an analysis worksheet that will guide students in their analysis or use the [National Archives artifact analysis worksheet](#).

Your students' portfolios can be a paper product or students can design a digital portfolio to be displayed on a computer. For a paper product, have students print out or make copies of images of the artifacts and have them print out their analysis to go along with the images. Consider having your students print out their portfolios to create a class collection of artifact analysis. A digital option is to have your students create a class website using free online blogging software.

Sources of Artifacts Online:

[National Geographic Ancient Artifacts](#)

[Artifacts Teach!](#) (Paid Subscription Required)

[Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum](#)

[Library of Congress - Cultures of America](#)

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Activity 4: Local History, Local Treasures

There are so many stories that our communities can tell. At Santa Elena, there are stories about American Indians, the French, the Spaniards, plantations, slaves, military training and modern history in addition to foodways, music, and religious traditions. Sometimes, those stories are hidden underground, archived in a library or depository, or recorded in history books. Divide your class into groups and assign each group a time period or era that is part of your community's heritage. For example, groups could focus on the pre-colonial period, the Civil War era, the Gilded Age, or Prohibition.

Have the student groups gather information from local resources, such as a historic preservation group, historical society, library, archive, city planner, local history club or organization, university history department, or local historians. Tell your students to pay attention to how artifacts and archeology are used to interpret the local history. Have students use what they learned from these resources in conjunction with secondary sources to put together a historical narrative for their assigned time period. Have them present their narrative on a poster board and have them highlight the artifacts -- through text or imagery -- that they believe help people today understand the era.

Once students create their posters, have the students present to the class, your school or the entire community and hold a "History Fair." In their presentations, each group can explain how specific artifacts tell the story of their chosen era and why archeological discoveries are important to preserve.



Activity 5: Historic Preservation in Your Community

Santa Elena was preserved throughout the years thanks to archeologists and historians. In many cases, local history is often ignored because of a lack of interest or a lack of funding. Some historic sites may be overgrown, trashed, or forgotten. Have students organize a community service project that brings attention to the site and gets your community involved in the preservation or restoration of the site.

Contact a local historic preservationist and invite him or her to meet and talk to your students. During the meeting, have your students find out what local neglected historic sites you have in your community and what they can do to help. For example, your class could organize a site clean-up day or a fundraiser to contribute to the site's restoration and preservation. If there are multiple sites, students can vote on which site the class will focus on.

Help your students to create and execute the action-plan for the project, including details such as advertising, fundraising, communication with key community partners, and a volunteer schedule. Have students create a persuasive argument for the project using historical research and the information they gathered from their meeting with the preservation expert. After the project, have your students design a simple website about what they accomplished, how they did it, and how other people can do the same.



Additional Resources

By looking at *Charlesfort-Santa Elena*, students discover why Santa Elena was so valuable to the Spaniards and the French, and follow the rise and fall of the settlement in present-day South Carolina. Those interested in learning more will find that the Internet offers a variety of interesting materials.

Parris Island Museum

The [museum](#) is dedicated to the United States Marine Corps history in the region, as well as general regional history including Spanish Santa Elena.

Library of Congress - The Cultures and History of the Americas: The Jay I. Kislak Collection

A [collection](#) of more than 4,000 rare books, maps, documents, paintings, prints and artifacts in the [Library of Congress](#) Jay I. Kislak Collection. The collection focuses on the indigenous people of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Florida Institute for Instructional Technology

The [Florida Center for Instructional Technology \(FCIT\)](#) works with educators to integrate technology into the classroom. FCIT is based at the College of Education at the University of South Florida. It provides online resources for students and teachers including the [Jacques Le Moyne engravings](#) he made while in modern-day Florida.

University of South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

The [University of South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology](#) is the best source of information regarding the archeological excavations of Santa Elena. It has a large [online database](#) of records on past excavations.

National Park Service American Latino Heritage Travel Itinerary

Part of the [Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary Series](#), the [Latino Heritage Travel Itinerary](#) explores sites all over the United States. Included in the itinerary is [Charlesfort-Santa Elena in South Carolina](#). The sites can be visited online or in person.

National Park Service Archeology Program

The website of the National Park Service's [archeology division](#). The website provides information on the Federal Archeology Program and resources including the [National Park Service's Archeology Guide](#) and distance learning programs for professional archeologists and those who are interested in archeology. The archeology program also offers a detailed breakdown of archeology at National Parks through the [Research in the Parks](#) website.

