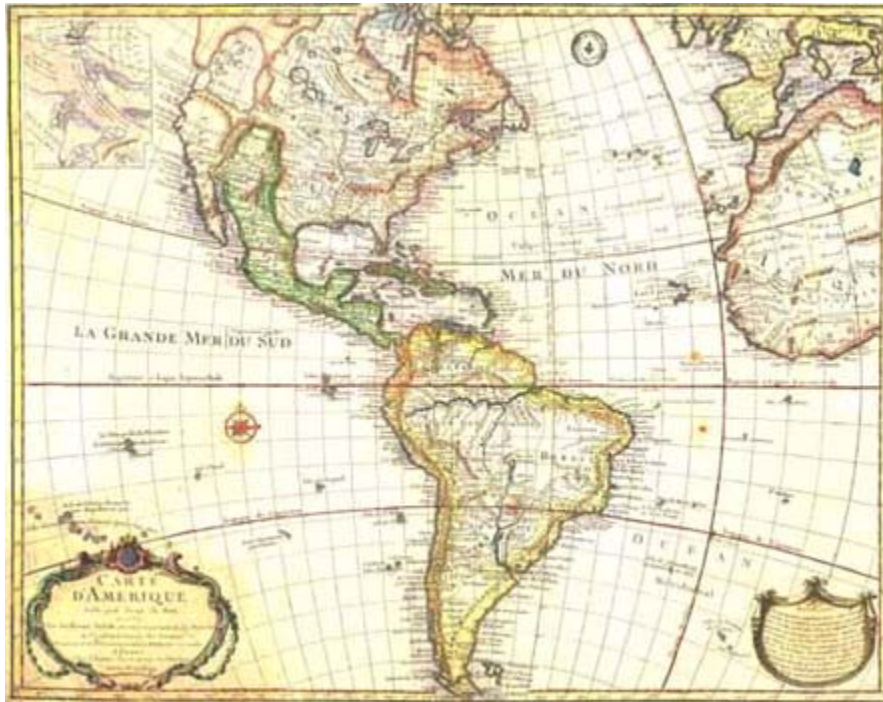


Oldest European fort in the inland United States found

TOP NEWS | JULY 23, 2013 | BY: PAUL HAMAKER |



Carte d'Amérique (Map of the Americas - 18th century Delisle map).

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[Robin Beck \(http://www.lsa.umich.edu/umma/research/robinbeck\)](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/umma/research/robinbeck), an assistant professor in the [University of Michigan \(http://www.umich.edu\)](http://www.umich.edu) Department of Anthropology and assistant curator at the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, and colleague [reported \(http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-07/uom-oef072313.php\)](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-07/uom-oef072313.php) the discovery of the oldest European fort in the inland [United States \(http://www.examiner.com/topic/united-states\)](http://www.examiner.com/topic/united-states) on July 23, 2013, at the University of Michigan website. [National Geographic \(http://www.nationalgeographic.com/\)](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/) sponsored the research.

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Fort San Juan was discovered about 300 miles inland from the Atlantic Coast of the United States near the city of [Morganton \(http://www.ci.morganton.nc.us/\)](http://www.ci.morganton.nc.us/) in western North Carolina.

Spanish Captain [Juan Pardo \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Pardo_\(explorer\)\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Pardo_(explorer)) and his men built Fort San

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Juan in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in 1567, nearly 20 years before Sir Walter Raleigh's "lost colony" at Roanoke and 40 years before the Jamestown settlement established England's presence in the region. Fort San Juan and six other forts that 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. Of the six garrisons that Pardo built, Fort San Juan is the only one to have been discovered by archaeologists to date.

The archaeologists got their first hints of an undiscovered Spanish fort from [magnetometry \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetometry\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetometry), which provides x-ray-like images of what lies below the surface. Magnetometry revealed sections of the fort's defensive moat or ditch, a likely corner bastion and a graveled surface that formed an entryway to the garrison.

Excavations in the moat conducted in late June of 2013 revealed it to have been a large V-shaped feature measuring 5.5 feet deep and 15 feet across. Spanish artifacts recovered include iron nails and tacks, Spanish majolica pottery, and an iron clothing hook of the sort used for fastening doublets and attaching sword scabbards to belts.

The Spanish explorers were looking for gold but never found it. Gold was in the area but a dispute over trade for food and documented "indiscretions" with native women led to the destruction of the forts and the death of the Spanish hopes for finding gold.

The researchers postulate that if the Spanish had found gold in the area the southern United States might still be part of Latin America because the discovery of added gold resources could have made a huge difference in the contest for the Americas between Spain and England.

Photos are available [here \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/87167906@N02/sets/72157634563089753/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/87167906@N02/sets/72157634563089753/).

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