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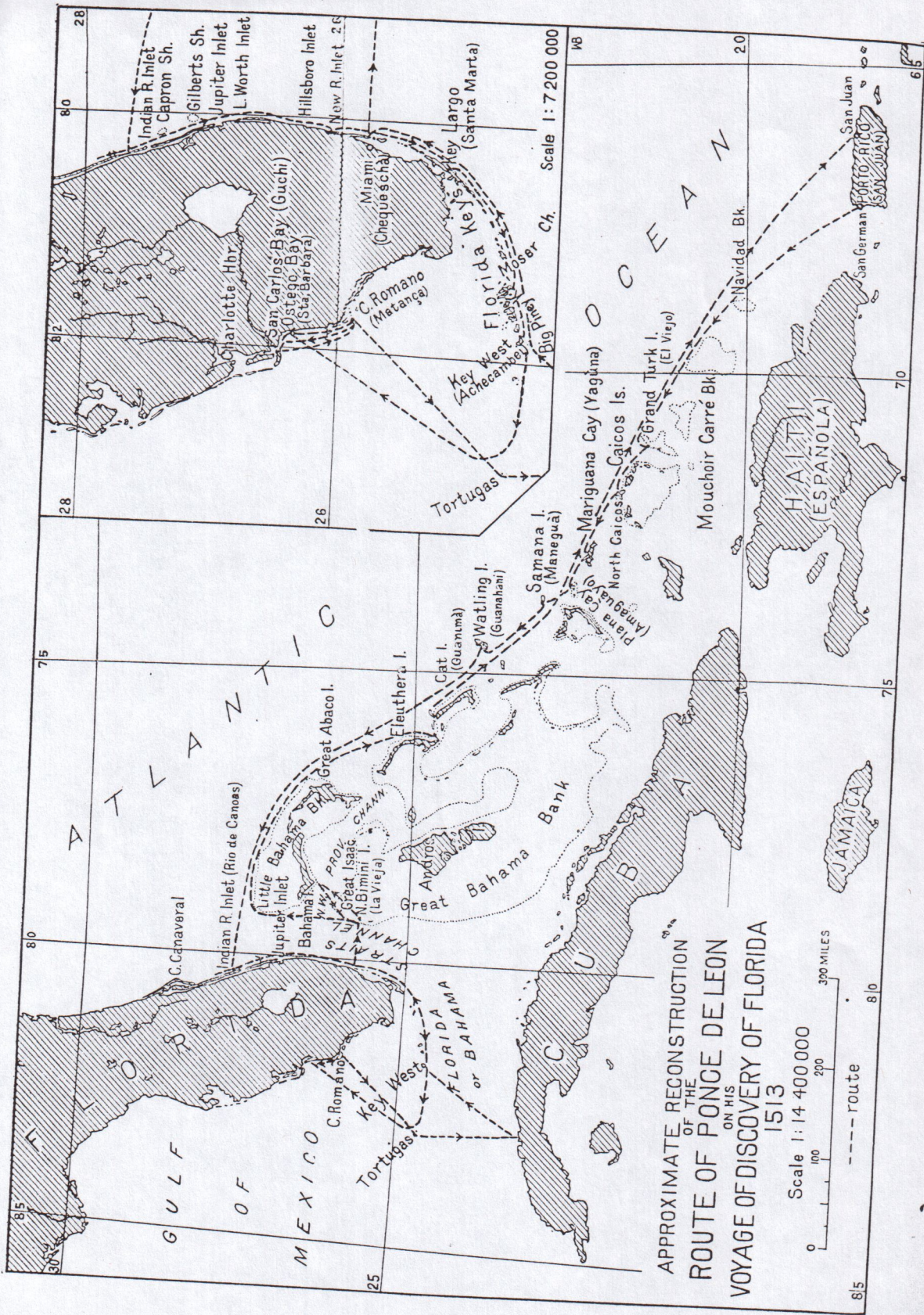
THE TRACK OF PONCE DE LEON IN 1513

By L. D. SCISCO, Ph.D.

