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Florida Humanities Council.

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Florida Humanities Council, Dee MacPherson, David Nolan, Michael Gannon, Kathleen Deagan, Elsbeth Gordon, Monica Rowland, and Gary Ross Mormino
St. Augustine
AN ANCIENT CITY IN A STATE OF CHANGE
A “SENSE OF PLACE” is difficult to define, but you know it when you have it. It’s a term that many of us first came upon while studying the literary works of writers such as William Faulkner or Thomas Hardy. But today the term is used by city planners, environmentalists, and civic and cultural leaders to describe the intimate connection that people can have with the place in which they live. It is an attachment to place that emerges through knowledge of its history and heritage, literature and lore, flora and fauna, geography and geology.

Writer and farmer Wendell Berry, whose poetry and novels are firmly planted in his home state of Kentucky, explains it best when he warns us that “if you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are.” That should throw a lot of Floridians into an immediate identity crisis, since two-thirds of us were born elsewhere and nearly 1,000 new Floridians arrive in our state each day.

I thought about this bond between who we are and where we are as I read the articles in this FORUM. Reading historian Mike Gannon’s descriptions of his childhood in St. Augustine, played out amidst the ruins of America’s oldest city, I understood immediately why the little boy riding his bike through that ancient city became one of Florida’s most respected and beloved historians. It seemed like a natural, if not pre-destined, trajectory.

For writer David Nolan, St. Augustine was love at first sight. Thirty years later, he writes about his adopted home as if it were a comfortable marriage made stronger by the hardships they have endured together.

So what about the rest of us who may not have the childhood memories—or the historic allure of an ancient city—to bond us to the place in which we live? Can you develop a sense of place in a sprawling suburb that used to be an orange grove? Can you find home in a place where you have no family?

These questions are pondered in FHC programs nearly every day, providing Floridians with the opportunity to explore the Florida experience through such disciplines as history, literature, and folklore. Our Florida Gatherings (scholar-led tours designed and conducted by FHC) are weekend immersions into the history and heritage of a Florida town and are guaranteed to make a Floridian out of the most stubborn transplant.

We take our mission seriously as we try to help both newcomers and native Floridians to develop a sense of place. Along with that connection comes a sense of ownership and stewardship that will help us preserve and protect our cultural history, our historic places, and our natural environment.

—Janine Farver
Humanities Alive!
News of the Florida Humanities Council

Creating a Love of Reading
By Dee MacPherson

Why I Live in St. Augustine
It's ancient streets reflect an ongoing tension between preservation and 'progress.' A local historian muses about memories—and about battles with bulldozers.
By David Nolan

Cherishing a City's Glorious Past
He grew up playing in a real castle. As an adult, he has helped preserve it and other remnants of the past.
By Michael Gannon

Florida's Seashell Castle
The walls of the Castillo de San Marcos were made of tiny calcified shells, the ideal defense against cannonballs.
By Michael Gannon

Spanish Colony a Sanctuary
African slaves who escaped from the British nearly 250 years ago, built Fort Mose—and archaeologists have found it.
By Kathleen Deagan

Many Cultures Create One Architecture
St. Augustine's buildings met real needs of the climate and frontier.
By Elsbeth Gordon

Surviving on the Coins of Strangers
The weather, the cures, the curiosities, and the past—all have drawn tourists to St. Augustine.
By Monica Rowland and Gary Mormino

Teachers Learn about Oldest U.S. City
They came from all over the country for a hands-on history lesson.

On the cover: The centuries-old Cathedral-Basilica of St. Augustine, home to the country's oldest Roman Catholic congregation, stands firm in the whirl of modern life.
Photo by Thalia Clarke
FHC Launches Mail Dog

Sign up to receive notices about FHC programs, teacher's seminars, Gatherings, and special events through our new electronic communication system, Mail Dog. To find out how to join, email ereddy@flahum.org or call 727-553-3815.

FHC Looking for Board Members

FHC is looking for Floridians with a passion for the humanities to fill eight board positions. The FHC board, which meets quarterly, sets policy, evaluates grants proposals, participates in fundraising activities, and promotes the Council.

Letters of nomination should include biographical information on the nominee, a resume, an explanation of the special qualities the person would bring to the board, and an indication of the nominee's willingness to serve.

Nominations should be sent to Janine Farver, Director, FHC, 599 Second Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Applications will be accepted through August 31.

Florida Gathering to Explore Cedar Key

The Florida Gathering is scheduled for Nov. 4-6 in the historic Gulf Coast community of Cedar Key. Surrounded by the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, Cedar Key was once a booming port town at the end of a cross-peninsula railroad line that began in Fernandina Beach. Today Cedar Key is a haven for artists and writers who see the unspoiled environment and quaint seaside town as an inspiration for their work.

The Florida Gathering is an FHC program that provides scholar-led tours that explore the history and heritage of Florida communities. Registration is open to the general public.

Activities in Cedar Key will include a historic walking tour, a narrated boat ride, a visit to an archaeological site, and a pre-Gathering kayak trip. A special performance of "Net Loss," an FHC-funded program that explores the human side of the ban on net fishing, will be performed for both Gathering participants and Cedar Key residents.

A complete itinerary for the Cedar Key Gathering will be available later this summer. Check the FHC website at www.flahum.org or contact Monica Rowland at 727-553-3803 or mrowland@flahum.org.

Cracker Culture in a Fast-Food Nation

"Swamp Cabbage: Cracker Culture in a Fast-Food Nation," a multidisciplinary exhibition, is on display in Miami from May 14 to June 29 at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. Developed by Miami artist Julie Kahn, Swamp Cabbage explores Cracker culture as a metaphor for our disappearing connection to food and land.

The project is named for the food made from the hearts of the Sabal Palm, Florida's state tree, which was a staple food for the destitute Florida homesteaders, or Crackers, who eked out an existence in Florida's backwoods. The one-month exhibit incorporates photography, video, and sound.

Opening day activities on May 14 include:

- 10 a.m. to noon: Cracker Cooking Demonstration, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 101 W. Flager St., Miami
- 6 to 7 p.m.: A panel discussion on vanishing Cracker culture at Locusts Projects, 105 NW 23rd St., Miami
- 7 to 8 p.m.: Wild Game Tasting, includes quail, wild boar, venison, and turtle (following the panel discussion).
Remembering Tillie Fowler

Congresswoman Tillie Fowler of Jacksonville died on March 2. Mrs. Fowler was a four-term member of Congress, the former mayor of Jacksonville, and the chair of the Florida Humanities Council from 1997 to 1991. Former FHC Executive Director Ann Henderson wrote this memorial.

Tillie Fowler was a woman who acted on her principles. Her support for the public humanities was not based on campaign contributions or polls in her district. She told me many times how the work of the council inspired her, introduced her to new ideas and authors, and brought her fresh perspectives on her community and state.

In the 1990s, support for the National Endowment for the Humanities was threatened. Mrs. Fowler used her position of leadership within the Republican Party to advocate—successfully—for funding to continue the role of the humanities in our public life. When her help was needed, she never hesitated. Her support at Congressional breakfasts and in numerous letters to her colleagues was visible and articulate. At a time when our friends were few, Congresswoman Fowler’s office was always open to the staffs and boards of the Florida Humanities Council and the Federation of State Humanities Council. She gave us useful advice and then went out to find us new allies.

I counted Tillie Fowler as a friend and mentor. Like so many other of her friends, I was amazed at the handwritten cards and notes that she somehow found time to send me. She was as good at friendship as she was at governance.

Values mattered to Tillie Fowler. She led a life that mattered.

—Ann Henderson

Prime Time helps create a love of reading

By Dee MacPherson

How do you know when you can believe what someone says? Would you like to live in a country where a king or queen makes all the rules? How can you tell when you are dreaming? Has your pride ever gotten you in trouble?

These are some of the questions provoking lively discussions among elementary-school children and their parents during Prime Time Family Reading Time, a literacy program offered this year in seven locations around Florida. The program, funded in part by FHC, is designed to create a love of reading in children who previously have not been motivated to read and are at risk of developing problems in school.

