

Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1549–1625), *Description del Destricto del Audiencia de la Española* from his *Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*

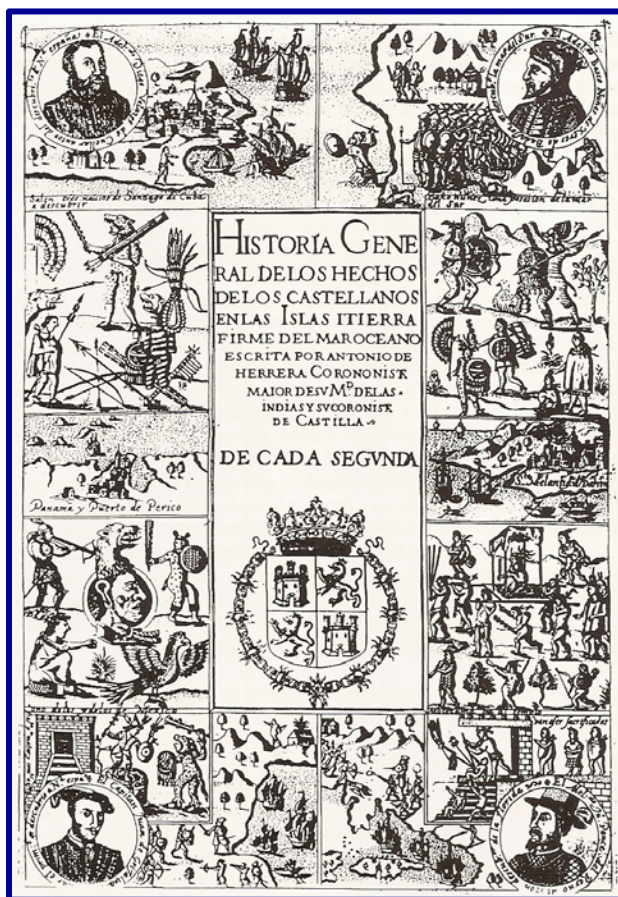
Interesting History

Shhh...

As the crown appointee, Herrera had access to highly valued first-hand accounts that Spanish explorers delivered to their king when they returned to the homeland. These journals and charts were guarded in Council chambers as secrets to keep the information from other countries. The Spanish king did not want the Kings of France and England to know the locations or details of his conquests. Information was leaked to other European powers only after pirates captured Spanish ships and looted their charts and manuscripts.

Herrera and Ponce de Leon

This account of Ponce de Leon is included in Herrera's four-volume chronicle of Spanish conquistadors.



Title page of *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano que llaman Indias Occidentales*, known as *Décadas*, 1601-1615

'Juan Ponce de Leon, finding himself without office..., and seeing himself rich, determined to do something by which to gain honor and increase his estate; and as he had news that there were lands to the northward, he resolved to go to explore toward that part; for which he armed three vessels, well provided with food, men and mariners, which for the purpose of discovery are most necessary..

They ran along beside the coast-seeking harbor, and at night anchored near the land in eight fathoms of water. And believing that this land was an island, they named it La Florida, because it had a very beautiful view of many and cool woodlands, and it was level and uniform; and because, moreover, they discovered it in the time of the Feast of Flowers [Pascua Florida]

Here Juan Ponce went ashore, called by the Indians, who immediately tried to take the boat, the oars, and the arms. In order not to break with them it was permitted them, in order not to cause trouble in the land. But, because they struck a seaman in the head with a stick, from which he remained unconscious, they had to fight with them.'

Early Visions of Florida

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