

Fort Caroline

NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas

NATIONAL MONUMENTS
FLORIDA



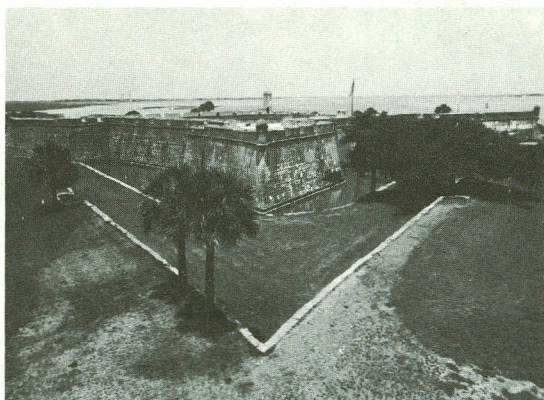
National Parks Centennial 1872-1972

The first conflict between Europeans in North America occurred four centuries ago on this 50-mile stretch of Florida's east coast. 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, alleging early exploration; and England, a late-comer in colonial expansion, who stood by waiting to develop the strength to take what she wanted. But the United States—a nation then unborn—ultimately won the land.

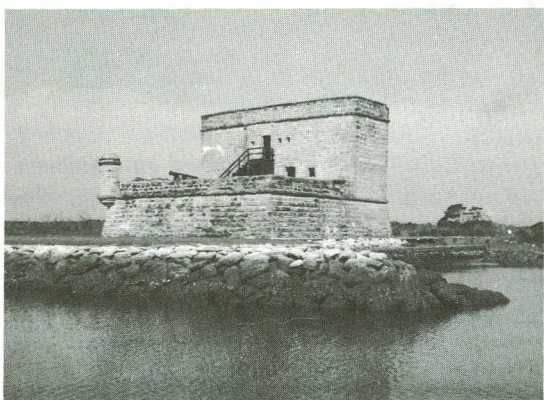
France was the first Nation to establish a foothold in the Florida wilderness that Spain had unsuccessfully attempted to settle several times. The French made a determined effort to control this region in 1564 when troops under René de Laudonnière built the sod-and-timber *Fort Caroline* 5 miles from the mouth of the St. Johns River. Hunger, mutiny, and Indian troubles plagued the settlement and it barely survived.



Reconstructed Fort Caroline



Castillo de San Marcos



Fort Matanzas

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

Almost immediately the French, led by Jean Ribault, sailed south to attack. Their fleet, however, was driven off St. Augustine by a violent storm, and the mission failed. The Spaniards, realizing that Fort Caroline would be lightly guarded, marched north and attacked the fort. They captured it and executed most of the inhabitants. The French fleet fared no better. Forced ashore by the storm many miles below St. Augustine, the survivors began an overland march to Fort Caroline. Learning from Indians that the French were heading north, the Spanish moved to intercept them. At an inlet 14 miles south of St. Augustine, the two enemies met. Some Frenchmen escaped, but most surrendered and were put to death—a cold military necessity, Spanish soldiers maintained. The episode gave a name to the area: Matanzas, Spanish for "slaughters."

Although Spain had ended one menace, she was not to enjoy unhindered possession of Florida. Other threats were to come. In 1568 an expedition of vengeful French freebooters descended upon Fort Caroline (then called Fort San Mateo), burned it, and hanged the survivors. They took revenge on the crews of captured Spanish vessels by throwing them into the sea. Then in 1586, England exercised its seapower when Sir Francis Drake attacked and destroyed St. Augustine. The townspeople began immediately to rebuild it.

Early in the 17th century, Britain entered North America in earnest, bent upon seizing Spanish-claimed territory. In 1607 Englishmen settled at Jamestown; by 1653 they had pushed south to settle in present-day North Carolina. The British again sacked St. Augustine in 1668, and this hit-and-run attack, followed by the English settlement of Charleston (in today's South Carolina) in 1670, caused Spain to build a defensive stone fort at St. Augustine—*Castillo de San Marcos*. Construction began in 1672 and continued at intervals until 1695.

After the destruction of the French at Matanzas Inlet, the Spanish built a watchtower at its mouth to warn St. Augustine of vessels approaching the city. 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. In 1686 the Spaniards repulsed another raid, this time at the *Matanzas* watchtower.

Castillo de San Marcos came under fire in 1702 during Queen Anne's War, when the English seized St. Augustine and unsuccessfully besieged the

fort. The 50-day military operation ended with the burning of the city, but Castillo emerged unscathed, thus becoming the symbolic link between the old St. Augustine of 1565 and the new city that rose from the ashes. As disputes with England continued, earthwork defense lines were built on the north and west limits of the settlement, and St. Augustine became a walled city. In 1728, a British force from (South) Carolina started to attack but was discouraged by the north defense line.

