

The Alleged Luna Colony: A New UWF Grant Proposal

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December 2019

The University of West Florida (UWF) claims that they have identified the archeological site of the 1559 Spanish Luna Colony at a site on Pensacola Bay known as the East Pensacola Heights Site (8Es1) (see Appendix). The site was first recorded by the Smithsonian Institution in the 1880s and revisited in the 1940s. The Smithsonian identified the site as a Native Aboriginal village site which contained two burial mounds (Walker 1883:855).

The University of West Florida (UWF) has submitted a new grant proposal to the State of Florida totaling \$866,561 to continue their excavations at the site. UWF has already spent over \$500,000 dollars from 2016 through 2019 on the project. The source of the monies are public funds based on tax payer dollars.

UWF states in their grant proposal that: The site was the “*Luna Settlement with some earlier Native American and later colonial and American occupations.*”

This statement is only partially scientifically proven. It is true that European colonial components of the 1700s and American components of the 1800s have been found, but proof of the Luna Settlement being present at the site has not been found. Requisite archeological features such as Spanish burials, structures, and numerous firehearths have not been discovered. Equally important, the Smithsonian reported Native pottery and midden remains from the Mississippian Period from the site (Willey 1982:200) as did UWF (Bense et al. 1989:142). This indicates that it is likely that Native people lived on the site when the Luna Expedition arrived, thus, demonstrating that UWF has contradicted the Smithsonian and even their own previous research.

In the current grant proposal, UWF also stated that it wants the grant money to expand on “... *previously encountered structural traces* ...” Traces? What does that mean? Either UWF has found Luna structures or they have not. At least four years have been spent on the site with no significant structural features to show for it at the own acknowledgement of UWF.

UWF has dug well over 1,000 test excavations on a 27-acre archeological site. That is an incredible amount of testing for such a relatively small site without finding the necessary definitive features relative to the Luna Expedition. Is UWF hoping to obtain more public funding for another two field seasons in hopes of finding archeological proof of what they have already claimed to have?

UWF should have started out by stating that they have a hypothesis of the Luna Colony location and they are going to prove or disprove their hypothesis with investigations in the field.

How do we explain the 16th-Century Spanish artifacts at the site? Did the Spaniards live there or did the Natives bring salvaged and traded objects back to their village? 8Es1 is a very complex archeological site and deserves much more attention than public relations articles. We need hard data from the site to be shared by UWF for peer review.

References and Related Works

Bense, Judith A., et al

1989 *The Pensacola Archaeological Survey*. Pensacola Archaeological Society, Publication Number 2. Pensacola, Florida.

Curren, Caleb

1994 *The Search for Sant Maria, a 1559 Spanish Colony on the Northern Florida Coast*. Pensacola Archeology Lab.

2012 *Archeological Testing for Santa Maria*. Contact Archeology Inc.

2012 *The Todd / Hurst Property: The East Pensacola Heights Site*. Contact Archeology Inc.

Walker, S.T. Walker

1883 *Mounds in West Florida*. Smithsonian Report.

Wiley, Gordon R. Wiley

1982 *Archeology of the Florida Gulf Coast*. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections. Vol. 113.

Appendix:



The University of West Florida claimed undoubtedly on Friday, December 18, 2015 that they had definitely found Luna's Colony on Pensacola Bay.

Based on UWF public press conferences, it was printed in bold headlines on the front page of the Pensacola News Journal.