In Prime Time sessions, humanities scholars and storytellers lead small groups of children and their parents in discussions that get beyond the surface meanings of the books they have read.

“I think the kids are seeing not just how to read on the surface, but how to dig deeper beyond the text and find another meaning,” said Nikki Holcombe, a Prime Time storyteller who, for four years, worked as a storyteller for the St. Petersburg library system before becoming a high school English teacher.

The program tries to demonstrate to children that the underlying message in a story can be meaningful to their lives, said Anne Sullivan, an early-childhood development instructor at St. Petersburg College. Sullivan, who led discussions at a Prime Time series hosted in St. Petersburg in February, asked questions designed to help participants discuss a story’s larger theme.

“Just because you read it doesn’t mean it’s enriched you in any way,” she said. The strength of Prime Time, Sullivan said, lies in the enormous amounts of research on which the program is based. The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, which created the program, provided a syllabus and discussion questions for the sessions, which run once a week for six or eight weeks. LEH also provided a list of award-winning children’s books to discuss, including The Paper Crane by Molly Bang and The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by John Scieszka.

This year, FHC provided seven $1,000 grants to Florida libraries that are sponsoring Prime Time programs for their communities. Funding also came from the Federal Library Services and Technology Act.

LEH also developed a bilingual version of the series. Bilingual Prime Time, which targets Hispanic families, is offered in Spanish by John Scieszka.

Prime Time storytellers lead children and parents in discussions that go beyond the surface meaning of the books they have read.

By Dee MacPherson

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LEH also developed a bilingual version of the series. Bilingual Prime Time is targeted at Hispanic families. The Clearwater Public Library (north of St. Petersburg) offered a bilingual series last March, and interpreters were brought in to translate so participants could communicate in their choice of Spanish or English.

Jana Fine, youth services manager for the library, said the bilingual program provides an opportunity for Hispanic families to discuss literature in a way they never have before.

"It’s a new experience for them to talk about books and reading, and to develop a more open conversation between families," she said. This kind of interaction helps children develop their analytical skills and makes them less likely to be intimidated by literature, said Holcombe, the storyteller for Prime Time in St. Petersburg.

Several parents who participated in the program in St. Petersburg said it showed their kids that reading can be fun.

Lorna Blakley, who brought her three children to Prime Time, said her 10-year-old son, Colt, previously was a reluctant reader.

"It took everything to get him to read," she said.

But after attending the sessions, Blakley said, he has shown a renewed interest in reading and now keeps a book in his bedroom.

DEE MacPHerson is a reporter for the Neighborhood News Bureau, a program of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.
WHY I LIVE IN

Its streets reflect centuries of life—and years of fights against bulldozers

By David Nolan
The Dining Hall at Flagler College, built in the 19th century as part of the Ponce de Leon Hotel, features stained-glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany and murals of angels painted by artist George W. Maynard.
It was the beauty of the place more than its history that first drew me here. When I came as a tourist, I remember saying, "Cities aren’t supposed to look this nice." From that moment on, I wanted to move to St. Augustine.

Three decades later, here I am, my mind crammed with local history, knowing where at least some of the bodies are buried, and trying to keep from becoming too sour.

What happened?

Call it a sense of responsibility. It was one thing to be a tourist, wandering the streets, visiting the beach, and eating French pastries. It was quite another to settle in and become part of a long, but too-thin, line of those who have sought over the years to preserve St. Augustine from its own worst instincts.

I knew some of my predecessors personally, like photographer Carver Harris, who, with his father, was the backbone of the St. Augustine Historical Society for the greater part of a century. I will never forget my frequent encounters with X. L. Pellicer, the "King" of the Minorcans, an ethnic group as distinctive here as the Cajuns are in Louisiana. In his 90 years, he presided over a change in the way Minorcans viewed their heritage—from shame to pride.

Some I never met but came to appreciate through their surviving work, like Dr. Andrew Anderson. He was the closest friend to railroad magnate Henry Flagler here and crusaded in his final decade to put works of art in public places—including the marble statues that gave our monumental Bridge of Lions its name.

In troubling times I am a visitor to the graves of my old friends Henry and Katherine Twine, who were the heart and soul of the civil rights movement here. They planned and marched and persevered to liberate St. Augustine from its disfiguring racism. Their campaign gained international attention and continues to inspire me.

I remember Norton Baskin, the finest storyteller I've ever known, husband and widower of Florida's emblematic novelist, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. His fascinating recounting of the cultural aspects of our heritage formed a blessed balance to the endless sun and fun and good times and clink-
In one of those serendipitous confluences of opportunity and necessity, I was hired in 1978 to work on a survey of all the old buildings in St. Augustine. This came about just as my bank account had emptied. I would have worked on this task for nothing—so closely did it match my interests and passion. But the paycheck I received for it was most appreciated.

For the next two years I walked up and down every street, stopped in front of every house, and filled out a form describing architectural details from rooftop to foundation. Then back to the old maps, photos, postcards, land records, newspapers, and city directories to dig up information on the past, and to pin down the age of each house.

I learned many things—the first being that if you stand in front of somebody’s house filling out a form, they will think you are the tax assessor and come out and curse you. So I learned many colorful phrases, and after they had blown off some steam, I would say, “No, I’m not the tax assessor. I’m a House Detective. Do you know anything about the history of your house?”

Then the tales would pour forth: true, false, scandalous, fascinating—raw material to be processed in spoilsport fashion by checking and double-checking. History in the making.

I was not long on the job, however, before it became clear that the largest file we were accumulating was of buildings that were no longer there. As with so many cities, the period of postwar prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s was the Golden Age of the Bulldozer.

Beginning symbolically in 1950 with the demolition of Flagler’s mansion, “Kirkside,” by his heirs, the destruction of historic buildings continued unabated right up to the time I began my career as a streetwalker. “Now you see it, now you don’t” might have been an appropriate motto for the city. Newspapers were filled with photos of smiling city fathers
wearing hard hats and seated behind the controls of bulldozers. Seeking progress was seen as a positive virtue.

Worse yet, it was seen as a contribution to historic preservation. I came to cringe at the popular phrase “Victorian Garbage.” The operative idea was that if you wanted to do something nice for historic preservation in St. Augustine, you would buy an ugly Victorian building, tear it down, build a fake Spanish colonial building on the site, and receive public praise for your civic-mindedness.

A lower-budget approach was merely to strip off a building’s Victorian porches and gingerbread and “Spanish it up” by stuccoing the exterior and adding a balcony.

Here’s where my sense of responsibility kicked in. How could I accept public funds for recording these historic sites, then stand idly by when people proposed to demolish them?

Others did not always share my angst. When I asked one of my colleagues what could be done, he said, “Snap a couple of pictures and kiss it goodbye.” That did not seem to me to be an adequate response, so I rejoiced at the creation in 1979 of the Friends of St. Augustine Architecture. This group was devoted to halting the mindless tide of demolition that was destroying this national treasure. Some battles were won, and some were lost. But demolition proposals faced strong public opposition and weren’t just greeted with the smiling rubber stamps of approval that had been the previous way of doing things.

It is nice to walk around the city and see buildings still standing that otherwise would have been lost. But it is also painful to think about how bad ideas that never should have been conceived came so close to birth, relentlessly pushed by people on someone’s payroll (frequently the public’s). Only the charity of volunteers managed to save things. Then there is the pain of passing by a parking lot or condominium or dormitory where you know an architectural or historic treasure once stood. The future is bound to curse the people or institutions that wiped these out.

We are blessed with a fine Historical Society Library. (My wife once said that my idea of the perfect vacation would involve being locked in the stacks of the New York Public Library.) But books are not the only resource that those of
my ilk can draw on.

One of my pleasures, as a historian, is being able to walk down the streets and encounter people who actually made history. Not the costumed figures in the tourist area on St. George Street, but the veterans of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. They have been some of my great teachers. It was the campaign in St. Augustine, led by Dr. Robert Hayling and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that led directly to passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964—one of the two great legislative accomplishments of the era.