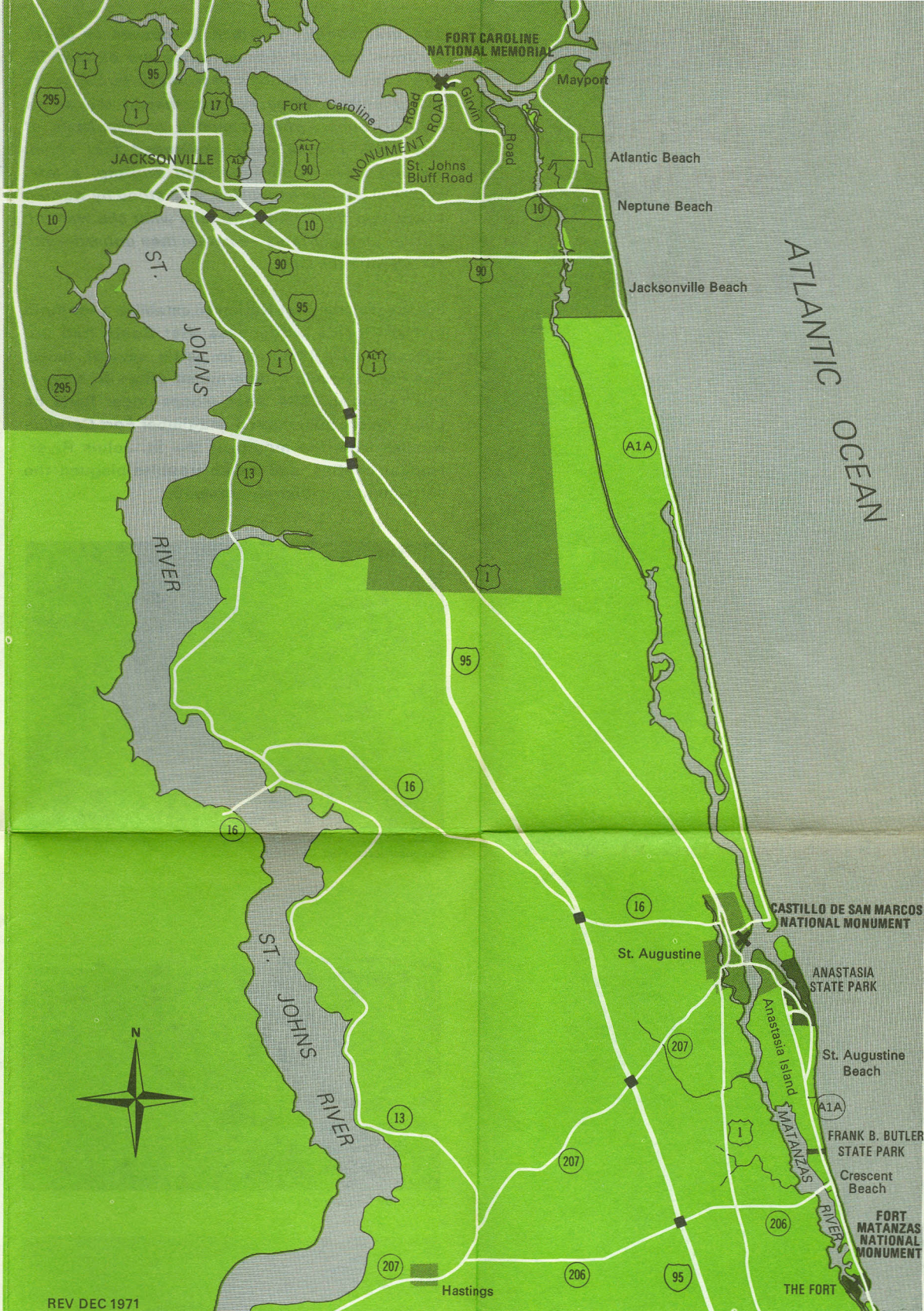
As English settlers and soldiers moved into Georgia, Spain began to modernize the Castillo. Matanzas, however, was still unfortified when the English struck in 1740. They again laid siege to the Castillo and blockaded Matanzas Inlet to prevent the Spaniards from using this avenue of communication with Havana. But the Spanish, heartened by military successes north of St. Augustine, did not waver through a 27-day, nerve-shattering, British bombardment of the fort and the city. Then, when the enemy lifted the blockade prematurely, the Spanish brought in critically needed provisions through Matanzas Inlet. Finally, with the hazards presented by the hurricane season, the British fleet sailed away and the army had no choice but to abandon the siege.

The Spanish, in turn, retaliated against Fort Frederica in Georgia in 1742, but they also met defeat. The next year, the British marched to the very outskirts of St. Augustine, in a poor imitation of their previous thrust.

The abortive 1740 attack proved to the Spanish the strategic value of Matanzas Inlet and the need for a strong outpost there. Consequently, in 1742 they completed the present stone tower at Matanzas. The Spanish also strengthened the St. Augustine fortifications by modernizing the Castillo and by constructing two additional earthwork lines to the north of it.

In 1763 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. For awhile, military operations against Georgia and South Carolina originated in St. Augustine, and three signers of the Declaration of Independence were detained here. To defend a settlement on the old Fort Carolina site, the British erected an earthwork on St. Johns Bluff. By the provisions of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, which ended the war, Great Britain returned Florida to Spain. But more important, a new Nation—the United States—became Spanish Florida's neighbor.

After the American Revolution, separatists, Indians, and renegades created incidents which led to serious Spanish-American tensions, causing Spain to cede Florida to the United States in 1821. The Castillo, which became known as Fort Marion, housed Indian prisoners during the Seminole War of the 1830's; Confederate troops occupied it briefly during the Civil War; and, later on, western Indian prisoners were held there. 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, Monument Road, St. Johns Bluff Road, and Fort Caroline Road. The original site was 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.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Caroline National Memorial and nearby 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 Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32084, is in charge of the three historical parks. Inquiries about the Castillo and Fort Matanzas should be addressed to him. A resident manager, whose address is 12713 Fort Caroline Road, Jacksonville, FL 32225, is in immediate charge of Fort Caroline National Memorial.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior