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PONTE VEDRA**
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST™

St. Augustine: The Place Where Hispanic Heritage in the U.S. Was Born Celebrating U.S. Hispanic Heritage Month

St. Augustine, Florida (August 2016) – For more than 450 years, Hispanics have had a deep and positive influence on the United States through their clear-cut commitment to family, faith, hard work and perseverance. Hispanic generations have enhanced and shaped the national spirit with centuries-old customs that mirror the multicultural and multiethnic traditions of communities. This impact is evident in St. Augustine more than any other destination in the U.S.

By the time the first English settlement in the new world was established at Jamestown, Virginia, St. Augustine had been a thriving coastal town under the control of the Spanish for more than 40 years. This historic place is the oldest city in the U.S. On September 8, 1565, Spanish Admiral Pedro Menendez de Aviles came ashore to found the city of St. Augustine and claim the land for Spain. Menendez' crew was made up of 800 Spaniards, Africans and Mediterranean people. Soldiers and sailors were joined by craftsmen, women and children, and Catholic clergy. When Menendez and his fleet came ashore on the grounds of what is today the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park, the Spaniards and the Timucua Indians who lived there, at that time, sat down together for the first Feast of Thanksgiving – a thanksgiving meal that came before the well-known New England Thanksgiving by 55 years!

In celebration Hispanic Heritage Month – Sept. 15 thru Oct. 15 – rediscover the place where the U.S. Latino spirit and soul were born and remain evident today.

HISPANIC CULTURE – U.S. HISTORY FIRSTS

- **FIRST THANKSGIVING HAD A SPANISH FLAIR**
First Thanksgiving Feast in what is now the United States. On 1565 Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and Spanish settlers founded the settlement of St. Augustine in Spanish La Florida. As soon as they were ashore the landing party celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving, and, afterward, Menéndez laid out a meal to which he invited as guests the native Timucua tribe of Seloy who occupied the site.
- **FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH SITE OF THE FIRST SPANISH SETTLEMENT**
Commemorating the founding of La Florida by Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon and his legendary search for the Fountain of Youth, archeologists have discovered that the park is the actual site of the original Spanish settlement of St. Augustine of 1565. Spanish colonial military cannon firings, an authentic 16th century boat works, a recreated Seloy Indian Village and exhibits demonstrating how the Spanish explorers navigated the seas are part of this classic experience in St. Augustine.
- **FIRST CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS – MISSION NOMBRE DE DIOS**
On the day, Don Pedro Menendez came ashore and founded St. Augustine, Father Francisco Lopez offered the first Holy Mass at the Mission Nombre de Dios – a site that became the home of the first Catholic parish in the nation. The museum on site tells the story of the mission and visitors can light a candle in the shrine of Our Lady of La Leche.
- **CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS – FIRST MASONRY FORTRESS**
First and oldest masonry fortress in the United States is the Castillo de San Marcos, built 1672-1695. Castillo de San Marcos, completed by the Spanish in 1695 to protect their treasure fleets from the

English and pirates, is the oldest structure in present day St. Augustine and a national monument and national park.

- **[FIRST FREE SETTLEMENT IN U.S. FT. MOSE](#)**

Ft. Mose - Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose - is the first legally sanctioned free African settlement in the U.S. when in 1738 slaves fleeing the British were granted their freedom by the Spanish if they adopted the Catholic religion. Today Ft Mose is a state park.

- **PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCION - OLDEST SPANISH PLAZA IN THE US**

Established in 1573, the town square is named for its monument to the Spanish constitution of 1812. Soon after the monument was erected, when the monarchy was restored, all such monuments in Spanish territories were ordered to be destroyed. However, St. Augustine's governor refused and the original monument that stands today is believed to be the only one remaining in the world.

- **AVILES OLDEST PUBLIC STREET**

Aviles Street, the oldest public street in the country dating back to 1570, was originally called Hospital Street because of the Spanish military hospital there.

Today, the influence of Hispanic history in St. Augustine is still evident more than four centuries later. Visitors can explore the heritage of the diverse people who built the city and called it home for centuries before it became a part of the United States at historic sites, still standing, Castillo de San Marcos, Fountain of Youth Archeological Park, Mission de Dios, Plaza de la Constitucion and other attractions such as:

- **[Colonial Quarter](#)** a 2-acre living history museum recreates St. Augustine's storied past. Visitors can explore the centuries and mingle with authentically costumed historic interpreters, participate in a musket drill, climb 35 feet to the top of a 17th century watchtower or sip on refreshments in the Taberna de Caballo, an intimate Spanish tavern, or at the British centric Bull & Crown Pub.
- **[Gonzalez-Alvarez House](#)** "The Oldest House" was built in approximately 1702 and owned by a soldier named Tomas Gonzalez. In 1812, it was the home of St. Augustine Mayor Geronimo Alvarez. The home is a National Landmark and is owned by the St. Augustine Historical Society and open for public tours.

This year, St. Augustine continues to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month with these annual events:

- Music lovers will enjoy St. Augustine's **[Sounds of Summer Festival](#)** which carries music from the beaches, to the historic district to Ponte Vedra Beach and beyond: rock, pop, country, blues, soul, reggae, contemporary and acoustic. Free concerts are part of the summer music mainstay. Every Thursdays, music lovers gather in the Plaza de la Constitucion for free concerts from 7-9 p.m.
- **[Founding Day](#)** September 10th will commemorate the 451st anniversary of the founding of St. Augustine, Florida's colonial capital and the oldest continuously occupied European city, port and parish in the continental US. In partnership with the Mission Nombre de Dios, volunteers will re-enact the landing of Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés on Sept. 8, 1565, on the original site of the "Noble and Loyal City's" founding in September 1565. These anniversary commemorations will be held from 10 a.m.-noon at the Mission Nombre de Dios. The event is free and open to the public.
- The **[St. Augustine Spanish Wine Festival](#)** a four-day event – starting Sept. 8th – that offers something for everyone who loves Spanish wine. The festival kicks off on Thursday at noon with a luncheon at First Coast Technical College. Friday evening features Vino Veritas at The Treasury on the Plaza with passed hors d'oeuvres, entertainment, premium wines and Spanish wine experts. Saturday is the Batalla de Vinos, or wine fight, and Cochinitillo Asado, suckling pig roast, at the Mission Nombre de Dios. Finally, the Grand Tasting is Sunday afternoon at The Treasury on the Plaza and includes 100+ Spanish wines.