

*Air View of Fort Marion Looking Toward Anastasia Island*

**FORT MARION** *and*  
**FORT MATANZAS**  
**NATIONAL MONUMENTS**  
**FLORIDA**

# FORT MARION *and* FORT MATANZAS NATIONAL MONUMENTS



United States Department of the Interior

Harold L. Ickes, Secretary

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, Director



Fort Marion and Fort Matanzas are ancient fortifications dating from the Spanish Colonial period in America. They represent part of Spain's contribution to life in the New World, and are symbolic of the explorer and pioneer spirit—the will to build from the wilderness a new center of civilization and a haven against danger. In these historic structures, the Spanish people have left us a heritage that is an important cultural connection with the Latin-American nations to the south, as well as another means of understanding the diverse old ways that have contributed to the making of our modern American democracy.

## The Forts

Fort Marion, the oldest masonry fort existing in the United States, was started in 1672 by the Spanish to protect St. Augustine, the first permanent

white settlement in this country. Castillo de San Marcos, as the Spanish called the fort, became a focal point of Spanish colonial culture—Spain's last impregnable outpost on the shores of the North Atlantic. Fort Marion is a symmetrically shaped, four-sided structure, constructed in the fashion developed by Vauban, the great French military engineer. Surrounded by a moat 40 feet wide, its only entrance is across a drawbridge. The great walls are from 9 to 16 feet thick, constructed of coquina blocks, a native marine shell-rock. The coquina blocks are cemented together by an oyster lime mortar. Beautifully arched casemates and interesting cornices testify to the workmanship and imagination of the Spanish builders. The fort contains guardrooms, dungeons, living quarters for the garrison, store rooms, and a chapel. Nearly all the rooms open on a court, about 100 feet square.

Fort Matanzas is a unique 18th century fortified tower, guarding the southern water approach to St. Augustine. Situated about 16 miles south of Fort Marion and St. Augustine, Fort Matanzas is a small structure of coquina blocks about 40 feet square, located on Rattlesnake Island. As there was no moat around it, a ladder was the only means of entrance. Near the fort site the Spanish put to death about 300 French Huguenots, and it is this gruesome event of 1565 that is commemorated in the name Matanzas, Spanish word for "slaughters."

## The Struggle for Florida

Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas were constructed because of international rivalry over Florida. Spain claimed this area both by papal grant and through the discoveries (1513) of Ponce de Leon, the romantic adventurer in quest of the fountain of youth. Past Florida shores sailed the Spanish fleets, homeward bound with fabulous cargoes—gold, silver, and precious stones from the looted treasuries of the Aztec and Inca. But, operating from the Florida coast, daring corsairs could seize the slow-moving galleons, and it was this threat to Spanish commerce that led to the founding of St. Augustine as the military outpost by which

Spain held Florida for 200 years and more.

In 1564, French Huguenots had built Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River, in Florida. The next year, Spain sent Pedro Menendez de Aviles to drive out these "French heretics" and as Menendez sighted Florida on August 28, Saint Augustine's Day, the colony he established was named St. Augustine.

Menendez accomplished his mission by iron strategy. The superior force of French soldiers sailed from Fort Caroline to attack him, but they were shipwrecked and most of them later slain at Matanzas, including their leader, Jean Ribaut. The small garrison left at Caroline was taken in a surprise attack.

After the destruction of Ribaut and the French in Florida, Spain was not destined to hold her position uncontested. England soon appeared as a powerful rival. Preying on the West Indies and Florida, English buccaneers caused endless trouble. In 1586, Sir Francis Drake burned St. Augustine and its partially completed wooden fort.

In 1607, the English founded Jamestown and soon began to make settlements both to the north and south of it. Spain, with its small garrison in Florida, needed a stronger fort if she wanted to hold this territory. Two events forced

her hand. In 1668, English freebooters sacked and plundered St. Augustine, and in 1670, Charleston, only 200 miles from St. Augustine, was founded. As a result of the growing British menace, the present stone fort, Castillo de San Marcos (Fort Marion) was built at the north entrance to St. Augustine harbor. The first baptism of fire of the new stone fort came in 1702 when South Carolinians under Governor James Moore unsuccessfully besieged it. Another South Carolina attack in 1728 was likewise repulsed.