National Geographic: Archaeology

The [National Geographic Society](#) provides an [online collection](#) of current articles explaining the process of discovery, history and science involved in archeology. The website also includes a collection of [ancient legends and artifacts](#). The National Geographic site also includes sections on science, innovation, and the earth.



Low Country Weekly: Where America Really Began

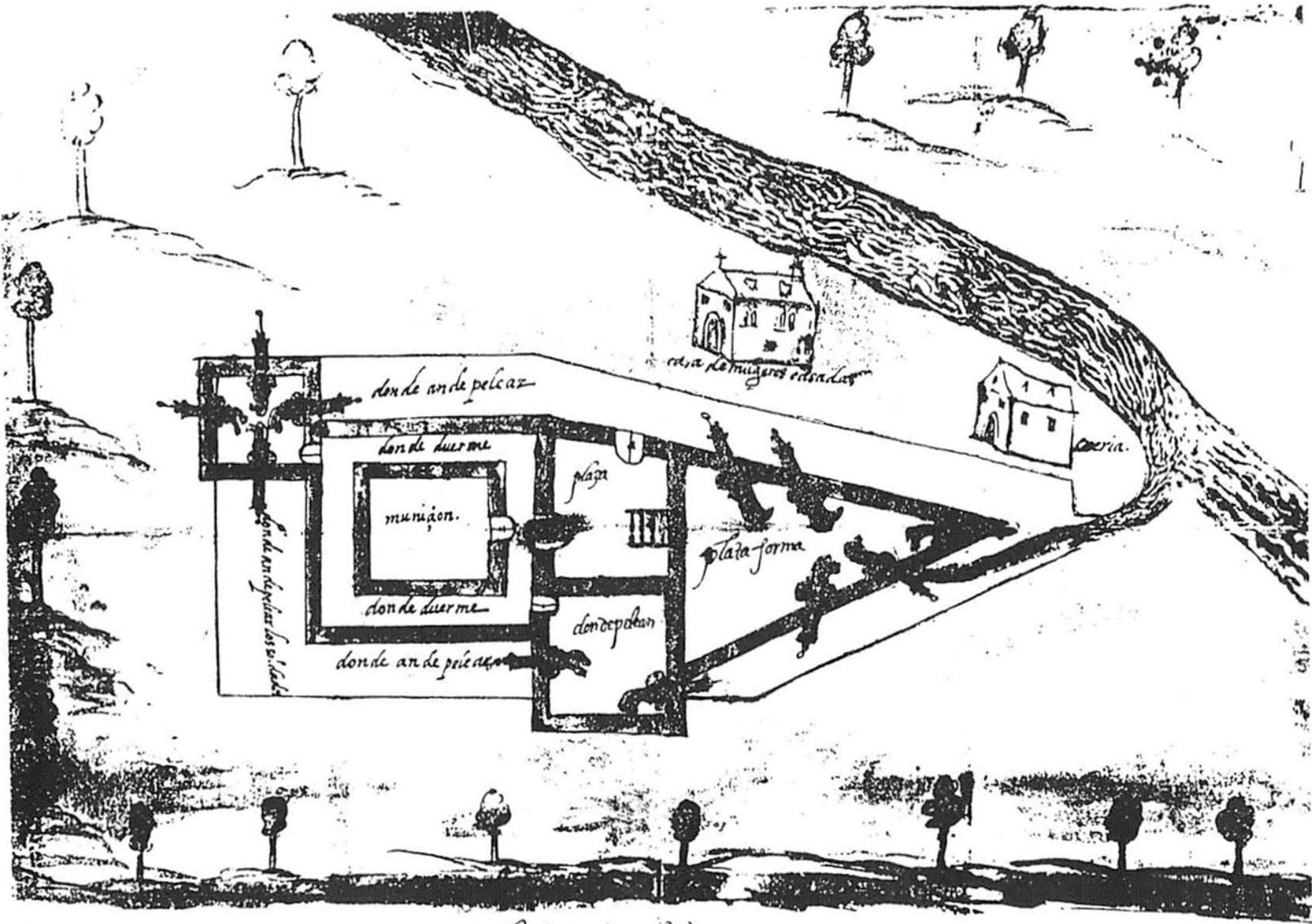
A [series of articles](#) written by Daryl Ferguson in [Low Country Weekly](#) focusing on the early history of South Carolina, including Santa Elena.

