

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



Resub

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name CONSTITUTION OBELISK

other names/site number Constitution Monument FMSF# SJ2490

2. Location

street & number Plaza de la Constitution n/a not for publication

city or town St. Augustine n/a vicinity

state Florida code FL countv St. Johns code 109 zip code 32084

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick/DSHPO 11/6/2012
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]

12/18/2012

Constitution Obelisk
Name of Property

St. Johns Co., FL
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
1	0	total

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Public Works

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: Object

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Early Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation COQUINA

walls STUCCO

roof n/a

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1813-1820

Significant Dates

1813

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

Second Spanish Period (1784 - 1821)

Architect/Builder

Hernandez, Martin: Builder

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of Repository

#

Constitution Obelisk
Name of Property

St. Johns Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	469800	3306700
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Weaver, Paul, Jennifer Wolfe/Robert O. Jones, Bureau of Historic Preservation, Department of State

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date November 2012

street & number 500 S. Bronough Street telephone 850-245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of St. Augustine: attn Jennifer Wolfe

street & number P.O. Box 210 telephone 904-209-4326

city or town St. Augustine state Florida zip code 32085

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section number 7 Page 1 **CONSTITUTION OBELISK,
ST. AUGUSTINE, ST. JOHNS COUNTY,
FLORIDA**

SUMMARY

The Constitution Obelisk is located in the Plaza de la Constitution in downtown St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida. The Constitution Obelisk, constructed in 1813, is twenty-five feet in height. The obelisk was built from local coquina recycled from other building projects. It was surfaced with a lime mortar for weatherproofing and featured classical detailing consisting of a molded cornice and a *perilla*, a pear shaped ornament at the top of obelisk. Its tapered features and proportions were the work of a skilled designer and builder, familiar with classical architecture. The original tablet announcing the Constitution was removed in 1815 by order of the restored Spanish king Ferdinand VI, but it was replaced in 1820 when the king swore allegiance to the 1812 Constitution. The integrity of the obelisk is excellent.

PRESENT AND ORIGINAL APPEARANCE

SETTING

The Constitution Obelisk is located on its original location in what was originally the Main Plaza or Plaza de Armas of the colonial city of St. Augustine (Photos #1&2). The Plaza, a principal component of the Spanish town plan of c. 1597, formed the heart of the town's commercial, religious and governmental life. The Plaza is a rectangular designed landscape which was surrounded during colonial times by St. Augustine's major public buildings. Principal among these buildings were Government House or the offices of the Spanish Governor and the parish church, now the Cathedral of St. Augustine. During the colonial period it served as a public gathering place, a market and as a military parade ground for drilling troops. In 1813, with the promulgation of the Constitution of Cadiz and the construction of the Constitution Obelisk, the Main Plaza was renamed the Plaza de la Constitucion (Spanish spelling).

Since the colonial period (1565-1821) the Plaza has undergone a number of changes. A Public Market was built on the eastern end of the Plaza in the 1820s. Following the Civil War, as seasonal tourism became a fixture of the local economy, the Plaza became more of a park, with the addition of trees, plants and fountains as part of Victorian Period

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beautification efforts. A Confederate Memorial was built in 1872. The original Public Market burned in the 1887 fire but was quickly rebuilt. In 1920 a bandstand was located at the center of the Plaza. The Constitution Obelisk is the oldest above surface feature in the Plaza. It is located at the west end of the Plaza near St. George Street. A short barrier between the obelisk and the sidewalk is created by four ten-foot-long chains suspended from four pyramid-shaped bollards that form a square around the monument (Photo #3). As a result of fires and demolitions, the scale, mass and style of the buildings around the Plaza have changed substantially since colonial times. The area surrounding the Plaza now includes the Catholic Cathedral and Trinity Episcopal Church, retail stores, art galleries, and a bank. Currently, the Plaza is bounded by Cathedral Street on the north, King Street on the south, St. George Street on the west, and Charlotte Street on the east.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The principal materials used in the obelisk's construction were cut and dressed recycled coquina stone finished with lime stucco. Construction documents indicate the materials came in part from the coquina ruins of the Palacio Episcopal or Bishop's House which was located on the south side of the plaza on the present site of the Trinity Episcopal Church.¹ Additional coquina came from a pallet of stone which had been set aside for the construction of a bridge. The stucco was prepared from local oyster shells. Other materials mentioned in the detailed documents included large nails or spikes for scaffolding, wood to form boards, a drop cloth, and an iron bar to support the *perilla*,² the small pear-shaped pinnacle of the monument.³

¹East Florida Papers, Geronimo Alvarez and Eusebio Maria Gomez to Ayuntamiento, St. Augustine, August 2, 1813, EFP, Reel 90, Bundle 210B17, Doc. 79.

² "*perilla*," a pear shaped ornament. Spanish dictionary, http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dict_en_es

³Geronimo Alvarez and Eusebio Gomez to Ayuntamiento, St. Augustine, February 7, 1814, EFP, Section 50, Reel 90, Bundle 210B17; Geronimo Alvarez and Eusebio Gomez to the Ayuntamiento, St. Augustine, February 7, 1814?, EFP, Section 50, Reel 90, Bundle 210B17.

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The foundation of the monument is granite. The lower portion of the monument is a pedestal measuring nine feet in height. The pedestal is composed of a plinth at the bottom, a four-foot wide square dado, and a cornice.⁴ White marble tablets are inserted on each of the four dado elevations. The four small tablets with the inscription "Plaza de la Constitution" are two feet in width by eight inches in height (Photos #4, 5&6). The main tablet on the east elevation measures two feet in width by three feet in height (Photo #7). All of the tablets are constructed of white marble, likely Danby Marble from Vermont. The cornice at the top of the pedestal was apparently pre-fabricated because construction documents indicate there was a labor charge for setting it separately. Above the cornice is the four-sided obelisk topped with a *perilla* (photo #8).

The obelisk was constructed using English measurements. Although the prescribed height of the obelisk described in the documents was thirty feet, the actual height is twenty-five feet.⁵ These dimensions are divided between the pedestal which measures nine feet, the obelisk which measures fifteen feet, and the *perilla* which measures one foot. All five of the stone tablets on the Obelisk have English dimensions.

The inscriptions on the marble tablets were inscribed in Spanish except for the English spelling of constitution on the four "Plaza de la Constitution" plaques.

ALTERATIONS

The Constitution Obelisk has undergone two major restorations. In 1986, John Garner, Jr. AIA, former Southeast Director of the National Park Service, stabilized the structure. At that time the Obelisk had largely been neglected since its original construction and was in poor condition and structurally unsound. The stucco finish was renewed using sand from local coquina quarries that closely duplicated the original.

During its second restoration, in March 2010, the City of St. Augustine again renewed the stucco finishes, using local masons Richard Hernandez, a descendant of the Spanish and

⁴ Francis D.K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995, p.179.
⁵Ibid.

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Minorcan settlers of St. Augustine, and John Harley, park mason for the Castillo de San Marcos for 35 years.

The original marble tablet on the east face, which had weathered and been vandalized, was replaced by a replica fabricated in 1988 (Photo #7). The original tablet is located in a warehouse owned by the City of St. Augustine, and could be restored to the monument. Four smaller tablets on each elevation of the shaft appear original (Photos #4, 5&6). The four tablets are described in the construction documents, and a ca.1835 drawing of the obelisk shows the existence of one of these tablets on the south elevation, further confirming their antiquity.⁶

Other than the removal of the original tablet, which could be reinserted, and the renewal of finishes, the Constitution Obelisk is unchanged since originally constructed. The Constitution Obelisk has a high level of architectural integrity.

⁶ Gordon, Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage, p. 90.

