

Historic St. Augustine museum open extended hours prior to closing for renovation, new exhibit

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- The Museum of History and Archaeology at the Government House in historic downtown St. Augustine will close July 23 for renovations and a new exhibit to open late next year.

“First Colony: Our Spanish Origins” will present the story of the founding of St. Augustine, its nature as a military and civilian community, its multicultural character and its importance to American history. The museum, which opened in 1991, will be open extended hours July 1-22 so the public can look at the current exhibit one last time.

The new exhibit was created based on scholarly research by the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, and is being developed under grants from the Bureau of Historic Preservation, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State.

The exhibit will be vital to the visitor experience and understanding of the unique Hispanic aspect of American history that is often unrecognized but will be celebrated as part of the City of St. Augustine’s 450th Anniversary in 2015. The exhibit will open at Government House in fall 2013 and remain during the 450th celebration. It will then become available for nationwide touring to spread the story of St. Augustine and our national origins to a broader audience.

Also funded by grants from the Florida Division of Historical Resources, the ground floor of Government House will be rehabilitated with upgrades to the museum, lobby and public restrooms. The construction work will restore some historic elements, particularly in the grand lobby, while also modernizing and slightly enlarging the exhibit space and adding a gift shop. The rehabilitation design was preceded by extensive research into the building’s history and architecture, which will be interpreted in new lobby display

cases. The construction work is expected to begin in September and conclude by June 2013.

Prior to the museum closing, the current exhibit will be open for extended hours, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. seven days per week July 1-22. A small preview exhibit, showcasing the themes and content of the upcoming "First Colony" exhibit will be installed in the Government House lobby on July 9 for public viewing. The Government House is located at 48 King St.

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