

Puerto Real: The Archaeology of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Town in Hispaniola.

Edited by KATHLEEN DEAGAN. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xxvi, 553 pp. Cloth, \$75.00.

The excavation of the Spanish town of Puerto Real (1503/4–1579) ranks as one of the four most important archaeological investigations of Spanish colonial sites in the Caribbean to have been conducted in recent years—the others being work at La Isabela, En Bas Saline, and Concepción de la Vega. Puerto Real is a crucial component to understanding the story of Spanish conquest and colonization of Hispaniola. Founded only a decade after the establishment of La Isabela, Columbus's colonial endeavor, Puerto Real was located in what was essentially the “outback,” or frontier region, of Spanish settlement. It was at the northwest of the island, not far from modern-day Cape Hatien and close to the area where Columbus suffered a shipwreck in 1492. Of the thirteen towns established by the crown around 1503, Puerto Real was perhaps the most distant from Hispaniola's political center at Santo Domingo. The town continued in existence until 1579, when royal orders aimed at suppressing *rescate*, or smuggling, ordered the settlement abandoned. Prior to this policy change, however, Puerto Real had risen from being an isolated outpost to becoming a center for mining and the production of hides, boasting a church ornamented with gargoyles and a formal town grid plan. It is one of a few sites that tells us about daily life on the sixteenth-century frontier and that reveals evidence both for the decline of the native Taino peoples and for the increasing cultural visibility of Africans brought to Hispaniola as slave labor. Deagan tells this story through historical documents and maps; she discusses topography and geography as well as architecture and the spatial distribution of artifacts, and she analyzes the material culture and fauna. By utilizing all these data sources, Deagan provides as concrete a glimpse into colonial life as it is possible to achieve.

As someone who was tangentially associated with this project, as lab supervisor for one field season, I am impressed with the scope of the edited volume, which coherently brings together many facets of a multiyear, multischolar investigation into the past. Some readers will already be familiar with Puerto Real from Charles Ewen's *From Spaniard to Creole* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1991), based on his dissertation research at the site. This new edited volume helps to frame Ewen's study within the broader context of what is known about the history and archaeology of Puerto Real.

The book is organized into ten chapters. Following an introduction by Kathleen Deagan, the project's principal investigator, William Hodges, the project's coinvestigator who located Puerto Real after it had virtually disappeared both from the landscape and from history, recounts the search for and rediscovery of the site. These authors, together with zooarchaeologist Elizabeth Reitz and historian Eugene Lyon, then place Puerto Real in its temporal and geographical setting, summarizing early accounts of what the town looked like and how the colonists lived. These opening chapters create a framework and a point of reference for discussing the archaeological findings that fol-

low, and they provide the detailed images of daily life that so often are skipped over or are missing from the archival record.

The use of various broadscale survey techniques is covered in a section about community organization by Maurice Williams, Raymond Willis, and Rochelle Marrinan. Together these authors present evidence for the town's layout and identify the buildings of the central plaza. Among these edifices is a construction they identify as the town church, which Willis shows to have been a rectangular structure, without transept, that incorporated the open chapel common to New World churches. His analysis of foot traffic flow suggests that the church, following the prescriptions of the day, was not only a central and imposing structure but, with an adjoining market area, was also at the heart of the village's daily activity. Williams's analysis of artifact distribution reveals aspects of social differentiation in Puerto Real. He demarcates areas of high-status residence that were later tested, or ground-truthed, through excavation. Marrinan reports on excavations of the town cemetery and of a second building at the town center.

In the next section Bonnie McEwan, Kathleen Deagan, and Elizabeth Reitz provide a look at domestic life in Puerto Real, and at a cattle- or possibly hide-processing complex that was part of the local economy. Their study is complemented by McEwan and Reitz's broader analysis of subsistence activity and animal husbandry. In his analysis of coarse earthenwares at the site, Greg Smith provides an intriguing picture of the town's shifting demography and its laboring class. Native Taino pottery traditions disappeared rapidly at Puerto Real, a sign, in material culture, of the plight of the native people, who suffered tremendous population loss due to disease, forced labor, and war with the Spanish. Over time a new type of pottery emerged—Christophe Plain, which shows affiliations with African potting traditions and seems to indicate that Africans brought as slaves gradually began to manufacture local pottery. Most of the unidentified plain pottery at Puerto Real comes from early-to-middle contexts, suggesting that a basic cottage industry—the making of earthenwares—was first undertaken by local native potters, then by people drawing on both native and other traditions, and finally by the African and *casta* laboring classes.

In a final section, William Hodges and Jennifer Hamilton present their work at Bayah, another Spanish town, located to the east at Fort Liberty, that probably incorporated some Puerto Real residents after their forced removal in 1579. Deagan's conclusion and summary draws further attention to Puerto Real's importance as an early example of the Spanish town plan in the Americas. She compares the site with other sixteenth-century Spanish settlements, and addresses issues such as the formation of *criollo* identity in the New World. In all, this is an important volume. It provides much baseline data that will be important for future research. Appreciation for the research encapsulated here will grow, I think, as our knowledge of early colonial life on Hispaniola increases.

JAMES G. CUSICK, University of North Florida