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ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA**

SUMMARY

The Constitution Obelisk, St. Augustine, Florida, already included as a contributing object to the National Historic Landmark St. Augustine Town Plan Historic District, is individually nominated to the National Register for local and statewide significance under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government. The obelisk has individual historical significance for its direct association with the Spanish Constitution of 1812. In all municipalities with at least a thousand residents the Spanish Constitutional government ordered the renaming of all main plazas (plazas mayores) to Plazas de la Constitucion and the erection of a commemorative tablet with the same name. The Constitution gave citizenship, local governmental councils, and freedom of the press to Spanish subjects including Spain's Florida colonies. The creation of the Constitution was an event of widespread significance because of its association with the constitutional movement inspired by the ideals of the United States Constitution, and later implemented by many nations. This monument is the only remaining resource in the State of Florida recognizing the 1812 Spanish Constitutional announcement.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In 1794, France, under Napoleon Bonaparte, invaded Spain, and when a treaty was signed in 1795, Spain received her mainland territory back that had been captured by the French. The next year Spain allied with France in a war against Britain. The war lasted until 1802, leaving Spain weakened to the point of paying France a monthly fee to remain neutral. Another war with Britain pitted French and Spanish navies against the British, but, they were soundly defeated at the naval battle of Cape Trafalgar in 1805. Having decided to annex the Spanish peninsula, Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808 (1), and required the new king, Ferdinand VII, to abdicate the throne to Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, making him Joseph I of Spain (2). The Spanish fought but lost most battles against the French. The enraged Spanish population was more effective with their own guerilla warfare tactics against the French on every front. In the absence of a central Spanish government, local committees, juntas, were formed in districts across the country to coordinate these military actions. Though there was some effort of committee cooperation with the Central Junta, many operated autonomously. The only safe place for the Central

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Junta to gather was in the Atlantic port City of Cadiz. The Central Junta, reformed into the Regency Council, and convened in Cadiz to charter a central government for Spain in September 1810 (3).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Constitution Obelisk was erected as a direct result of the Spanish Constitution of 1812. The Spanish Constitution was promulgated on March 19, 1812, by the Cadiz Cortes, the national legislative assembly of Spain. The Constitution of Cadiz, the first constitution to be implemented in Spain, established principles of universal male suffrage, national sovereignty, constitutional monarchy, and freedom of expression and the press (4). The Constitution had immediate consequences for Spain, Spanish America and the Philippines, including East Florida, a province of Spain from 1784-1821. For the first time, the peoples of the Spanish dominions became citizens, not subjects, with certain inalienable rights. One provision of the Constitution provided for the creation of a local government or town council (an ayuntamiento) for every settlement of over 1,000 people.

The Spanish Constitution was officially proclaimed in St. Augustine on October 17, 1812. The most immediate consequence of the Constitution was the establishment of an ayuntamiento (5). The constitutional ayuntamiento of St. Augustine governed from November 8, 1812, until January 18, 1815. The ayuntamiento consisted of the governor, a mayor, and five councilmen. One of the first acts of the newly formed St. Augustine ayuntamiento was to initiate a building program for the erection of the Constitution Obelisk (6). On August 14, 1812, the Spanish Cortes promulgated a decree requiring the renaming all the main plazas or plazas mayores in major towns to Plazas de la Constitución (Constitution Squares) (7). The decree further mandated the placement of a memorial tablet with the name Plaza de la Constitution in each main plaza (8).

The decree read:

Don Fernando VII, by the grace of God and by the Constitution of the Royal Spanish Monarch of the Spanish Dominions, and in his absence and captivity the Regency of the Realm, named by the Cortes Generales y Extroordinarias (the Spanish Parliament or Assembly) to all that see and understand, know that: the Cortes has decreed

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the following: the Cortes Generales y Extraordinarias, wanting to give notice by all means possible in the memory of the Spanish people the happy period of the promulgation of the political Constitutional Monarchy, decrees. That the main plaza of all the towns in which this act is celebrated or already may have been celebrated, be known as the following "Plaza de la Constitucion," that it (the name Plaza de la Constitucion) be expressed in this way on a memorial tablet erected in the same place as is appropriate (9).

Under the authority of the Spanish Cortes, the Decree of August 14, 1812, was sent to Sebastian Kindelan, Governor of the Province of East Florida at St. Augustine, and officials in other areas of Spain and the Spanish Empire(10). Compliance with the decree was limited by the fact that much of Spain was occupied by the French under Napoleon. Furthermore, parts of Spanish America, particularly New Spain (Mexico), were in rebellion against Spanish authority and unwilling to comply with orders from Spain, be they from royal or constitutional officials. Moreover, even in many areas where the Constitution was recognized, because of indifference or a lack of resources, it is likely that commemorative tablets were never erected.

In St. Augustine, Spanish officials loyally complied with the royal decree of August 14, 1812. On January 19, 1813, Governor Sebastian Kindelan delivered a certified copy of the decree to the St. Augustine ayuntamiento. Local officials exercised discretion from the outset in their interpretation of the decree. While the decree specified a lapida or stone tablet for commemorating the constitution, Governor Kindelan's letter mentioned the tablet but indicated an azulejo (ceramic tile) would be an acceptable alternative medium (11).

The St. Augustine ayuntamiento took nearly a year to fully comply with the Decree of August, 1812. The official who conceived the idea of building an obelisk for exhibiting the tablet and commemorating the Constitution is as yet un-documented. The Mayor of St. Augustine, Geronimo Alvarez, broached the subject of an obelisk on May 17, 1813, in a letter to the ayuntamiento (12). The letter referenced the royal decree of August 14th, and the fact that the ayuntamiento had agreed to proceed with the project on January 20th, 1813. The May 17th letter and six additional documents describe the obelisk in Spanish as

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a pyramid (13). Mayor Alvarez, a native of Spain,(14) lamented the lack of progress in completing the project given that all materials were readily available in East Florida with the exception of the tablet. The tablet, which would be constructed of white marble (15), was not available locally and had to be imported from outside East Florida.

On June 21, 1813, Mayor Alvarez again discussed the lack of progress and indifference in complying with the decree in a follow up letter to the ayuntamiento (16). On the July 5, 1813, Fernando de la Maza Arredondo, senior town councilman and head of the committee charged with complying with the decree, responded to Mayor Alvarez. In a status report to the ayuntamiento, Arredondo described the features to be built as an obelisk or tablet. Citing a lack of funds and personnel, he requested that Mayor Alvarez fund the project or refrain from criticizing the lack of progress. Arredondo concluded his report by requesting his removal from the project and the naming of a suitable replacement (17). Mayor Alvarez, undaunted, responded on July 27 with another letter requesting action or objections from the ayuntamiento on the matter of construction of an obelisk (18).

Mayor Alvarez's protests evidently produced results. On August 2, 1813, the ayuntamiento received a design proposal from the committee members in charge of building the obelisk. Although his name was not mentioned in the proposal, Martin Hernandez was the builder and likely the designer of the obelisk. He was the only individual associated with the project likely to have the requisite skills to undertake such a sophisticated design. Hernandez was born in Mahon, Minorca, in 1756 and settled with his family in the Turnbull Colony at New Smyrna Beach, Florida, in 1768 (19). He was trained in carpentry and masonry and became a prominent resident and land owner in St. Augustine during the Second Spanish Period. Jose Mariano Hernandez, his son, was Florida's first territorial delegate to the United States Congress after the transfer of Florida from Spain to the United States. The younger Hernandez later served as a Brigadier General in command of the Florida Mounted Volunteers during the Second Seminole War. He was best known for capturing the Seminole Chief Osceola in St. Johns County under a flag of truce (20).