(Map on p. 722)

The story of Ponce de Leon's discovery of Florida in 1513, just four centuries ago, rests essentially upon a single text, the paraphrase of that explorer's relation, made by the historian Herrera and forming two chapters of his *Historia General*. The original relation is not known to be existent. That the charts of Ponce de Leon reached Spain and were used in the construction of other maps is evidenced by the cartographic appearance of Florida soon after his discovery, but Herrera seems to have had no knowledge of these charts, nor do well-known type maps like that of Ribero show clearly any first-hand acquaintance with the geographic records of Ponce de Leon. It is with some satisfaction, therefore, that one may direct attention to the less known Freducci map, of which Casanova published in 1894 a photographic reproduction and accompanying monograph,¹ for in the Florida of the Freducci map appear nomenclature and geographic outlines that unmistakably derive from the charts of Ponce de Leon. The Freducci map is of Italian construction, having been made at Ancona by Conte Ottomanno Freducci. It is now without date, but Casanova fixes its time as 1514 or 1515. Its representation of Spanish American regions, drawn from Spanish sources, presents nomenclature only slightly touched by Italian influence. So soon was this map made

¹ *Carta Nautica di Conte di Ottomanno Freducci*, in *Publicaciones del R. Istituto di Studi Superiori*, Florence, 1894. For ordinary reference to the chart Mr. Harrisse's tracing in *Découverte et Évolution Cartographique de Terre Neuve*, p. 81, will be sufficient. A later map by Freducci, reproduced in Kretschmer's atlas, copies the Florida of his early map, but so conventionalizes the outlines that their historical significance is destroyed.



APPROXIMATE RECONSTRUCTION
 OF THE
 ROUTE OF PONCE DE LEON
 ON HIS
 VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY OF FLORIDA
 1513

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after the Florida discovery of 1513 that there had not been time for any considerable recopying of Ponce de Leon's records. The Freducci Florida must have derived almost directly from the explorer's charts, and it may, consequently, be ranked as a source document supplementing the text of Herrera.

It is true that Herrera presents with his history a map showing the region of the West Indies and Florida, but that map has no relation to the historian's text concerning Ponce de Leon. It is a derivative map, showing outlines that have degenerated from their original sources through repeated copyings. As a source document it is without value as regards Florida discovery. The Freducci map, on the other hand, by preserving the data of Ponce de Leon, makes it possible to interpret the text of Herrera as it here follows in terms of the modern map and to give his narrative a preciseness of meaning not otherwise possible.

"Juan Ponce de Leon finding himself without office, through Juan Ceron and Miguel Diaz having been restored to those of the island of San Juan, and seeing himself rich, determined to do something with which to gain honor and increase estate; and as he had news that lands were found to the northward he resolved to go to explore toward that part; for which he equipped three vessels, well supplied with provisions, people, and seamen, which for the purpose of exploring are most necessary."

"He sailed from the island on Thursday, in the afternoon, on the 3rd of March, setting out from the harbor of San German. He went to Aguada, in order to take from there his course. The night following he sailed to sea, to northwest a quarter by north, and the vessels proceeded eight leagues of a day's run, until the sun rose. They went on sailing until on Tuesday, the 8th of the said month, they came to anchor at the banks of Babuega, at an island that they call El Viejo, which is in twenty-two and one-half degrees. Next day they anchored in an islet of the Lucayos called Caycòs. Presently they anchored in another called La Yagùna, in twenty-four degrees. On the 11th of the same month they reached another island called Amaguàyo, and there they were at stop for repairs. They passed on to the island called Maneguà, which is in twenty-four and one-half degrees. On the 14th they reached Guanahani, which is in twenty-five degrees and forty minutes, where they prepared one vessel for crossing the weatherward gulf of the islands of the Lucayos. This island Guanahani was the first that the admiral Don Christoval Colon discovered, and where, in his first voyage, he went on land and named it San Salvador. They set out

² Ponce de Leon also obtained a royal patent authorizing him to discover, possess and colonize the island of Biminy. The text of this patent is in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos*, XXII: 26. A translation will be found in the *American Catholic Historical Society Records* for Dec., 1912.

from here, running northwest, and on Sunday, the 27th, which was the day of the Festival of the Resurrection, which commonly they call 'of Flowers,' they saw an island and did not examine it. And Monday, the 28th, they ran fifteen leagues by the same direction, and Wednesday they proceeded in the same way, and afterward, with bad weather, until, the 2nd of April, running to west-northwest, the water lessening to nine fathoms at one league from land, which was in thirty degrees and eight minutes, they ran along the length of coast seeking harbor and at night they anchored near the land in eight fathoms of water.''

