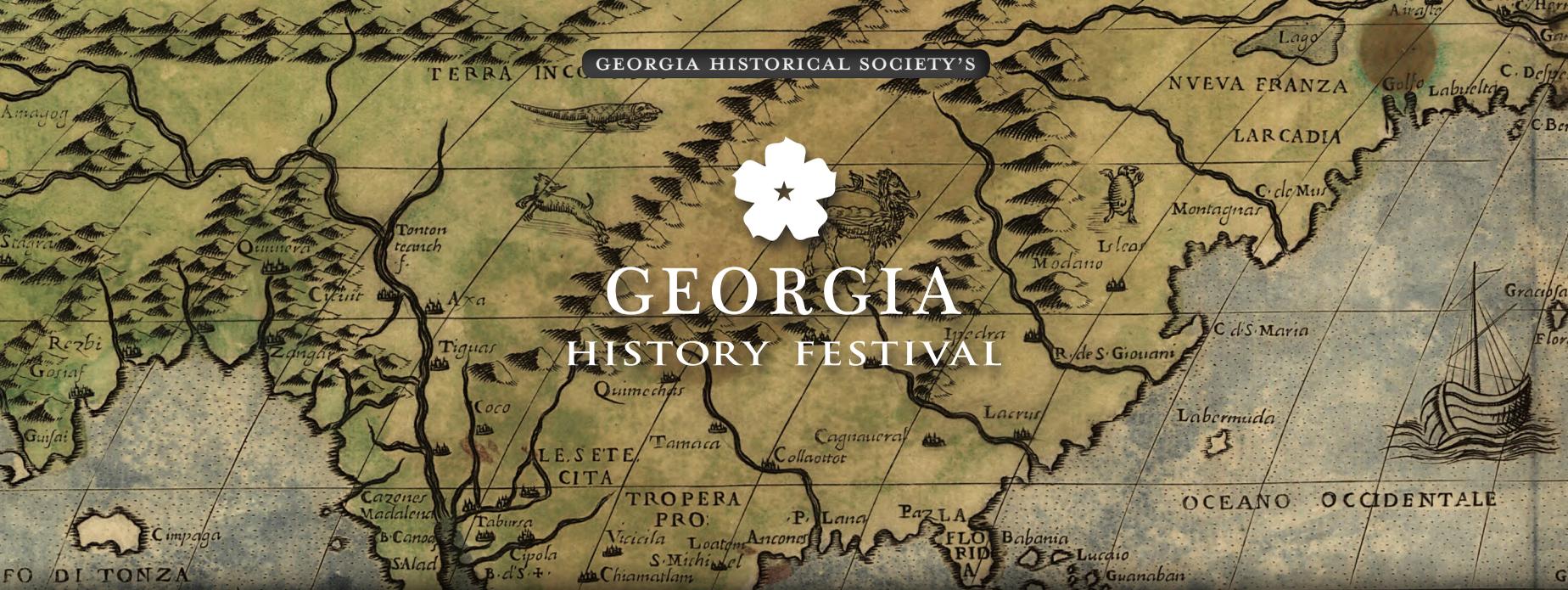


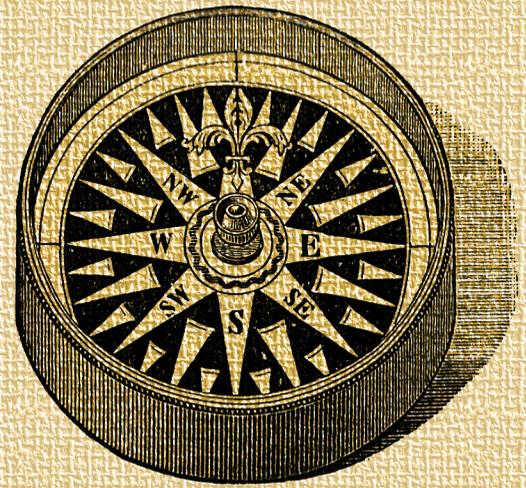
GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S



GEORGIA HISTORY FESTIVAL



HERNANDO DE SOTO AND THE IMPACT OF SPANISH EXPLORATION IN GEORGIA



Festival Co-Chairs: Dolly Chisholm and Thomas D. Hills



HERNANDO DE SOTO

C. 1496/97 - 1542



Image: Hernando De Soto. Engraving by J. Maca. Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-354.

EARLY LIFE

Hernando de Soto was born c. 1496/97 in Extramadura, Spain. His parents were minor Spanish nobility, or **hidalgos**. This meant that he came from a very old and respected family. Even though they were hidalgos, de Soto's parents were not rich. He grew up in a modest household.

