



# Heart and Soul of Florida: Sacred Sites and Historic Architecture

*Elsbeth K. Gordon*

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## Landmarks of the human spirit

“Emphasizes the importance of many Spanish Colonial sites and puts them in context with American History.”—Donald A. Crichlow, architect

Red-ochre burial mounds, mysterious artifacts in ponds, giant circles carved in limestone, Spanish mission chapels, frontier houses of worship, gothic cathedrals, courthouses, post offices: eight thousand years of Floridians’ lives can be experienced through the state’s human-made environment.

A sweeping saga of Florida’s built landscape from 6000 b.c. to the present, *Heart and Soul of Florida* begins with pre-Columbian archaeological sites. Architectural historian Elsbeth Gordon re-creates the original atmosphere of many such ancient places. These burial and worship arrangements serve as printed watermarks of Native American traditions, grounding Florida’s identity as time passes.

Spanish Colonial architecture provides Florida with a second important layer of cultural history. This book is filled with accounts of remarkable architectural activity from this period: it tells the story of the Spanish mission of Nombre de Dios (1580–1793) and compares the Spanish Royal Ordinances of 1573 with the town plan of St. Augustine today. Photographs, drawings, and maps make these tales even more absorbing and tangible.

Ending with Florida’s exciting pioneering and dynamic entrepreneurial era, Florida’s newest era, Gordon provides a much-needed broad synthesis of Florida’s rich architectural heritage. She expands the definition of “sacred space” by including preserved historic civic buildings, like the State Capitol, to fully examine the multitude of places that nurture the spirits of Florida’s people.

Gordon inspires the general and professional public to see Florida’s built environment as a rich continuum of history and identity that shaped and continues to impact Florida’s culture—from the mundane to the transcendent. These humanizing places, many of which endure permanently in the landscape, represent an “architecture of the soul.”

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