Alas, as one local professor has said, St. Augustine is “the most famous place you never heard of” in civil rights history. Its important sites were unmarked and, in this new century, they have been bulldozed with abandon. Two places of national importance have been destroyed in the past two years: the Ponce de Leon Motor Lodge (where the publicized arrest of the 72-year-old mother of the governor of Massachusetts introduced the St. Augustine movement to the world); and the Monson Motel, the only place in Florida where King was arrested in a civil rights demonstration. People in the future will weep at our failure to preserve these sites.

My current crusade is to establish a permanently marked Freedom Trail of the important sites of the civil rights movement. It is a shame that millions of tourists and schoolchildren come through here each year and can learn nothing about this part of our history, the time when St. Augustine was the stage for a great moral drama acted out for an international audience.

Like any place, St. Augustine is a work in progress. How much of it will survive in the future depends on how hard current residents work to save it. We should fashion a city that we enjoy and that serves our needs. But we should not pass on to our successors something diminished. Preservation—like freedom in the words of the old song—is a constant struggle.

So what's new?

Growing up in history's playground, cherishing A GLORIOUS PAST

By Michael Gannon

When I was a high schooler growing up in St. Augustine during the World War II years, I reveled in the physical remains of that city's Spanish-colonial past. Many days I could be found clambering over the battlements of Spain's old coquina stone castle, then called Fort Francis Marion, after a South Carolina Revolutionary War hero. Few residents of the town seemed to know, or to care, that four score years before the revolution, that castle stood as the northernmost sentinel of Spain's New World empire, a stern remnant of the cordon of fire that once ranged from Panama to Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Florida.

On other days I bicycled down the city's narrow streets, like Treasury Street and Artillery Lane, imagining myself a helmeted horseman in service to King Philip V. Or I cast my mullet net in waters off the old Franciscan mission Nombre de Dios (Name of God), the first site permanently established by Europe to serve North America's native people. Or I stood among the old Spanish residences on Avilés, Charlotte, and Marine streets, and watched artists of the Provincetown and Rockford schools re-create from the oils on their palettes the age-mellowed gray
and ochre of stucco ground-floor exteriors, and the darker hues of the wood-plank balconies that formed arabesques over the pavement below. These were the architectural features brought to San Agustín from Spanish home provinces centuries before.

In addition to the “fort,” as everyone called the castle, tourists (mainly military personnel on weekend leaves) were directed by locals to the city’s “attractions,” such as the Fountain of Youth, the Old Spanish Inn, and the Oldest Schoolhouse. It was a catchpenny town, and any place advertised as “oldest” could count on making money. Local artist Norman MacLeish, brother of poet Archibald, showed me his fanciful watercolor of “The Oldest Shipwreck, Now Under Construction.”

But hold on! There was one attraction called “oldest” that, in my young estimation, rose above the rest. It was the González-Alvarez house, which stands on St. Francis Street in the little-visited south side of town, a site that has been continually occupied since the early 1600s. Popularly advertised as the Oldest House, the building was maintained and accurately interpreted by the St. Augustine Historical Society, which, seemingly alone among St. Augustine’s organizations, provided the public with well-researched information about the city’s Spanish past. From the society, a visitor learned that St. Augustine was founded one year after the death of Michaelangelo and the birth of William Shakespeare, and was the first permanent European settlement on the continent north of Mexico. It boasted our country’s first church, school, and hospital; first European institutions of government, banking, and commerce; first courts and city plan.

Among the society’s other contributions was its advocacy in the mid-1930s of an effort to obtain national funding for the purpose of restoring the city’s 36 surviving colonial buildings. An institute with Andrew Carnegie money responded positively, undertook some still-important historical and archaeological research, then, with the onset of World War II, abandoned the project.

Following high school, I worked and studied mostly outside the state. On my return to St. Augustine in 1962, I found that the city had made dramatic strides in the understanding of its 236 years under the flag of Spain, and of its 21 years under King George III and Parliament. Two events in particular had put the citizens on this new trajectory. The U.S. Department of the Interior had changed the name of the Spanish castle from Fort Marion to its original cognomen Castillo de San Marcos (Castle of St. Mark). And, responding to the leadership of Gov. LeRoy Collins, in 1959 the Florida Legislature had created the St. Augustine Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission (later the Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board). Its purpose: preserving, restoring, and reconstructing, as far as that was possible, the old colonial walled city.

I quickly became caught up in the excitement. In 1965, the city and the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Augustine observed the 400th anniversary of their founding. In the run-up to that date, a great amount of scholarship was generated; historical conferences took place; and important government officials visited from Spain and Washington, including Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley asked me to produce and direct the church’s ceremonies. In that connection, in 1963 I met with President John F. Kennedy in Tampa. I was to show him certain historical documents and maps and to invite him to participate in the quadricentennial events.
It was a catchpenny town, and any place advertised as 'oldest' could count on making money. Local artist Norman MacLeish showed me his fanciful watercolor of 'The Oldest Shipwreck, Now Under Construction.'

scheduled for September 8th, 1965. From the 15 minutes we met together I remember two things that he said to me: "Certainly St. Augustine is a national historical treasure," and "I'll keep in touch." But four days later he was dead.

At the Mission Nombre de Dios, where it was believed the Spanish founders came ashore and the first pastor of St. Augustine celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving, the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine erected a votive church dedicated to the Prince of Peace and a 208-foot-high stainless steel cross, the highest in the hemisphere. It was my responsibility to oversee the construction of those monuments, which marked the approximate place where Christianity formally began in what is now the United States. In 1993 archaeologist Kathleen Deagan uncovered on the mission site the
remains of the Spaniards' casa fuerte, or block house, dating from 1566. Six years earlier, she had found, on the neighboring Fountain of Youth grounds, the colony's first encampment. It was a blessing, she told me, that the Fountain of Youth Park was created where it was, since the undisturbed soil was readily available to the archaeologist's trowel.

In 1967, the year I moved to Gainesville to join the faculty of the University of Florida, Gov. Claude Kirk appointed me a member of the Preservation Board. For 20 years I continued to be reappointed by succeeding governors, and twice served as chair of that body. Thus, I was privileged to witness a variety of projects that greatly enhanced the manner in which St. Augustine preserved its antique character and presented itself to the general public. Early on, the board drew a protective shield around the city's surviving 36 colonial-period structures, none of which has been harmed to date. Over the space of 35 years the board restored or reconstructed 40 colonial and other historical buildings; the work was almost entirely by private donors (the state funded only the operating expenses of the board staff). One of the generous benefactors was the late Lawrence Lewis, a Henry Flagler heir in Richmond, Va., who had spent part of his childhood in St. Augustine. Lewis was a longtime member of the Preservation Board. The eight-block restored area north of the Plaza and south of the City Gate became known as The Colonial Spanish Quarter Museum. Among the buildings included in the museum is the "Old Spanish Inn," more accurately known today as the de Mesa-Sánchez House, which was restored to its 1830 configuration.

Historians and archaeologists on the board staff spent three years developing a detailed inventory of every historical (50 years or older) structure, wall, or monument inside the city limits of St. Augustine. False claims as to origin or antiquity of certain buildings were gently dismissed in this thoroughly researched project. The inventory quickly became a model for other communities in the nation that wished to establish solid credentials for their historic districts. Inspired by the board's actions, the City Commission passed a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1974. This provided for a Historic Architectural Review Board to establish and regulate standards for building and remodeling residences, office buildings, and other structures. Their height, size, and architectural style were scrutinized, as were the appropriateness of roofs, colors, windows, hardware, and percentages of lot to be built on. In accordance with another ordinance, passed in 1990, building permits would not be issued until sites received a certain amount of archaeological study. While there have been violations of these norms, they have been rare and not egregious.