The region of the eastern Bahamas had found its way into Spanish maps before Ponce de Leon's voyage, with a varied nomenclature. Freducci's sources for this locality bore names differing from those in Herrera's relation, but in other maps than Freducci's may be found the names used by Ponce de Leon. The term 'baxos de Babueça' in the earlier years was applied to the series of shoals extending from Grand Turk Island easterly to Navidad Bank. In later years the term became restricted to the Mouchoir Carré Bank and finally became disused.³ El Viejo, Old Man, of Ponce de Leon's voyage, was Grand Turk, the only island on these banks suitable for anchorage. Maps of later times now and then applied the name to one of the small islets lying south from Grand Turk. In early maps the modern Caicos group is easily recognizable by its quadruplet of islands lying in chain. Which one of this group was the Caycòs of Ponce de Leon it would be somewhat rash to say, but the Ribero map and some others seem to attach the name more especially to the modern North Caicos. The next islands reached by the explorers, La Yagùna and Amaguàyo, will be sought in vain in the more familiar Spanish maps of the time. These names went out of use among Spaniards very early. The Silviati map, however, seems to identify them as Mariguana and Plana Cays respectively. The next island, Maneguà, is easily traced. Even Freducci carries its name. It is modern Samana. The island Guanahani, made famous by Columbus, is identified with Watling Island by modern students of the Columbian voyages, and the evidence of early Spanish maps bears out the conclusion. Later maps sometimes transferred the name to Cat Island. The foregoing identifications show that Ponce de Leon skirted the eastern side of the Bahamas. From Watling Island he bore northwesterly, seeing Eleuthera or Great Abaco in the distance, rounded the Little Bahama Bank, and striking almost directly west into unknown waters, found the Florida coast.

³ W. H. Tillinghast gives data on the cartography of Mouchoir Carré Bank in *Harv. Univ. Lib. Bibliog. Contrib. No. 14.*

Herrera says the landfall in Florida was at latitude $30^{\circ} 8'$. On turning back in Herrera's text it will be noted that El Viejo is given latitude $22^{\circ} 30'$ and Guanahani latitude $25^{\circ} 40'$. The true latitudes of these islands are otherwise on modern charts, however. The center of Grand Turk is at $21^{\circ} 28'$ and that of Watling at $24^{\circ} 2'$. Seemingly the record of latitudes made by Ponce de Leon gave him an excess reading of about one degree in latitude $21^{\circ} 30'$ and an excess of about $1^{\circ} 40'$ in latitude 24° . Assuming that his error increased toward the north in regular ratio,⁴ it becomes possible to construct a tentative scale of corrected latitudes wherewith to check the ten statements of latitude that Herrera offers. By this scale Grand Turk assumes its true position at $21^{\circ} 28'$, Plana Cays take a tentative location of $22^{\circ} 41'$ as against true latitude $22^{\circ} 36'$, Samana takes the tentative location of $23^{\circ} 5'$, which is also true latitude, Watling assumes its true position of $24^{\circ} 2'$, and the Florida landfall takes tentative latitude $27^{\circ} 40'$, a little north of Indian River Inlet. This must be approximately correct. The modern map shows that a vessel skirting Little Bahama Bank as did Ponce de Leon would reach the continent about here. The Freducci map, though showing no indicated latitudes, exhibits a coast which corresponds to that of the real Florida if the latter be terminated at about the latitude stated. The tentative scale, the implications of Herrera and the outlines of Freducci are in harmony on this point.

“And thinking that this land was an island they named it La Florida, because it had a very pretty view of many and cool woodlands, and it was level and uniform: and because, moreover, they discovered it in the time of the Flowery Festival [*Pascua Florida*] Juan Ponce wished to conform in the name with these two facts. He went on land to take information and possession. On Friday, the 8th, they made sail; they ran in the same direction, and Saturday they sailed to the south a quarter by southeast; and sailing by the same rhumb up to the 20th of April they discovered some huts of Indians, where they anchored. And the day following, all three vessels proceeding along the edge of the sea, they saw a current such that, although they had a great wind, they could not proceed forward, but backward, and it seemed that they were proceeding well; and in the end it was known that it was in such wise the current which was more powerful than the wind. The two vessels that found themselves nearest land anchored, but the current was so

⁴ The journals of the Cabrillo-Ferreló exploration of the Pacific Coast in 1542 show a parallel instance of stated latitudes in excess of true latitude, the excess element of which increased as the explorers moved from south to north. Prof. George Davidson tabulates an analysis of these latitude records in his *An Examination of the Early Voyages of Discovery and Exploration on the Northwest Coast of America, from 1539 to 1603*, Appendix No. 7 to the Report of the Superintendent of the Coast and Geodetic Survey for 1886, pages 244-247.

great that the cables went tight, and the third vessel, which was a brigantine, that found itself more to sea, must have not found bottom, or did not know of the current, and it drew it away from land, and they lost it from sight, the day being clear and with fair weather.

