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## Antiquities At and Near New Smyrna, Florida

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him. Now the great changes, the distress of the country, troubles still to come, which with remarkable clearness of vision he foresaw - all weighed heavily upon his mind. His health failed, and he aged rapidly. He lived into the second year of the war, the last months of his life being filled with illness and suffering.

On the 14th of September, 1862, the end came. All day long a storm had been raging, and some feared that he would be disturbed. But he said he had always loved to hear the wind, and so he lay calm and undisturbed by the storm without. He had from his youth been a devout and humble Christian, and as now he lay dying, his lips moved often in prayer. Thus the day wore on and the evening came and he fell asleep, calmly and peacefully.

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## **Antiquities at and near New Smyrna, Florida.**

BY JOHN Y. DETWILER, New Smyrna.

These antiquities embrace at the present time, the "Spanish Mission," the "Old Fort" and the "Rock House," the latter within the last few years having been destroyed by the removal of the shell mound on which it was built, for road making purposes. This building as well as that of the Spanish Mission, however, has been perpetuated by photographs of which the Florida State Historical Society has authenticated copies.

Gradually, as the years advance, discoveries have been made of important archaeological ruins where none were supposed to exist. This is especially true in relation to the Spanish Mission, which from the earliest recollection of the oldest inhabitant, was known as the Turnbull Sugar house. The discovery of the Altar Lights, and other Paraphernalia pertaining to a Sacerdotal Edifice by Capt. Mathews, while removing an old stump to plant an

orange tree, gave rise to investigation, resulting from many corroborative evidences in the proof that the building was, originally designed as a church edifice.

The restored candlestick from the best preserved portions of the three discovered, can be seen by visitors to the rooms of the Historical Society.

The facts relative to the ancient Fort are these. For many years the shell mound was occupied by a residence owned by the Sheldon family, which was destroyed by the Federal gunboats during the early part of the Civil War and a less pretentious building was erected upon the site. This building was torn down a few years ago, and the shell of which the mound was composed was removed, revealing bastions on the northeast and northwest ends of the works. Further excavations demonstrated from the size and regularity, together with the arrangement and location, that other ideas than the mere foundation of an ordinary building had been the conception of the architect and engineer. The location of the Rock House commands a view of Musquito Inlet for miles, as well as the approaches both to New Smyrna, where the fort is located and to the northwestward through the channels to Spruce Creek and Turnbull Bay, formerly supposed to be an open waterway through the swamp southward to the Indian River.

The remains of what is supposed to be a gun traverse or stone platform, north of the Rock House, which was discovered by the writer twenty-one years ago, while securing data for the initial number of the New Smyrna Breeze, as original editor, showed quite plainly the circular mound about four feet high and approximately twelve or more feet across, with an opening in the center just twelve inches square. This opening contained the remains of a stick of live oak, evidently built in the masonry, but then decomposed until only a piece six feet long flattened diagonally, with a large tenon or pivot on the upper end remained. This stick was removed and

laid aside for preservation, but was not secured until eight years after. A piece of this oak timber is among the collections of the Society.

Upon further investigation and inquiry, it was learned from Mr. Bertola Pacetti, then living near the lighthouse, that many years before, he had removed the circular stones for the purpose of building a cistern and found that the structure was a low circular tower with a stone platform around it and a post in the center. The surroundings were then almost impenetrable, being located in the dense hammock. Such are the facts that indicate the old building was a fort.

The eastern coast of Florida has been inhabited by people for many centuries, as demonstrated by the vast accumulation of oyster shells in the vicinity of Mosquito Inlet.

Is the Spanish Mission what it is claimed, the work of Columbus on his second voyage, to introduce and perpetuate the Catholic religion in behalf of his patrons, King Ferdinand, and Queen Isabella in the newly discovered country ?

It is possible that the conditions topographically, at that time, were such that the newly-erected edifice was located a mile inland on a lagoon no less marked in its depth and outline, than the North Indian River is now, along the peninsula opposite New Smyrna ?

It will be observed that the most perfect cut stone arches of the Mission are fronting the west, a short distance only from a well defined swamp, and that the building in style of architecture is similar to those of California and Spain of from four to six centuries ago. The coquina rock being easily wrought, and everlasting in its nature, permitted the most perfect workmanship which would not be called for in the erection of a sugar house located in the wilderness. There being no deposits of coquina in the immediate vicinity, it is supposed the building material was transported by floats from quarries

located near the entrance of Turnbull Bay and the junction of Spruce Creek, about three miles distant. To realize the condition, let us imagine a triangle, due north and south four miles long, with its base one mile wide, this will represent the topography of the locality in the vicinity of New Smyrna and Mosquito Inlet. In the southeast angle locate the prehistoric Fort, three miles north locate the Rock House and the gun traverse with a long range cannon mounted, commanding the inlet a mile distant. The apex of the triangle would be the south side of the entrance of what is now Turnbull Bay, then a continuation of the Indian River proper. The southwest angle of the triangle is the location of the Spanish Mission, one mile west of the Fort, which would command three miles distant over the oyster beds and marshes of that time to the entrance of the inlet.

Realizing the importance of their newly discovered possessions, would not the crown of Spain endeavor to protect and preserve the only and original Mission by locating it in such a position that it would be impossible to destroy it by an invading enemy, comprising both French and English?

Modern discoveries may bring to light other features bearing upon these facts, just as the past few years, have shown by the discovery of the Altar candlesticks the nature of the edifice, by the uncovering of the bastions the presence of the Fort, and the probable use of the circular masonry as a gun traverse by the presence of the center post and its location near the "Lookout" or Rock House.

In preserving the landmarks and historical data, at the present time, we are only supplying the links of the chain that binds together the information obtained from successive generations and used in its entirety, serves to make history for the edification of mankind.