North St. George Street, which travels north-south through the eight-block restored area, underwent a major

Two views of the González-Alvarez house, known as the oldest in St. Augustine, showing its courtyard (top) and front entrance.
transformation. Once a nondescript collection of shabby buildings, made uglier by power and telephone poles and webs of overhead wires, St. George became a neat and charming re-creation of a Spanish street. It was closed to traffic; and when its old brick street surface was removed, an archaeological team found a Spanish tabby and crushed-coquina surface. In 1983, this material was reproduced and applied to the surface. The resulting pedestrian mall has drawn about a million visitors annually and has brought unprecedented prosperity to area merchants.

To the relief of many, the City Commission required that all guides in the city pass a test on the history of St. Augustine and its principal buildings and streets. Those achieving a passing grade were licensed to conduct tours. Today the visitor may be confident that he or she is listening to genuine history. Such confidence, I am afraid, may not extend to six new unlicensed “ghost tour” companies.

In 1997, for fiscal and political reasons, the Department of State abolished the Preservation Board. Principal casualties of that action were the board’s historian and archaeologist positions. It had been scholarship that defined the board’s successes, and now the city’s renascence was suddenly cast adrift. After a number of shaky years, however, individual scholars came forward to right the ship. Acclaimed early-Florida historian Eugene Lyon took up station at Flagler College under the patronage of Lawrence Lewis and the St. Augustine Foundation. City Archaeologist Carl D. Halbirr impressively continued the work of the board staff in that discipline. With funding from the city, the state, and the University of Florida, archaeologist Kathleen Deagan transferred millions of artifacts that had been excavated over the years in St. Augustine to the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. They have been catalogued and analyzed; results are accessible to scholars, and many of the results are available on-line. Planning is afoot to curate Halbirr’s more recent findings.

In 1999, 10 major scholars of St. Augustine, representing the fields of history, archaeology, and architectural preservation, joined to form The Historic St. Augustine Research Institute. Members were active scholars with current or past academic appointments and with no administrative responsibilities. Together—they now number 13—they have offered their services to the city. The St. Augustine Foundation has provided generous funding for their work. During the last four years, this think tank has met annually, has produced scholarly publications, and has presented three public lectures each spring for the citizens of the city.

The principal problem facing the city today is that of demolition. By all cultural and legal means, the city must protect and defend its colonial and other historic buildings. The colonials are the geese that lay the golden eggs. Today the city is crowded not only with tourists but also with would-be new residents with deep pockets. As a result, real estate prices have climbed sharply; and many civic leaders fear that certain colonial structures may be purchased and demolished to make way for new construction. This is possible because of a loophole in the city code. An individual can purchase a colonial building or a historic building, wait one year during which the city has the option though not the cash to buy the property back, then legally tear it down. A local committee of leading citizens, taking the name Colonial St. Augustine Preservation Foundation, headed by William Adams, a former director of the Preservation Board, has urged the City Commission and Review Board to close that loophole. As this is being written, the Review Board is meeting to discuss strengthening the demolition ordinance. Unless and until the existing defect is corrected, the historic fabric of St. Augustine is up for grabs.

MICHAEL GANNON is Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Florida.
As I write these words in my study, I pass my hands over the sharp-edged chunk of shell rock that I found when, as a boy, I explored the battlements and grounds of Spain's never-conquered castle, Castillo de San Marcos, in St. Augustine. I have vivid memories of climbing about the castle's cannon and letting my imagination soar as I pictured its major battles. When I rowed my boat past the old fortress to cast a net for mullet or shrimp, I envisioned gunners, musketeers, and pikemen in its embrasures, ready to fight me off if I ventured to be as foolish as the British siege forces who attempted in vain to crack those stout defenses. The tall walls and frowning parapets of Florida's genuine castle, though pounded by hundreds of cannonballs from English guns in the 1700s, never shattered. No amount of bombardment from the artillery of that period could breach them.

Why? Because the walls and parapets were constructed from resilient seashells—tiny calcified shells forged over many millennia into shell rock that the Spaniards quarried from Anastasia Island, the long, narrow barrier island that separates St. Augustine from the sea.

To understand how this unlikely urban armor originated, we have to go back roughly two million years to what geologists call the Cenozoic Era. It was then that violent ocean storms threw up banks of small shells and shell fragments on beaches at four sites: Anastasia Island; Washington Oaks State Park, below Crescent Beach; Jupiter Beach; and, outside Florida, on the West Coast of Africa. The shells had been formed by a tiny mollusk known technically as donax. When the storm waters receded and sand covered the shell marl, the tightly compressed mixture of calcium carbonate and sand eventually hardened to form a compact fossiliferous limestone, on the surface of which individual, whole, or broken shells were massively visible.

The existence of this stone was not known to St. Augustine's founder, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, whose 800 Spanish settlers in 1565 established themselves on the mainland opposite the island and christened their habitat la Ciudad de San Agustín. Initially their homes and public buildings were of wattle and daub construction because, as the first chaplain complained, "stone is nowhere to be found." In 1585, however, Timucuan natives of the district took a Spanish detail to the island and showed how, by digging through the sandy topsoil, vast quantities of shell rock were exposed.

For lack of the proper tools to quarry and move the stone, the natives had not made use of it in their buildings. Neither did the Spaniards in theirs, for the same reason. But this changed 92 years later when necessity lent them invention and determination. The necessity was a fortress capable of surviving both weather and British gunfire. By 1672 no fewer than nine wooden forts had stood at St. Augustine, two on the island and the remainder on the mainland. All but one had been burned or had rotted away in the water table and rains. Now, with the city a helpless victim to a British pirate raid in 1668 and newly threatened by the founding two years later of British Charles Towne (Charleston) just 250 miles to the north, Gov. Manuel de Cendoya, "with spade in hand," broke ground for a durable fortress to be built entirely of Anastasia shell rock, which the Spaniards by that date called coquina.

With axes and picks, pry bars and wedges, Spanish engineers and workers cut out rectangular slabs of the calcified shells and placed them on the beds of ox-drawn wagons. The labor force consisted mainly of impressed (though paid) Florida and Georgia coastal-isle natives, Spanish convicts and English prisoners, and African slaves. When
first quarried, the rock was light yellow and spongy; it gradually darkened and hardened somewhat after being in the open air and the sun. Taken to the water's edge, the rock slabs were lightened across Matamas River to the construction site, which was set high on a plateau of earth. There, other workmen operating chains and pulleys raised the slabs, one on top of another, and joined them with a quick-setting lime mortar fashioned in two nearby kilns from oyster shells.

By 1695, 23 years after the dedicatory spade, the castle was substantially complete. It was a square structure with jutting diamond-shaped bastions at its four corners, a design originated by the great French military engineer Sébastien le Prestre Vauban (1633–1707). Its 20-foot-high bastions and walls (curtains) were 16 feet thick at their base, narrowing to 9 feet at their tops, where the parapets bristled with cannon. To prevent the intrusion of moisture the entire exterior was finished with off-white lime stucco. A decorative red band ran around the upper surface.

In November 1702, just as the Spaniards feared, Augustine was invaded by an 800-man force of Englishmen and Indians from Carolina. The entire population of the city, 1,500 souls, took refuge in the castle, bringing with them personal belongings and livestock; the castle were placed in the moat from which seawater had been withdrawn. Col. James Moore, commanding the attackers, set up an artillery battery to the south of the Castillo and began a bombardment that he was confident would breach the castle walls.

But to the surprise of Englishman and Spaniard alike, the coquina possessed an entirely unanticipated property. Still relatively soft, it did not fracture when hit by a cannon ball. It absorbed the ball. Cannonading the Castillo was akin to tossing bowling balls into mud. One can easily imagine Moore stamping his feet in frustration. Some of the balls rolled off the coquina surface. Others stuck in the stone. At the end of a day, the castle looked like a chocolate chip cookie. The Spaniards recycled the English cannonballs and sent them back with prejudice.

After 50 fruitless days of siege, Moore and his force withdrew to Carolina, thoroughly humiliated by seashells. And one would have thought that no further English attempt would be made to reduce this particular castle by artillery. But, no, another English war maker named James Oglethorpe, governor of the new colony of Georgia, a man who seems to have learned few lessons from 1702, came south 38 years later to try conclusions with the same fortress, and with exactly the same results. Oglethorpe had more cannons, 30 to Moore's four, and cannonballs of heavier weight. But his battering fire had just as little effect. Wrote one of his officers: The native rock "will not splinter but will give way to cannon ball as though you would stick a knife into cheese." After 27 days of siege, Oglethorpe, too, slunked home in disgrace. Once again the seashells ruled.

That 310-year-old structure still stands tall but now shows considerable wear. The years and the wind and rainfall have almost entirely eroded its original stucco finish, allowing moisture to threaten the stability of the naked coquina. To preserve the rock, the National Park Service, which administers the Castillo, plans to apply a waterproof coating of plaster much like that employed by the Spaniards.

If you want to see the unshielded coquina, like the chunk I hold here in my hand, visit the Castillo. Touch the seashells—and imagine!

Michael Gannon is Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Florida. This article is reprinted from the Winter 2003 issue of FORUM. The Castillo walls remain as they were.
ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVER EVIDENCE OF FORT MOSE, BUILT NEARLY 250 YEARS AGO BY AFRICANS WHO ESCAPED FROM THE BRITISH.

By Kathleen Deagan

Fort Mose—or Gracía Real de Santa Teresa de Mose—was the first legally sanctioned free black town in the United States, built near St. Augustine in 1738 by once-enslaved Africans and their Spanish allies. The fight for freedom embodied in the history of Mose highlights a facet of the African-American colonial experience that is dramatically different from the more familiar story of slavery, oppression, and passivity.

Until the site of Fort Mose was unearthed through a controversial archaeological project that began in 1985, few Floridians—and even fewer people outside of Florida—had ever heard of the free African-American colonial town. Several distinguished historians, including Luis Arana, Irene Wright, and John Tepaske, had written scholarly articles about Mose, but it remained a quaint footnote to Florida history. For most people the story of Mose was buried as deeply as the physical remnants of the site itself.

I first became aware of Fort Mose in 1971 as a first-year graduate student at the University of Florida. That was when F. E. "Jack" Williams, a longtime resident of St. Augustine, contacted the late Charles Fairbanks, a professor of archaeology, to do a test project on a piece of Williams's property that he believed to be the site of Fort Mose. Fairbanks and his students (including me) tested the site and uncovered 18th-century artifacts that could very likely have been left there by the residents of Fort Mose.

Like most people who first hear the story of Fort Mose, I was captivated and intrigued, returning to the site again in 1976 (this time as an assistant professor at Florida State University) with another group of students. The results of that project convinced us that the Williams site was, in fact, Fort Mose. Over the next few years I wrote several proposals to grant agencies for funds to carry out more thorough investigations. None of my proposals was funded (although a number of other proposals for work at Spanish sites in St. Augustine were).

It was not until 1985 that our ongoing efforts to secure support for the excavation of Fort Mose were successful. In that year Florida State Rep. Bill Clark of Fort Lauderdale visited the site and was both moved and impressed by its importance to African-American history. Clark introduced a bill in the Florida Legislature that provided funds for the historical and scientific study of Fort Mose, as well as for the dissemination of that
information to the general public.

We devoted the first six months of the project to documentary research in Spanish archives since, like most historical archaeologists, we did not want to destroy any part of our site by excavation in order to learn things that could be found less destructively in documents. Historian Jane Landers, then a doctoral student at the University of Florida and now a professor of history at Vanderbilt University, spent countless hours in the Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain, doing her own kind of historical "excavation."

Most researchers had assumed that there would be little direct information about the people of Fort Mose in the documents since it was thought that they were both non-literate and non-elite. However, Landers, by combining her own skill and enthusiasm with the questions asked of her by archaeologists, unearthed an unexpectedly rich record of both the people and the site of Mose.

Fort Mose came into being as a consequence of extended Anglo-Spanish conflict over the "debatable lands" between St. Augustine and the Carolinas, provoked by the establishment of Charleston in 1670. African Americans figured in these conflicts from the beginning as they escaped slavery on Carolina plantations, allied themselves with the Yamasee Indians, and moved, not infrequently, across the borders of Spanish- and English-claimed territories.

In 1687, a group of fugitives—including eight men, two women, and a small child—arrived in St. Augustine. They were given sanctuary and protection from extradition on the basis of their religious conversion. By 1693, the Spanish Crown decreed that all such escaped fugitives would be given sanctuary and, eventually, freedom in Spanish Florida as long as they converted to Catholicism. Enslaved Africans in the English colonies moved swiftly to take advantage of this opportunity, and increasing numbers successfully made the dangerous and difficult journey to Florida through the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The Spanish sanctuary policy—not entirely altruistic—dealt an economic and psychological blow to the English as it enhanced the economic and defensive resources of the Spanish colony. The refugees had valuable skills and trades to offer, and many of the Africans proved to be fierce and effective fighters.

By 1738, more than 100 refugees had arrived in St. Augustine. In that year the town and fort of Grociosa Real de Santa Teresa de Mose was formally established about two miles north of the Castillo de San Marcos at St. Augustine. Thirty-eight men, most of them married, formed the Fort Mose militia and lived at the fort. They were expected to farm their new lands as well as man their fort.

In 1740, the English-South Carolinian forces of Gen. James Oglethorpe laid siege to St. Augustine, largely in response to the successful Spanish-aided African resistance to enslavement. Oglethorpe's troops captured Fort Mose. African, Indian, and Spanish forces soon recaptured the fort. But Mose was so badly damaged during the battle that its residents moved to St. Augustine where they lived as soldiers, shopkeepers, bakers, blacksmiths, sailors, cattlemen, and, in at least one case, a Spanish privateer. In 1752, when Fort Mose was re-established and a second, larger fort was rebuilt close to the location of the first, the Mose people returned to the site.

In 1759, there were 22 households and 67 residents at this second site of Fort Mose, including 37 men, 15 women, and 15 children. The community represented a diverse ethnic-linguistic group. The residents of Mose included Congos, Carabalis, Minas, Gambas, Lecumis, Sambas, Gangas, Araras, and Guineans. Many of them had lived among the English and Yamasee. Mose must have been a remarkably polyglot community, incorporating a wide variety of languages and cultural traditions. These people lived and worked at Mose until 1763, when, by the Treaty of Paris, Florida became a British colony. The 34 families there then moved to Cuba with the rest of the Florida colonists. There they became homesteaders on another rough frontier in Matanzas.

We began our excavation of Fort Mose in 1986, armed with Landers's information, and eager to uncover the details of the cultural practices of the Mose residents. Working with descriptions of the site, historical maps, and NASA multispectral imagery, we were able to demonstrate conclusively that the Williams property was, beyond a doubt, the site of the second Fort Mose. The remains of the first fort were nearby, submerged in the marsh mud but still visible to the NASA sensors.

Today, the site of the second fort and town is an isolated marsh island of about three acres, surrounded by tidal-flooded mud flats. The fort, located on the site of a long-occupied Indian shell midden, has escaped flooding but still is threatened both by rising sea levels and modern construction. The development of highways and other projects over the years has filled in many of the creeks that formerly drained the marsh, provoking excessive inundation of the immediate area around Mose.
The site on which the people of Mose built their second settlement was occupied almost continuously from about 1,000 B.C. through the end of the colonial era in 1821. The 11-year Mose occupation is represented by a thin layer of soil and shell (between 5 and 15 centimeters thick) embedded within a 1.5 meter-deep (about 4 feet) shell midden. Isolating the precious Mose deposits was thus a slow and painstaking process, requiring excavation of shell layers in individual 5-centimeter increments, so as not inadvertently to mix the materials from Mose with those from earlier or later occupations.

Excavations revealed construction details of the moat, the earthwork curtain (walls of the fort), and the posts from large and small interior wood-post structures. A small circular wood and thatch structure, some 12 feet in diameter, was thought to be one of Moses' domestic residences and is very similar in form and probable construction to both Florida-Indian and African prototypes. Both the documentary and archaeological evidence indicate that the Mose residents lived within the walls of the fort.

