



The part of the world known as America was named after Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian who explored and mapped the New World's North Atlantic coast on on behalf of Spain.

Amerigo's nephew, Juan, was also important in America's colonial history. Thank goodness, though, his career did not surpass in preeminence that of his uncle, or our dear nation could have been called the United States of Juan. We would be called Juanians or something of the sort. Kind of sends shivers down your spine to think of what strangeness there might have been if our nation had been saddled with a less distinctive name.

Juan inherited his Uncle Amerigo's maps, and continued his familial mission of documenting, with pen and ink, the gradually resolving puzzle of the New World's coastline.

In one of Juan's more famous maps, created in 1526, the part of the world that is now the American South is called Nueva Tierra de Ayllon. The name comes from Lucas de Ayllon, to whom Spain had granted the rights to explore and colonize the mainland northwest of Hispaniola.

As related in previous columns, Ayllon's attempt to colonize his fabulous new territory was a miserable failure. His expedition lost its food and supplies in a shipwreck near Winyah Bay, so in the following months many Spaniards starved. Some, including Ayllon, died from disease.

After Ayllon died, San Miguel de Guadalpe went bust. The remaining Spaniards sailed home, leaving behind the hundred or so Africans who had been brought to labor in the New World.

The Spaniards left behind a few artifacts, some of which were passed along to inland tribes. We know this because the items were later found by the next wave of Spanish explorers, who expressed their surprise at discovering objects of Spanish manufacture in the distant native villages.

All in all, the most constructive and memorable thing the colonists of San Miguel did was build a boat at Winyah Bay. This vessel, called La Gavarra, was a replacement for the one that was lost. It's probably one of the first boats built by Europeans on these shores. Not all that exciting, really, but compared to the decades of barren narrative that followed, it was a definite highlight in our 16th century history.

Between 1526 and 1562, nothing very interesting happened in the Lowcountry. Or if it did, it wasn't recorded. So in terms of heroic and tragic stories of colonization and conquest, these years represented a dry spell. Spain seemed to have simply lost interest in the Lowcountry.

I won't be fleshing out this part of the story any time soon. From what I can tell, Ayllon's heirs were either lazy or broke or both. Whatever the case, they squandered their inheritance by failing to seize the opportunity that was passed down to them.

As for Spain, it had bigger fish to fry in Europe. And Spaniards in the Americas kept busy mining gold and silver in territories far, far south of Tierra de Ayllon.

After some more reading and ruminating, I'll come back to the history of this time and place. Until then, here's news about local happenings.

GROWING POWER: THE AFRICAN VILLAGE. The people of Oyotunji are reaching out to the larger Lowcountry community. They joined the Chamber of Commerce a couple of years ago, and recently held a wine & cheese reception hosted by HRM Oba Adefunmi II. He previewed a film he has been working on, *The Power of Growing*. The film's theme -- that Americans have become disconnected from the source of our sustenance -- is one that resonates with many in these Eat Pray Love/Animal Vegetable Miracle/Slow Food/Pollan-Palooza times we live in. Oyotunji is in the process of becoming a regional training facility for Growing Power, an increasingly visible and vibrant program for connecting today's youth to the mysteries, miseries and mission-driven satisfaction of farming your own food. In case you've missed it, youth

farming is kind of like the modern-day equivalent of having a paper route: it's character building, it helps bring in income, and, in one of life's great ironies, it fosters self-reliance while at the same time cultivating a sense of commitment to the greater community.

GROWING MORE: DAUFUSKIE ISLAND COMMUNITY FARM'S AUTUMN FEST. The folks on Daufuskie Island are also fans of Growing Power. They don't have a formal GP farming program yet, but they definitely are getting into the spirit of things. They've built their own saw mill, and using wood from that, they have already constructed pretty little poultry houses and a goat barn. Future projects include hoop houses for co-cultivating greens and and tilapia. You can support Daufuskie Farm on November 6 by attending Autumn Fest, 11 am-4 pm at Freeport Marina. It's a family event offering local island foods, prizes, contests, games, music, dancing, arts and crafts. And half the fun is getting there! For Hilton Head Island boat reservations call (843) 342-8687. For Savannah boat reservations call (843) 341-4870.

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