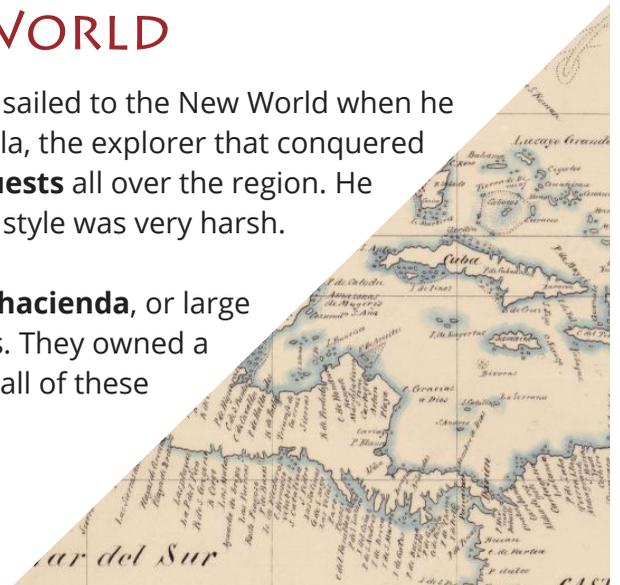
De Soto was born after Christopher Columbus claimed the New World on behalf of Spain. He grew up hearing about Columbus and other explorers going on adventures in the New World and gaining riches there. He dreamed of becoming a successful **conquistador** and gaining a fortune like Columbus.

COMING TO THE NEW WORLD

De Soto jumped at the first opportunity to make his dream a reality. De Soto sailed to the New World when he was just a young teenager. He went to Central America with Pedro Arias Dávila, the explorer that conquered Panama and Nicaragua. De Soto spent the next twenty years going on **conquests** all over the region. He learned his leadership skills from the men he served under. Their leadership style was very harsh.

De Soto became very wealthy on his first trip to the New World. He owned a **hacienda**, or large plantation, in Nicaragua. He also had business partners in several companies. They owned a gold mine, a shipping company, and participated in the slave trade. By 1530, all of these things helped him become one of the richest men in Central America.

Image: Map of America by Diego Ribero, 1529. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.



VOCABULARY

Conquistador - a leader in the Spanish conquests of America, Mexico, and Peru in the 16th century

Conquest - the act of taking control of a country or city through the use of force

Hacienda - a large estate or plantation with a dwelling house

Hidalgo - a member of the lowest noble class in Spain

NORTH AMERICAN JOURNEY

Hernando de Soto is most famous for his exploration of North America. He led 600 men on a journey through what is now the southeastern United States. They were the first Europeans to explore most of this region. De Soto was sent by the King of Spain to explore and settle **La Florida**. It had already been claimed for Spain by another conquistador, Juan Ponce de León. The king wanted de Soto to start a Spanish **colony** there and govern it. De Soto hoped to do what he and Francisco Pizarro did in Peru. He wanted to find a rich kingdom of native people, conquer them, and make them subjects of the Spanish Crown.

They first arrived near what is now Tampa Bay, Florida in May of 1539. They spent the next four years traveling over 4,000 miles all over the American Southeast. They went to a total of ten states that exist today, including Florida, Georgia, South

Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. De Soto and his men were the first Europeans to reach and cross the Mississippi River.



Image: The De Soto Map. From Original Narratives of Early American History. Edited by J. Franklin Jameson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.



Image: DeSoto Discovering the Mississippi, c. 1893. Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-3013.

CONTACT WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

De Soto was searching for wealthy civilizations like the Incas in Peru. In order to find their way, de Soto and his army kidnapped Native Americans to serve as guides. Many of these guides lied to de Soto about where they believed wealthy villages were located. They feared the Spanish and did not want them to harm their tribes or their neighbors. They also wanted to protect their tribes' property. When de Soto and his men passed through native villages, they often stole the natives' food and other supplies they needed to continue their journey. This explains why de Soto's path through the southeast does not follow a specific pattern or direction.

VOCABULARY

Colony - An area ruled by another country. The country that rules the colony is often far away from it.

La Florida - Spanish territory in what is now the southeastern United States during the colonization period

WHAT PATH DID HERNANDO DE SOTO TAKE?

