

Brief Note

Conquistadors at Saltville: An Interim Update*

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It has been five years since I published in *The Smithfield Review* the story of the conquistadors attacking American Indians in Southwest Virginia, probably at Saltville, in 1567.¹ The story derived from a review of archival Spanish records (in multiple English translations) and of ongoing archeological investigations near present-day Morganton, North Carolina. It was from there a party of Spaniards and their Indian allies led by Hernando Moyano departed northward for Virginia on a foray to attack a people called the Chiscas. It was a combination of the evidence of the archival documents and the results of the archeological investigations that made (and makes) the story compelling.

This note tells that the story has begun to receive attention; it tells of two additional archival sources found subsequently; it mentions, but does not document, subsequent developments; it records several errata in the 2004 article in the endnote²; and, it correctly reprints the overview map from that article which was garbled in the printing process (Figure 1).

Since 2004, the story of the conquistadors being in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee (a region I call Holstonia) in the sixteenth century, forty years before the settlement of Jamestown, has been recounted in a text book,³ in work of local history,⁴ in a light-hearted book about the Melungeons,⁵ and in a popular archeology magazine.⁶ The story has even been told in Spanish translation in a newspaper article⁷ and in a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*.⁸ These citations demonstrate that while the Spanish attack on six-

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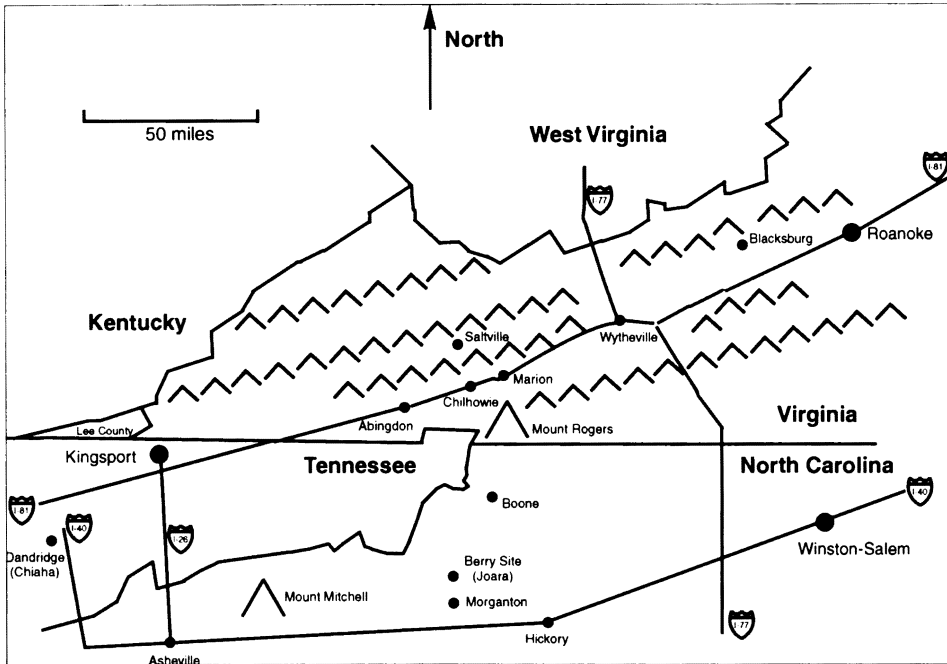


Figure 1. Corrected sketch map locating the principal places mentioned in the 2004 article.

teenth-century American Indians in Southwest Virginia has hardly yet achieved the status of common knowledge, the story is becoming increasingly well-known and accepted. To my knowledge, the veracity of the basic story has nowhere been challenged.

On the archival side, no new recent evidence has been forthcoming; however, I have discovered two previously unrecognized articles.⁹ The first of these is yet another set of Pardo-related translations. The second is an important record of additional testimony given by Luisa Menendez, the Indian woman from Saltville, and her husband in Saint Augustine in 1602.

On the archeological side, a major report on the Berry site has appeared, 30-year-old, amateur-excavated artifacts from Northeast Tennessee in private collections have been studied, and my own investigations (published and unpublished) of regional artifacts now held in private collections have yielded photographs of many additional specimens of shell gorgets and stone platform pipes.