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**ST. AUGUSTINE
PONTE VEDRA**
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®

What Makes St. Augustine The Oldest City in the U.S.?

St. Augustine, Fla. - When it comes to history, no city in the United States can match St. Augustine in terms of age, authenticity or beauty. In 2015, the city of St. Augustine commemorated the 450th Anniversary of its founding as the oldest continuous European settlement in the United States.

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 peoples. Soldiers and sailors were joined by craftsmen, women and children, and Catholic clergy. They gathered on the shores of a Florida saltmarsh at the site of a large Native American village known as Seloy.

The area had long been home to native Indians. Archeological discoveries suggest that Native Americans lived in the area at least 500 years before the arrival of the Europeans. Known as the Timucua, they lived in an orderly society that benefited from hunting, fishing and small scale farming.

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 who lived there sat down together for a Feast of Thanksgiving – a thanksgiving meal that preceded the well-known New England Thanksgiving by 55 years!

Menendez and his crew also celebrated a Catholic Mass, led by Father Francisco Lopez, and built a mission church on the grounds of the current Mission Nombre de Dios. This makes St. Augustine home to the oldest Catholic parish in the United States.

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