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Present State of the Spanish Colonies

William Walton (?1783–1857) was British agent at Santo Domingo (Haiti), one of the two states on the island of Hispaniola, over which the British had briefly fought with the French before it proclaimed its independence in 1804. Returning to England in 1809 he began to write on Spanish and South American affairs. This work was published in two volumes in 1810. Volume 1 deals with Hispaniola, which was settled by both the Spanish and French, and officially divided in 1697. Haiti was now independent, but the other part (now the Dominican Republic) remained under Spanish control until 1821. Walton discusses the history and geography of the island, and particularly the natural resources and wildlife. The rebellion of Haiti had seriously damaged the economy, which had been thriving, and more successfully exploiting the island's resources than the larger Spanish colony. Walton's object was to encourage the growth of trade between Britain and the region.

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Frontmatter

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William Walton

Frontmatter

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Present State of the Spanish Colonies

*Including a Particular Report of Hispaniola,
or the Spanish Part of Santo Domingo*

VOLUME 1

WILLIAM WALTON



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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Freeman sculp.

Ferdinand VIII. King of Spain

From a portrait in the possession of Admiral Apodaca

Published by Longman & Co. Sept. 22^d 1810.

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 978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1
 William Walton
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PRESENT STATE
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SPANISH COLONIES;
 INCLUDING
 A PARTICULAR REPORT OF
 HISPANOLA,
 OR THE
SPANISH PART OF SANTO DOMINGO;
 WITH A
 GENERAL SURVEY OF THE SETTLEMENTS
 ON THE
SOUTH CONTINENT OF AMERICA,
 AS RELATES TO
 HISTORY, TRADE, POPULATION, CUSTOMS, MANNERS, &c.
 WITH A
CONCISE STATEMENT OF THE SENTIMENTS OF THE PEOPLE
 ON THEIR
 RELATIVE SITUATION TO THE MOTHER COUNTRY, &c.

BY WILLIAM WALTON, JUN.

SECRETARY TO THE EXPEDITION WHICH CAPTURED THE CITY OF SANTO DOMINGO
 FROM THE FRENCH; AND RESIDENT BRITISH AGENT THERE.

Quod sol atque imbres dederant, quod terra creat
 Sponte sua, satis id placabat pectora donum.
 Quod superest, æs atque aurum, ferrumque repertum est,
 Et simul argenti pondus.

LUCRETII, lib. v.

—mores hominum....et urbes.

Hor.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
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William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

THE precipitation with which the following sheets are put to press, will, it is hoped, be admitted as some excuse for any want of classification and orderly arrangement, that may be occasionally observed in the course of the narrative. The work was commenced on a sick and boisterous voyage across the ocean, and was completed amidst other weightier occupations, and, during intervals, in a great measure stolen from the social intercourse of the author with relations and friends, from whom he had been separated from his childhood. It was thought, however, that if it could be deemed to contain any information of interest or importance, its value would necessarily be diminished by delay of publication, at a time when the public mind seemed to be, in a particular manner, drawn to the new world, and seeking especially to extend its hitherto

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

PREFACE.

imperfect knowledge of the Spanish Settlements in that quarter.

It having fallen to the lot of the author to visit, early in life, the people and countries of which he here attempts a faint delineation, he had formed the design of putting his researches together at some future period, in a large and general description of the Spanish Colonies, and had, with that view, collected a variety of materials relating both to the Spanish Islands and the shores of the Continent, from La Vela to the Oronoko, which have been, during the last war, the most accessible to foreigners. From his intercourse with Spanish officers, and with the literati of the country, he had been enabled to obtain the documents which were necessary to form the groundwork of such an undertaking; and he had, besides, compiled much relating to the same subject, during a long residence in Spain, where he had been favoured with access to the best libraries, and furnished with communications from several persons who had resided in official situations in the Spanish Indies. Happening, however, to be among the first of those who were taken by the French, at the breaking out of the contest in Hispaniola, many of these papers were then unfortunately

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

vii

lost, and, to complete his calamity, the remainder perished on board his Majesty's ship the Lark, which had conveyed part of the British troops from Jamaica to the siege of the city of Santo Domingo, and foundered in the month of August, 1809, during one of those dreadful hurricanes, which sometimes sweep the West India seas. Thus deprived of what he had collected during the course of seven years application and labour, the author is now left with little else, than the traces of his memory to recur to for his guidance, and he therefore wishes to be considered as bringing forward the present publication, rather as an essay, than as a complete treatise on the important subject to which it relates.