“Here Juan Ponce went on land, called by the Indians, who presently tried to take the boat, the oars, and the arms. And in order not to break with them it was permitted them, in order not to cause irritation in the region. But, because they struck a seaman in the head with a staff, from which he remained unconscious, it was necessary to fight with them, who, with their arrows and armed shafts—the points of sharpened bones and fish-spines—hit two Spaniards, and the Indians received little hurt. And the night separating them, Juan Ponce regathered the Spaniards with hard work. He set out from there to a stream where he took water and firewood, and stayed awaiting the brigantine. Sixty Indians repaired there to hinder it. One of them was taken for a pilot, and so that he might learn the language. He put on this stream the name of La Cruz, and he left by it one [*i.e. a cross*] hewn from stone, with an inscription. And they did not finish taking water, because of being brackish.

“On Sunday, the 8th of May, they doubled the cape of La Florida, which they named Cabo de Corrientes, because the water ran so much there that it had more force than the wind, and did not permit the vessels to go forward, although they put out all sails. They anchored behind a cape close to a village called Abaiò. All this coast, from Punta de Arracifes as far as this Cabo de Corrientes extends north and south a quarter by southeast, and it is quite clear and of depth of six fathoms; and the cape is in twenty-eight degrees and fifteen minutes.”

Herrera seems to imply that the explorers moved northward from their landfall on April 2, and again on April 8. They could not have gone far in that time, and moreover the Freducci map gives no hint of their observing the outward trend of coast that culminates in Cape Canaveral. Turning their prows southerly they soon found Indian River Inlet, true latitude $27^{\circ} 30'$, which they marked on their chart as Rio de Canoas, River of Canoas.⁵ As they moved onward they noted from time to time slight changes in coastal trend which they indicated by cape-like points on their charted coast line. The first of these was distinguished by an outlying shoal which may have been Capron Shoal. The second had no descriptive mark. The third, which they named Punta de Arracifes, Point of Reefs, was distinguished by a mass of outlying shoals. It was probably the

⁵ The word “rio” as used by Spanish mariners was applied not only to running streams, but also to tidal inlets and to small coastal sounds.

locality of Gilbert Shoals. Somewhere about here seems to have been their anchorage of April 20 near Indian huts.

Still advancing they fell into that current which so roused their astonishment by forcing them to unintended anchorage. Apparently they were now a few miles north of Jupiter Inlet. Too near land to feel the Gulf Stream, they must have met the tidal current that sometimes attains considerable force at that part of the coast. While they waited for the current to abate they visited the aborigines with the results that Herrera tells. At the next inlet that invited them they entered to await the consort vessel's return. This place they called Rio de la Cruz, River of the Cross. The chart record of its cruciform shape identifies it beyond question as Jupiter Inlet, true latitude $26^{\circ} 56'$. No other inlet on the coast has the three branching streams at its head.

Still moving southward the explorers charted an inlet in position corresponding to the northern end of Lake Worth. Modern charts show a swamp at this point but no inlet. Possibly the swamp at high tide may have seemed an inlet: possibly an inlet really existed at the time. Soon the Spaniards rounded the point at Lake Worth Inlet in the face of another tidal flow and dropped anchor at an Indian town called Abaida by Herrera, Abacoa by Freducci. At Lake Worth Inlet there is a notable change in the trend of the peninsular coast line. The smooth convex curve of shore revealed by the modern atlas shows nothing that to-day would be called a cape, but to the old-time mariners, running by compass, the change of coastal trend was very noticeable and very important. Maps made before the days of official surveys indicate here an elbow of cape-like character. That Herrera indicates the locality at Lake Worth Inlet is shown by his reference to the trend of coast from Punta de Arracifes to this place. Freducci's coast line and his reference to Abacoa confirm the identity of the place. It is not clear, however, why Herrera's source should give the place the name Cabo de Corrientes, Cape of Currents, while Freducci's source should call it Cabo de Setos, Cape of Pales.