During the Second Spanish Period, Martin Hernandez was the principal master builder or maestro de obras in the Province of East Florida. Other than the Royal Engineers, the maestro de obras was the highest ranking building professional in an administrative district such as East Florida. A master builder was a professional contractor, typically trained

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through an apprenticeship program, who was capable of producing and executing building designs (21). Following the re-assignment in 1793 of Mariano de la Rocque, the chief engineer in the province, Hernandez assumed much of the responsibility for public works in East Florida (22). From 1811 until 1816, during the period when the Constitution Obelisk was built, there was no engineer in the province. Hernandez, under the administrative rules of the time, became the chief building official in East Florida until the arrival of Engineer Francisco Cortazar in 1816 (23).

The St. Augustine ayuntamiento approved the design of the obelisk at its August 2 meeting. The only condition was that it measure thirty feet in height. Minutes of the meeting indicate that the obelisk was to be built from the coquina (shell stone) ruins of the former Episcopal Palace or Bishop's House (24). The Bishop's House was originally the residence of Bishop Francisco de San Buenaventura y Tejada during the years 1735-1745. Located at the present site of Trinity Episcopal Church, on the south side of the Plaza de la Constitucion, the Bishop's House was converted to the British Statehouse in 1772-1773. In 1790, the Statehouse was struck by lightning and soon fell into ruin. It was torn down in 1804 after the parish church, now the Cathedral of St. Augustine, was completed (25).

With a design approved, Martin Hernandez undertook construction of the Constitution Obelisk in the latter months of 1813. The construction history of the obelisk is minutely detailed. Hernandez provided weekly reports to the ayuntamiento which described the materials and workers who erected the obelisk (26). Work began in late August of 1813 and, according to the reports, lasted eleven weeks, terminating in early November. The tablet on the east elevation of the obelisk further confirms 1813 as the year when the project was completed. With work completed, in December 1813, Mayor Geronimo Alvarez and Councilman Eusebio Maria Gomez prepared a comprehensive report of the labor, materials and expenses associated with construction of the obelisk. In February 1814, Mayor Alvarez and Commissioner Gomez sought reimbursement for the costs. Solicitor Jose Bernardo Reyes reviewed the expenses for compliance with legal requirements and issued a report (27). New Mayor Jose Sanchez and Councilman Francisco Rosado, who succeeded Alvarez and Gomez, reviewed all reports and construction documents and issued a final report approving payment on March 14, 1814 (28).

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The construction documents provide remarkable insight into the builders, materials and methods of construction of the Constitution Obelisk. Martin Hernandez, in addition to supervising the overall project, also served as chief mason. He was assisted throughout the project by two unnamed laborers. According to the construction documents, the workers were ethnically diverse. Hernandez was Minorcan. A black laborer was used the day the corner stone was placed. Two large black men were employed for harvesting coquina at low tide for the cornice and transporting the material on a cart. The Master Carpenter Esconopoly--likely Domingo Esconopoly, a Greek descendant of the Turnbull Colony--was employed to make minor repairs (29). An assistant mason, Sub-lieutenant Benjamin Seguir, was an officer in the Company of Pardos and Morenos. The Pardos and Morenos were an army unit of black and mixed raced soldiers who served in St. Augustine and, among other duties, worked on fortifications (30).

During the first week of construction, Martin Hernandez procured a bucket, drop cloth, thirty feet of boards for scaffolding, a pound of nails, and wood for platforms and hand barrows for transporting materials. During the 4th and 5th weeks, he purchased nine bushels of lime from a Mr. Rosell and during the 11th week another 33 bushels from the widow Sarah Fish. The lime was likely used to prepare mortar for setting the coquina stone and stucco for finishing the exterior of the structure. In the 12th week Hernandez obtained six pounds of large nails for constructing scaffolding. While preliminary plans indicated that the structural coquina for the obelisk would come from the former Bishop's House, construction documents indicate that at least part of the coquina was leftover materials destined for construction of a bridge. The documents even reference an iron bar for attaching the perilla at the pinnacle of the obelisk. The most important items procured were four tablets for displaying the inscription, "Plaza de la Constitution" (31).

Ironically, although a monument to the Spanish Constitution of Cadiz, the obelisk was constructed using English measurements. Lime used in its construction was measured in bushels and nails in pounds. The prescribed height of the obelisk was thirty feet, but as actually constructed was twenty-five feet (32). All five of the stone tablets on the obelisk have English dimensions. The four small tablets on each elevation with the inscription "Plaza de la Constitution" are two feet in width by eight inches in height. The main tablet on the east elevation measures two feet in width by three feet in height. The best explanation for this fact is that Martin Hernandez and many of the artisans in the Province

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of East Florida were former British subjects, trained in English building traditions. Moreover, the tablets, constructed of white marble, came from outside the province, possibly from Danby, Vermont, in the United States. They could have been pre-cut to English dimensions prior to being shipped to St. Augustine. The inscription on three of the small tablets is the English spelling of Constitution rather than the Spanish "Constitucion." However, based on a physical inspection of the tablets by sculptor Enzo Torcoletti, it appears that the original c's were changed to t's perhaps as a result of vandalism in the post-colonial era.

The placement of the memorial tablets on the obelisk brought St. Augustine in compliance with the royal decree of August 14, 1812. The main tablet on the east elevation reads as follows:

PLAZA de la CONSTITUCION
Proclaimed in this City of St.
Augustine, East Florida on the
17th of October, 1812, during the Governorship
of Brigadier Don Sebastian Kindelan
Knight of the Order of Santiago
AS AN EVERLASTING MEMORIAL
The Constitutional Council has raised
this obelisk under the supervision of Don Fernando
de la Maza Arredondo, the Younger
Dean(33) of the Council, and Don Francisco Robira
Solicitor
1813

The constitutional government of Spain was short lived. On July 30, 1814, barely eight months after completion of the obelisk, the crown issued a royal decree, restoring Ferdinand VII to the Spanish throne (34). At a regular meeting of the St. Augustine ayuntamiento, on September 5, 1814, the governor, mayor, and councilmen agreed to remove the tablets from the obelisk following receipt from Havana of Diarios del Gobierno, the official crown newspaper. The Diarios reported that tablets proclaiming the Constitution had been removed from other plazas and some had been replaced with tablets

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proclaiming them "Plaza of Ferdinand VII." Based on this information, but without a direct order, the ayuntamiento instructed Councilman Francisco Pons to remove the tablets (35). The royal decree of July 30, 1814, was not delivered to St. Augustine until January 18, 1815. Upon its receipt, the constitutional governmental system was abandoned and the local ayuntamiento was formally dissolved (36).

In 1820 Ferdinand VII again swore allegiance to the Constitution of 1812. As a result, the ayuntamiento of St. Augustine was restored on May 4, 1820. Governor Jose Coppinger recalled the available members of the last ayuntamiento, including Fernando de la Maza Arredondo, the younger, who was elected mayor. The ayuntamiento ordered that on May 11 the tablets commemorating the Constitution be restored to the obelisk in a formal ceremony. A three-day formal celebration honoring the restoration of the Spanish Constitution began on September 25, 1820 (37).

The second Spanish constitutional government in East Florida was also short lived. By the time the Constitution was restored, the Adams-Onis Treaty, by which Spain ceded East and West Florida from Spain to the United States, had been signed on February 19, 1819. The United States Senate ratified the treaty on February 19, 1821, and later that year Spain formally transferred St. Augustine and East and West Florida to the United States (38). The transfer was done peacefully and diplomatically without force of arms. Many former Spanish citizens who had supported the Constitution of Cadiz and construction of the Constitution Obelisk, including the Alvarez and Hernandez families, remained in the newly formed United States Territory. Likely for these reasons, United States authorities allowed the obelisk to stand. In contrast, officials in many of the newly founded republics of Spanish America systematically removed such vestiges of Spanish rule, much as United States officials had removed vestiges of British rule at the conclusion of the War of Independence.