The discovery and colonization of distant regions, having been rendered subservient to the best and most valuable purposes of human life, by the intercourse and exchange which have been established between them, the description of such countries becomes a pleasing theme to the youthful mind; while it conveys instruction to the traveller or navigator, who may visit them for the purposes of research, of business, or of pleasure. Respecting the Spanish Settlements, we were in the greatest want of information; what

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

PREFACE.

we had, being derived from their own authors, who wrote soon after the discoveries of Columbus, and whose works, from two centuries intervening, are now become obsolete; or else from the French literati, who have lately visited their shores.

It may, perhaps, be thought that some parts of the second volume are anticipated by what others have lately written on the same subjects; but it ought also, in candour, to be considered, that the same sources of information were open to the author, and were actually explored by him about the same time. Reference is here made chiefly to Depons' work on the Caraccas. Where, however, the author's personal observation could not direct him, he has, without scruple, availed himself of the best authorities, to which he could procure access. While he has endeavoured to divest his narrative of cumberous minutix, he has been ambitious of inserting whatever he has been able to discover of a curious, interesting, and instructive nature, in order to throw as much light as he could, on the transatlantic possessions of Spain, and their relative situation to the mother country. This candid avowal of his sentiments and views, he humbly submits to the consideration of the public, so-

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William Walton
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE. ix

licitous to obtain for them its indulgent patronage :
which he does with the greater confidence, from
the consciousness that he is actuated by no other
wish, than to be of some utility to the community
at large.

Bristol,
Sept. 1, 1810.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

INTRODUCTION. - - - - -	1
CHAP. I.	
First Discovery, and early History of Hispan- ñola. - - - - -	9
CHAP. II.	
Present Government of Haiti. - - - - -	22
CHAP. III.	
Description of the Coast, Harbours, Bays, and detached Islands of Hispaniola. - - -	29
CHAP. IV.	
Soil and Resources compared with those of Haiti, Country, Vallies, Climate, Plains, Branding Cattle, Woods described. - -	66
CHAP. V.	
Rivers, Streams, Lakes, &c. - - - - -	75
CHAP. VI.	
Aspect of the Country, and stroke of the Sun and Moon. - - - - -	82

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii	CONTENTS.	
	CHAP. VII.	
	Species of Woods, Fruits, Vegetable Pro- ductions, &c. - - - - -	86
	CHAP. VIII.	
	Mines, Mineral Productions, &c. - - - -	108
	CHAP. IX.	
	Animals, Game, Fish, Insects, &c. - - - -	117
	CHAP. X.	
	Population, Cities, Towns, &c. - - - -	130
	CHAP. XI.	
	Amusements. - - - - -	158
	CHAP. XII.	
	Indians, their History, one of their Idols des- cribed, Decline and Rise of Hispañola, Po- licy of the French in the West Indies. -	164
	CHAP. XIII.	
	Occupation of the Island by the French, till their final Expulsion by the English and Spaniards. - - - - -	190
	CHAP. XIV.	
	Advantages that result to England from dispo- singing the French of Hispañola. - - -	225

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)CONTENTS. xiii

APPENDIX. - - - - - 245

A.

Description of the N. E. Coast of the Spanish
Main from Cape Vela, to the Oronoko - *ib.*

B.

General Account of the Bull-feasts in Spain - 288

C.

Statement of the Productions of French St. Do-
mingo, with other Commercial Particu-
lars. - - - - - 293

D.

Memoirs of the Prince of Peace, late Minister
and Generalissimo of the Spanish Armies. 303

E.

Copy of a Dispatch from Major-General Carmi-
chael, respecting the Capture of the city of
Santo Domingo. - - - - - 317

F.