When Gen. James Oglethorpe founded Georgia in 1733, rivalry between the Spanish and English became even more acute. Troubles arose on land and sea—runaway slaves, hostile Indians, pirates! Spain, expecting war, built Fort Matanzas in 1737 and strengthened Fort Marion.

In 1740, Oglethorpe attacked St. Augustine. For 27 days during the heat of summer more than two thousand people were huddled together in the casemates and the 100-foot square court of Fort Marion.

The Spanish continued to hold Matanzas, and when the English carelessly loosened the blockade of that inlet, shallow-draft boats waiting off shore slipped over the bar, bringing desperately needed supplies and reinforce-

ments from Havana. The Tower of Matanzas had proved its worth.

The English finally became disheartened and gave up the siege. Not until 1763 did they secure Florida, exchanging it for Havana, which they had captured from the Spanish during the Seven Years' War.

England held Florida for two decades, including the critical years of the American Revolution. When Charleston, S. C., fell into British hands, prisoners, among them three signers of the Declaration of Independence—Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, and Arthur Middleton—were taken to St. Augustine, and some of them were confined in Fort Marion. By the Treaty of Paris, Florida was returned to Spain in 1783.

## Florida Acquired by the United States

Runaway slaves and Indians were still an international problem. These marauders made a practice of robbing Georgia plantation owners, who crossed the Spanish border to run them down. The difficulties were partially solved when the United States took possession of Florida in 1821, according to the terms of the Treaty of 1819 which had been negotiated with Spain for the purchase of Florida.

Fort Marion Entrance



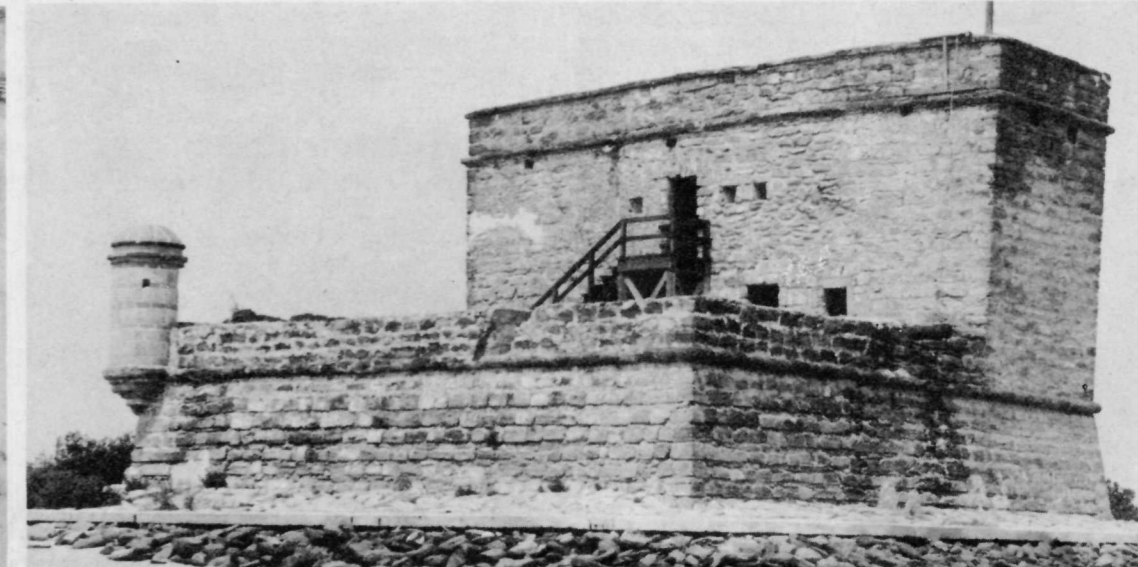
The Watchtower, Fort Marion



Visitors Studying Chapel Entrance



Fort Matanzas Guarded the South Entrance to St. Augustine





Arch Supports Ramp to Top of Fort Marion

Under the American regime, trouble with Indians increased. The Second Seminole Indian War broke out in 1835. Fort Marion became a prison. The most famous of its prisoners at this time was Osceola, the Seminole Indian leader.

Except for a short Confederate occupation, the fort continued in use as a prison or arsenal. Here, among his western Indian prisoners, Capt. R. H. Pratt conducted the experiments that led to his later founding of Carlisle Indian School. Geronimo's band of Apaches were prisoners during the 1880's. The Spanish-American War period (1898-1899) marked the last active military use of the fort, with the confinement in its musty rooms of about 150 court-martialed American soldiers.