Spanish records in the East Florida Papers and other sources document that the Royal Decree of August 14, 1812, called only for memorial tablets commemorating the Constitution of Cadiz and not obelisks or other types of monuments (39). Yet the St. Augustine constitutional ayuntamiento funded and constructed an obelisk for commemorating the Constitution and for displaying the tablets, going far beyond the technical requirements of the decree. In the 19th century, several writers interpreted

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construction of the obelisk as being the requirement of the decree rather than a local initiative. In 1885 Charles B. Reynolds in his publication *Old St. Augustine* wrote that once Ferdinand VII was restored to the Spanish throne, a royal order had been promulgated, ordering that monuments to the Spanish Constitution be demolished. That same year, W. W. Dewhurst in *The History of St. Augustine, Florida* published similar information. Both reported that while the tablets were removed, the monument in St. Augustine, unlike others throughout Spanish dominions, was allowed to remain. These publications, written 70 years after the obelisk was completed, were likely based on hearsay, passed down by local residents over several generations. In fact, the obelisk, absent the tablets proclaiming the 1812 Constitution, had no intrinsic symbolism beyond St. Augustine and the Province of East Florida.

From the minutes of the ayuntamiento and other documents, it is clear that Spanish officials in St. Augustine consistently complied with royal orders and decrees regarding the Spanish Constitution. As a result, the tablets proclaiming the Constitution were erected, removed, and restored to the obelisk. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the obelisk was ever ordered to be demolished. In 1955, the St. Augustine Historical Society erected a marker at the base of the obelisk with text which further reinforced the interpretations published in the 1880s by Dewhurst and Reynolds (40). Thus, at least locally, the myth was born that the Constitution Obelisk was one of many such monumental presentations of the decreed tablets, instead of a unique local response to the Decree of August 14, 1812.

The Constitution Obelisk of St. Augustine is significant under Criterion A for several reasons. It served as a public announcement of the Constitution of Cadiz to the population of St. Augustine, as mandated by the governing Regency. It commemorates the ideals of an international movement that took root with the United States Declaration of Independence and Constitution. In 1821, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "The flames kindled on the Fourth of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them."⁽⁴¹⁾ These ideals include the theory of the state as a compact between the people and the government and the idea that fundamental laws should be written. The ideas and ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution are recognized for inspiring political thinkers in many parts of the world ⁽⁴²⁾. including those who promulgated the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz.

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The influence of the 1812 Constitution on the emerging states of Latin America was quite direct as representatives from Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador, attended the Constitutional Convention in Cadiz, and later emerged as founding fathers of constitutional republics in their respective countries. The Spanish Constitution served as a model for the Norwegian Constitution of 1814, the Portuguese Constitution of 1822, and the Mexican Constitution of 1824 (43). It was directly related to the establishment of local, representative government in St. Augustine and the establishment of the predecessor of the current city commission (44).

Constitution Proclamations in Florida

Apart from St. Augustine, the only settlement in East Florida with a Spanish style town plan and a plaza was at what is present day Fernandina Beach, on Amelia Island. Sometime between 1788 and 1790, the Spanish government traded an orange grove for a lot that was farmed by a Maria Mattair. The land was referred to as "Plaza Lot." In 1811, Spain established the Town of Fernandina (NR 1990, national significance), and a town plan was platted on the property with existing buildings moved to accommodate the street grid. The Plaza Lot faced the Amelia River, and five streets ran east/west inland from it, and three streets crossed them running north/south. The plaza was referred to as a fort, but it consisted of only a battery of three cannon behind bales of cotton. American forces took control of the town on March 17, 1812, and returned it to the Spain on May 6, 1814 (45). Under American control during the period of the renaming of plazas and the placing of announcement tablets, the site was doubtless never used to commemorate the Spanish Constitution. The property is currently an open grassed block serving as a neighborhood park. The placement and historic names of the streets are retained.

The major Spanish settlement in western Florida was Pensacola, which served as the West Florida capital (46). In 1765, the town was laid out on a grid fronting the waterfront of Pensacola Bay. There was a plaza, a fort, and settlement that extended about a mile along the shore. By 1810, the economy of the area was expanding. The military population was above 400 and the civilian population was around 1,000 (47). A 1813 map executed by the Surveyor General of West Florida, Vicente S. Pintado, shows a "Plaza of the Constitution," adjacent to Palafox Street (48). When King Ferdinand returned to power in Spain, the

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name was changed to Plaza Ferdinand (NHL 1961), by which it is called today. There is no commemorative plaque announcing the Spanish Constitution of 1812, and no record has surfaced that there ever was one. Only the name of the plaza on the map speaks to the Spanish Constitution.

The only other named settlement in West Florida was St. Marks (NHL 1977), which served as a Spanish port accessed by the Gulf of Mexico. It was protected by a fort at the confluence of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers. The fort was manned by soldiers, and there was no Spanish styled town plan. The distance from St. Augustine, meant that communication and commerce was difficult, and in 1785, St. Mark's was placed under Pensacola's jurisdiction (49).

The Constitution Obelisk, with its plaques, therefore, is the best representative of how the Spanish edict to announce the constitution was carried out in Florida.

End Notes

- 1 Simon Barton, *A History of Spain*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, p.151-53.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p.164.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p.165-66.
- 4 Richard Jones Shafer, *A History of Latin America* (Lexington, Massachusetts, Toronto: D.C Heath and Company 1978), 306-307; Richard Herr, "The Constitution of 1812 and the Spanish Road to Constitutional Monarchy," 65-102 (notes on 374-380) in Isser Woloch, ed. *Revolution and the Meanings of Freedom in the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996).
- 5 Luis Rafael Arana, "The Municipal Council and the Constitution Monument," *El Escribano*, 4 No. 3, (July, 1967), 4.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 4-5
- 7 "Constitution" is spelled "Constitucion" in Spanish. The spelling varies in this nomination based on its context.
- 8 The Spanish have been long recognized for their contributions to urban planning. The main plaza or plaza mayor was a central feature of all newly founded Spanish towns in the Americas and the prescribed place for public monuments.

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9 Governor Sebastian Kindelan to Ayuntamiento, January 19, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-36, Section 50, East Florida Papers(referred to hereinafter as EFP); Archivo General de la Nacion, La Constitucion de 1812 en la Nueva Espana, Tomo 1(Mexico: Tip. Guerrero Hnos. 3a de Donceles, 81. 1912), 91-92.

10 Kindelan to Ayuntamiento, January 19, 1813, Reel 90, Item #1813-36, Section 50, EFP; Archivo General de la Nacion, La Constitucion de 1812 en la Nueva Espana, Tomo 1(1912), 91-92.

11 Governor Sebastian Kindelan to Ayuntamiento, January 19, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-36, Section 50, EFP.

12 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, June, 21 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-10, Section 50, EFP.

13 Ibid. See also same Reel and Sections, Items 1813-57, 1813-60, 1813-60, 1813-79, 1814-115, 1814-121.

14 Geronimo Alvarez, a baker, arrived in St. Augustine in 1784, when the Spanish re-occupied St. Augustine and the Province of East Florida. In 1790 he purchased a residence now known as the Gonzalez-Alvarez House, presently owned and operated by the St. Augustine Historical Society. See Arana, "The Municipal Council and the Constitution Monument," El Escribano, July, 1967, 4, No. 3, 4.

15 The material was confirmed by sculptor Enzo Torcoletti on February 8, 2012.

16 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, May 17, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-57, Section 50, EFP.