Library of Congress - 1492: An Ongoing Voyage

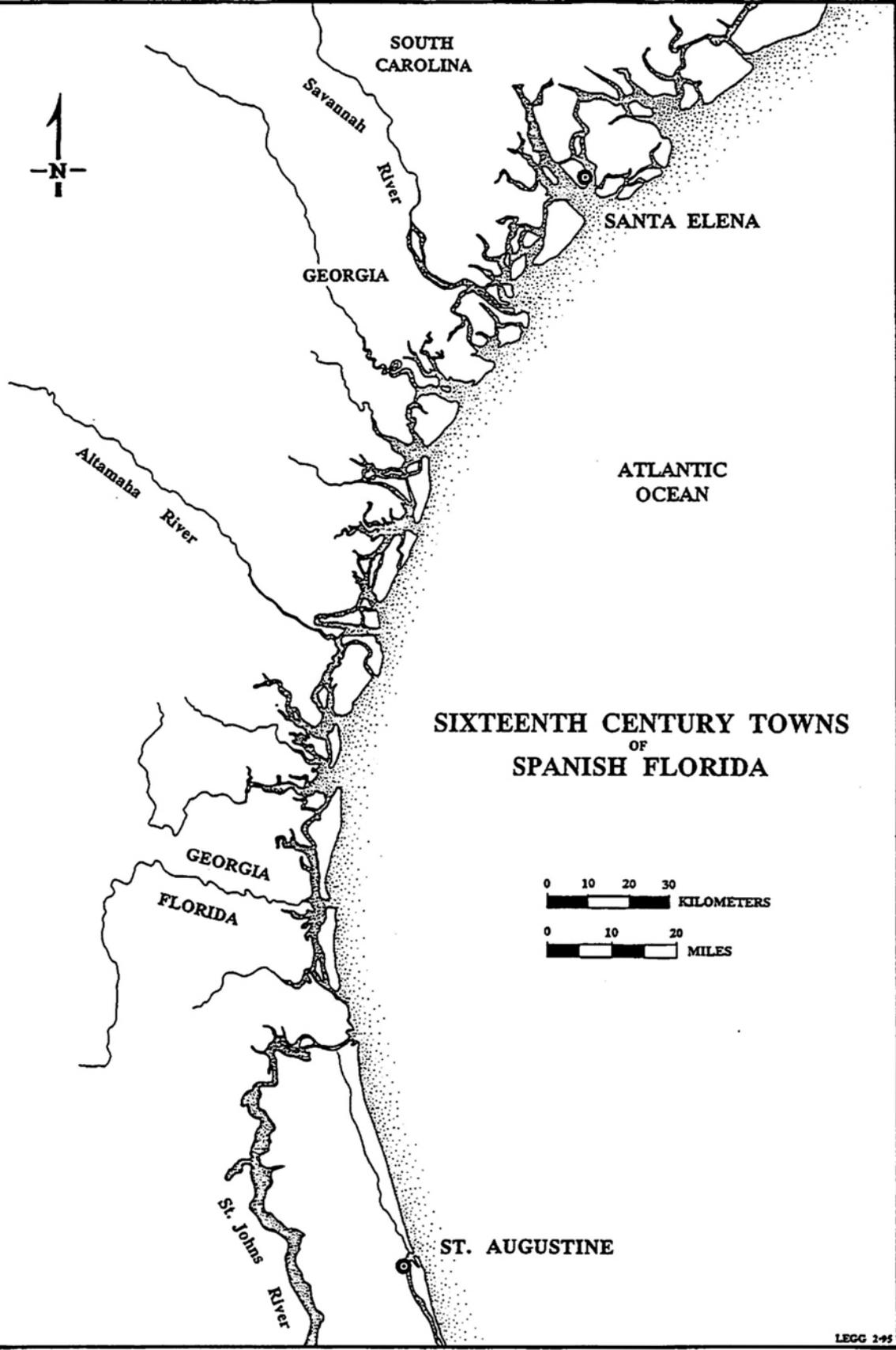
An [online exhibit](#) that focuses on Columbus' 1492 expedition. The exhibit includes primary sources, artifacts, drawings and maps.