The lives of the people who lived at Mose are reflected in sherds of English, Indian, and Spanish pottery, lead shot and gunflints, rum bottle fragments, pipe stems, and nails, and a few beads, buttons, and buckles. They ate mostly fish, shellfish, and locally available game, supplemented occasionally with pork or beef from St. Augustine. No plant foods have survived, but they must have been an important part of the diet.

Like the plants, many of the Mose residents' possessions were undoubtedly made of such perishable materials as wood, basketry, gourds, and cloth, and have not survived in the earth. Others—relegated to the trash heaps—were probably thrown into the creek adjacent to the site. One of the most evocative artifacts from Mose—a small, handmade silver medallion—came from the creek. It depicts St. Christopher on one side and bears a design on the other side that is reminiscent of the mariner's compass rose.

We know that conversion to Catholicism was a condition of freedom for the Mose residents, and some of the glass beads may have been used in rosaries. Although no items directly suggesting African influence have yet been recovered from the excavation, it is quite likely that some of the European or Indian items could have been used in ways that combined African and Catholic traditions in the manner of so many Afro-Caribbean traditions today. We, as archaeologists, have simply not yet learned how to recognize these in the mule material record.

Only a small portion of the Mose site was excavated in the two years of fieldwork carried out there. One reason for this was the difficult logistical challenges posed by the site itself. Both the conditions of access and the delicacy of isolating the short Mose occupation required slower-than-usual excavation strategies.

Other reasons were political. Some segments of the St. Augustine community claimed that this site was not Fort Mose. They maintained that the fort was located elsewhere and charged that the project was misusing grant funds to create a "revisionist history." This challenge made it imperative to demonstrate beyond a doubt that this site was, in fact, the Fort Mose shown in maps and described in documents. Because of this, our work concentrated on uncovering the structural features of the fort more intensively than we might otherwise have done. In addition, the excavations at the site were suspended sooner than expected because of local legal challenges to the purchase of the site by the state of Florida.

However, the primary and most important reason for not excavating more of Fort Mose was—and still remains—that it is a unique and priceless site and should be zealously preserved and protected (even from archaeologists) until specific questions about Mose really need answers.

The most important message about Fort Mose today is the actuality of its existence, and the most important contribution of archaeology to that message has been to provide it with a tangible, accessible physical identity. The Florida Museum of Natural History, with the support of the Florida Legislature, developed a 2,000-square-foot exhibit on Mose that toured the United States from 1989 to 1999. This was the longest tour in the history of the Florida Museum, and more than seven million people learned about Mose and its message. Curriculum materials, articles, and videos on Mose have been incorporated into public school lessons on Florida history.

In 1994, through vigorous lobbying by the African-American community in St. Augustine and the efforts of Rep. Clark, the site of Mose was purchased by the state of Florida and became part of the Florida Park System. In 1996, it was designated a National Historic Landmark.

The consequences of these events for the St. Augustine community have been dramatic. The Fort Mose Historical Society was formed in 1995 and is a vitally active organization of more than 200 members. It has brought black and white residents of St. Augustine together in a common cause—protecting, promoting, and interpreting this remarkable site and its story. Such an alliance would have been difficult to envision in St. Augustine—a community with a troubled history of race relations—even 20 years ago when knowledge of Fort Mose existed only in the pages of scholarly journals.

Most archaeologists hope that their excavations will produce new theoretical principles about culture or new insights into obscure scientific questions of change. I count myself among them, but I also feel that the archaeology at Fort Mose has produced far more important results. It provides a tangible symbol of free African-American history, self-determination, and active participation in colonial American life that is just as real as the story of slavery.

The work at Fort Mose is a testament to the results that can be obtained when historians, archaeologists, and a local community work together in what is called historic archaeology. The narrative of Fort Mose, told through both artifacts and documents, has reached thousands and has generated a kind of public fascination and governmental commitment that is rarely achieved when a story is told with words alone.

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The United States holds dear. It was the European race to permanently settle North America; it was first to introduce European agriculture, plants, and animals; it was first to plant a permanent Christian cross in its sand and first to build a Spanish mission; and it was the first to grant amnesty to enslaved Africans and build them a town and fort of their own.

Since my interest is architecture, I would add another first: a oneness of architecture. Out of centuries of human experience came an intelligent design for living. Isolation from the world made it simultaneously provincial and original. I view it as America's first cohesive vernacular architecture drafted on site and shaped to place. Its shell stone material met real needs of the climate and frontier. Its architectural design withstood the effects of time and of four changes in government—and was the creation of people from many different cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds, working together. My St. Augustine is the crucible of Florida's multicultural soul.

It is also key to Florida's story. Many times the coastal city fell to its knees under the burden of destructive forces only to rise again. Spanish settlers founded St. Augustine in 1565 in an unfamiliar Indian village—in the face of an impending hurricane and precariously close to a French fort at the mouth of the St. Johns River. They suffered a century of catastrophic fires, hurricanes, and pirate and enemy raids that destroyed their starter buildings of wood and thatch. But year after year, the...
The Cordova Hotel (above), opened in 1888, is known today as the Casa Monica Hotel (left). Opening that same year was its competitor, the Ponce de Leon Hotel (opposite page, bottom), which is now Flagler College.

The enemy retreated, and the little town was reborn beside its castle. But this time its buildings rose defiantly, with the coquina and oyster shell materials of their un defeated fort—materials the sea provided.

Coquina was a stone made of small clams compressed into rock during the Pleistocene Epoch when Florida's coast was under the Atlantic Ocean; the oyster shells they renewed themselves.

Colonists of St. Augustine rebuilt their town in that wood and thatch.

Finally though, in 1672, they built a fortress that no one could destroy. They constructed a castle of coquina shells to defend their ocean inlet and protect them from the dangers that rose in on wind and tide to attack the city's heart. In 1702, some 1,500 citizens and their livestock piled into el castillo while the English and Indians set fire to the wooden city outside the ramparts. For two months the residents of the castle drank little water, ate little food, and persevered. Their fort stood firm.

LONG BEFORE MODERN ARCHITECTS BROUGHT THE IDEA OF “NEW URBANISM” TO THE PLANNING OF LIVABLE COMMUNITIES, THERE WAS ST. AUGUSTINE.

had been piled into enormous, but convenient, mounds by Florida's pre-Columbian residents. Taking from nature and the ancient mounds, the builders of St. Augustine quarried the shell stone on Anastasia Island and heaved it into thick building blocks; they crushed and burned the oyster shells to make lime, tabby concrete, and the white plaster that protected their new walls. Stone was permanent. Stone gave the citizens of St. Augustine a future, and it gave them new cultural expectations. As they rebuilt their homes, than the snapshot of life reenacted by volunteers in period clothing in reconstructed houses. I look up at cantilevered, roofed balconies purposefully built to hang over the street, peek through side entrances to the courtyard galleries, sit in the cool loggia of the Segui-Kirby Smith House, and wonder why this outside-in construction characterized St. Augustine.

This type of construction had been centuries in the making in Mesopotamia, Rome, Spain, Africa, and the West Indies; it allowed house owners to sit outdoors in

FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE IN THE ADAGE, "WE ARE WHAT WE BUILD." BUILDINGS ARE BIOGRAPHIES OF PEOPLE. ONE TAVERN OWNER HAD FORMED HIS TABBY FOUNDATION WITH EMPTY BOTTELS. EVEN THOUGH I CANNOT ENJOY SOME SIPS OF THE LOCAL "ORANGE SHRUB," AN 18TH-CENTURY MIX OF JUICE AND SPIRITS, OR SAVOR AN OYSTER STEW IN THE GARDEN LOGGIAS WITH 18TH-CENTURY HOMEOWNERS, I FEEL PRIVILEGED TO KNOCK ON THEIR DOORS IN MY RESEARCH. WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE GOT THERE BEGINS AT THE FRONT DOOR.