17 Fernando de la Maza Arredondo to Ayuntamiento, July 5, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-57, Section 50, EFP. Arredondo apparently saw the project through to the end because his name is inscribed on the tablet located on the east elevation of the obelisk.

18 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, July 27, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-63, Section 50, EFP.

19 St. Augustine Historical Society, Biographical Files, Hernandez family.

20 Biographical Guide of the United States Congress, bioguide.congress.gov, Joseph Marion Sanchez, 1793-1857. Mala Compra, Hernandez's plantation, was listed in the National Register in 2004.

21 Elsbeth K. Gordon, Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 86.

22 Benito de Pangua to Enrique White, March 1, 1802, Reel 56 doc 1802-106 Sec 32 EFP mentions Maestro Mayor Martin Hernandez.

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- 23 Martin Hernandez to Governor of Florida, St. Augustine, Aug. 17, 1811 Reel 74 Sec. 38, EFP.
- 24 Geronimo Alvarez and Eusebio Maria Gomez to Ayuntamiento, St. Augustine, August 2, 1813, Reel 90, Bundle 210B17, Doc. 79, EFP.
- 25 Gordon, Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage, 103-104, 110.
- 26 Many of the construction documents have been translated by St. Augustine Historic Society volunteer Jose A. Vigara and were very helpful in the preparation of this article.
- 27 Reyes title was sindaco procurador. This position was a fiduciary or trustee with legal, fiscal and administrative responsibilities. It is sometimes translated as attorney general, which in the author's opinion is overstated, since the official did not always have formal legal training. Solicitor or city attorney is probably the most accurate interpretation.
- 28 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, February 7, 1814, Reel 90, Item #1814-115, Section 50; EFP, Francisco Pons and Jose Sanchez to Ayuntamiento, March 14, 1814, Reel 90, Item #1814-121, Section 50. EFP.
- 29 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, February 7, 1814 Reel 90, Item #1814-115, Section 50, EFP
- 30 Manuel Lopez to Governor of Florida, August 20, 1812 Reel 27, Section 15, ID17779, EFP.
- 31 Geronimo Alvarez to Ayuntamiento, February 7, 1814 Reel 90, Item #1814-115, Section 50, EFP.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 The Spanish word is decano or senior member.
- 34 Arana, "The Municipal Council and the Constitution Monument," 7.
- 35 Proceedings of the St. Augustine Ayuntamiento, 1812-1821, May 4th, 1820, Reel 174, Sec 93.
- 36 Arana, "The Municipal Council and the Constitution Monument," 7.
- 37 Ibid. Proceedings of the St. Augustine Ayuntamiento, 1812-1821, May 4th, 1820, Reel 174, Sec 93.
- 38 Charlton Tebeau A History of Florida (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971)
- 39 Governor Sebastian Kindelan to Ayuntamiento, January 19, 1813 Reel 90, Item #1813-36, Section 50, EFP.
- 40 Dewhurst The History of Saint Augustine, Florida (1885), 139-142; Reynolds Old St. Augustine, (1885), 121.

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41 Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1821. As quoted on the National Archives and Records Administration's Charters of Freedom web page.

42 from Independence: A Guide to Independence National Historical Park (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1982).

43 Stanley G. Payne . A History of Spain and Portugal: Eighteenth Century to Franco. 2. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973),. 432–433.

44 Arana, "The Municipal Council and the Constitution Monument," (1967), 4.

45 Florida Master Site Files files NA 10 & NA 238.

46 Paul S. George, *A Guide to the History of Florida*, (New York: Greenwood Press), 1989, p.64.

47 Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida*, (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press), 1971, p.99.

48 Norman Simmons and Dr. James R. McGovern, *Pensacola in Pictures and Print*, (Pensacola: Mayes Printing Company), 1974, p.15.

49 Paul S. George, p.64.

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Section number 9 Page 1 **CONSTITUTION OBELISK,
ST. AUGUSTINE, ST. JOHNS CO.,
FLORIDA**

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Section number 9 Page 2 **CONSTITUTION OBELISK,
ST. AUGUSTINE, ST. JOHNS CO.,
FLORIDA**

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FLORIDA**

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Constitution Obelisk is located within the Plaza de la Constitution, owned by the City of St. Augustine. The National Register boundary is defined by four bollards linked by chains in a 10' by 10' area surrounding the Obelisk.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property has historically been associated with the Constitution Obelisk.

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Section number Photo Page 1 **CONSTITUTION OBELISK,
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FLORIDA**

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Plaza de la Constitution, St. Augustine
2. St. Johns County, Florida
3. Jennifer Wolfe
4. February, 2012
5. Obelisk within the Plaza, facing northeast
6. Photo #1 of 8

Items 1-4 are the same for the remaining photographs.

5. Obelisk within the Plaza, facing west
6. Photo #2 of 8

5. Obelisk, facing south
6. Photo #3 of 8

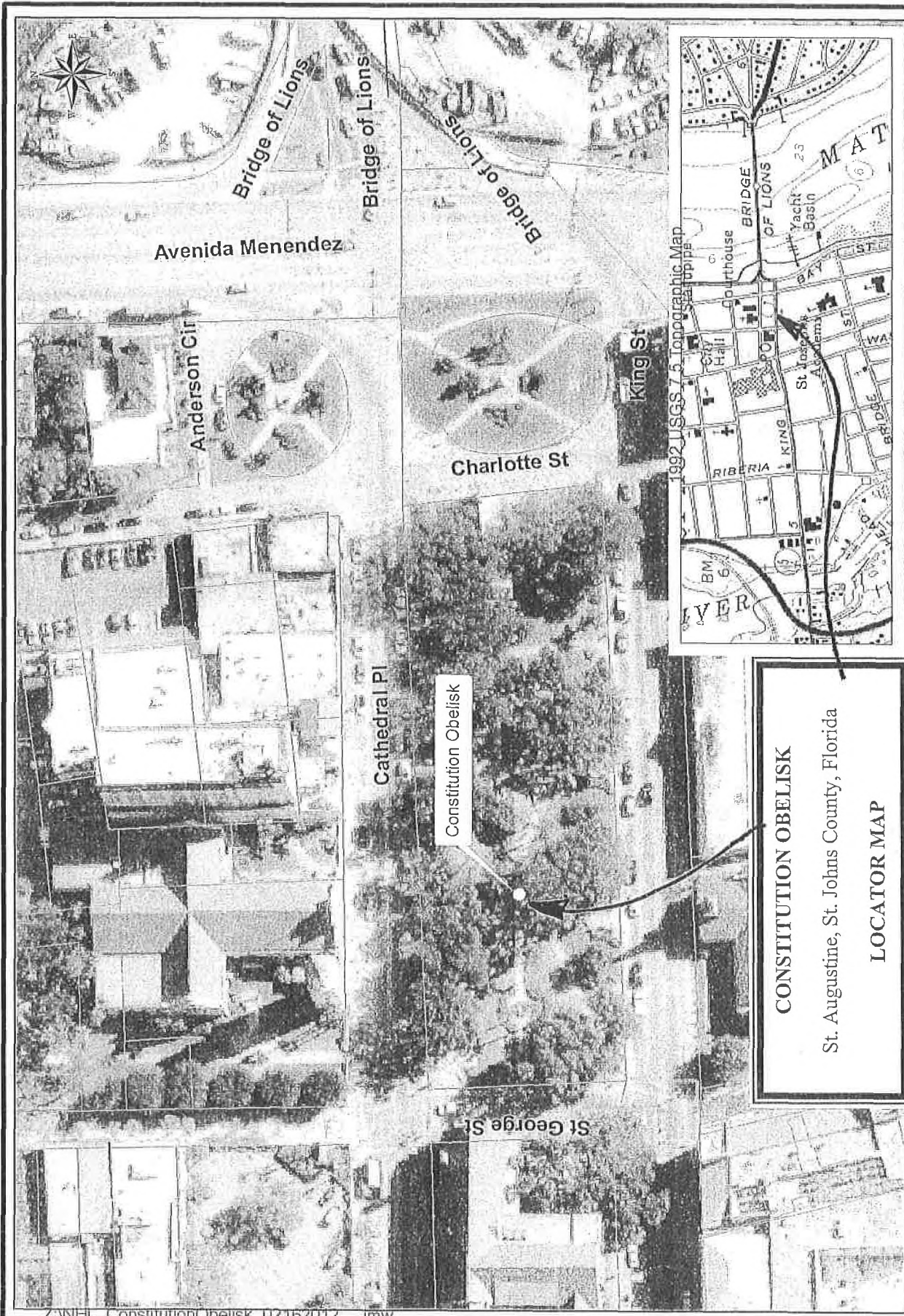
5. "Plaza de la Constitution" plaque, facing east
6. Photo #4 of 8

