

Mission San Luis

1. Summary Description

a) Project Description

Few Americans are aware of the more than 100 Spanish missions established across north Florida between St. Augustine and Tallahassee during the 16th and 17th centuries. Located in present-day Tallahassee, Mission San Luis was the western capital of Spanish Florida, and the largest and most important of the Florida missions. It was home to more than 1500 Spanish and Apalachee Indian residents until the pogrom of 1702-1704. Often described as one of the great tragedies of early southern history, the Florida missions were destroyed by English-instigated raids during which most of the Christianized natives were killed outright, enslaved, or forced into exile.

Although Mission San Luis was burned to the ground in 1704, its location was never lost to local residents. When the State of Florida acquired the site in 1983, however, little was actually known about the mission community until archaeological and historical investigations began in earnest. As a result of more than two decades of award-winning research, the Mission has been reconstructed and transformed into a 60-acre classroom. Living history programs, school and group tours, special events, and camps are offered throughout the year. *Extensión San Luis*, our bilingual outreach program, also carries the story of the Mission to classrooms throughout the state.

b) Project Applicability to Award Criteria

Victors write history. Consequently most of our nation's past is heavily skewed toward English colonies and accomplishments, while the contributions of Spaniards and American Indians in the development of North America are all but ignored. Research and education at Mission San Luis have focused on this poorly understood and inadequately interpreted aspect of our nation's history--the formation of Hispanic American society in the United States.

Years of focused archaeological and historical research have revealed that Mission San Luis provides an intriguing example of cultural diversity and accommodation. The enormous Apalachee council house--the largest Indian building in the southeastern United States--stands directly across the central plaza from the Franciscan church. Unlike English colonists who typically lived apart from local native populations, the Apalachee Indians' community center was the largest structure in the center of the Spaniards' western capital. The Spanish Deputy Governor and the paramount Apalachee chief also lived and governed in close proximity to one another at the Mission. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for Spaniards and Indians to intermarry. The archaeological evidence of their blended families, homes, and activities are found every day at Mission San Luis. Our field investigations are designed to maximize data recovery while minimizing the impact on our remarkably well-preserved archaeological remains.

This foundation-era community has been meticulously reconstructed and today is the only place residents and visitors to our state can experience daily life at a Florida mission. Through our on-site and outreach programs, we underscore the direct connections between our country's diverse colonial past and the present, and promote an appreciation of the unique contributions of Spaniards and Native Americans in the formation of our national character. Since Hispanic Americans are now the majority minority in our country, this is a story that has relevance to an ever-growing proportion of our citizens who may not have related to mainstream American history as it has been portrayed in the past. And, after years of studying the fate of the Apalachee Indians as a textbook example of cultural extinction, the extraordinary happened. In 1996, descendants of the Apalachees from Mission San Luis revealed themselves (see appended *Wall Street Journal* article). They are the only documented descendants of any contact-era Florida Indians, demonstrated by an unbroken chain of parish records from the time they converted to Christianity at San Luis in the 1600s.

Please read the enclosed letters of recommendation and endorsements (included in additional documentation) to fully understand the contributions of Mission San Luis to its community and constituents.

c) Significant Outcomes

- A National Historic Landmark, Mission San Luis is one of the most significant archaeological and historic sites in the country. For over 20 years, it has been studied and interpreted using extraordinarily high standards of excellence in research and program development.
- This level of comprehensive research, combined with the meticulous translation of that research into faithful reconstructions and public education, is unparalleled in Florida.
- Mission San Luis has excelled in developing strong relationships with its contemporary Hispanic and Apalachee Indian communities.
- Mission San Luis has provided a marvelous opportunity to communicate the colonial past of Florida to the public, while serving as an economic engine for the region and state.
- The award-winning research staff has published seven university press books, numerous monographs, and dozens of scholarly articles in professional journals. They have also produced numerous popular publications, articles, and educational materials, several of which have been reprinted in large type and Braille.
- Since December 2004, when an integrated public relations campaign began, Mission San Luis has been featured in 63 publications with a cumulative circulation of 14,074,447 and on Web sites with a total of 17,233,487 users each month.
- Mission San Luis is a unique cultural resource that illuminates Hispanic American cultural development in our country.

2. Cultural Heritage Significance

Mission San Luis was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 and was purchased by the State of Florida in 1983. In 1984, the State initiated an ambitious program of rigorous archaeological and historical research, combined with public programming and educational outreach. Today, Mission San Luis is the most thoroughly investigated mission in the Southeast and the primary source of year-round education on Spanish colonization, Apalachee Indians, and the missions of the southeastern United States.

3. Organizational Roles

Mission San Luis is owned by the State of Florida and managed by the Florida Department of State's Division of Historical Resources. It has completed this project through long-term vision and perseverance that has withstood changing administrations and budget climates. For more than two decades, staff has partnered with a wide range of institutions in research, preservation, property acquisitions, infrastructural improvements, reconstructions, program development, and fundraising. The most significant contributors have been the National Endowment for the Humanities, University of Florida, National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, City of Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida Department of Education, Trust for Public Land, Visit Florida, Tallahassee Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Department of Transportation, National Center on Accessibility, and the Friends of Mission San Luis, along with our historic constituencies, the Hispanic community, the Apalachee Indians, and the Catholic Church. Each of these entities has contributed financial support, expertise, and/or valuable assistance to this project.

4. Cost Estimate

Spanish Village	Research \$22,838 (NEH) + \$87,003 (DOS) Reconstruction \$122,000 (DOS)
Church	Research \$54,340 (NEH) + \$264,298 (DOS) Reconstruction \$10,000 (Bishops) + \$547,121 (DOS)
Apalachee Village	Research \$31,398 (NEH) + \$128,663 (DOS) Reconstruction \$250,000 (Historic Preservation Grant) + \$464,332 (DOS)
Friary-Kitchen	Research (conducted same time as church research) Reconstruction \$500,000 (DOS)
Education/Interpretation	Planning \$49,916 (NEH) + \$47,511 (DOS) Implementation \$250,000 (NEH) + \$647,667 (DOS)
Total Project Cost:	\$3,477,087

5. Awards

1987-1989 NEH grant to investigate town planning at San Luis (\$22, 838)
1988 *Apalachee: The Land between the Rivers*. Florida Historical Association Award for year's best book on Florida history.
1991-1992 NEH grant for research in the Apalachee village (\$31,398)
1992 – 1993 NEH planning grant to develop site interpretation (\$50,000)
1994-1996 NEH grant to research the religious complex (\$54,340)
1995 DOT-ISTEA award for land acquisition (\$700,000)
1995 – 1998 NEH implementation grant for interpretive media (\$250,000)
1996 Grant from the Bishops of Florida toward reconstruction of the Franciscan church (\$10,000)
1996 *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*. Florida Historical Association Award for year's best book on Florida history.
1997-2000 Florida Historic Preservation Special Category Grant to reconstruct the Apalachee council house (\$250,000)
1999 *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis*. American Association of State and Local History Commendation of Excellence Award.
2004 National Center on Accessibility Recognition – Mission San Luis showcased for exceeding ADA standards and facilitating optimum access for disabled visitors.
2004 – 2008 NEH Challenge Grant to establish endowment (\$1,000,000)
2005 American Graphics Design Award for printed media
2005 American Institute of Architects Award for Architecture (Tampa Chapter), Historic Restoration Category

6. Final Completion

The most recently completed reconstructions were the friary and its detached kitchen which opened in March 2005. El Castillo de San Luis, the magnificent military complex at the Mission, is currently being rebuilt.