

The Alleged Discovery of the 1559 Spanish Luna Colony on Pensacola Bay

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The University of West Florida (UWF) has claimed that they have found the site of the 1559 Spanish Luna Colony. The UWF claim was made in December of 2015 based on scant artifactual remains. A number of professionals and members of the general public are now questioning the validity of that claim due to a lack of necessary archeological data. The following points outline the lack of data.

1. **Shipwrecks:** UWF is using the three shipwrecks on the shallow sand shelf just offshore of the alleged Luna Colony site as support of their land colony claim. In fact, two of the ships were not anchored when they sunk (The third shipwreck is yet to be studied in detail.). Consequently, the two ships could have blown onto the shallow sand shelf from anywhere in the bay. Thus, they were not anchored just off the alleged Luna Colony site and cannot, reasonably, be used as support data for the alleged land colony.
2. **Spanish Structures:** The Spanish maintained a presence at their colony for over two years. The population at the site varied from over 1,500 people to several hundred. Not only did they need to build structures for their personal security but also the King of Spain had given them orders to build a church and a large warehouse. There should be numerous structures at the colony site. UWF has reported none.
3. **Spanish Burials:** The Spanish of the Luna Expedition recorded deaths from drowning, disease, starvation, and Native attacks. The priests on the expedition would have made sure that the bodies of the dead were buried in the proper Catholic tradition, likely near the church. The bones and teeth of the Spaniards would, most assuredly, be archeologically identifiable. There should be numerous Spanish burials at the colony site. UWF has found none.
4. **Firehearths:** Certainly, the Spanish would have built many firehearths for warmth, cooking, light, and comfort during their two-plus years stay at the colony site. There should be numerous firehearths at the Luna Colony site. UWF has not reported numerous indisputable remains of Spanish firehearths.
5. **Spanish Artifacts:** Obviously, Spanish artifacts from the 1500s would be found at the Luna Colony site. UWF has found such artifacts at the site they claim is the Luna Colony, however, they are mixed with Native artifacts. The Smithsonian Institution reported a Native village site at that location in 1885. The Native peoples living at that site could have easily salvaged Spanish artifacts from the shipwrecks just offshore of their village or traded with the Luna Colony settlers somewhere else on Pensacola Bay. Some of the Spanish artifacts found by UWF could even have come from earlier Spanish expeditions such as Pineda, or Narvaez, or Soto.

It appears that the University of West Florida acted impulsively without proper scientific justification when they emphatically claimed that they had found the site of the Luna Colony. Eventually, the site may be proven to be the Luna Colony but after two years of intensive excavations at the site by UWF with some one thousand shovel tests, numerous large excavation units, and monitoring of a number of residential construction trenches ... Spanish structures, burials, and firehearths have not been unearthed. Despite this overwhelming lack of necessary evidence of the Luna Colony location, The University of West Florida continues to distribute press releases that are not supported by a sound scientific data base.