5. "Plaza de la Constitution" plaque, facing south
6. Photo #5 of 8

5. "Plaza de la Constitution" plaque, facing north
6. Photo #6 of 8

5. Plaques of plaza and constitution proclamation, facing west
6. Photo #7 of 8

5. Obelisk and perilla portion of monument, facing north
6. Photo #8 of 8



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CONSTITUTION OBELISK
 St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida
LOCATOR MAP

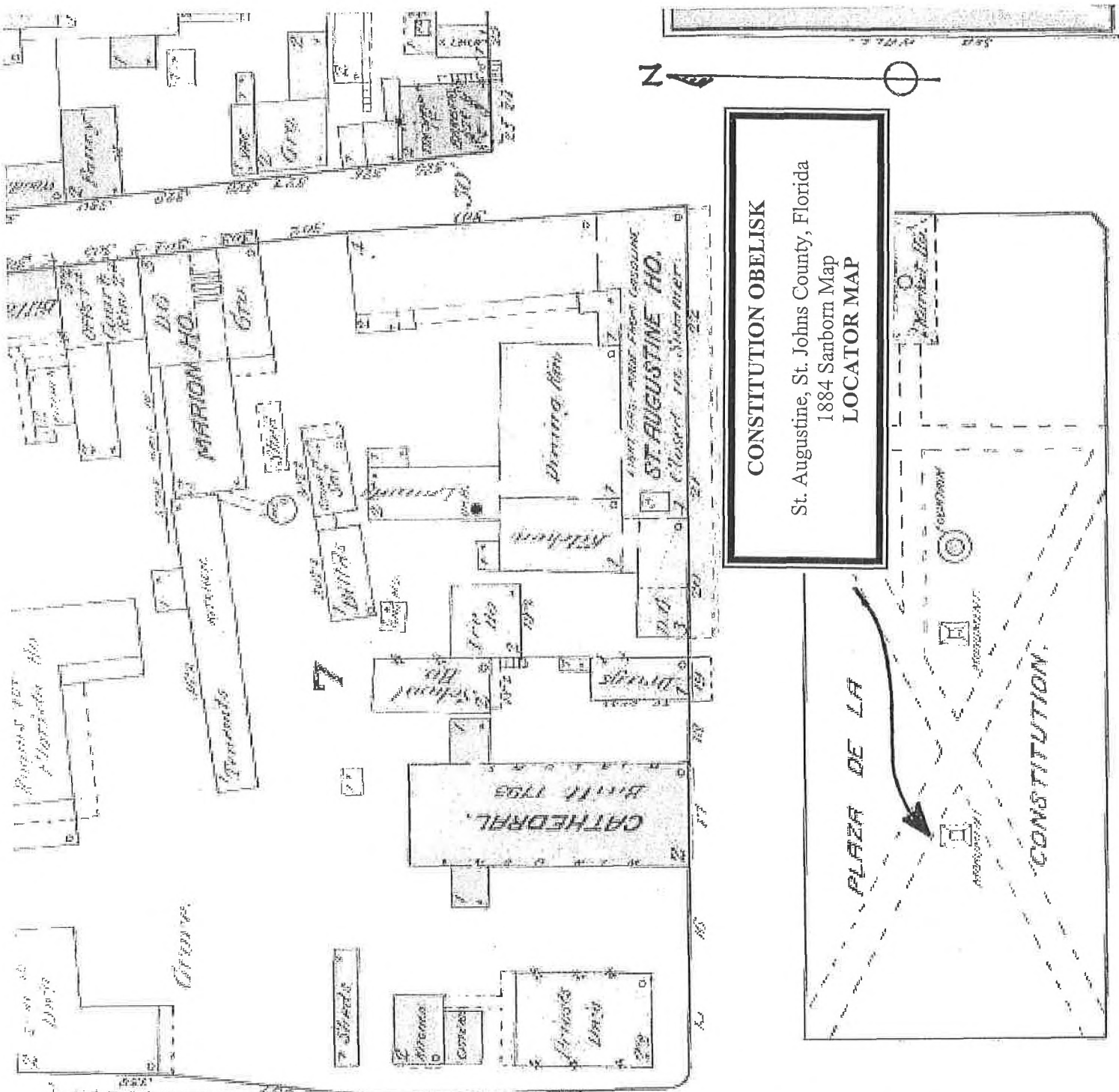


City of St. Augustine
 PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT
 P.O. Box 210, St. Augustine, FL 32085 Phone: (904) 825-1065

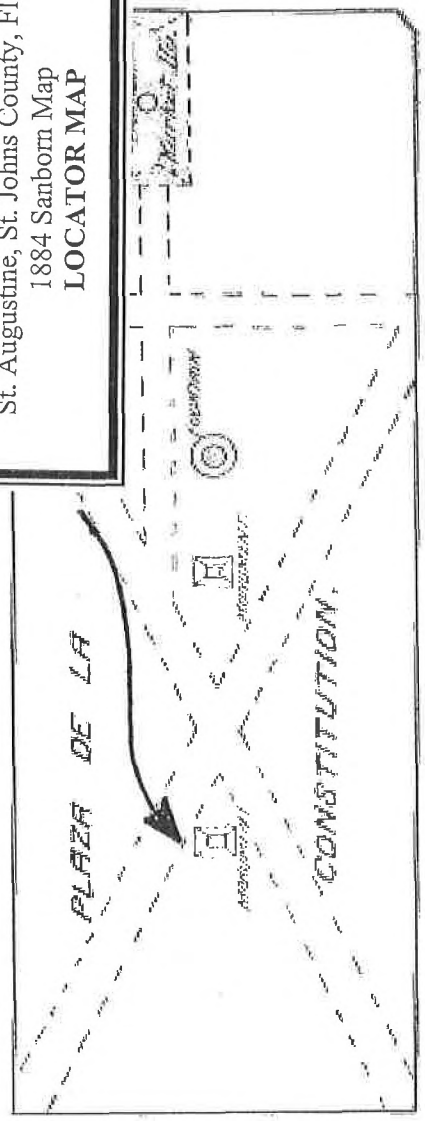
Constitution Obelisk
 National Register Nomination Proposal

SHEET
 1 of 1





CONSTITUTION OBELISK
 St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida
 1884 Sanborn Map
 LOCATOR MAP



1884, St. Augustine, St. Johns County
 Sanborn Insurance Maps
 Sanborn Map Company

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00074227/00003>
 NHL Preliminary Evaluation Proposal
 Constitution Obelisk, St. Augustine, FL

GENERAL NOTES:
 1. THIS MONUMENT AND THE PARK ITSELF IS AN IMPORTANT HISTORIC SITE. BOTH MONUMENT AND SITE ARE TO BE TREATED AS THE VALUED ARTIFACTS THEY ARE. ALWAYS USE THE MOST GENTLE METHOD TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED RESULT.
 2. THE SITE IS PRESUMED TO BE RICH IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE. THERE IS TO BE NO DISTURBANCE OF THE SUBSURFACE CONDITIONS OF THE SITE.
 3. THE CONTRACTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY CHANGES TO THE MONUMENT DUE TO UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES OR IRREGULARITY DURING THE COURSE OF OPERATION.
 4. DIMENSIONS AND LOCATIONS/SIZES OF DAMAGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS TO BE VERIFIED BY CONTRACTOR.