WHY IS THERE A COHESIVE ST. AUGUSTINE STYLE? I THINK IT IS BECAUSE THERE WAS A CHEMISTRY THERE THAT BECAME A FOUNDATION OF LIFE. IT VALUED PRAGMATISM, EXPEDIENCY, AND DIRECTNESS, AND WAS CONSERVATIVE AND CONSISTENT ABOUT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING. WHAT WAS BUILT FIT THE PLACE, ITS CLIMATE, THE AVAILABLE LOCAL MATERIALS, AND THE JOB TO BE DONE. BUILDINGS IN ST. AUGUSTINE HAD LITTLE REASON TO CHANGE.

English governors professed a respect for the "Spanish stone," appreciating its subtropical durability. They turned up their noses at the white pine and prefabricated barracks delivered from New York. English colonists added second stories of yellow pine, cedar, and cypress, a few fireplaces, and glazed sashes to the Spanish houses—and they drank copious amounts of beer and Madeira. But all of that was in deference to the cultural traditions of the colder climates of Scotland and England, the places from which they came.

"IT TAKES TIME TO GET THE BODY LANGUAGE OF A BUILDING TO FIT INTO AN ENVIRONMENT," WRITES THE INNOVATIVE ARCHITECT, FRANK O. GEHRY. RENOWNED AMERICAN AUTHOR WILLA CATHER PUT IT ANOTHER WAY: "EITHER A BUILDING IS PART OF A PLACE OR IT IS NOT. ONCE THAT KINSHIP IS THERE, TIME WILL MAKE IT STRONGER."

In the 1880s, railroad magnate Henry Flagler and his talented young architects, John M. Carrère and Thomas Hastings, recognized that the architecture of Old St. Augustine had this affinity for place. When they constructed the magnificent Ponce de Leon and Alcazar hotels and the Grace Methodist and Memorial Presbyterian churches, they glorified and validated St. Augustine's history and multicultural her-
witnessed the extraordinary human achievement of the people who built St. Augustine. I am overwhelmed by early warnings from the Weather Channel and CNN. I am overwhelmed by the extraordinary human achievement of the people who built St. Augustine.

This old, resilient city has a sanctity of place that reminds us of things outside our ordinary lives, of things simultaneously then and now, old and new. I am thankful that in the long days of post-hurricane darkness last summer, when I was living without electricity or running water, my own St. Augustine–influenced house, with its courtyard and loggia, had light, ventilation, captured rainwater, and was in no need of air-conditioning.

One of the more vexing problems about loving St. Augustine is the attitude of non-Floridians. Many writers and historians who are not from Florida would have us believe in the myth of an America founded by the English. Smithsonian magazine, for example, reported in an issue just last winter that the people of Jamestown were "America's first permanent residents." On the New York Times OP-ED page of November 24, 2004, Charles C. Mann (author of 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus) writes: "Until the arrival of the Mayflower, continental drift had kept apart North America and Europe for hundreds of millions of years. Plymouth Colony (and its less successful predecessor in Jamestown) reunited the continents." The gauntlet is down! English was not our first mother tongue. The San Pelayo beat the Mayflower by a half-century, and that gives us boasting rights!

Why is St. Augustine so comforting, so beguiling, and so worth studying?

ELSIE THOMAS is a research associate of the Historic St. Augustine Research Institute and author of Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage.
All those in search of health, all endowed with romance and imagination, all who could appreciate the rare charming haze of antiquity which hangs over the ancient little city, grew into love for St. Augustine, and lingered there far beyond their appointed time.
—Harper’s New Monthly Magazine (1874)

In the first place, the climate is most disagreeable. I know they tell you it isn’t, but it seems to be a principle of the Floridians not to tell the truth. The main industry of the state is deceiving strangers.
Letter from Margaret Maynard to friend —The Atlantic Monthly (1886)

No other city in America can boast the historical trajectory of St. Augustine. For more than two centuries, the garrison’s fortunes depended upon the arrival of el divado, the annual royal subsidy from the Spanish crown. For nearly another 200 years under the American flag, its fortunes have depended upon selling its past. Today, St. Augustine’s prosperity is measured by the annual migration of tourists.

When U.S. troops hoisted the Stars and Stripes above El Castillo de San Marcos on July 21, 1821, a new era began. The Americanization of St. Augustine demanded new names—Fort Francis Marion replaced El Castillo. It also required new economies. Once a strategic bulwark between New Spain and Protestant enemies to the north, St. Augustine now served as a sanctuary for the sick and infirm who sought winter comfort amid Old World charm.

In the 1820s and ‘30s, Americans began to express pride and interest in their own landscapes and historic sites. St. Augustine catered to the curiosities of a young republic and to “strangers”—as tourists were then called—who wished to venture south for the winter. St. Augustine reinvented itself as an American spa, a place to cure consumption, the catarrh, and other ailments. One guidebook cited “powerful chemical ingredients” carried by the salt-air breezes that acted as “a neutralizer to disease.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson arrived in St. Augustine in 1827. The accomplished man of letters complained of the “motley population,” but conceded that “the air and sky of the ancient sand-bank of a town are really delicious.”

Throughout the 19th century, Florida was remote, well beyond the pale of Saratoga Springs and Newport. Little wonder that the root word for traveler comes from the noun travail. “Does anyone know what a sailing ‘voyage’ to Florida implies?” asked Abbie Brooks in her 1879 guidebook. “The mattress is as hard as Pharaoh’s heart. Bilge water keeps the cabin supplied with an odor resembling sulphur spring surroundings.”

Travelers who approached St. Augustine by sea risked shipwreck on the treacherous sandbar at the entrance to the harbor, and the land route was equally daunting. It required a steamboat passage up the St. Johns River to the town of Picolata, then posting over 18 miles of unpaved roads in a mule-drawn stagecoach—a trip one author described as “3 hours of torture.” The completion of the Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Halifax Railway seemed to secure the city’s reputation as a winter resort.

Upon arrival, visitors made pilgrimages to the fort, the Old City Gate, the Huguenor Cemetery where, curiously, no Huguenots are buried, and the Slave Market where few slaves were ever sold. Physicians prescribed the saltwater cure for modern nervous ailments; thus, visitors sailed to Anastasia Island or strolled along the sea wall. The poet Sidney Lanier praised the U.S. government for building the sea wall just wide enough for two people to walk hand-in-hand, claiming that it was the rightful duty of government to encourage romance.

Locals marketed the warm weather, sea-air cures, curiosities, and historic sites (some real, some fake).

By Monica Rowland and Gary Mormino
Winter 'strangers' pose outside the popular Fatio boarding house in the late 1840s.
In 1886, Fort Marion became a “must” stop. The star attraction was not the fort, but its notorious prisoners: Apache Indians. The Fernandina Mirror exclaimed, “St. Augustine will be the ‘happy hunting ground’ for the dime-novel reader and would-be heroes among our youngsters.” Not everyone cheered. “At night the weird and mournful sound of Indian chants could be heard drifting over the battlements,” observed a resident.

Not since Menéndez stepped upon the shore in 1565 did a single individual alter St. Augustine’s future as much as Henry Flagler on his 1883 visit. The powerful partner of John D. Rockefeller, Flagler epitomized the flinty image of the era’s Robber Barons. “My thought was to make King St. the 5th Ave. of St. Augustine,” he wrote a friend, adding, “I believe...we can make St. Augustine the Newport of the South.”

Flagler’s St. Augustine ushered in a new era of tourism. The Standard Oil titan spared no expense in his homage to a Spanish romantic past. With a keen eye for talent, Flagler hired two young architects who designed the spectacular Ponce de Leon and the Alcazar hotels in a Spanish-renaissance style. The hotels embodied the Gilded Age: presidents and blue-blooded Americans such as Chauncey DePew gazing through Tiffany windows, sweating in Turkish baths, and dancing under the twinkling electric lights.