Smithsonian-Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga

From the [National Museum of Natural History](#), this [online exhibit](#) commemorates the 1000th anniversary of the Viking landing in the Americas. The exhibit features documentation of the landing in addition to animations of ships, interviews with historians and the history of settlements from Scandinavia to Newfoundland.



El fiarte de san laolina



SOUTH CAROLINA

Savannah River

SANTA ELENA

GEORGIA

ATLANTIC OCEAN

SIXTEENTH CENTURY TOWNS
OF
SPANISH FLORIDA

Altamaha River

GEORGIA

FLORIDA

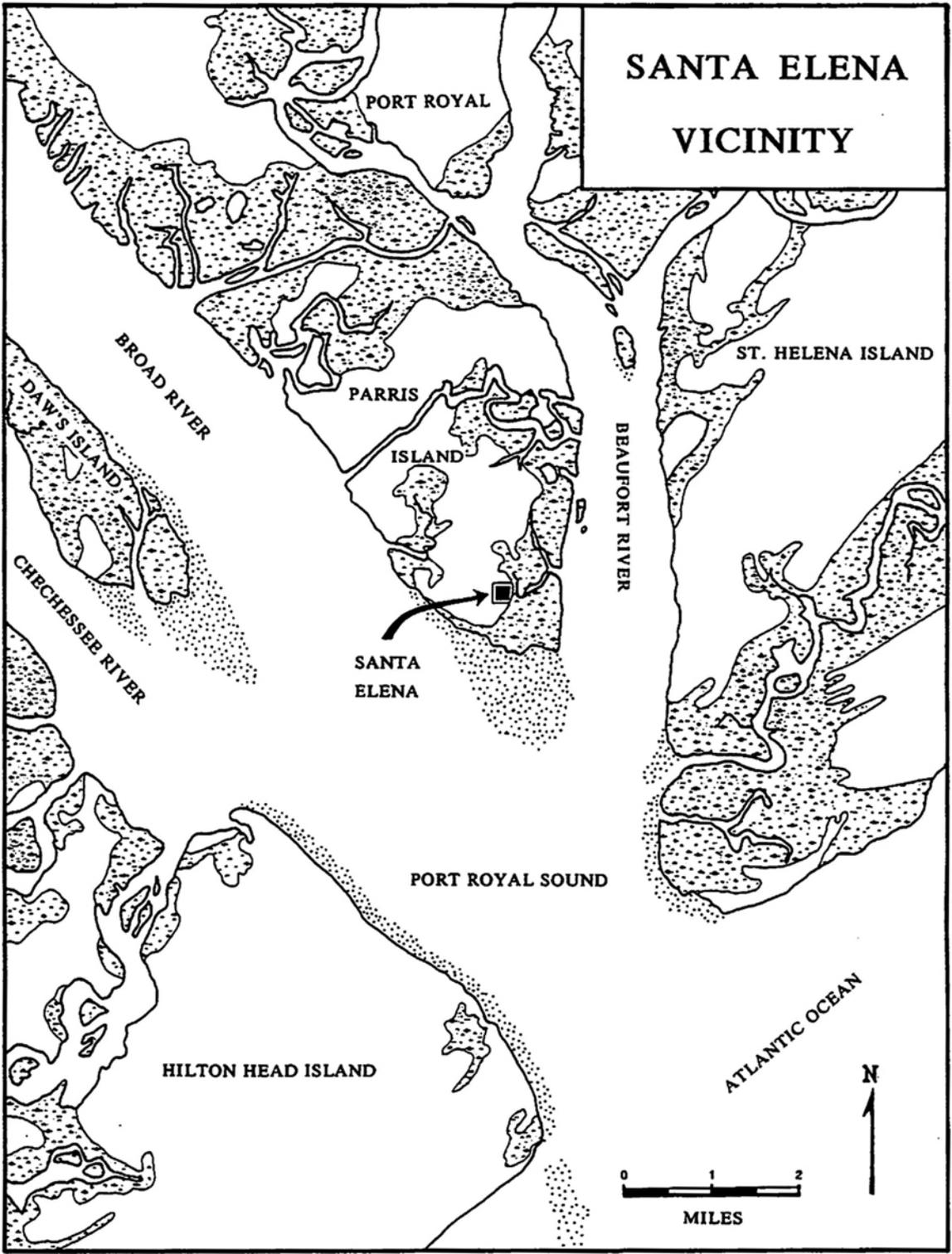
0 10 20 30
KILOMETERS

0 10 20
MILES

St. Johns River

ST. AUGUSTINE