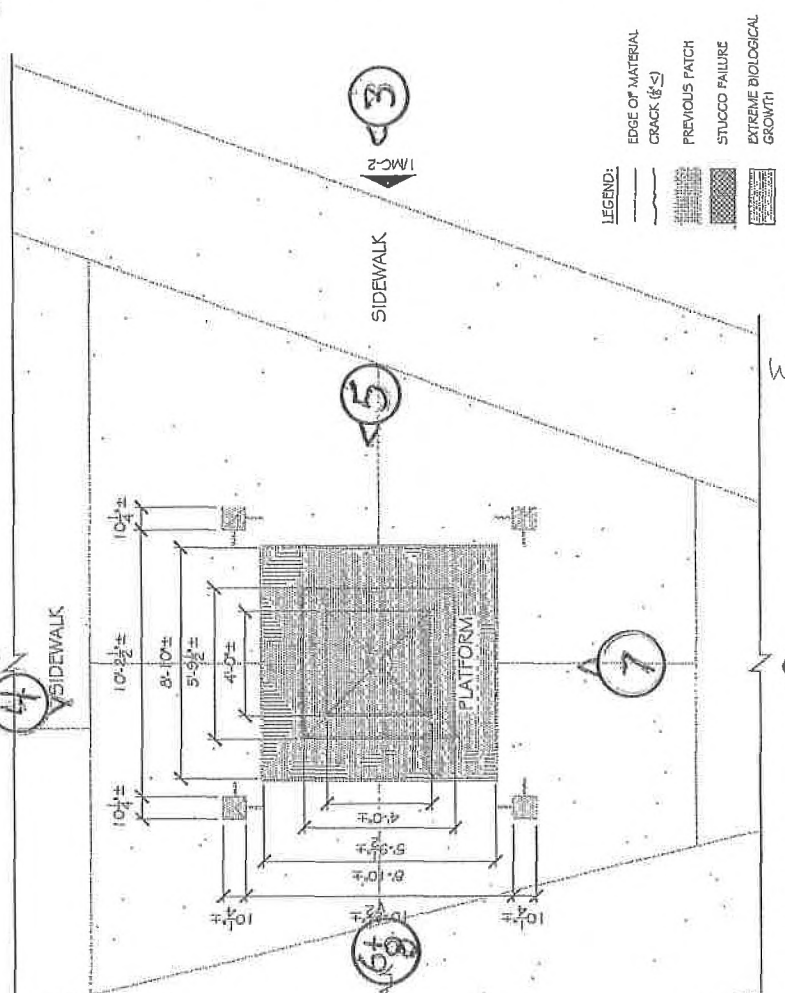
CLEANING:
 1. THOROUGHLY CLEAN STUCCO AT PLATFORM, PEDISTAL, OBELISK, SPHERE AND BOLLARDS AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 09910: CLEANING LIME-BASED STUCCO.
 2. THOROUGHLY CLEAN MARBLE PLAGUES OF PEDISTAL DUE AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 04902: CLEANING MARBLE.

REPAIRS:
 1. REMOVE FAILING STUCCO OF PEDISTAL DIE AND INFILL REPLACE WITH COMPATIBLE STUCCO AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 09200: PATCHING LIME-BASED STUCCO.
 2. FILL DIVETS AND INDENTATIONS IN STUCCO GREATER THAN 1/4" DEEP WITH REPLACEMENT STUCCO AT ALL PORTIONS OF PLATFORM, PEDISTAL, OBELISK, SPHERE AND BOLLARDS AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 09200: PATCHING LIME-BASED STUCCO.

FINISHES:
 1. APPLY UMEWASH TO STUCCO OF PLATFORM, PEDISTAL, OBELISK, SPHERE AND BOLLARDS AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 09912: APPLYING UMEWASH.
 2. APPLY PAINT TO METAL CHAIN AND GROUNDING BOLTS AS PER SPECIFICATION SECTION 09902: PAINTING EXTERIOR METAL.

LEGEND:

	EDGE OF MATERIAL
	CRACK (6-4)
	PREVIOUS PATCH
	STUCCO FAILURE
	EXTREME BIOLOGICAL GROWTH
	WORN STUCCO
	ELEVATION TAG (E.G. DRAWING 1/SHEET MC-21)
	IMC-2