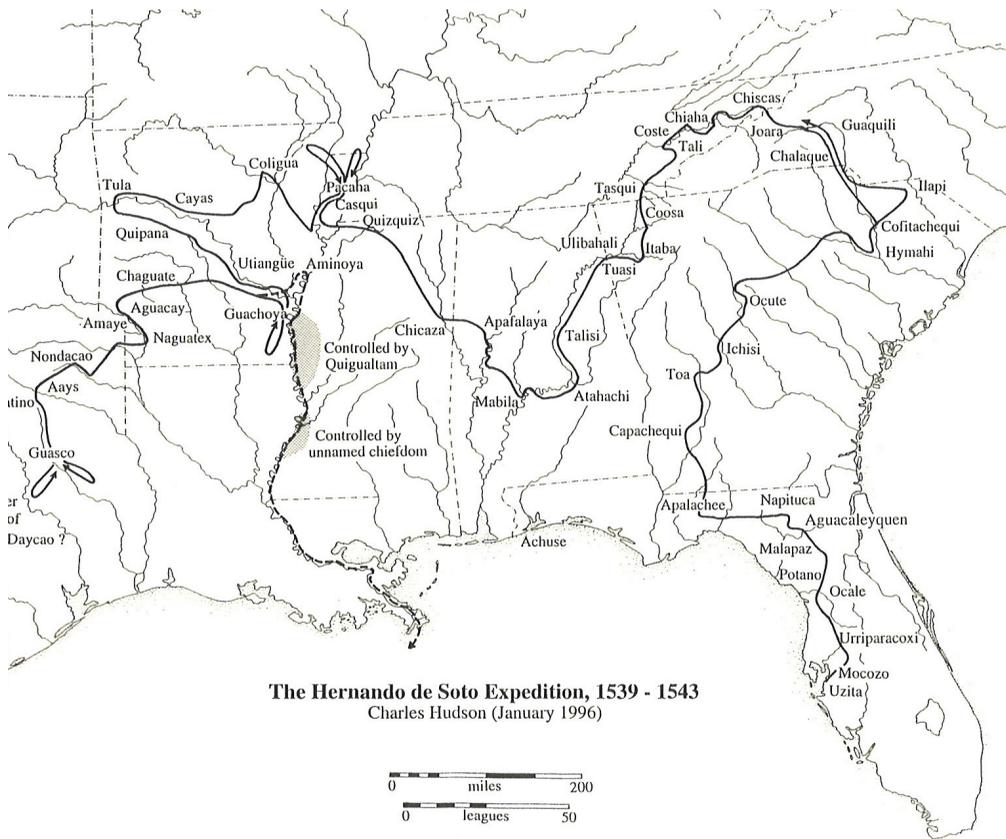


Image: From Galloway, Patricia, ed. *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

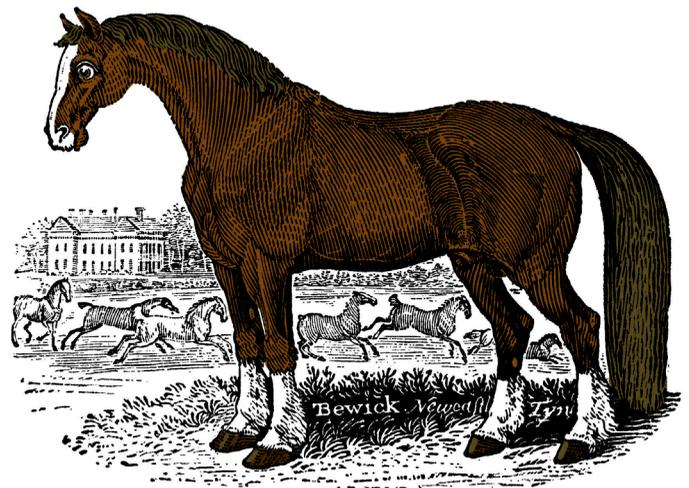
While he was in North America, Hernando de Soto passed through ten states. No one knows for sure exactly where de Soto marched. In fact, historians, archaeologists, and other researchers are still trying to map de Soto's journey in North America. This map shows Dr. Charles Hudson's best guess about where de Soto traveled. These guesses are based on hard work and study, but new research continues to change the map.

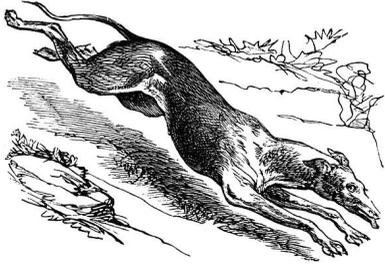
WHAT DID THE SPANISH BRING?

When Hernando de Soto and his men came to the New World they brought a lot of supplies with them from Europe. Many of the things they brought did not exist in North America before Europeans brought them.

