

Fort Caroline

NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Castillo de San Marcos & Fort Matanzas

NATIONAL MONUMENTS • FLORIDA

Four centuries ago this 50-mile stretch of Florida's east coast witnessed the first conflict between Europeans in North America. In the years that followed, three nations shaped the area's history: Spain, who claimed it on the basis of discovery; France, who challenged that claim, also alleging early exploration; and England, a latecomer in colonial expansion, who stood by waiting to develop the strength to take what she wanted. But the United States—a nation then unborn—won the land.

The French were the first to seize a toehold in the Florida wilderness that Spain believed to be economically worthless. (Spain's King Philip II, after sponsoring several unsuccessful attempts to establish a settlement, had barred further colonizing efforts.) In 1564, France, making a determined effort to control this region, sent troops to the St. Johns River, where they built the sod-and-timber *Fort Caroline*. Hunger, mutiny, and Indian troubles plagued the settlement.

Despite these internal problems, *Fort Caroline's* very existence mocked Spain's claim to Florida and threatened the passage of the Spanish treasure fleets that followed the Gulf Stream and swung close inshore. Spain responded by sending out an expedition both to settle Florida and to drive out the French. When the Spaniards arrived at the mouth of the St. Johns River in 1565, they found the French, tried unsuccessfully to board their ships, and then sailed to a harbor further south, where they established St. Augustine as a base for further operations.

Almost immediately the French sailed south to attack. Their fleet, however, arriving within view of St. Augustine, was driven off by a violent storm. The Spaniards, realizing that *Fort Caroline* would be lightly guarded, marched north and attacked the fort, captured it, and executed most of the garrison. The French fleet fared no better. Driven ashore many miles below St. Augustine, the survivors began an overland march to *Fort Caroline*. The Spanish, learning from the Indians that the French were ashore, moved from St. Augustine to intercept them. At an inlet 14 miles south, the two forces met. While some Frenchmen escaped, most surrendered and were put to death—a measure, Spanish soldiers pointed out, dictated by cold military necessity. The episode gave a name to the area: Matanzas, Spanish for "slaughters."

Although Spain had ended one threat, she was not to enjoy untrammelled possession of Florida. Other annoyances were to come. In 1568 an expedition of vengeful French freebooters descended upon Fort San Mateo, the former *Fort Caroline*, burned it, and hanged the survivors. They took similar revenge on the crews of captured Spanish vessels. In 1586 England's Sir Francis Drake attacked and destroyed St. Augustine.

Now Britain entered the scene in earnest, bent upon seizing Spanish-claimed territory. In 1607 Englishmen settled at Jamestown; by 1653 they

had pushed south to settle in the Carolinas. The British again sacked St. Augustine in 1668, and this hit-and-run attack, followed by the English settlement of Charleston in 1670, caused Spain to build a defensive stone fort at St. Augustine—*Castillo de San Marcos*. Construction began in 1672 and continued until 1696.

In the meantime, a watchtower had been built at the mouth of the Matanzas River to warn the city of unfriendly vessels entering the estuary. But despite this precaution, pirates surprised the *Matanzas* garrison in 1683 and marched toward St. Augustine and the unfinished *Castillo*. A Spanish soldier, escaping from the corsairs, warned the garrison, which ambushed the pirates and turned them back.

Castillo de San Marcos received its baptism of fire in 1702 during Queen Anne's War, when the English seized St. Augustine and unsuccessfully besieged the fort. As disputes with England continued, and as English settlers and soldiers moved into Georgia, Spain began to modernize the *Castillo*. *Matanzas*, however, was still unfortified when the English struck again in 1740. They laid siege to the *Castillo* but failed to capture it.

This abortive attack proved to the Spanish that their fortifications needed strengthening. In 1742 they completed the present stone tower at *Matanzas*, and continued work on *Castillo de San Marcos* until 1763. Then, as a result of the French and Indian War, Spain ceded Florida to Great Britain in return for British-occupied Havana. The British garrisoned *Matanzas* and strengthened the *Castillo*, holding the two forts through the American Revolution. By the provisions of the Treaty of Paris of 1782, which ended the war, Great Britain returned Florida to Spain, who in turn ceded it to the United States in 1821.

Following the American Revolution, the Spanish abandoned *Matanzas*, but continued to use *Castillo de San Marcos*. Later the post became the American Fort Marion, and during the Seminole War of the 1830's it housed Indian prisoners. Confederate troops occupied it briefly during the Civil War. It was last used during the Spanish-American War as a military prison.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Fort Caroline National Memorial, 10 miles east of Jacksonville, can be reached by Fla. 10, St. Johns Bluff Road, and Fort Caroline Road. The original site washed away in the 1880's when the river channel was deepened, but the fort walls have been reconstructed nearby to help you visualize the scene.

