

Preserving History Through Archaeology



October 2022
Volume XI, Issue 8

GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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From the Vault: A Spanish Coin

In this new section for the *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin* (GAB), "From the Vault" focuses on artifacts found at Fort Daniel Archaeological Park. For this month I would like to focus on one of my favorite artifacts that is displayed in the Fort Daniel Museum: the 1776 Mexican-minted Spanish coin (*pictured right*). At Fort Daniel we have found pottery pieces, nails, utensils, and fragments of projectile points, but only one coin has been found (so far!). It is so surprising that this coin has survived all of these years—especially since Fort Daniel became cultivated farmland after the fort was abandoned. This artifact is used as a tool to teach visitors to the site on what monetary resources were available on the Georgia frontier.

British money was rare in the colonies and was unheard of during the early years of the United States.



Laws in England prevented the export of the British currency. It was up to the colonies to either print or mint currency. The earliest coin made in the colonies was authorized by the Massachusetts legislature in 1652¹. With the lack of coins being minted, foreign currency was widely circulated, and since Georgia was close to Spanish Florida, Spanish coins were widely circulated.

At the height of the Spanish Empire gold and silver were heavily mined in South America, and this resulted in an abundance of Spanish currency in both Europe and the Americas. People in the English colonies traded a lot with the Spanish colonies and acquired a large number of Spanish coins. For this reason it is not uncommon to find Spanish coins at sites dating to the colonial period. The Spanish dollar

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was one of the few widely accepted denominations and served as the interim currency in the colonies. Because of this preference to the Spanish dollar, the money of the United States became designated in dollars instead of pounds².

After the Revolutionary War, the United States Constitution gave Congress the power to coin money, and in 1792 Congress passed its first coinage act. This act created the first national mint in Philadelphia and sketched out the coinage system. The Coinage Act of 1792 adopted the decimal system and combined Alexander Hamilton's idea of bimetallic standard with Thomas Jefferson's proposal that the dollar be the standard unit³. This coinage act also ended the legal tender of Spanish coins in the United States.

Therefore, how did this little coin end up at Fort Daniel? On the Spanish coin there is an inscription that reads: "Carolus III Dei Gratia 1776." *Dei Gratia* means "by the grace of God." This coin has the face of King Charles III of Spain (hence *Carolus III*), and the other side it has a crown above two pillars. We don't know for certain if this was someone's coin to be used as money or maybe a lucky charm, but we do know that someone probably had it while stationed at Fort Daniel. ■ **DMG**

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1. Allen, Larry. "Massachusetts Bay Colony Mint." *The Encyclopedia of Money*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC).
 2. Michener, Ron. "Money in the American Colonies." EH.net. October 2022. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/money-in-the-american-colonies>.
 3. "Money in Colonial Times." Philadelphiafed.org. October 2022. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/education/money-in-colonial-times>.

More Diggin's

- **Elisha Winn Fair RESCHEDULED:** Because of predictions of strong wind and rain, the Elisha Winn Fair has been rescheduled for October 8 and 9 from 10AM to 5PM each day. The Winn House and all buildings will be open for guided tours. There will be food vendors, craft vendors, period demonstrations, a period garden, blacksmith demonstrations, and live music. The cost is \$5 for everyone over 12.
- **History After Hours at the Atlanta History Center:** Explore the haunted mansion, the Swan House of Horrors, at the Atlanta History Center on Thursday, October 20 beginning at 7PM. Grab a signature cocktail and head out onto the dance floor. There will be a costume contest, fortune teller, some light bites, and other frightening surprises. For more information or tickets visit the [Atlanta History Center Web Site](#).
- **Ghost Tours of Lawrenceville:** Storytellers will take you on a stroll around downtown Lawrenceville telling you tales based on local legends or stories handed down through the years. The 90-minute tour will take you to some of Lawrenceville's most interesting places, and stories behind some of Lawrenceville's most bizarre events will be told by some ghostly storytellers. For more information or tickets visit the [ghost tour Web site](#).



Defending the Frontier

14th Annual Frontier Faire

Saturday, October 15, 2022

Rain Date: Saturday October 22, 2022

10AM–4PM

Fort Daniel Historic Site

(2505 Braselton Highway/GA 124, Buford)

FREE Admission

★ **Public Archaeology**

★ **Fort Daniel Museum**

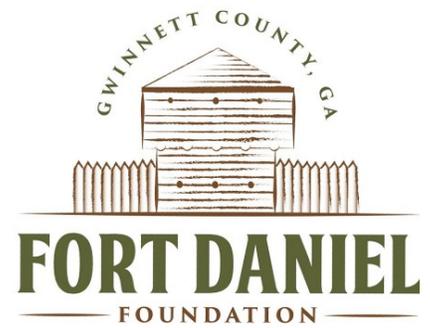
★ **Frontier Demonstrations**

★ **Historic Interpretations**

★ **Public Archaeology**

For information visit Fort Daniel Foundation's Web site: fortdaniel.com

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Archaeological Preservation at George Washington Birthplace

Throughout the summer, a centuries old brick foundation known as “Building X” has been focus of research and conversations with park visitors at George Washington Birthplace National Monument. New South Associates, Inc. conducted a limited excavation to gain additional information before it is reburied.

New South Associates conducted archaeological excavations at the historic site located in Colonial Beach, Virginia trying to figure out what the Building X really is. It was first thought to be the location of Washington’s birth home. The National Park Service had it excavated



in the 1930s, and these investigations revealed a complex structure consisting of four to five rooms. The site location was home to the Popes Creek Plantation and is considered to be the ancestral home of the Washington family.

However, scholars believe that Building X might represent out-buildings with cellars overlapping.

The people at New South’s main goal was to expose and record the foundations that would be examined by

people familiar with the region’s colonial architecture—hoping to finally solve the mystery of Building X. ■ **DMG**

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