HORSES

Spanish conquistadors and their men used horses for several things. Riding horses allowed them to travel faster than they could on foot. They also used them to haul heavy loads attached to carts and in battle against their enemies. De Soto and his men took a lot of horses on their journey. Horses were not native to the New World. This was the first time many of the native communities saw horses. The Spanish left some of their horses behind in the region. This allowed the Native Americans to adopt them into their own cultures.





DOGS

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Spanish used dogs in their military. They trained them to be very ferocious and attack their enemies. They were very large. Many of the Native Americans in North America had never seen dogs like these. The dogs helped the Spanish **intimidate** the native people. Some of the dogs got away from the Spanish while they were traveling. The Native Americans adopted the dogs into their own culture.



PIGS

The Spanish brought pigs along to eat for food. They called them swine. When they arrived, these animals did not exist in North America. Throughout de Soto's journey, several pigs got away from the Spanish. They mostly stayed in the woods and remained wild animals. The wild hogs found in Georgia today are descendants of those early Spanish pigs. In Arkansas, the wild hogs that were originally brought by the Spanish are called razorbacks.

DISEASES

De Soto and most of his men grew up in Europe. Many Europeans were exposed to certain diseases during childhood. Their bodies developed defenses against these disease. One of these diseases was **smallpox**. **Smallpox** did not exist in the New World before Europeans arrived. **Smallpox** is much more deadly to adults than to children. Because Native Americans were first exposed to **smallpox** as adults and not children, they died in greater numbers. European diseases killed so many Native Americans that entire communities disappeared. Survivors came together to form new societies like the Creek in what is now Georgia.

VOCABULARY

Immunity - Protection from something. When someone has immunity from a disease it means they are protected from getting sick even if they are exposed to the disease.

Intimidate - To make someone afraid.

Smallpox - A contagious disease causing fevers and pustules. It was very deadly if not treated correctly. Native Americans with no natural immunity were particularly susceptible to European diseases like small pox.

HERNANDO DE SOTO TIMELINE

1492

Christopher Columbus reached the North America. He claimed the land for Spain.

ca. 1496/97

Hernando de Soto was born in Extramadura, Spain.

1513

Juan Ponce de León explored La Florida in search of the Fountain of Youth.

1514

Pedro Arias Dávila left Spain for his expedition of Panama.

1519

De Soto participated in the conquest of Panama.

1520

De Soto's shipping company built ships for Francisco Pizarro's conquest of Peru.

1524

De Soto helped Francisco Hernández de Córdoba conquer Nicaragua. De Soto led his own expedition to El Salvador and Honduras.

1525

De Soto was elected mayor of León, Nicaragua.

1528

De Soto and his business partner Hernán Ponce de León, became two of the wealthiest men in Central America. They owned a gold mine, sold slaves, and owned a shipping company.

1531

De Soto was named Chief Lieutenant of Pizarro's expedition to Peru.

1532

De Soto led the expedition to the Incan capital of Cajamarca. The Spanish held their leader Atahualpa ransom.

1533

The Spanish killed Atahualpa even though they were given silver and gold. De Soto was on a mission to capture the city of Cuzco when Atahualpa was killed.

1534

Pizarro named de Soto Lieutenant Governor of Cuzco.

1535

De Soto returned to Spain for the first time in many years.

1536

De Soto married Isabel de Bobadilla.

1537

The King of Spain granted de Soto the rights to explore and settle La Florida. De Soto was appointed governor of Cuba.

1538

De Soto and approximately 600 volunteers left Spain for La Florida. They arrived in Cuba in June.

1539

De Soto and his men set sail for La Florida from Cuba in May. They arrived near modern-day Tampa Bay and spent the rest of the year exploring modern-day Florida before setting up winter camp.

1540

De Soto and his men left their winter camp in March. They traveled through the modern states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. They had several violent encounters with Native Americans along the way. The expedition lost over twenty men and most of their supplies were burned in a fire. They set up winter camp in modern-day Mississippi.

1541

After leaving their winter camp, the expedition had another conflict with natives - the Chicasa tribe. The Spanish lost more men in battle and more equipment in another fire. In May, de Soto and his men became the first Europeans to cross the Mississippi River. They set up a winter camp on the Arkansas River in Autiamque, located near modern Jacksonport.

1542

De Soto and his men marched south after leaving their winter camp. He got a fever in May at a native village on the banks of the Mississippi River in what is now Arkansas. He named Luis de Moscoso Alvarado as the new leader of the expedition after he realized that he would not recover.