SANTA ELENA VICINITY



PORT ROYAL

BROAD RIVER

DAW'S ISLAND

CHECHESSEE RIVER

PARRIS
ISLAND

SANTA
ELENA

ST. HELENA ISLAND

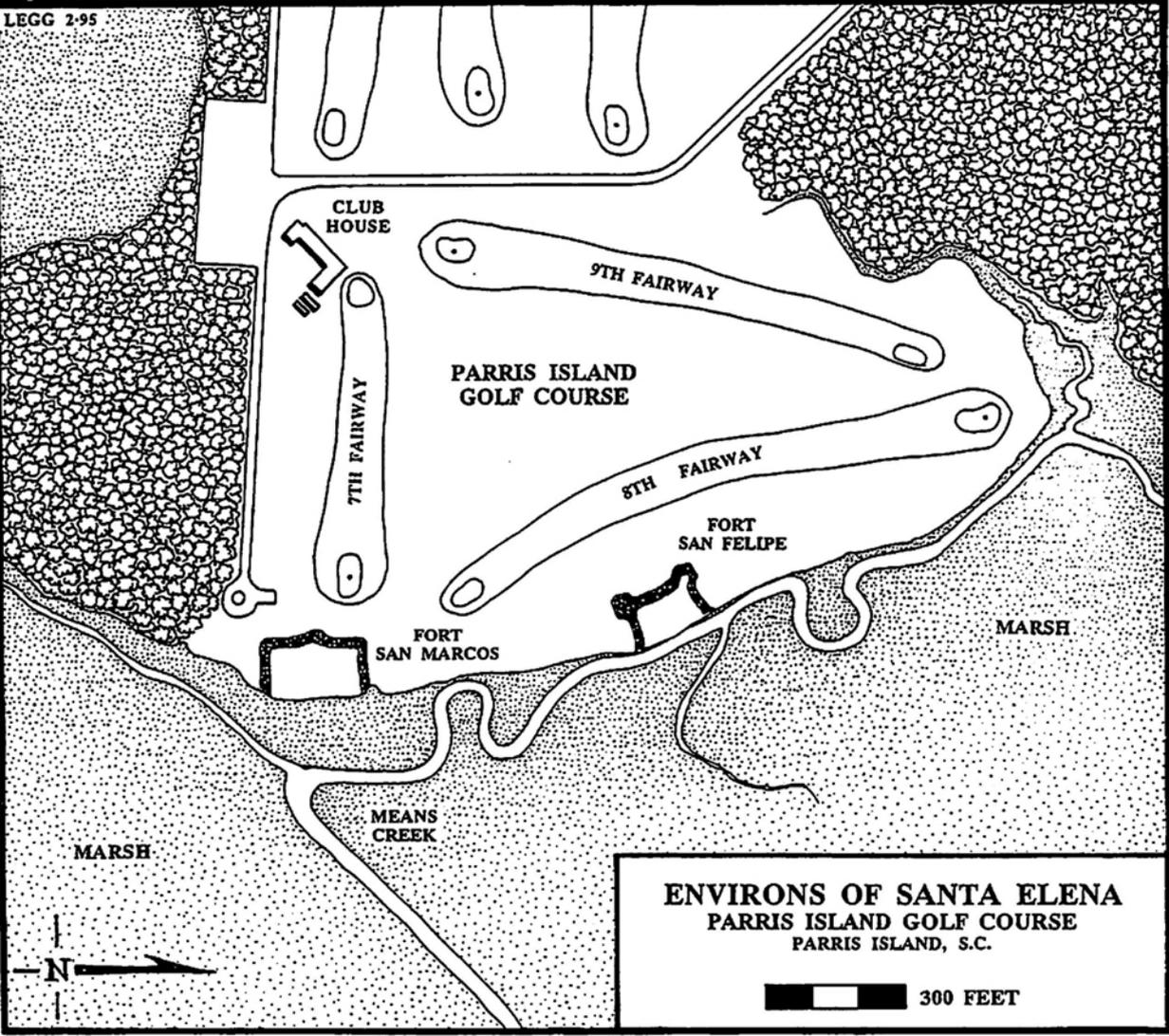
BEAUFORT RIVER

PORT ROYAL SOUND

HILTON HEAD ISLAND

ATLANTIC OCEAN





CLUB HOUSE

7TH FAIRWAY

PARRIS ISLAND GOLF COURSE

9TH FAIRWAY

8TH FAIRWAY

FORT SAN FELIPE

FORT SAN MARCOS

