



Foundation Document Overview

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument

Florida



Contact Information

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Purpose



Built by the Spanish in St. Augustine to defend Florida and the Atlantic trade route, CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves the oldest masonry fortification in the continental United States and interprets more than 450 years of cultural intersections.



Significance

Significance statements express why Castillo de San Marcos National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Primarily constructed of locally quarried coquina stone, Castillo de San Marcos is a remarkably well-preserved example of Star Fortress military architecture and illustrates Spanish military engineering adaptation in the New World.
- Castillo de San Marcos is a tangible representation of more than 250 years of conflict between European colonial powers in what is now the southeastern United States and Spain's military struggle to protect the vital Gulf Stream trade route.
- Castillo de San Marcos was the principal fortification in the region from 1672 to 1900, having been occupied by the armies of Spain, Great Britain, the Confederate States of America, and the United States, and has meaningful connections to diverse cultures in St. Augustine and the world.
- Castillo de San Marcos, known as Fort Marion at the time, became a military prison for American Indians; including the Seminoles in 1837, Plains Indians from 1875 to 1878, and Apaches in 1886–1887.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Castillo de San Marcos.** The Castillo de San Marcos and its surrounding moat, covered way, ravelin, and glacis are the primary nationally significant cultural resources for which the park exists. The coquina fortress and its components were originally built by the Spanish in 1672–1695 to defend the harbor of St. Augustine and to provide a shelter for Spanish citizens when under attack. The fort continued to be used by a succession of nations and people, including the British, the United States, and Confederate States of America, each modifying the Castillo in different ways that contribute to the fort’s significance and appearance today.
- **City Gate Pillars.** These coquina pillars were erected in 1808 in connection with the reconstruction of the earthwork Cubo Line in the area. The City Gate was the only opening in the earthwork to the walled city of St. Augustine, which ran westward from the Castillo to the San Sebastian River.
- **U.S. Water Battery.** During the American territorial period in 1821–1845, a modification filled in the original moat on the east side of the fort in 1838–1842 and established a barbette-type gun emplacement and Hot Shot Furnace. The battery is an example of a modified work of the second system of U.S. seacoast fortifications, the federal program to upgrade the structural defensive systems and artillery of coastal forts. The present sea wall is a modification of the Spanish sea wall to meet the demands of the barbette (protective circular armor mounting) emplacement.
- **Ledger Art and American Indian Wall Art from the Incarceration Period.** During the period of American Indian incarceration at the fort, prisoners created ledger art illustrating their memories and experiences. Original drawings, created by imprisoned Plains Indians, are housed in the museum collection. In addition, two engravings are on the walls in casemate 15, and serve as tangible reminders of the Indian incarceration period.

Other Important Resources and Values

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Viewshed.** From the fort’s gun deck, the viewshed encompasses all approaches to the Castillo, both land and water, illustrating how the Castillo dominated the surrounding area. The view also includes supporting features of the defensive system such as the glacis hill, Cubo Line, and the City Gate Pillars.
- **Artillery Collection.** An artillery collection of 38 pieces, including 24 cannons, 8 howitzers, and 6 mortars, remained in place when the fort was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933. The rest of the artillery has been acquired through gift, exchange, or loan. The artillery is important for interpreting Castillo de San Marcos’ history and its evolution of artillery and adaptations in the fortifications because they closely correlate to the park’s significant time periods.
- **Archeology.** The archeological resources of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument include aboriginal and historic sites, structures and middens, features, and objects. These resources are important for the information they have provided on the history of the fort to date and the information future archeological research may reveal.



Description



Castillo de San Marcos National Monument was established as Fort Marion National Monument by Presidential Proclamation on October 15, 1924. The U.S. War Department administered the site until it was transferred to the National Park Service (NPS) in 1933. In 1942, Congress restored the fort's Spanish name, Castillo de San Marcos. Castillo de San Marcos National Monument comprises approximately 20 acres in the city of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida, just north of the city's central plaza, fronting Matanzas Bay. In colonial times, the Castillo de San Marcos sat at the northern edge of the city where it commanded the land and sea routes leading to the settlement. Today, the core area of colonial St. Augustine remains south of the park, with the modern city growing outward in all directions.

Castillo de San Marcos is the oldest remaining European fortification in the continental United States. The fortress was built by the Spanish between 1672 and 1695, just over one hundred years after the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States.

Castillo de San Marcos served primarily as an outpost of the Spanish Empire for the purpose of guarding the colonial town against invaders and protecting sea routes so that treasure ships could depart to Spain without incident.

The fort was built upon, changed, and adapted to various needs many times throughout its history and numerous owners. During the 18th century, the fort changed from Spanish control to British and back to Spanish, where it remained until Florida was purchased by the United States in 1821. In 1825, the War Department changed the name of Castillo de San Marcos to Fort Marion in honor of American Revolutionary War General Francis Marion.

Confederate forces occupied Fort Marion between January 1861 and March 1862 when it was reoccupied by forces of the United States for the duration of the Civil War. Fort Marion was also used as a prison for members of the Seminole Tribe in the 1830s and the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Caddo, Apache, and Arapaho Tribes during the 1870s and 1880s as the western migration of settlers resulted

in conflicts over land and resources and ultimately led to removal of most native peoples from their homelands by the United States Army.

The park protects 11 historic structures centered around Castillo de San Marcos (1672–1695), a diamond-shaped bastioned masonry fortification. The associated historic structures include a moat that encircles most of the fort, a ravelin (a triangular fortification), covered way, a grassy glacis, city gate pillars, seawall, water battery, hot shot furnace, and the reconstructed Cubo Line, and the fort green, which is kept open in accord with Spanish colonial military practice.

Visitors to Castillo de San Marcos National Monument have opportunities to learn about the history of the fort through ranger-led programs, self-guided tours, exhibits, and historic weapons demonstrations. During operating hours, visitors can access the upper level of the Castillo (Spanish for castle) and look out over the city of St. Augustine and Matanzas Bay.