

During the expedition led by Coronado (below), the 40-lb. back-but cannon shown here would have appeared similar to 15th or 16th century German light artillery pieces (opposite). Note the heavy wooden tripod that could be disassembled for transport.

# In America?

## A Conquistador's Cannon Unearthed

northernmost effort at establishing an actual town, and evidence shows it to be named San Geronimo III. The places they stayed farther north in the Pueblo area were all referred to as camps or quarters and were not given the official legal designation of "town." "San Geronimo" may have been specified in the expedition's charter as the name required for a permanent town in the New Land. As the Coronado expedition passed through this region heading north when it established this settlement, about 40 of the Spanish horsemen, along with their squires, slaves and perhaps families were left behind, the total number being about 200 to 400 people. They used this place to erect buildings, establish a formal presence in the area on behalf of the church and king, take care of the sick and offload some of the expedition's troublemakers.

After about six to 12 months, the town was attacked by the local natives, who were spurred to violence following a train of abuses, including the Europeans taking their wives and daughters as sex slaves, stealing their food and lopping off their noses, tongues and hands for minor offenses. Many of the town's population were killed, and the survivors were forced to flee. One historical account suggests that the battle was over quickly, with the natives surprising the Spanish in the early morning, implying that many were killed in their beds. Another account indicates that the battle lasted a bit longer. The rampart gun was found on the floor of a collapsed mud-and-rock-walled structure that was in the center of the town and battlefield. It seems the roof of this structure was set on fire, and a wall collapsed on top of the gun, preserving it to this day. Carbon-14 dating of charcoal and luminescence dating of an unusual pottery sherd from inside the structure place this gun and the structure squarely in the Coronado time period.



Crossbows with steel bolts were also used by the Spanish on this expedition, and, so far, 80 expended copper and iron crossbow bolt heads and arrow points have been found in the vicinity of this building and elsewhere around the site. These are the first iron specimens ever found for the Coronado expedition. Pieces of other firearms and ammunition were found elsewhere around the townsite where the Spanish fought before fleeing for their lives. Matchlock arquebus parts, wheellock parts, ringlets from chainmail armor, rivets from plate armor and pieces of broken swords and daggers were also found, among other items. One account says that only six Spaniards survived the attack, aided by a priest who fiercely defended others with a broadsword during the chaos. These survivors fled the town, marking the first time that American Indians defeated and totally routed the Spanish in North America. Indeed, no European expeditions came back to southern Arizona for about 140 years.

Medallion with the effigy of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, in the Town Hall, Plaza Mayor of Salamanca (Spain)