

History,  
Alive!

streets and houses were decorated with gold and jewels. When the Spanish heard Indians tell similar tales, they became convinced that the Seven Cities of Cibola were somewhere in North America.

Spanish explorers first looked for the seven cities in Florida and in present-day Texas. They found plenty of adventure, but no golden cities. Then a Spanish priest named Marcos de Niza claimed to have seen a shimmering golden city in what is now New Mexico. He raced back to Mexico City with the news.

**The Coronado Expedition** In 1540, a famed conquistador named Francisco Vásquez de Coronado set out from Mexico City with a large expedition and de Niza as his guide. Their goal was to find the legendary golden cities.

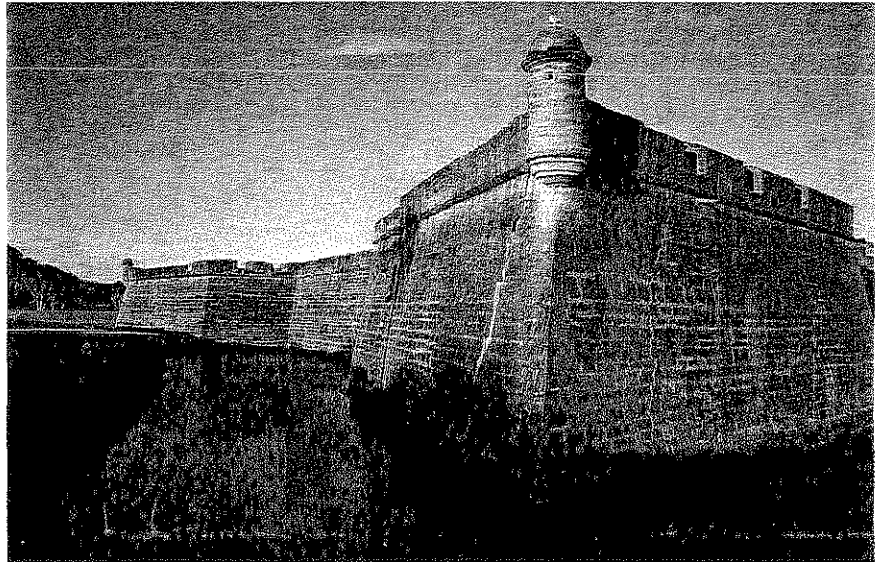
After traveling north more than 7,000 miles, the expedition found a Native American *pueblo* (a village of apartment-like buildings made of stone and adobe rising four and five stories high). To de Niza, this might have looked like a golden city. But to Coronado, it was a "little, crowded village...all crumpled up together." The enraged expedition leader sent the priest home.

The Coronado expedition continued north onto the Great Plains before giving up the search for golden cities. Disappointed, Coronado reported to Spain, "Everything is the opposite of [what] was related, except the name of the cities and the large stone houses.... The Seven Cities are seven little villages."

**Settling the Borderlands** As conquistadors explored new territories, they claimed the areas for Spain. By 1600, the Spanish borderlands extended west from Florida across present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

At first, Spain did little to encourage settlement in these far-flung areas. But when rival European nations also began to show an interest in the land, small bands of soldiers were sent to these regions to protect the claims. The soldiers lived in walled forts called *presidios*.

In 1565, for example, a Spanish naval officer named Pedro Menéndez de Avilés was sent to Florida to protect the area from French explorers. Menéndez successfully drove the French out of their Florida base and built a fort on the peninsula's Atlantic coast. Menéndez named the fort Saint Augustine. Over the years, Spanish soldiers based at St. Augustine successfully defended the fort, and Spanish claims to Florida, from both French and English rivals. Today, St. Augustine is the oldest permanent settlement founded by Europeans in the United States.



St. Augustine was originally a presidio, or fort, built by the Spanish to protect their claim to Florida. It is the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States.

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Missions were established to convert Native Americans to Christianity and increase Spanish control over the land. Missions included a church and the farmland on which missionaries produced almost all of what they needed to survive.

**missionaries** people who travel to a territory or community in order to make converts to their religion

brought 400 settlers and 7,000 animals from Mexico to New Mexico. The long overland journey took a year and a half to complete.

At first, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico welcomed the newcomers. Unfortunately, the Spanish repaid the Indians' kindness with cruelty. Indians were made to work for the settlers as slaves. Catholic priests ordered the whipping of Pueblo religious leaders who continued to practice their traditional rituals. Such treatment led the Pueblo people to rise up in revolt and drive the Spanish out. Twelve years would pass before Spanish settlers returned to New Mexico.

During the 1600s and 1700s, settlement of the Spanish borderlands proceeded slowly. But in time, the language, religion, and culture of Spain spread across much of the American Southwest.

**Impact on Native Americans** The arrival of Spanish settlers had a great impact on the native peoples of the borderlands. The Pueblo people, for example, learned from the Spanish how to use new tools, grow new foods, and raise sheep for wool. In turn, the Indians introduced the Spanish to new techniques for growing crops in the desert soil.

From Florida to California, some Native Americans converted to the Catholic faith. The converts often lived and worked in and around the missions, growing crops and helping to maintain the churches and other buildings. However, even converts often continued to practice their traditional religious rituals as well.

Unfortunately, wherever the Spanish settled, they brought with them diseases to which native peoples had no resistance. Smallpox, measles, and influenza often wiped out entire villages. Before Coronado's expedition, there had been more than 100 Indian pueblos in New Mexico. By 1700, only 18 remained.