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July 24th, 2013, 20:59 GMT · By [Laura Sinpetru](#)

Archaeologists Dig Out the Oldest European Fort in Inland US

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ENLARGE

Archaeologists claim to have discovered the oldest European fort in inland US. The fort's remains sit some 300 miles (483 kilometers) away from the country's Atlantic Coast, near the city of Morganton in North Carolina.

Researcher Robin Beck, now working with the [University of Michigan](#), explains that the name of this fort was San Juan.

It was built in 1567 by Spanish Captain Juan Pardo and his men, who, after arriving on the continent, chose to set up camp in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Neither these people, nor others who had built other forts nearby San Juan got to explore the newly found world for too long. Thus, it did not take long for them to be attacked and killed by native tribes.

"Fort San Juan and six others that together stretched from coastal South Carolina into eastern [Tennessee](#) were occupied for less than 18 months before the Native Americans destroyed them, killing all but one of the Spanish soldiers who manned the garrisons," Robin Beck explains.

Captain Juan Pardo arrived in the Americas some time after Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

However, the latter merely established two colonies, i.e. St. Augustine and Santa Elena, in 1565 and 1566, respectively.

The Captain was the one who was dead set on colonizing the American South, hence the fact that he took the time to build forts at a considerable distance from the coastline.

Researchers say that fort San Juan had a defensive ditch that was shaped like a V and was nearly 5.5 feet (1.7 meters) deep.

It also had a corner bastion, which was supposed to [help](#) the settlers defend themselves against native people who might try to kill them.

Apparently, neither the defensive ditch nor the bastion proved as [reliable](#) and useful as the men who had built them hoped them to be.

Several iron nails, tacks, pottery and clothing hooks have thus far been recovered from this site. Archaeologists are ready to keep digging, and hope to find more artifacts in the weeks to come.

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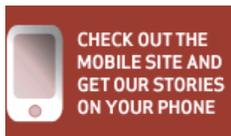
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