Herrera assigns to Cabo de Corrientes the stated latitude $28^{\circ} 15'$, a position which so nearly agrees with the true latitude of Cape Canaveral that it has caused the latter to be identified frequently with Cabo de Corrientes. The stated latitude corresponds to tentative latitude $26^{\circ} 7'$, but this harmonizes as little with the descriptive statements of the text as does Cape Canaveral. In this instance there is probably a textual error. The true latitude of Lake Worth Inlet is $26^{\circ} 7'$. Had Herrera said $29^{\circ} 15'$ the correspond-

ing tentative latitude would be very close to the true latitude of the inlet.

“They sailed on until they found two islands to the south in twenty-seven degrees. To one that had a league of extent they put the name Santa Marta. They reached water in it. On Friday, the 13th of May, they made sail, running along the coast of a sand-bank and reef of islands as far as the vicinity of an island that they named Pola, which is in twenty-six and one-half degrees, and between the shoal and the reef of islands, and the mainland extends to the open sea in the form of a bay. On Sunday, the day of the Festival of the Holy Spirit, the 15th of May, they ran along the coast of rocky islets ten leagues, as far as two white rocky islets. And to all this line of islands and rocky islets they put as a name Los Martires because, seen from a distance, the rocks as they raised to view appeared like men that were suffering. And the name has fitted, moreover, because of the many that in them have been lost since. They are in twenty-six degrees and fifteen minutes.”

From Lake Worth Inlet continuing southward the explorers passed Hillsboro Inlet and New River Inlet, both of which they marked on their chart and the latter of which they seem to have entered, for it was named by them Rio Salado, Salty River. Farther on they found a place called Chequeschà, as Herrera has it, or Chequiche, as says Freducci. The northward pointing bay indicated by Freducci seems to identify this place with the bay at modern Miami. Advancing to stated latitude 27° , corresponding to tentative latitude $25^{\circ} 7'$, they stopped for water at an island a league in extent, apparently modern Key Largo, which they named Santa Marta.

Their next anchorage as they ran along the Keys was the island Santa Pola, or Santa Paula, whose stated latitude of $26^{\circ} 30'$ corresponds to tentative latitude $24^{\circ} 42'$. The text seems to imply also that this island lay about ten leagues from the extremity of the Keys. Apparently the locality indicated is about where Moser Channel crosses the line of keys in true latitude $24^{\circ} 40'$. Herrera's reference to the mainland is nevertheless puzzling. It is possible that the mass of islands here seemed to the explorers like a part of the Florida mainland and that Herrera's description is meant to fit some one of the larger keys, such, for example, as Big Piney Key. An alternative is to suppose that Herrera's abridgment has obscured a reference to a hasty reconnaissance of Barnes Sound by way of the Moser Channel. The basis for this idea is the appearance in Freducci's map of the name Canbei lying along the north side of the Keys and the name El Nirda lying along the islands that skirt the Florida mainland at Barnes Sound.

The next anchorage seems to have been at or near the extremity of the line of the Keys, at an island named Achecambei. It may have been Key West, for Herrera's stated latitude $26^{\circ} 15'$ corresponds to tentative latitude $24^{\circ} 30'$, and Key West lies in true latitude $24^{\circ} 33'$. The name Los Martires which Ponce de Leon applied to the Keys appears on the Freducci map. From the extremity of the Keys the explorers moved westward far enough to reconnoiter the Tortugas group and then swung their course northerly in deep water.

"They continued sailing, sometimes to the north and other times to northeast, until the 23rd of May, and on the 24th they ran along the coast to the south (not going forth to see that it was mainland) as far as some islets that extended outward in the sea. And because it appeared that there was an entrance between them and the coast for the vessels, in order to take water and firewood they were there until the 3rd of June, and careened one vessel that was called the San Christoval. And at this time Indians in canoes repaired there to reconnoiter the Spaniards the first time. Seeing that although the Indians called them the Spaniards did not go on land, wishing to raise an anchor in order to repair it, they thought that they were going away. They put to sea in their canoes and laid hold of the cable to carry away the vessel; for which the bark went after them and, going upon the land, they took four women and broke up two old canoes. The other times that they repaired there they did not come to a rupture, because they saw no preparations before they traded skins and pieces of guaïn.