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, in St. Augustine, can be reached by U.S. 1 and Fla. A1A.

Fort Matanzas National Monument, 14 miles south of St. Augustine, is on Fla. A1A.

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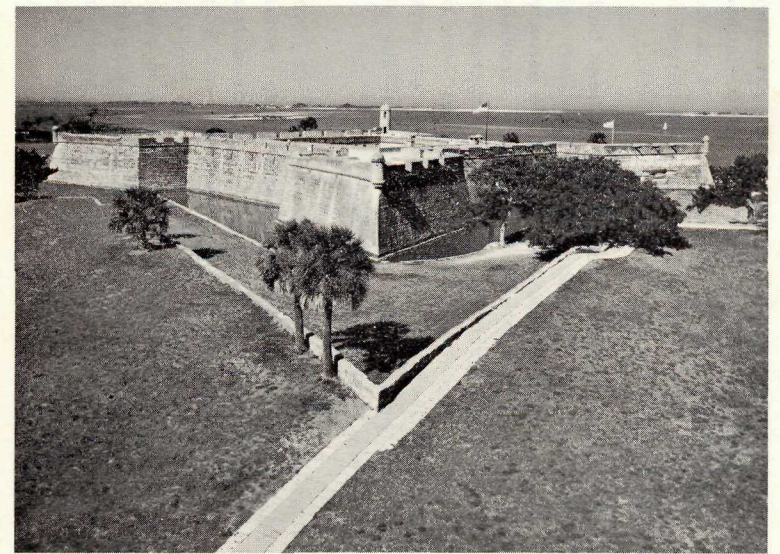
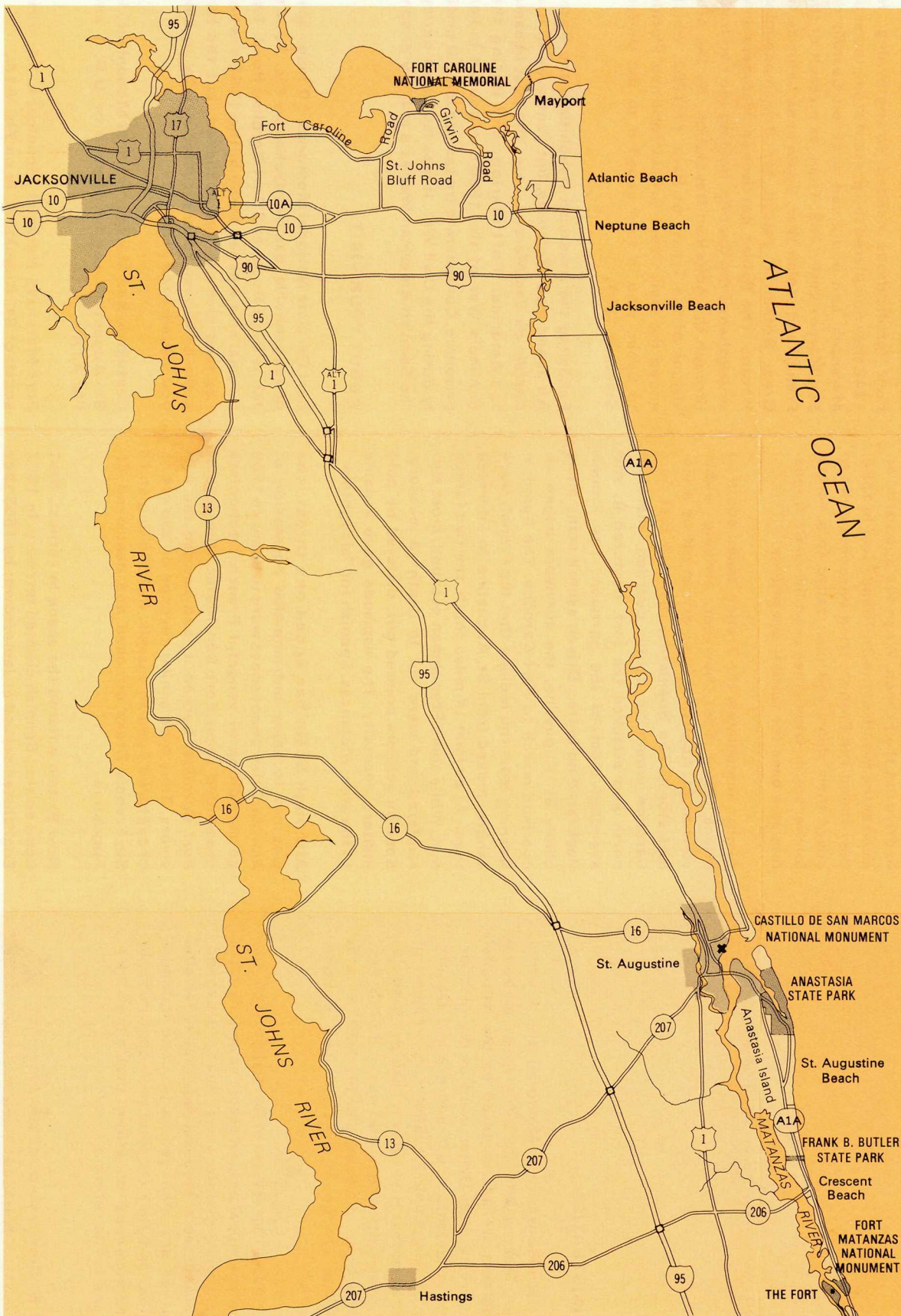
ADMINISTRATION

