

**News Release: Immediate**  
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**Contact:** Anne Chesky Smith  
[director@wnchistory.org](mailto:director@wnchistory.org), 828/253-9231

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**WNC HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION HOSTS EXHIBIT OPENING FOR  
*UNEARTHING OUR FORGOTTEN PAST ON AUGUST 18***

“Unearthing Our Forgotten Past: Fort San Juan” is now on display in the Western North Carolina Historical Association galleries at the Smith-McDowell House in Asheville. **The Association will celebrate the official opening of this excellent traveling exhibit on Wednesday, August 18 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm with live music, refreshments, and games on the front lawn. The event is free and open to the public.** The Association is also celebrating several newly completed renovations on the historic home that serves as their facility including a new copper standing seam roof and new exterior paint.

The exhibit was developed by the Exploring Joara Foundation as part of the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Juan Pardo expeditions through Western North Carolina.

Several decades ago, archaeologists identified a site near Morganton as the location of Joara, one of the largest Native American towns in what is today Western North Carolina. Joara was occupied from approximately 1400-1600 A.D. Two Spanish expeditions (led respectively by Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo) visited the town in the 1500s. The Pardo expedition was part of a larger effort to establish a string of forts from the coast of present-day South Carolina to Mexico.

In 2013, archaeologists confirmed that Joara was also the site of Fort San Juan, which was established by Pardo in 1567, nearly 20 years before the English settlement at Roanoke on the coast of North Carolina and 40 years before the settlement at Jamestown.

Through various artifacts uncovered by the archaeologists, the exhibit showcases the Spanish occupation of Fort San Juan and the lives of the native people who lived in the Joara area.

The [Exploring Joara Foundation Inc.](#) engages the public in archaeology in the Carolinas, and emphasizes the discovery of the Native American town of Joara and Fort San Juan.

The exhibit will be on display at the Smith-McDowell House through December. The gallery is open 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday – Saturday. Reservations are recommended. The Smith-McDowell House is located at 283 Victoria Road in Asheville beside the A-B Tech campus.

For more information on the August 18th event or to RSVP, visit [www.wnchistory.org/events](http://www.wnchistory.org/events)

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Image: “Unearthing Our Forgotten Past” exhibit at the Smith-McDowell House in Asheville; Credit WNC Historical Association