"On Friday, the 4th, while awaiting wind for going in search of the chief Carlos, as the Indians of the vessels said that he had gold, a canoe came to the boats; and an Indian who understood the Spaniards, who, it was believed, must be from Española or from another island of those inhabited by Spaniards, said that they should wait, as the chief wished to send gold in order to trade. And while waiting there appeared at least twenty canoes, and some fastened together by twos. Some went to the anchors, others to the vessels, and began to fight from their canoes. And not being able to raise the anchors they wished to cut the cables. An armed bark went to them and made them flee and abandon some canoes. They took five and killed some Indians and four were captured. Two of them Juan Ponce sent to the chief in order that they should tell him that notwithstanding they had killed a Spaniard with two arrow wounds he would make peace with him.

"The following day the bark went to sound a harbor that was there, and the party went on land. Indians repaired there who said that next day the chief would go to trade (but it was deceit). Meanwhile the people and canoes came near, and so it was that on the 11th eighty men behind waist-cloths went upon the vessel that was nearest. They fought from the morning until the night with-

out hurt to the Spaniards, because the arrows did not reach, whilst for the cross-bows and artillery shots they dared not draw near, and in the end the Indians retired. And the Spaniards, after having stayed nine days, on Tuesday, the 14th, resolved to return to Española and to San Juan, with the intention of exploring on the way some islands of which the Indians that they carried gave information. They returned to the island, where they took water, which was named Matança, from the Indians that they killed."

From the Tortugas the Spaniards worked uncertainly toward the northeast until they again saw land. Apparently this landfall revealed no harbor, but a day's run to the southward brought them to the islands at Cape Romano, where they found a refuge. Here occurred the battle with Indians for which they named the place Matança, The Killing. The identity of Matança with Cape Romano is fixed by Freducci, whose inaccurate legend Yglias de Maranca is applied to projecting islands backed by small islets and by a coast line whose trend in either direction resembles that in the modern map. The explorers' landfall, located north of Cape Romano a day's run of eight or ten Spanish leagues yet not far enough north to reveal a harbor, must have been near latitude $26^{\circ} 20'$.

From Cape Romano the explorers removed to another harbor and stayed in it nine days. Its location is not indicated by Herrera. On Freducci's map there appears near the northern extremity of his Florida coast line the names Guchi and Stababa in the relative positions of San Carlos Bay and Ostego Bay. Stababa seems to be an abbreviated form of Santa Barbara, patroness of mariners endangered by storm. Of the name Guchi no explanation is at hand. Herrera's text makes it improbable that these places could have been noticed at the time of the landfall. It is not unreasonable therefore to suppose that the Spaniards, on leaving Cape Romano, moved northward and found harbor at the points indicated, perhaps seeking refuge from storm. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the larger vessels to have found harbor on the shoal-girdled coast lying southward from Cape Romano. San Carlos Bay and Ostego Bay lie at the southern extremity of the line of islands that guards the entrance to Charlotte Harbor, but neither Herrera nor Freducci give any hint that the Spaniards knew of this latter harbor's existence. From their second anchorage, wherever it may have been, the explorers returned to Cape Romano for water and then struck out for the Tortugas, homeward bound.

"On Wednesday they went on the lookout for the eleven rocky

islets that they left at the west. On Thursday and Friday they ran in the same direction until, on Tuesday, the 21st, they reached the rocky islets, which they named Las Tortugas, because in one short time in the night they took, in one of these islands, one hundred and sixty tortoises, and might have taken many more if they had wished. And also they took fourteen seals, and there were killed many pelicans and other birds that amounted to five thousand.

"On Friday, the 24th, they ran to the southwest a quarter west. On Sunday they saw land. On Monday they proceeded along the extent of it in order to examine it, and on Wednesday they took harbor in it and dressed the yards and sails, although they were unable to learn what land it was. The greater part considered it as Cuba, because they found canoes, dogs, cuttings from knives and from iron tools; and not because anyone knew that it was Cuba, but by the argument that to Cuba they had that course, and that it ran east and west like it, except that they found themselves eighteen long leagues off the route for it being Cuba.

"On Friday they went from here in search of Los Martires. On Sunday they reached the island of Achecambei, and passing by Santa Pola and Santa Marta, they reached Chequeschà."

