

PLAZA DeLUNA
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Plaza de Luna, located at the south end of Palafox Pier, is named for Don Tristan de Luna, the leader of a Spanish expedition that landed in this region of La Florida in August 1559 to establish a permanent colony. However, in September 1559, a hurricane struck the area, sinking the expedition's ship. Though most of the expedition's supplies were still onboard the ships, the colony remained for two years despite the hardships. Though not permanent, this expedition was the largest colonization attempt by any European nation in the United States.

During the time of the de Luna Expedition, the natural shoreline of Pensacola Bay ran along what is now Main Street and Bayfront Parkway. While two of de Luna's ships have been located through underwater archaeology conducted by the University of West Florida, the fate of

other ships is unknown. During the late 1800's, Pensacola developed a working waterfront that extended from Bayou Chico to Bayou Texar. The ships that were found are located to the east of this working waterfront. As this waterfront was expanded and permanent piers and wharves were extended hundreds of feet into Pensacola Bay, other underwater archaeological sites may have been lost forever under timbers, ballast and other fill materials.

Plaza de Luna, and to a greater extent Palafox Pier, shows how the natural shorelines of urban areas have been hardened. In addition to the concrete bulkheads used here, other types of shoreline hardening along Pensacola Bay include wooden bulk heads and rip-rap. Rip-rap, like that found along Bayfront Parkway, are large stones or boulders used to prevent erosion. Project GreenShores is an example of how an urban waterfront can be "softened" and returned to a more natural state.



Prior to the construction of Plaza de Luna, this site was occupied by the Pensacola Municipal Auditorium. Dedicated in 1955, the auditorium hosted performers such as Elvis Presley, Patsy Cline and Jerry Lee Lewis during its early years. With the acquisition and restoration of the Saenger Theater by

the City of Pensacola and the construction of the Pensacola Civic Center in the 1980's, the Pensacola Municipal Auditorium became a secondary venue for entertainers and was relegated to other civic activities. After receiving extensive damage from Hurricane Ivan in 2004, the auditorium was demolished in 2005.

Plaza de Luna is designed to be a location where people have access to the waterfront along Pensacola Bay. It is an excellent location for fishing, bird watching, sharing a meal, having a wedding, watching the sun set, or in this case, geocaching.