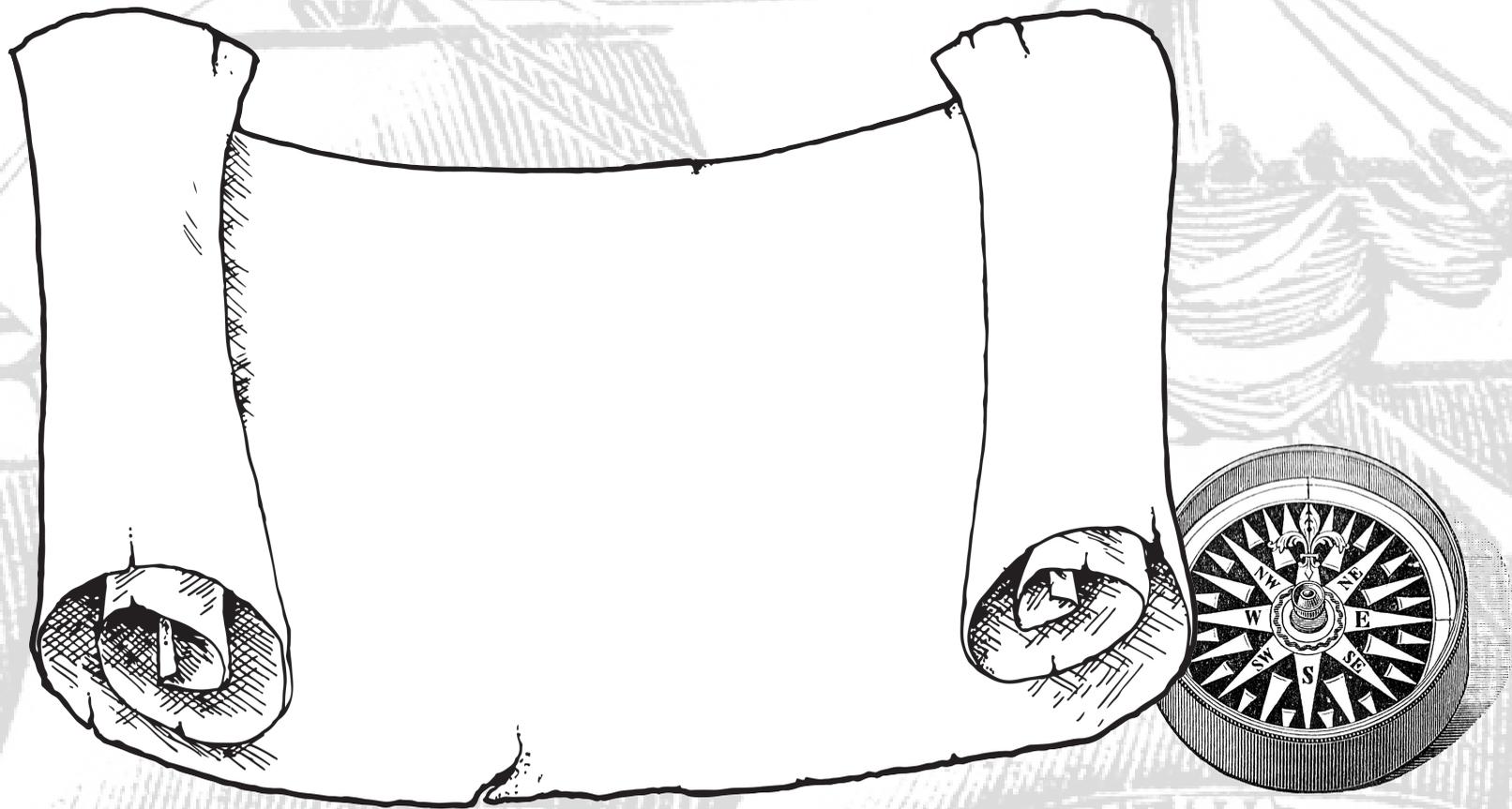
Hernando de Soto died on May 21. Members of the expedition buried him in the Mississippi River. Luis de Moscoso Alvarado tried to march back to safety in Mexico. The dry terrain of modern-day Texas was too difficult to march through, so the survivors set up a winter camp on the banks of the Mississippi near Guachoya.

1543

Luis de Moscoso Alvarado and the expedition built boats and sailed down the Mississippi River. Only around half of the original men survived.

YOUR JOURNEY

Imagine you are taking a journey to an unknown world. What would you bring?
Use the space below to make a list or draw what items you would pack.



FIRST ENCOUNTERS

You are on a space voyage and discover a new planet. Draw what your first meeting with the planet's native beings might be like.





Learn More about

HERNANDO DE SOTO

Visit Hernando de Soto's Featured Historical Figure resources on the Georgia Historical Society website georgiahistory.com. Click on the LEARN page to find Explore Georgia History. From there you can access all the Featured Historical Figures resources.

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ONLINE

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