

The Spanish Influence on Surveying and Mapping in the Americas

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Spanish surveying and mapping activities in the Americas seems to be a well-kept secret. Most of the well-studied surveying and mapping activities begin with British and American efforts, with a quick passing reference to those of the French. Overlooked are the Spanish coastal charting and mapping, beginning with Columbus in the latter part of the 16th century and ending in the latter part of the 18th century in Nootka. Forgotten also are the surveys on land, first on the seaports and later surveys of town sites, roads, and lands granted to settlers. Kino's maps of northwestern New Spain, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and after 1711, the efforts of the Spanish Royal Engineers such as Miguel Constanso in the western part of the Americas and the Philippines are little known. This paper presents an overview of Spanish surveying and mapping activities in the Americas, and places them in the proper niche in the history of surveying in the Americas.

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