Fort Caroline National Memorial and Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 1 Castillo Drive, St. Augustine, Fla. 32084, is in charge of the three areas. However, a resident Management Assistant, whose address is 12713 Fort Caroline Road, Jacksonville, Fla. 32225, is in immediate charge of Fort Caroline National Memorial.

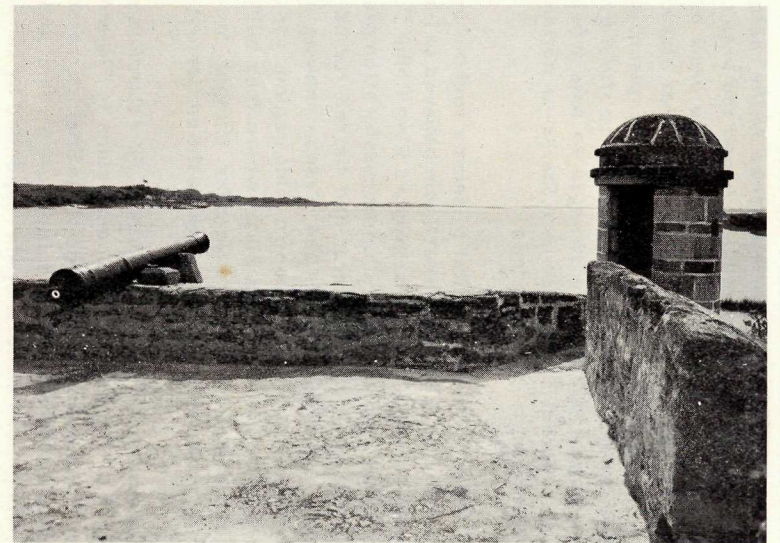
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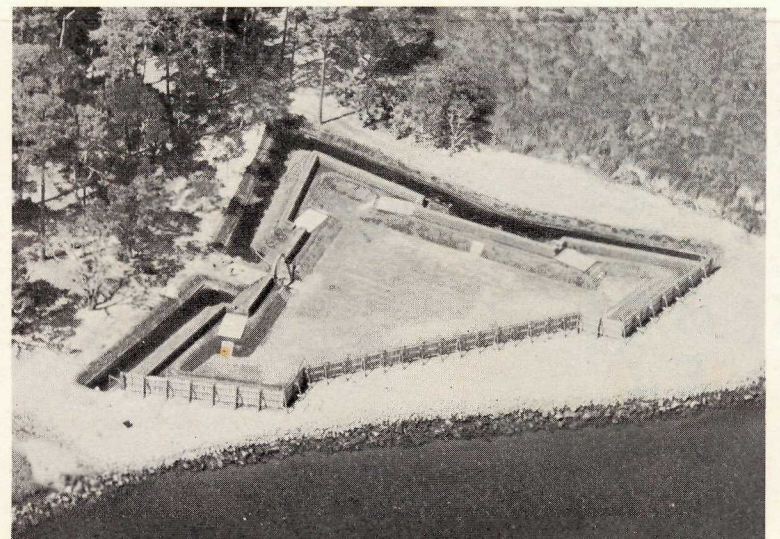




Castillo de San Marcos



Fort Matanzas



Reconstructed Fort Caroline