Running from Cape Romano the Spaniards sighted and stopped at the island group that to this day preserves the memory of Ponce de Leon's big catch of turtles. Herrera must surely have blundered, however, if he meant to report a catch of five thousand birds. Running from the Tortugas southerly they reached, as they rightly guessed, the Cuban coast, somewhere near its western end. From thence they guided themselves back to the Florida Keys and retraced their former route along them, noting, as they passed, their former anchorages at the islands that Herrera mentions. At Chequeschà, probably the harbor at modern Miami, in true latitude $25^{\circ} 50'$, they seem to have stopped. Herrera does not say that they crossed the Bahama Channel from this place, but as his next described point is a Bahama islet identifiable with true latitude $25^{\circ} 45'$, it would seem certain that Chequeschà was made their point of departure from the Florida coast.

"They sailed as far as some islets that are in the banks of the Lucayos more to the west, and anchored in them on the 18th of July, where they made supply of water. And they put on them the name La Vieja, from an old Indian woman, without any other person, that they found. And they were in twenty-eight degrees.

"In the beginning there could not be learned by the discoverers the name that La Florida had, seemingly, because, seeing that that point of land projected so much they considered it as an island, and the Indians, as it was mainland, told the name of each province, and the Spaniards thought that they were deceiving them;

but in the end, because of their importunities the Indians said that it was called Cautiò, a name that the Lucayos Indians put upon that land because the people of it carried their private parts covered with palm-leaves woven in the form of a plait.

"On the 25th of July they went from the islets on the lookout for Bimini, sailing among islands that seemed water-swept. And, being done, not knowing by what way to go on with the vessels, Juan Ponce sent the bark to examine an island that he considered as water-swept and found to be that of Bahàma. And thus said the old woman that they carried, and Diego Miruelo, the pilot, whom they met with a bark from Española that was going at its own risk, although others say that by luck they had made port there. They went Saturday, the 6th of August, by the route they had been going, and until finding the deeps they ran to the northwest a quarter west as far as an islet of rocks alone at the edge of the deep. They changed course. They ran by the edge of the bank to the south. They changed this course next day, although Bimini was not in that direction. And for fear of the currents that another time were driving the vessels to the coast of La Florida or Cautiò (as then they were calling it) they took up their return movement for the island of San Juan de Puerto Rico."

On leaving Chequeschà the explorers apparently crossed the Bahama Channel easterly in quest of Bimini, the region granted to Ponce de Leon by royal patent, and for the occupation of which his present expedition had been taken forth. It was supposed by them that Bimini lay somewhere in the western part of the Bahama archipelago. Almost directly across the water from Chequeschà lay two islets marking the edge of the Great Bahama Bank. Herrera's stated latitude of 28° , corresponding to tentative latitude $25^{\circ} 56'$, identifies La Vieja, Old Woman, as modern North Bimini, in true latitude $25^{\circ} 44'-47'$. Its surface, rising forty feet above the ocean, is still a mariner's sea-mark and on occasion a source of water supply. Its modern name of Bimini was attached to it long after the time of Ponce de Leon, however. It is not the Bimini that he was seeking.

From North Bimini the Spaniards apparently moved northerly and somewhat easterly across the outer part of the Great Bahama Bank, noting on their way the tide-swept bars and islets that abound there. Soon they found a large island that they learned to call Bahama. The Bahama of the earlier maps identifies it with the modern island of the name. In their examination of this island they must have discovered the deeper water of the Northwest Providence Channel, for they seem to have followed its course westerly, reaching the lone islet now known as Great Isaac, in true

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The Track of Ponce de Leon in 1513

latitude $26^{\circ} 2'$. From this islet they turned to follow the edge of the Bahama Bank southerly again. At this point Herrera's abridgment becomes most unsatisfactory. How far south they went he does not state. It may be that they ran back to La Vieja for water and wood, but Herrera does not say so. It is clear only that they found the tidal current difficult to cope with, and that, abandoning further effort to cross the banks easterly, they headed northward to skirt the Little Bahama Bank by the route they had used on the outward voyage.

"And having sailed until the 18th of August they found themselves at daybreak two leagues from an island of the Lucayos, and they ran three leagues, as far as the point of this island, where on the 19th they anchored and stayed until the 22nd. From here they were retarded four days in arriving at Guanima, because wind and passage failed them. And they fled back from its coast to the island of Guatào; and by the storms they were kept occupied in it without being able to go from it twenty-seven days, until the 23rd of September. And the bark from the island of Española that had joined itself with them was lost there, although the people were saved.