The Ponce de Leon made St. Augustine the most fashionable winter resort on the East Coast, if only briefly. Flagler’s vision also created Palm Beach and energized Miami, cities of irresistible appeal. Tourists flocked to the more prestigious and warmer resorts along the East Coast, undercutting St. Augustine’s allure. Flagler, however, remained devoted to his beloved St. Augustine and chose to be buried there upon his death in 1913.

Even as the Ponce de Leon’s status as a premier winter resort was being eclipsed by the Breakers and Royal Palm Hotels, the railroad and steamboat were losing ground to the Model T. The Dixie Highway (today’s US 1) sliced through St. Johns County in 1916, heralding a new age of travel and traveler. The 1920s ushered in middle-class tourism, and St. Augustine adapted to motor courts and...
A City Survives on the Coins of Strangers

Tourism

Adapting an 18th-century city to the 20th-century automobile posed problems. US 1 literally ran through the Old City Gate. But the Dixie Highway whisked millions of motorists through the Ancient City.

In a city devoid of natural resources for manufacturing, the past was the product of St. Augustine. The city's fortunes rose and fell according to tourist traffic. Most St. Augustinians depended upon the coins of strangers for their livelihood. Minorcan descendants sold palm tree hats and Skeeter beaters to swatting tourists. "Top-hatted Negroes" drove carriages and regaled tourists with tales while ferrying them through the narrow side streets.

The alligator, the armored reptile that Jacques le Moyne demonized in his 16th-century engravings, became a tourist favorite, as live baby 'gators were packaged in cigar boxes and shipped home. The St. Augustine Alligator Farm, begun in 1893, continues as one of the state's longest-running attractions.

The humorist Ring Lardner satirized 1920s St. Augustine. "First we went to St. George Street and visited the oldest house in the United States. Then we went to Hospital Street and saw the oldest house...Then we turned the corner and went down St. Francis Street and inspected the oldest house...We passed up lunch and got into a carriage driven by the oldest horse in Florida...."

The quintessential St. Augustine tourist attraction remains the Fountain of Youth Park. Opened in 1909 by Luella Day McConnell, a Klondike speculator and irrepressible promoter, the main building was a single-story log cabin with a thatched roof, spacious veranda, and a commanding view of the river. The park was a commercial success, with more than 1.5 million visitors in its first year. The fountain was said to be the source of youth, and the park claimed to cure various ailments. Today, the park is a popular destination for tourists and history buffs alike.

by Jacksonville and Camp Blanding flooded the bars and streets on weekends, while Coast Guard recruits took over the near-empty Ponce de Leon Hotel.

The war's end ignited the greatest revolution in leisure-time activities in American history. Millions of tourists motored down US 1, eager to enjoy a slice of Floridaia. Roadside motels sprouted along US 1 and A1A, offering middle-class families more egalitarian accommodations than stuffy Victorian hotels. In 1949, tourists began boarding sight-seeing trains. St. Augustinians understood the wisdom of Gov. Fred C. Corning's 1940 quip, "There are no ball weevils in the tourist crop."

St. Augustine gambled on the success of a long and costly restoration of the historic quarter and the recreation of a colonial village called 'San Agustín Anguita.' Government officials, including Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, visited the historic sites of the city; and in Washington, city officials lobbied for federal funding for the city's 400th anniversary celebration. The stage was set: 1965 was the year of the city's 400th anniversary celebration.

But celebratory fireworks were doused by a racial confrontation that gained national notoriety. Although the town's white citizenry had long considered its paternalistic attitude toward race relations to be natural and healthy, the veneer of civility created by the service-oriented demands of tourism quickly wore off. Led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) staged sit-ins, culminating in a walk-in at St. Augustine Beach. Tourism plummeted, as visitors avoided a town where a motel owner chose to throw acid

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into a pool filled with peaceful integrationists. In an ironic twist of fate, chartered tours now file past Lincolnville, the city's historic black neighborhood, to pay tribute to civil rights' battlegrounds and memorials.

If 1964 marked celebration and conflict, 1971 augured regret and reckoning. The opening of Walt Disney World in 1971 signaled a new era in Florida tourism. Venerable attractions like Manineland, located south of St. Augustine on A1A, could not compete against the high-stakes, high-tech megaparks. Although the massive growth in Florida tourism stimulated by Disney World and Sea World increased the number of travelers to St. Augustine, the city would never again rank as a premier destination.

The number of tourists who annually visit St. Augustine today ranges somewhere between four million and six million persons. The numbers are stunning when one considers that St. Augustine's population hovers around 12,500, less impressive when one considers that 75 million tourists visit Florida annually.

Tourism has imposed a cruel dialectic upon St. Augustine. Legions of historians, archaeologists, and preservationists painstakingly study and interpret the past. But tourism's increasing demands for new restaurants, hotels, and parking garages threaten the integrity of the very past that the tourists are coming to see. In March of 2005, Americans learned of St. Augustine's plight in a nationally syndicated news article headlined, "The City That Can't Afford Its Own History." The article noted an embarrassing lack of state and city funds for preservation of some of the nation's most historic artifacts. Can St. Augustine balance condominiums and colonial ruins? May the past be prologue.

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They sat in an old cathedral illuminated by the soft amber light emanating from stained-glass windows as a distinguished scholar told them the story of how Spanish settlers established America's first Roman Catholic parish there.

They stood in the heart of the nation's oldest city and watched an archaeologist dig into the soil and discover a small, intact skeleton of a calf that might have been a child's pet in the 18th century.

They walked through a cozy house, built 300 years ago of coquina (quarried stone) and tabby (a mixture of oyster shells and lime), while a historian told them about the everyday lives of the people who lived there so long ago.

These glimpses into the past were all part of a hands-on history lesson last summer for 200 teachers who came to St. Augustine from all over the country. They were participants in weeklong seminars organized by FHC in partnership with Flagler College, the Historic St. Augustine Research Institute, and the St. Augustine Historical Society. The project, entitled, "Between Columbus and Jamestown: Spanish St. Augustine," was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of its Landmarks of American History series.

The teachers came in four groups of 50, each group for one week in July. This year, the weeklong seminars are being offered again; and another 200 teachers from around the country are scheduled to attend, from June 27 through July 23.

The middle- and high-school teachers will come from 36 states to experience and learn about America's oldest permanent settlement—a bustling Spanish town that was nearly a half-century old by the time Jamestown was settled by the British in 1607—a fact not usually mentioned in the history books.

The teachers come from all disciplines of study, including history, social studies, English, art, music, science, Spanish—even math.

"I must now reevaluate the way I teach colonization to include Florida, because you cannot leave out this part of American history," wrote one of last year's seminar participants.

The teachers came from all disciplines of study, including history, social studies, English, art, music, science, Spanish—even math. Florida scholars conduct the experiential seminars, which are designed to enrich the teachers' lives, recharge their love of learning, and provide them with ideas, information, and materials they can use in teaching their own students.

"It was truly living history by being here, and every day was an adventure," one of last summer's attendees wrote.

Wrote another: "To have the most respected scholars of Florida history sharing their passion and knowledge...was an incredible honor."

One of those scholars—James G. Cusick, curator of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida—wrote about last summer's seminars:

"I remember the enthusiasm of last year. It conquered the heat of touring the Castillo. It waded boldly through a sea of words like situado, reja, praesidio, visita, and coartación. Spanish teachers were thrilled to discover they could use Florida documents to teach their subject. Middle school teachers were determinedly searching the web for out-of-print copies of Siegel's The Story of St. Augustine in 1702. Everyone wanted to know about the Spanish mission system. Everyone wanted to know about Fort Mose. And why not? These are national histories. Kids should know that a dozen of today's states were once in the Spanish Empire. They should know that people were wrestling with questions about slavery in 1687, 174 years before the Civil War.

The teachers were given the opportunity to work in groups to create lesson plans to use in their classrooms. These materials and much more about St. Augustine (including primary source material in three languages—English, Spanish, and Latin) soon will be available on the FHC website, at:

http://www.flahum.org/sections/home/index.html
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