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Charlesfort/Santa Elena Video Project

By Chester B. DePratter

For the past year and a half, I have been working with Larry Hall, Advanced Producer/Director at South Carolina Educational Television, to produce a video on early European settlement of South Carolina. This project, funded in part by a grant from the South Carolina Humanities Council, is nearing completion, and the final product should air in Fall 1997.

The video, titled "For God, Glory, and Gold: Early French and Spanish Conquest of South Carolina," will combine information relating to the archaeology and history of the 16th century European settlement of the South Carolina coast. The video will be one hour long and will consist of interviews and footage of archaeological excavations at both French Charlesfort (occupied 1562-1563) and Spanish Santa Elena (occupied 1566-1587). As most of you know, both Charlesfort and Santa Elena were located on the southern tip of Parris Island, which is now occupied by the U. S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

In mid-February, 1997, Larry and I traveled to St. Augustine, Florida, to interview Dr. Kathleen Deagan, archaeologist with the Florida Museum of Natural History, at her excavation of the earliest Spanish fort (built in 1565) in St. Augustine. The following week, we were in Charleston to interview two College of Charleston historians, Dr. Amy Bushnell and Dr. Bertrand van Ruymbeke, on the documentary sources pertaining to the conflict

between Spain and France for control of this part of the world.

Over the past year, we traveled to Florida on several occasions to videotape important sites and to interview several people knowledgeable about the focus of our production. We visited the National Park Service's reconstruction of Fort Caroline (a French settlement near Jacksonville, Florida, occupied 1564-1565), to interview park rangers and to obtain footage of the fort and its locality.

In St. Augustine, we shot footage of

St. Augustine plaza and uncovering part of the 16th century settlement there. While in St. Augustine, we interviewed Center for Historic Research historian Dr. Eugene Lyon, the foremost authority on the Spanish settlement in Florida. We traveled south from St. Augustine to Matanzas where Spaniard Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and his men massacred two large groups of Frenchmen who had escaped his attack on Fort Caroline earlier in 1565.

During the summer of 1996, Dr. Paul Hoffman, a historian at Louisiana State University, visited Columbia, and we were able to interview him

concerning various aspects of the French and Spanish presence in the region.

When Stanley South and I resume excavations at Charlesfort/Santa Elena on March 31, 1997, Larry and I will be able to videotape the final sequences we need to complete our project. We will interview Dr. Steve Wise, Director of the Parris Island Museum, and Stanley South concerning the history of the site and excavations there. We will obtain footage of the Charlesfort/Fort San Felipe excavations that we need to complete that aspect of our work. Then will come the process of editing the interviews and other footage into its final form. We will also produce an educational booklet to go with the videotape, so

that it can be used effectively in schools. All in all, it has been an interesting and enlightening process, and I look forward to putting together the final product.



Larry Hall videotaping at Fort Caroline National Memorial, Jacksonville, Florida. (Photo by Chester DePratter)

the large stone fort, the Castillo de San Marcos, built by the Spanish occupants of St. Augustine at the end of the 17th century in response to the English settling in South Carolina. We visited and interviewed city archaeologist Carl Halbirt who was excavating in the