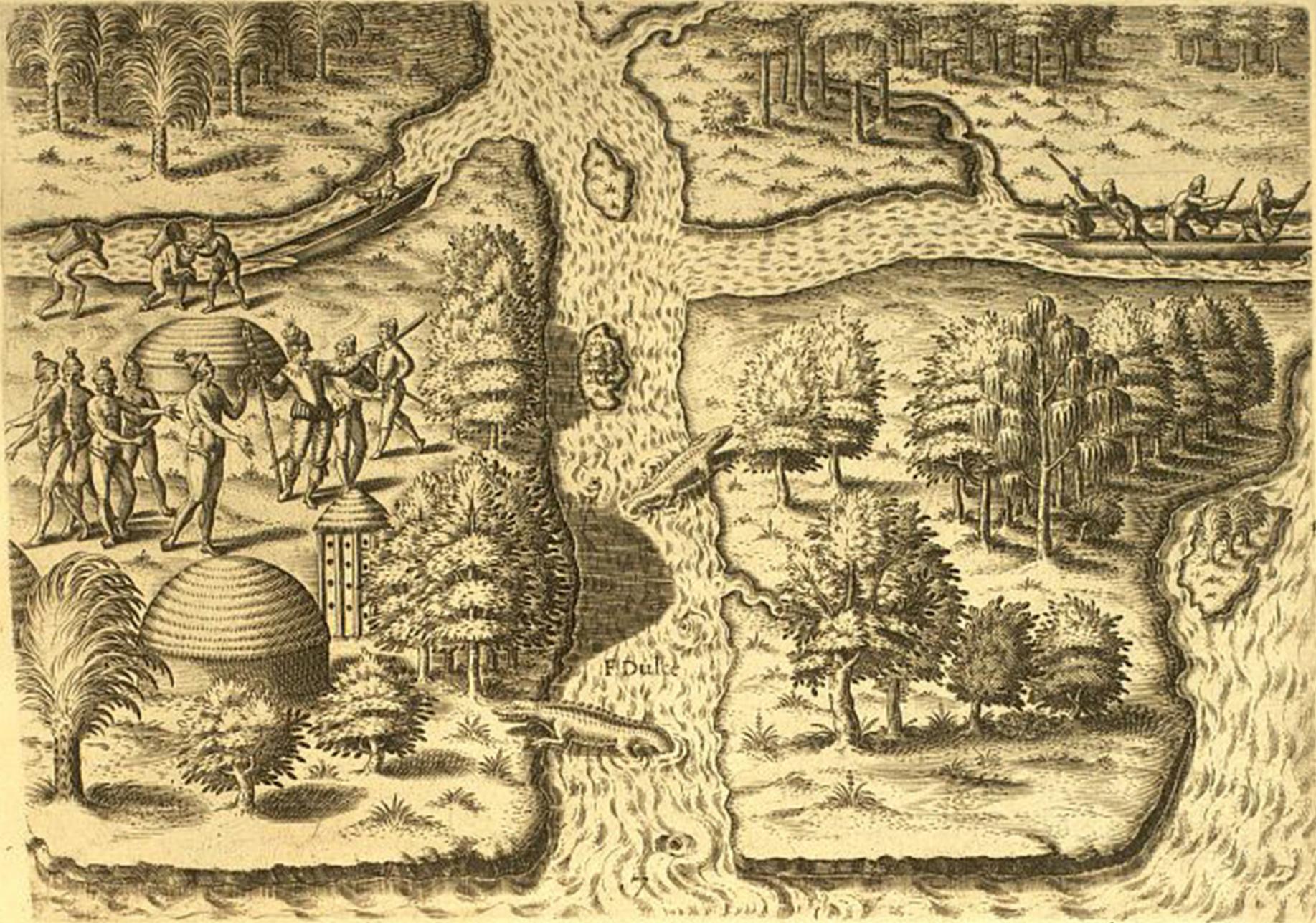
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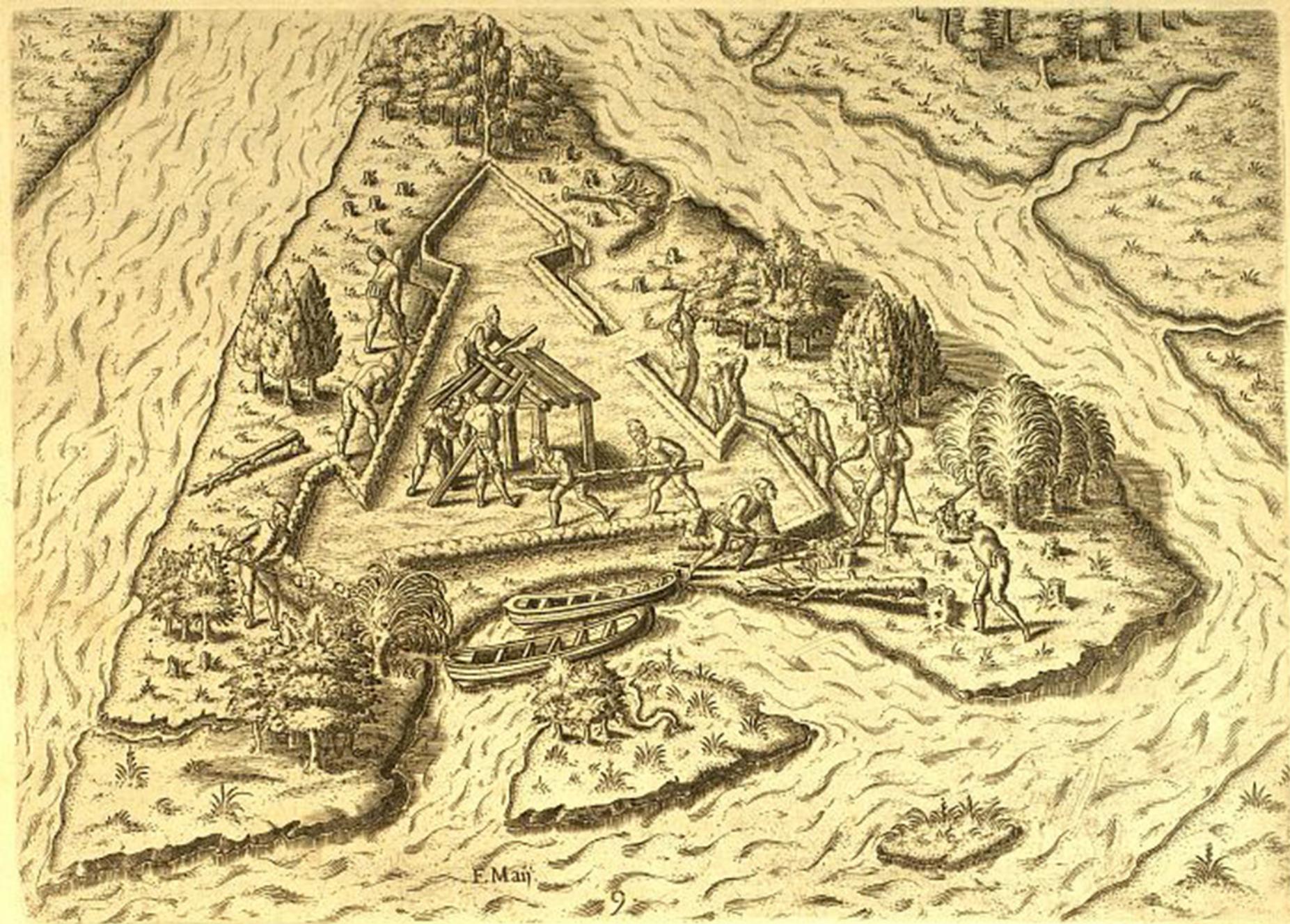
MEANS CREEK

MARSH

ENVIRONS OF SANTA ELENA
PARRIS ISLAND GOLF COURSE
PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.

300 FEET





F. Manj



12



75



407B

397

293

DORRIS &
O'NEILL-FORT
SAN FELIPE
8 12 97