Fort Marion has lost its usefulness for military purposes but not its charm for the visitor. The secret dungeon, the shot furnace, guardrooms, and the chapel are of continuing interest. The old castle stands proudly on the banks of the Matanzas River, vested with its mantle of antiquity. From its massive walls are seen the old city gates (now part of the national monument) and the narrow streets of the quaint town which it protected for more than two and a half centuries.

### How to Reach the Forts

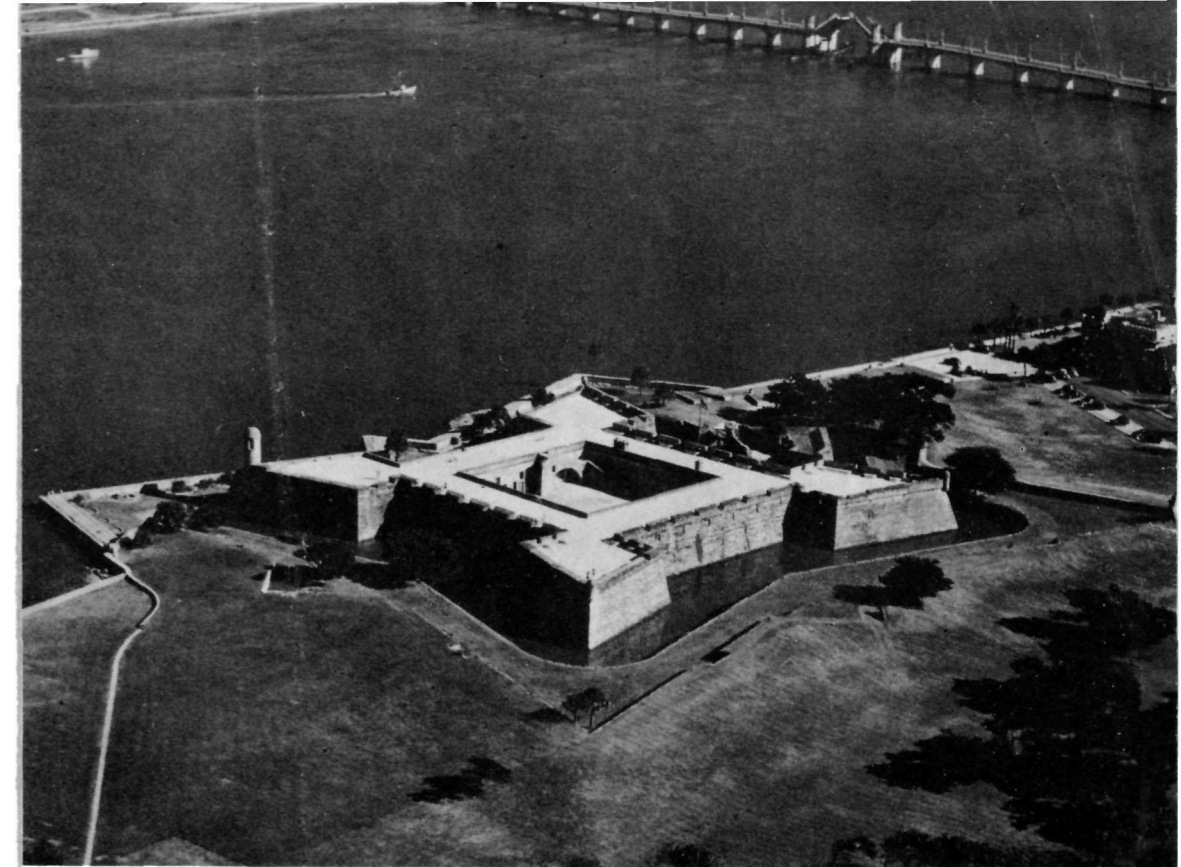
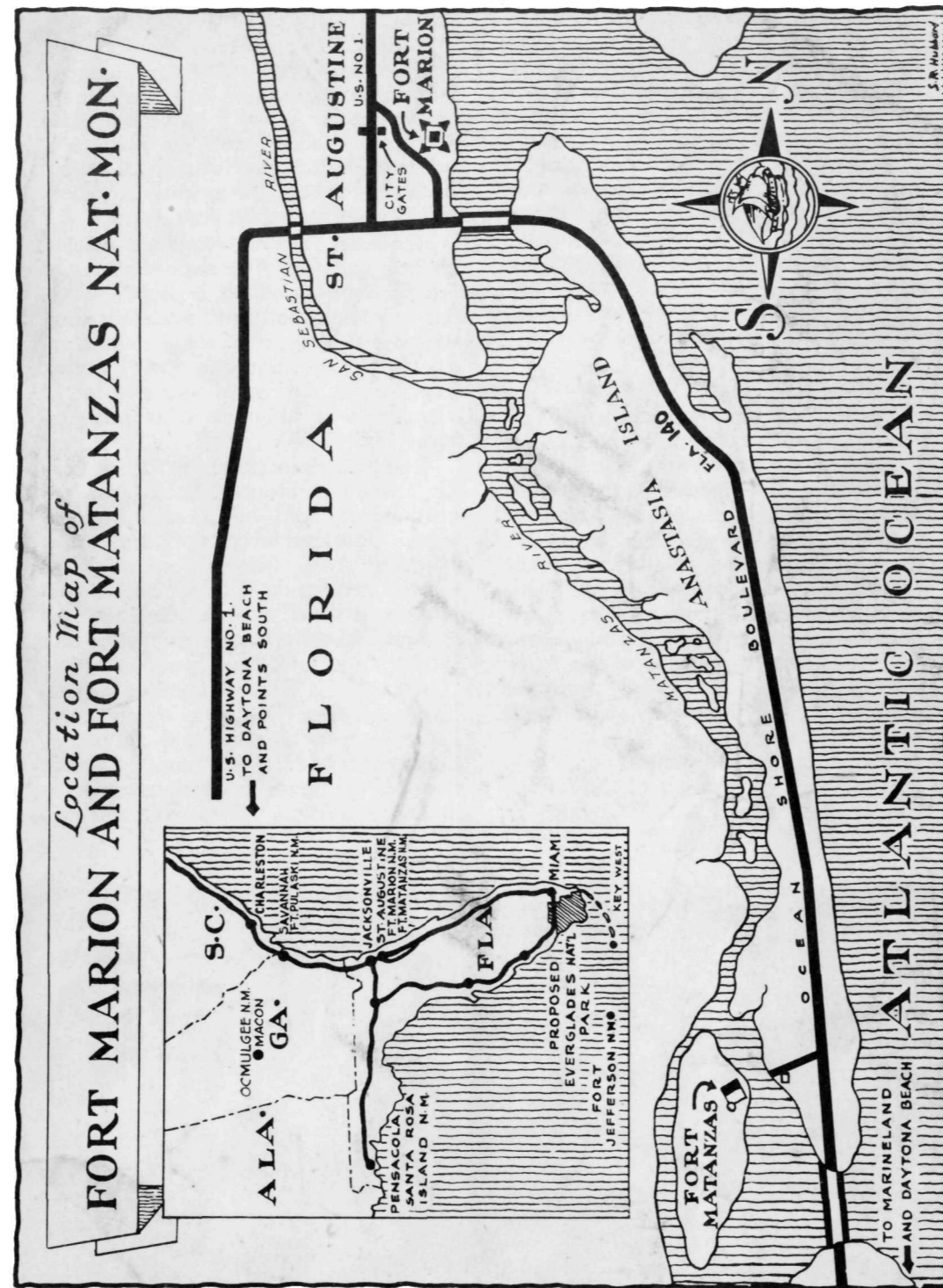
Fort Marion is readily accessible on U. S. Highway No. 1, and Fort Matanzas can be reached by the Ocean Shore Boulevard (Florida 140) to near Matanzas Inlet.

### Service to the Public

Both Fort Marion and Fort Matanzas are open the entire year, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A fee of 10c for admission to Fort Marion is charged visitors over 16 years of age, with the exception of members of school groups who are admitted free up to 18 years of age. Free guide service is available to all visitors. Organizations and groups will be given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the Superintendent. Limited museum exhibits are available at Fort Marion.

### Administration

Both Fort Marion and Fort Matanzas were declared national monuments by Presidential Proclamation of October 15, 1924. Since 1933 they have been administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. Each monument comprises about 18 acres. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Fort Marion National Monument, St. Augustine, Fla.



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Fort Marion was renamed Castillo de San Marcos by Act of Congress, June 5, 1942.

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