

Lesson Plans

Homes of Historic St. Augustine (From the Early Period to Statehood)

Prepared by Coni Solomon

Intended Grade: 4th

Subject Areas: Social Sciences

Correlation to National or Florida Sunshine State Standards:

SS.A.1.2.1	SS.B.1.2.1
SS.A.1.2.3	SS.B.2.2.1
SS.A.2.2.3	SS.B.2.2.2
SS.A.6.2.2	SS.D.1.2.1
SS.A.6.2.5	SS.D.1.2.2

Objectives:

1. The student will be able to identify the major characteristics of homes in St. Augustine from the Early Spanish Period, the British Period, and the Second Spanish Period.
2. The student will understand how the physical environment supports and constrains human activities, including the building and maintaining of primary dwellings.
3. The student will use maps and other geographic tools to gather, interpret data and draw conclusions about the physical patterns of each of the basic periods of St. Augustine's early history.

Approximate Time Required: varies by activity

Materials Required: varies by activity

Instructions:

Become familiar with basic forms of housing and architecture in colonial Florida. Here is a brief summary from workshop lecture notes:

Early Spanish Period – 1565-1763

The early homes of St. Augustine were made of natural materials. Wattle and daub, thatch, or timber-construction with the boards running vertically were all methods of making walls. Roofs were thatched using palmetto fronds. Tabby, an early form of concrete, was also used to create walls, floors, and flat roofs. Lime made from burned and powdered oyster

shell, sand, and water was a component for whitewash. These early homes were quite tiny by today's standards. They easily rotted in the Florida climate and had little resistance to fire.

Around 1702 homes began to be built out of a stone called coquina. Coquina was cut from quarries on Anastasia Island, transported across the bay, and cut into slabs and blocks. The Castillo de San Marcos required thousands of blocks of coquina for its construction. Once the fort was finished, the King of Spain allowed others to purchase leftover stone for building homes. These homes were still small, with a 1 to 2 room layout on a simple rectangular plan. There were no chimneys in the Spanish design. Braziers were used for heat. Kitchens sometimes contained stoves, or simple arrangements of fires, tripods, and spits, to cook food. Houses were smoky inside, but this acted as a mosquito repellent. Many of these houses were used by military personnel and were quite spartan.

Homes might have included a walled garden with the entrance at the side of the wall. Within the walls the family typically grew vegetables and citrus. Family privacy seemed to be an important social detail the Spaniards brought with them.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Why did the first settlers use such a simple house plan?
2. Why did they wait until 1672 to build with stone?
3. What were the advantages and disadvantages of having a house built of naturally occurring materials?
4. Why were most of the early settlers military?

British Period – 1763-1784

For a short period of time the British occupied St. Augustine and left their mark on the existing architecture. Almost all of the Spanish settlers left the *ciudad* (town) before the British took full possession of Florida. The new settlers brought ideas that subtly changed the Spanish design. The English added chimneys for cooking and for heating. They also added on rooms or second stories to the homes. Some homes were remodeled with the front door opening onto the street rather than through the side wall of the garden. Homes became more spacious, more tailored to life in colonial Florida. Porches were enlarged. Second floors and wings were becoming common.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Why do you think the houses were built without chimneys?
(Hint: Think about those natural resources!)
2. Spanish houses were traditionally built right up to the street. What do you think those closely spaced houses on narrow streets produced? (Shade)
Do you think this was an accident or was it planned? Why?

3. Would a British family have built a home with the walled house and garden style? Why or why not?

Second Spanish Period – 1784-1821

During this time there was a large influx of people from different countries into St. Augustine. The *ciudad* had more trade. It was less of an outpost on the far reaches of the Spanish influence and more of a true town. The better homes were made of coquina as it was durable and fire resistant. Many homes had a second floor reached by a stairway from the loggia (covered porch) and they had a small balcony on the street side. Roofs were typically covered in cypress shingles. Within town, there were several neighborhoods.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. How would St. Augustine be different in the Second Spanish Period compared to the Early Spanish Period?
2. Why do you think the Spanish residents kept the walled house and garden style? (safety, social customs, aesthetics)
3. What types of additions or changes do you think were made to make the houses more livable?

Activities:

1. Create a vocabulary book in the shape of the simple house style.
Students could draw the thatching on or actually glue on small pieces of palmetto frond. On each page have students write the word and its definition.
When appropriate, have students draw or illustrate the word (i.e. draw the wattle and daub weaving pattern)

Possible Vocabulary

- Castillo
- Ciudad
- Coquina
- Garrison
- Praesidio
- Tabby
- Thatch
- Quarry
- Wattle and daub

2. Students create a period-style plan of a common house, an added on house, and a British influenced house.
Be sure one plan includes the walled garden style. Then, using everyday materials (milk cartons, palm fronds, etc.), students re-create a 3-D version of one plan.
3. After creating the typical house styles, students could, using old maps of St. Augustine, re-create a typical street scene. Include the city gate and the fort.

4. Most basic lots in St. Augustine were 50 x 100 varas (*Spanish feet*). A Spanish foot at that time equaled 11 English inches. Have students calculate the area and perimeter of a basic lot in Spanish feet and English feet. They could also do the area and perimeter of their newly designed home.
5. Social Aspects of the Home Match the family to the house plan they most likely would have had:
 - *Family A:* A British soldier, his wife and their three children arrive in St. Augustine. They are moderately well off as the soldier also works for a local merchant when not on duty to supplement his income.
 - *Family B:* A farmer, his wife and two children, who hoped to prosper selling crops to the governor move in to Florida. Since their arrival from Spain, his crops have not fared well. If he is lucky, he will again bring in only about 40% of his crop to sell.
 - *Family C:* A Spaniard who has just arrived has a fancy title from the king and has been granted a large plot of land just to the west of the main plaza. The king has also sent him with financial backing to get his cattle ranch started.
 - *Family D:* A cooper and his wife have just arrived from Cuba. They have no children and he is an expert in his trade. He expects to do quite well in St. Augustine, just as he has done for the last 20 years in Cuba. He has a few extra tools that he might barter or sell.

Sources:

- Gordon, Elsbeth K. *Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage*. (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2002). Chapter 3, "The Darkened Age of Wood" pp. 56-77
- Manucy, Albert. *The Houses of St. Augustine*. (St. Augustine Historical Society, 1962).
 - "A History of Housing" pp.14-27;
 - "Design and Materials" pp. 48-61
- Historical Archaeology at the Florida Museum of Natural History
<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/HISTARCH/STAUGUSTINE.HTM>
- General Sites About St. Augustine
 - <http://www.historicstaugustine.com/>
 - <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/staugustine/intro.htm>