"Having dressed the vessels, it appearing to Juan Ponce that he had toiled much, he resolved, although against his wish, to send one to examine the island of Bimini; for he wished to do it himself, because of the account that he had of the wealth of this island, and especially of that particular spring, as the Indians said, that restores men from old ones to youths, the which he had not been able to find, by reason of banks and currents and contrary weather. He sent then, as captain of the vessel, Juan Perez de Ortubia, and as pilot, Anton de Alaminos. They carried two Indians for pilots of the banks, because they are so many that with much peril can one proceed because of them.

"And this vessel departed on the 17th of September, and Juan Ponce next day for his voyage. And in twenty-one days he arrived within recognition of San Juan and went to take harbor in the bay of Puerto Rico, where, after having found Bimini although not the spring, the other vessel arrived with an account that it was a large island, cool, and with many water places and woodlands. And discovery by Juan Ponce in La Florida had this ending, without knowledge that it was mainland; nor for some years afterwards was assurance of it had."

Herrera, having left the explorers in the Bahama Channel, next reveals them near the extremity of Guatào island, which the older maps show, by the location and contours assigned to it, to be modern Eleuthera. The name Guatào is called Ciguatao in the earlier maps and corrupted to varying spellings by later copyists. After

some efforts the explorers crossed over to Guaninà, modern Cat Island, but were forced to run back to Eleuthera to get proper refuge from storm. When the storms had passed Ponce de Leon detailed the light-draught vessel to continue the search for Bimini. He himself sailed homeward to Porto Rico, presumably retracing his outward route from Watling Island to Grand Turk and from thence to the harbor of San Juan.

Anton de Alaminos, the responsible officer of the smaller vessel, picked his way into the Bahamas from the eastward and at about the location where Bimini was supposed to be he found Habacoa, modern Andros Island, the water places and woodlands of which were satisfactory, but which offered no spring of recurrent youth. This great island was Bimini, decided Alaminos, and he prepared to bear the tidings to Ponce de Leon at Porto Rico. Before he departed, however, remembering his duties as Ponce de Leon's deputy, he seems to have parleyed with the natives in a sort of formal treaty. Of this the evidence is a passage in the royal *cedula* of July 22, 1517, issued by Charles and Juana to restrain slave trade:

"Juan Ponce de Leon made report to us that he went to explore by command of the catholic king, our lord, father, and grand-father—may he have saintly glory—the islands of Bimini and the island Florida, and that in fulfillment of certain articles that were agreed upon with him he explored the said islands and many others, and left the chiefs and Indians of the said island of Bimini peaceful; and he assured them on Our part, promising them that they would not have any evil through the said Juan Ponce, nor through any other persons, and that they would not be removed from there to carry them to the said island Española like the Lucayans, since it is what they most fear; and the said chiefs and Indians remained very glad and said that they would have production of bread and other things for us, and that they would serve in what might be commanded them,"⁶

With the story of discovery ended, that of cartography begins. The charts of Ponce de Leon and of Alaminos went in due time to Spain, doubtless to the government repositories where they could furnish information to the Spanish officials and pilots. From them sprang two prototypes that for many years guided representation of the western Bahamas. One of these prototypes showed Habacoa, modern Andros Island, of proper size and location, surrounded by the Great Bahama bank, and with no large island between it and Florida. Of this type is the Silviati map, made about 1525, being

⁶The *cedula* will be found in Colec. Doc. Inéditos, XI: 295.

one of the earliest maps of the region where Ponce de Leon went. The other prototype showed Habacoa, properly indicated and located, but by some blunder there was placed close to it at the west another island, half its size, bearing the name Bimini. Of this type was the Freducci map and some others.

This doubling of Habacoa-Bimini met with the favor of many map-makers as they copied and recopied their material year after year. There came a time, however, when the cartographic myth of Bimini fell under suspicion. In the seventeenth century French and Dutch buccaneers haunted the West Indies and the region of the Bahamas became better charted than formerly. Sometimes the island Bimini was left out entirely by map-makers: sometimes it was disintegrated into a group of islets lying within the Bahama bank and keeping the name Bimini: sometimes the name was shifted to a little island group, well known to mariners, that lay on the western edge of the Bahama bank. This little group was the same that Ponce de Leon had visited and named *La Vieja*. De Lisle, the French geographer, is one of the earlier ones who thus attached the name Bimini to a real islet. His atlas of 1733 shows it so indicated. He seems not to have been the first to do so, however. Others before him and after him found it convenient to thus dispose of the orphan name, and so to-day it rests where Ponce de Leon rested in his search for the real Bimini.