Selection of a Cargo, or an Assortment of Goods
suited on a general Scale for the Mar-
kets of Spanish America. - - - - - 327

Remarks. - - - - - 349

Further particulars relating to the Idol or *Cemi*,
described in page 167 of this volume. - 352

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

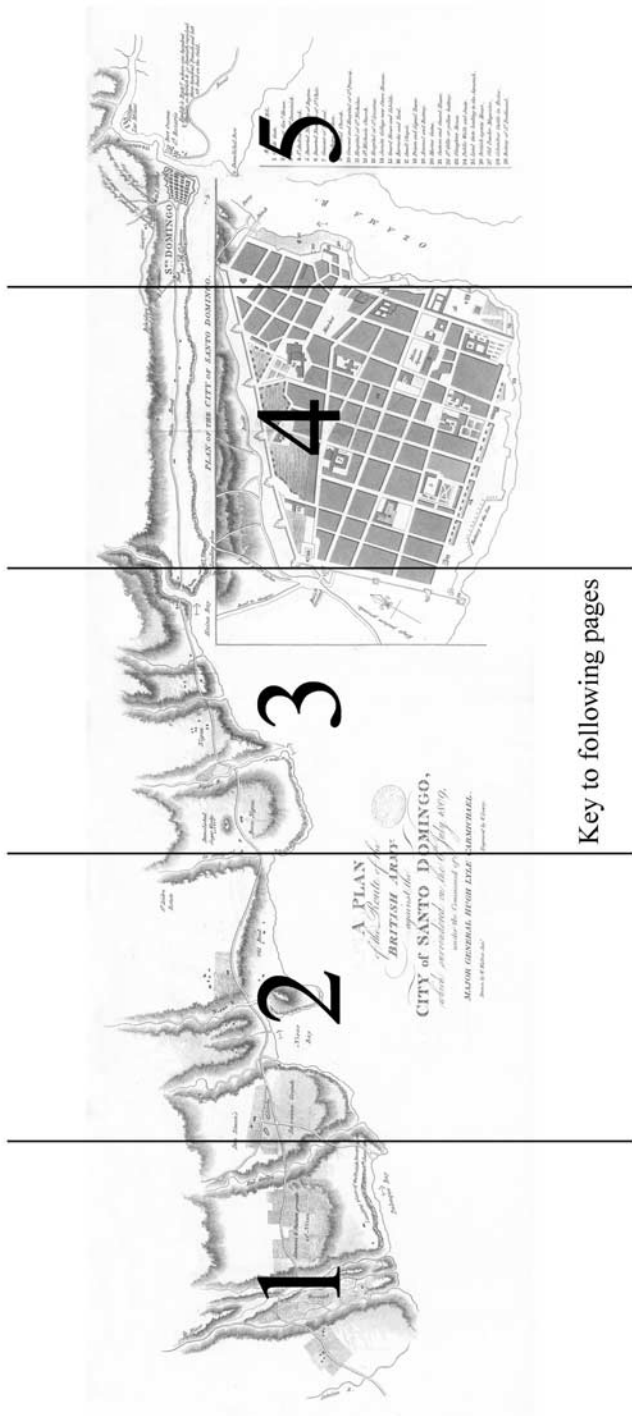
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

CONTENTS.

Dissertation on the Antilles, or West India Islands, particularly Hispaniola, Soil, original State of its Productions, Climate, Winds, and other Phenomena, Creoles, Caraihs, Buccaneers, &c. - - - - - 355

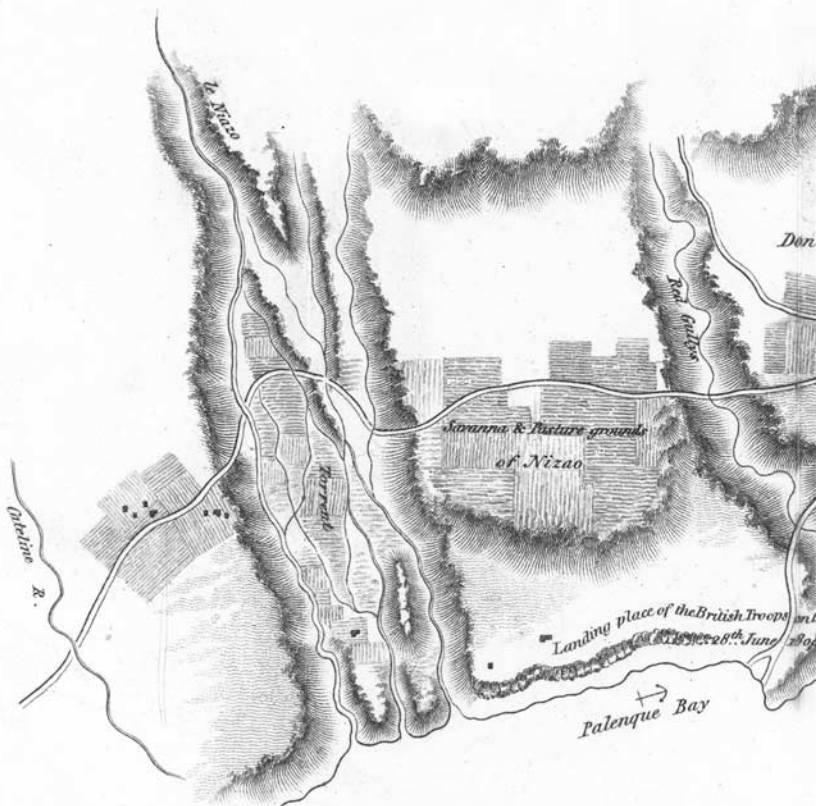


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978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

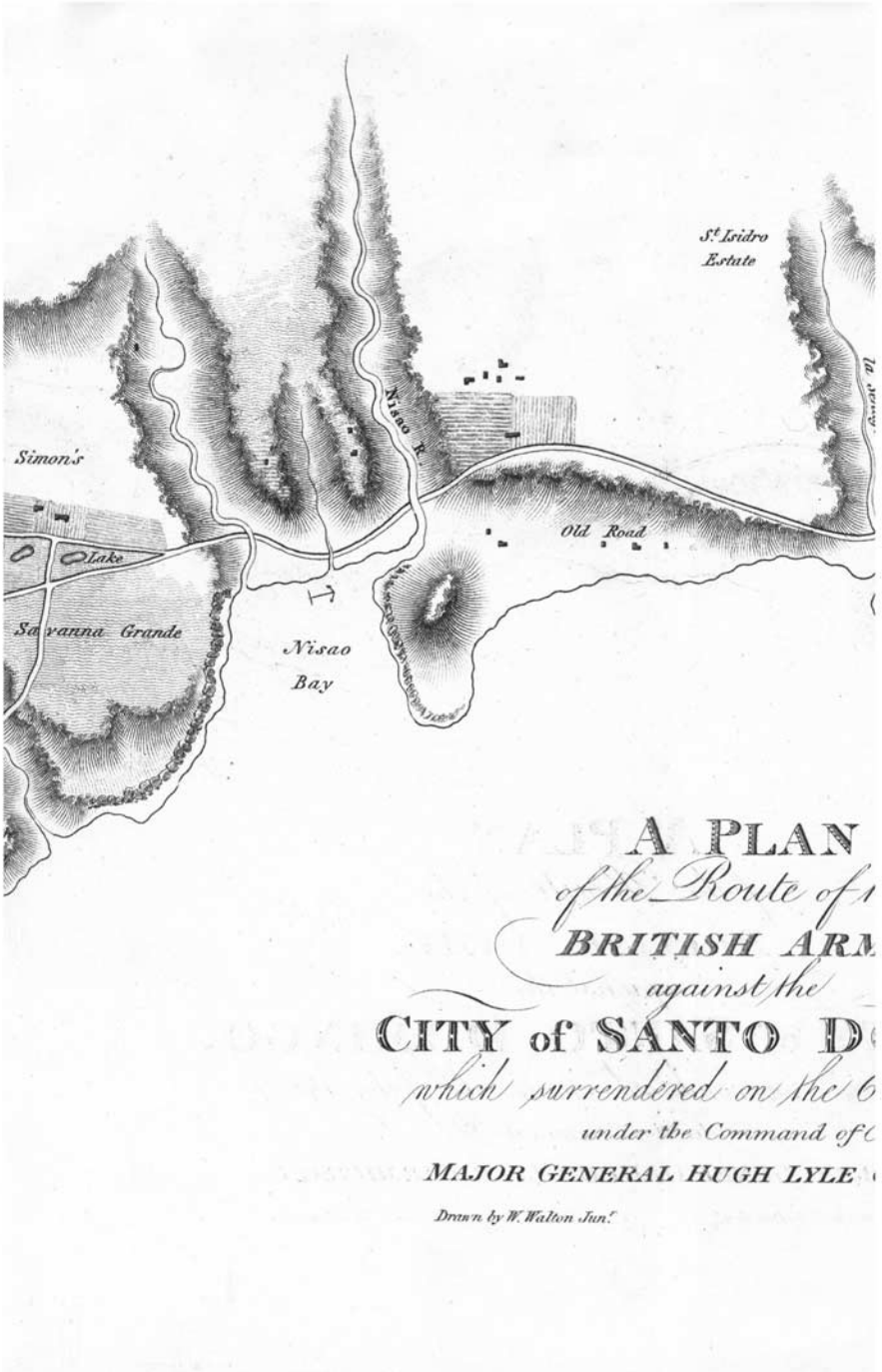
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1
William Walton
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

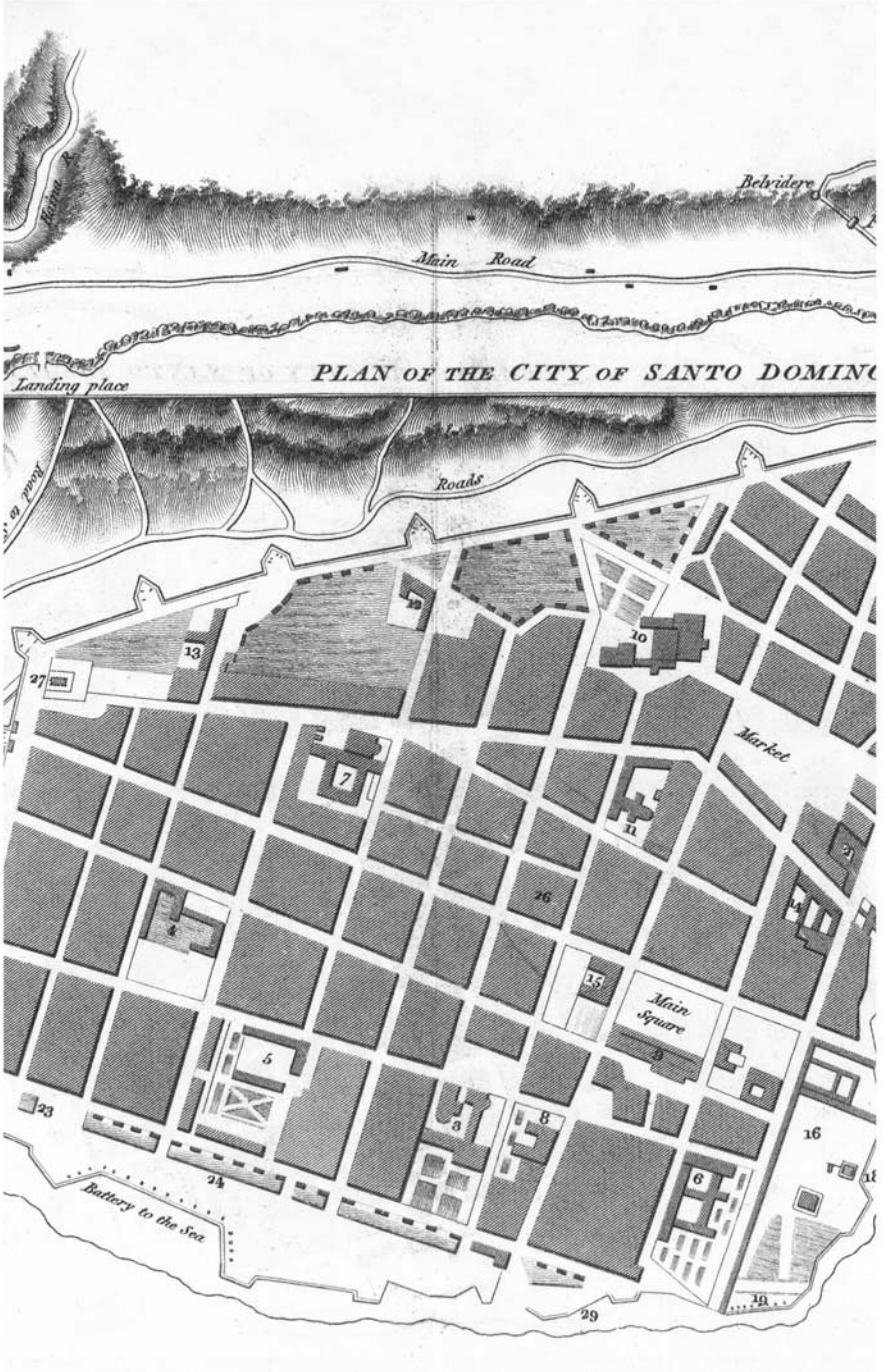


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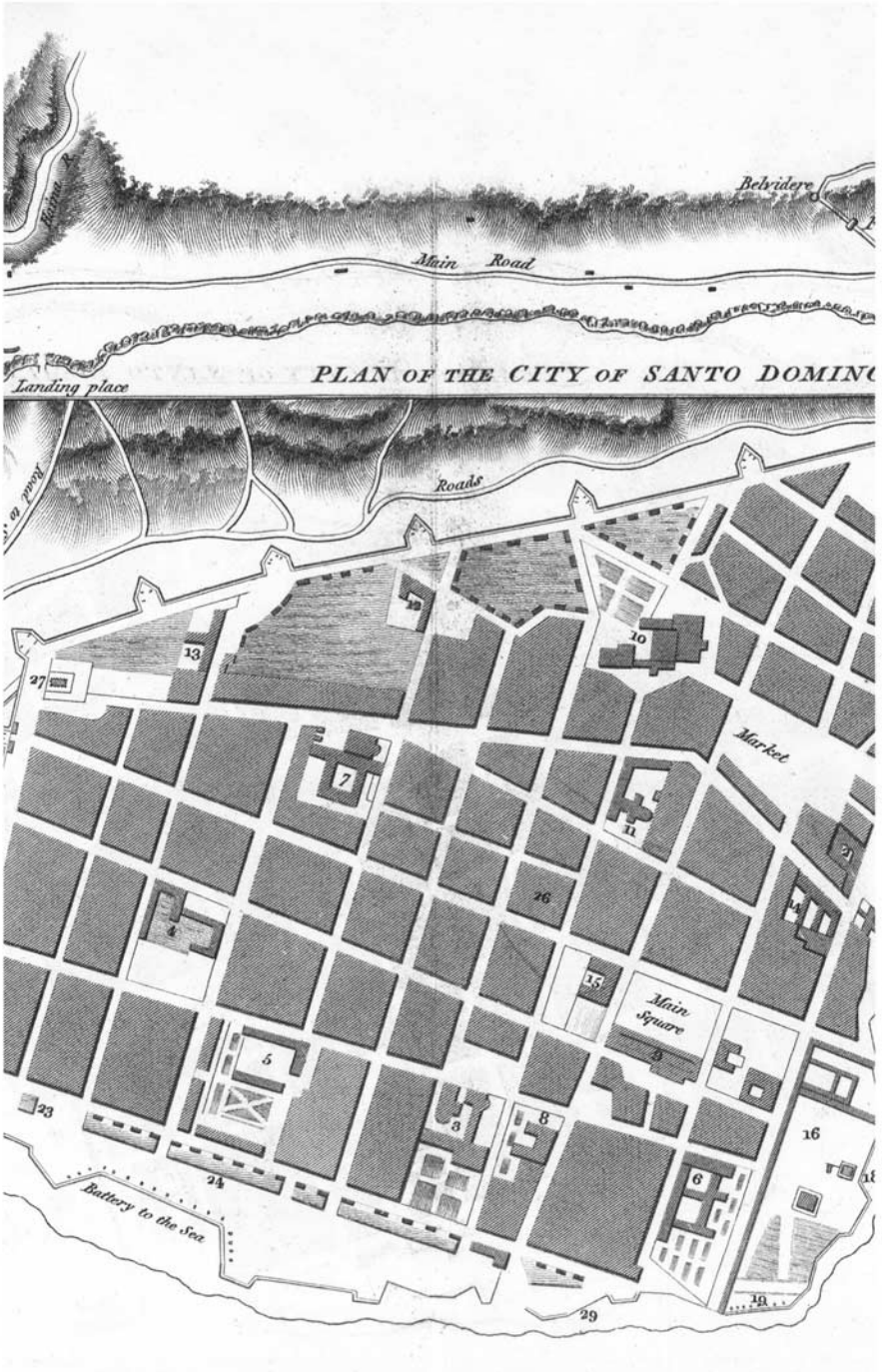
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William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1
William Walton
Frontmatter
[More information](#)



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02459-4 - Present State of the Spanish Colonies, Volume 1

William Walton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