1 SITE PLAN

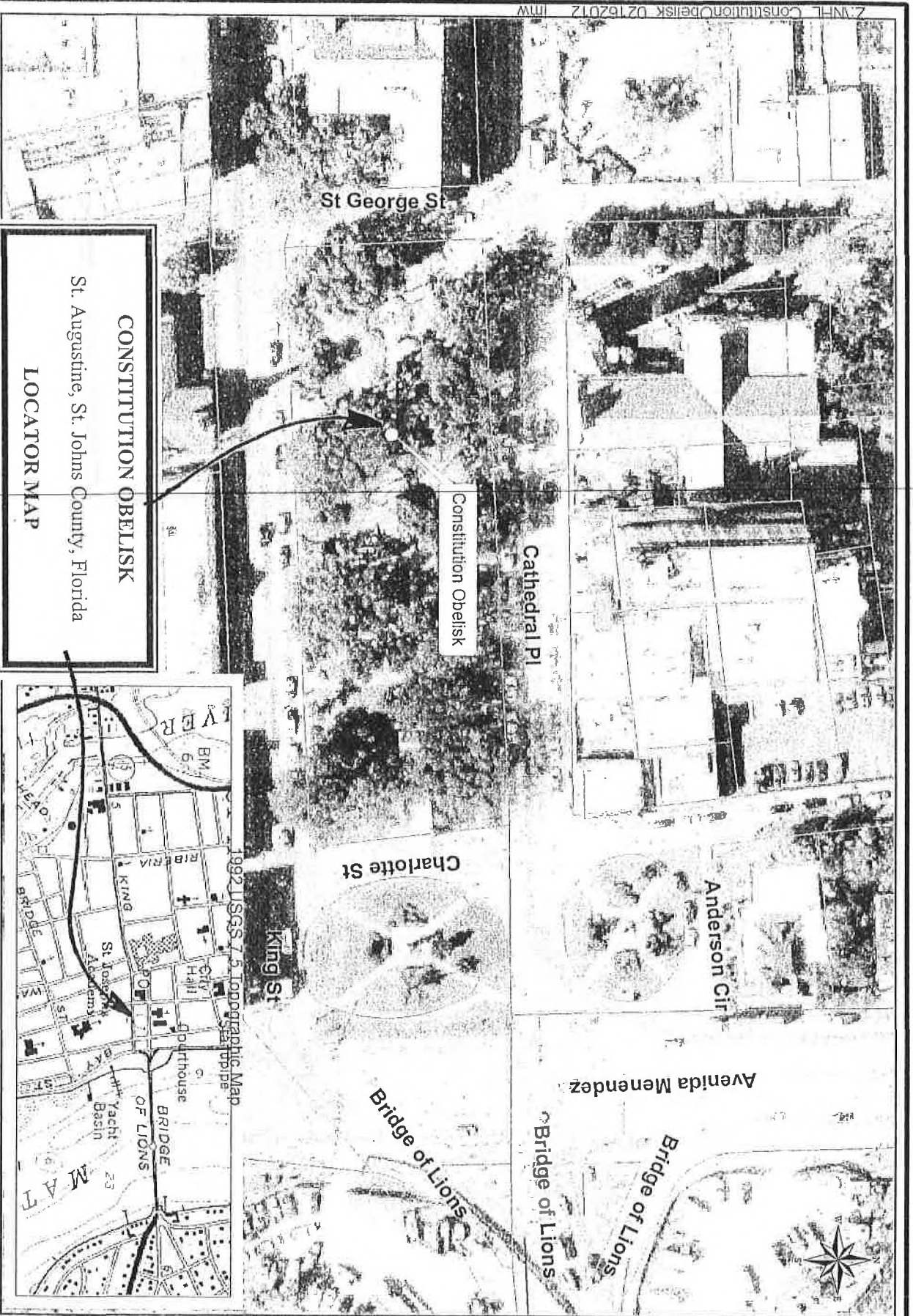
2

CONSTITUTION OBELISK
 St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida
SITE MAP & PHOTO DIAGRAM

JOSEPH K. OPPERMANN-ARCHITECT, P.A.
 WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

MONUMENTO de CONSTITUCION
 ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
 RESTORATION DRAWINGS

DATE	08/07
DESIGNED BY	J.K.O.
DRAWN BY	J.K.O.
CHECKED BY	
SCALE	
PROJECT NO.	MC-1



2:\NFL ConstitutionObelisk 02192012.lm7w

CONSTITUTION OBELISK
 St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida
LOCATOR MAP



City of St. Augustine

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT
 P.O. Box 210, St. Augustine, FL 32085 Phone: (904) 825-1065

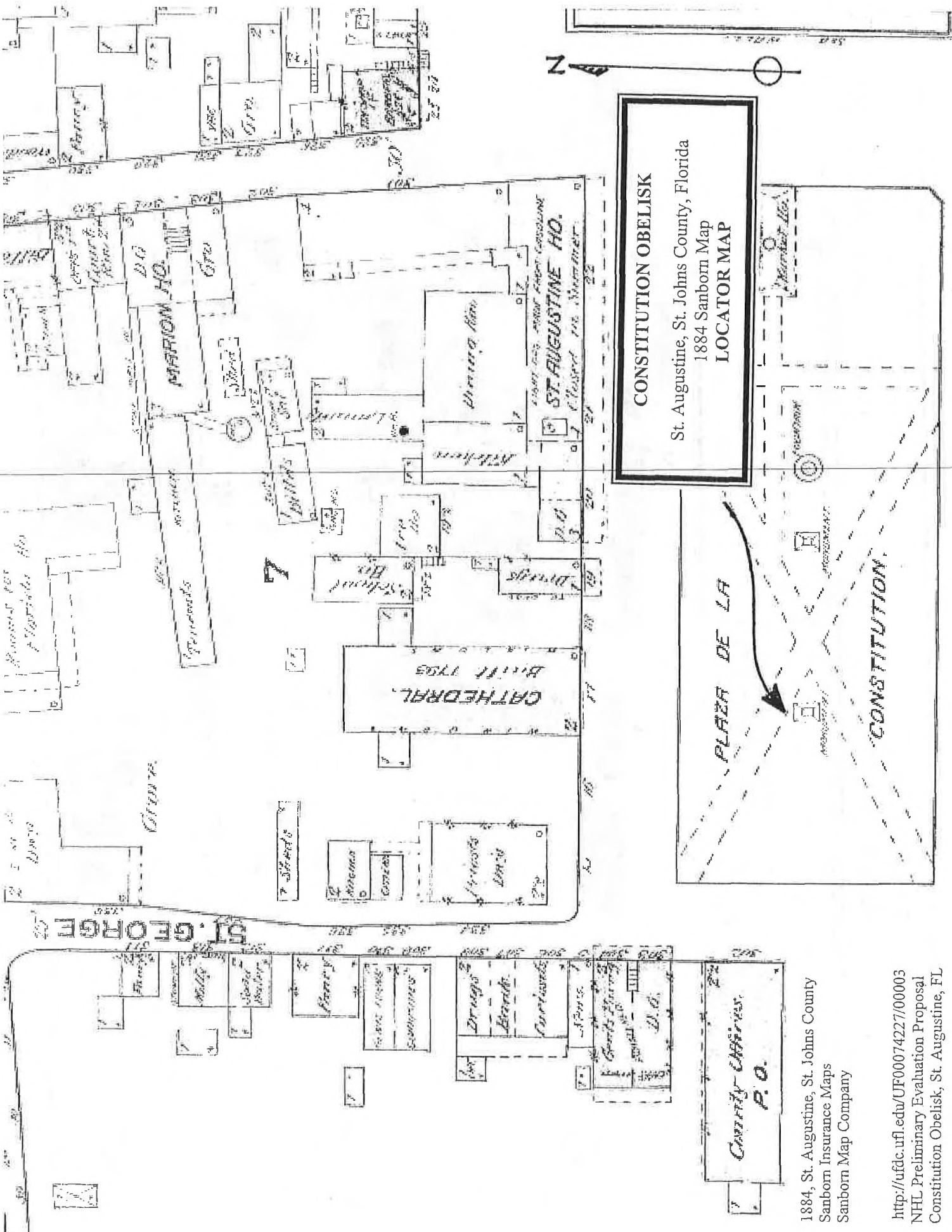
Constitution Obelisk

National Register Nomination Proposal

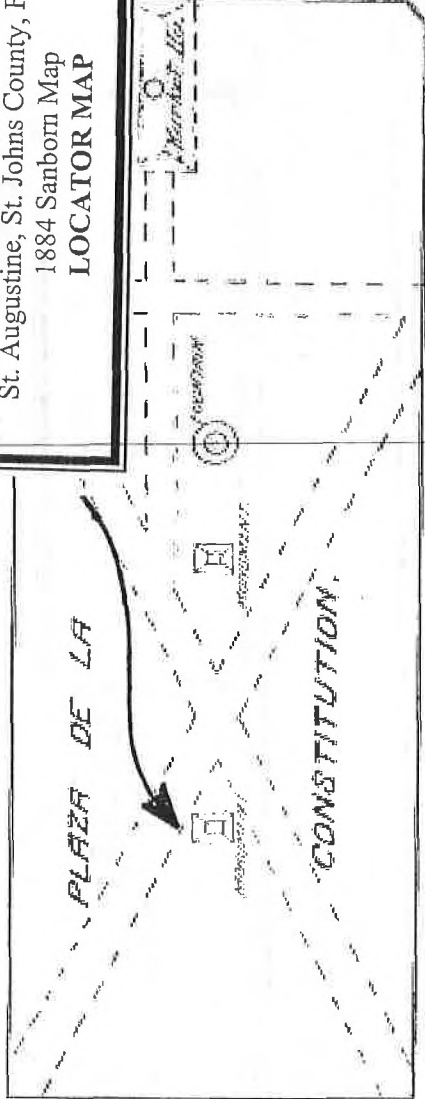
SHEET

1 of 1





CONSTITUTION OBELISK
 St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida
 1884 Sanborn Map
LOCATOR MAP



1884, St. Augustine, St. Johns County
 Sanborn Insurance Maps
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<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00074227/00003>
 NHL Preliminary Evaluation Proposal
 Constitution Obelisk, St. Augustine, FL