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# OFFICIAL HISTORY

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## FORT MARION CITY GATES

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

(SECOND EDITION)

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FORT MARION FROM TOWER,  
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

Showing hot shot oven, where shot was heated red hot to fire at wooden vessels, sea wall and water battery, moat, Matanzas Bay, bridge to South Beach and Bay front of city. Fort commenced in 1565 and now one of the most historic landmarks of Spanish history in the U. S.

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## PREFACE.

In this work we have attempted a brief summary of the important events connected with the history of Fort Marion and the City Gates, and in so doing we must necessarily present the more important facts connected with the history of St. Augustine.

The facts and dates contained herein are in accordance with the best authority obtainable.

For many of these facts we are indebted to Dr. DeWitt Webb, president of the St. Augustine Institute of Science and Historical Society; to Sergeant Brown who has been in charge of Fort Marion since August, 1885; to Mr. H. S. Wyllie who has devoted much time to research work in connection with the history of St. Augustine and who is now acting as guide at Fort Marion; to Fairbanks History of Florida; and the "Unwritten History of St. Augustine", by Miss Brooks who visited Spain in the interests of the Historical Society and obtained these facts.

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## DISCOVERY OF FLORIDA.

**J**UAN PONCE DE LEON, in search of the Fountain of Youth, discovered Florida March 27, 1513. He landed at the Indian village of "Seloye" on the spot where St. Augustine now stands. He did not attempt to make a settlement but returned to Cuba where he died.

## FOUNDING OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

The first permanent settlement, on what is now the territory of the United States, was established by Pedro Menendez de Aviles on August 28, 1565, on the spot where St. Augustine now stands. His expedition, which sailed from Cadiz, Spain, in July of that year, consisted of 2600 souls, embarked on board 34 vessels, the largest of which was of 1000 tons burden.

There being great danger of attack by both the French and English, work was at once commenced on a fort, or castle, which they called San Juan de Pinos. This structure was built of logs and earth.

## ATTACKS.

In 1586 Sir Francis Drake arrived off St. Augustine. He immediately landed his troop on Anastasia Island, intending to make an attack the next day. During the night, however, the Spaniards fled from the castle, leaving behind 13 or 14 great pieces of brass ordinance and 2000 pounds sterling, which had been sent to pay the soldiers. Upon learning that the soldiers had fled Drake immediately crossed the bay and plun-

dered and destroyed the fort. The following day as they were marching toward the town, which was then beyond Maria Sanchez Creek, southwest of where the Ponce de Leon Hotel now stands, a Spaniard fired from ambush, killing Drake's sergeant-major. In retaliation for this Drake burned the town and destroyed the gardens.

After the departure of Drake the Spaniards began work on another fort. This was built of wood and earth, in the shape of an octagon. A few years later coquina came into general use and was largely used in strengthening and enlarging the fortifications.

### **JOHN DAVIS.**

In 1665, the famous pirate, John Davis, plundered and burned the town, but obtained little booty. The castle was not taken, but after his departure the plans were changed and the work of reconstructing the castle as it stands today was begun.

### **GOVERNOR MOORE.**

In 1702 Governor Moore, of South Carolina, sent an expedition, consisting of 600 militia and the same number of Indians, against St. Augustine. Part of the expedition under Colonel Daniels came by land, attacked and took immediate possession of the town, the troops and inhabitants retiring to the fort. Governor Moore arrived shortly after with a naval force, but, owing to the lack of heavy siege guns, no impression on the fort could be made. Colonel Daniels was then sent to Jamaica for the necessary artillery, but during



his absence two Spanish vessels appeared before the harbor and, fearing his retreat might be cut off, Moore, after a siege of three months, abandoned the undertaking and returned to South Carolina. Before he retired, however, he committed the barbarity of burning the town—making the third time St. Augustine had been reduced to ashes by an invading force.

### COLONEL PALMER.

In 1727 Col. Palmer of Carolina, crossed the Attamaha river with 300 white troopers and a large band of Indians. He laid waste all northern Florida, "To the very gates of St. Augustine" (Fairbanks). This is the first mention of the gates. It is evident therefore that they were built between the time of Governor Moore's raid in 1702 and Palmer's attack in 1727.

### GOVERNOR OGLETHORPE.

In 1740 Governor Oglethorpe, of Georgia, besieged St. Augustine. On June 12th he opened fire with five batteries located on the island and mainland across the bay. The garrison at that time consisted of about 750 men, while the total population of all classes was about 2100. The inhabitants all took refuge in the fort, where they were compelled to remain for 38 days, during the heat of the summer, until the siege was raised on July 20th. The bombardment did little damage owing to the spongy nature of the material of which the walls are constructed. Many holes where cannon balls entered the walls on the water side may still be seen.

## REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Florida, which was in the possession of England from 1763 to 1783, remained loyal to that country during the Revolutionary War. After the fall of Charleston 61 gentlemen of high standing, believed by the British to be promoters of the revolution, were sent to St. Augustine as prisoners. A number of these patriots, including General Gadsen, were closely confined in the fort for nearly a year. The others were allowed the freedom of the city, but were treated with great indignity and contempt.

## FLORIDA CEDED TO UNITED STATES.

On the 10th of July, 1821, the flag of Spain, which for two and a half centuries had waived over St. Augustine, was lowered forever from the castle and in its place rose the Stars and Stripes.

## THE CIVIL WAR.

On March 11th, 1862, the fort was surrendered without resistance to Commodore Rogers, of the Union forces, and remained garrisoned by the Federal troops until the end of the war.

## PRISONERS OF WAR.

In 1875 Comanche, Kiowa and Arapaho Indians to the number of 77 were confined in Fort Marion. In 1886 five hundred Apache prisoners of war were sent

to Fort Marion, where they were kept for more than a year, after which they were transferred to Alabama. During the Spanish-American War of 1898 it was used as a military prison.

### COMMENCEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT FORT.

When the work of reconstruction was begun in 1665, prisoners from Mexico were sent to assist in the work. Spanish governors and soldiers came and went and still the work went on. It was not until 1756, ninety-one years later, that the engineer in charge could place over the entrance the coat of arms of Spain with the inscription which, translated, reads:

“ Don Fernandez the Sixth being King of Spain, and Field Marshal Don Alonzo Fernandez de Herreda, Governor and Captain-General of the City of St. Augustine, Florida, and its province, this fortress was finished in the year 1756. The works were directed by the Captain-Engineer, Don Pedro de Brazas y Garay.”

During all the Spanish rule the structure was known as San Marco Castle. After coming into possession of the United States the name was changed to Fort Marion, in honor of General Francis Marion, of Revolutionary fame.

### · BUILT OF COQUINA.

The fort is built of coquina (a shell rock of natural formation), which was obtained from quarries two miles below the present lighthouse, on what is known

as the Old Quarry Road, and which will richly repay a visit. The blocks of cut stone were transported down Quarry Creek and across the Bay on barges, and carried to their present position with cross-bars. Notwithstanding the fact that most of the work was done by slaves, we are told that upwards of thirty million dollars were expended on the work and the King of Spain, on learning of this, exclaimed, "Its curtains and bastions must be made of solid silver."

### BASTIONS AND TOWERS.

Fort Marion has four nearly equal bastions (the triangular-shaped corners), known as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Augustine and St. Charles, and four connecting walls called curtains. On three of the bastions are sentry towers, while on that to the northeast stands a high watch tower, commanding a view of both land and water. The walls are about 12 feet thick at the base, 9 feet at the top, and about 25 feet high.

### PLAZA, RAMP AND TERREPLEIN.

The covering over the space between the inner and outer walls is called the terreplein, and is about 40 feet wide. Upon it the guns were mounted. Around the outer edge of the terreplein is a wall three feet thick and six feet high, known as the parapet. This was pierced for 64 guns. On the waterfront the parapet was lower. The ascent to the terreplein is up an incline plane known as the ramp, recently converted into steps. The upper part of the ramp is supported by a peculiar shaped arch, remarkable for the fact that it was constructed without a keystone. The plaza, or inner court,

is 100 feet square, and the casemates, with one or two exceptions, open into it. There are 26 casemates, five dungeons and one magazine. The only entrance is through the sallyport in the middle of the south curtain.

### CASEMATES.

The two casemates at the right of the entrance were guard rooms and contain fireplaces. Leading off from the inner of these rooms is a large dungeon which was used as the general prison.

The casemate at the left of the entrance was the commander's quarters, while the two rooms leading off from it were used by the other officers of his staff.

### COURT ROOM—(OSCEOLA).

In the southwest corner is the court room, where the raised platform for the officers of the court may still be seen. In this room, in 1837, the famous Indian chief, Osceola, together with Coacoochee and Talmus Hadjo, were imprisoned. At the rear of the room are the notches which the two latter dug in the masonry to enable them to climb to the ventilator 18 feet above the floor. Through the horizontal bars, 8 inches apart, in this ventilator they worked their way and dropped to the moat, about 25 feet below, from where they made their escape. Osceola refused to accompany them, saying that a white man had unjustly imprisoned him and a white man should set him free. Near the door are three notches dug by him in the wall to enable him to climb to the window ledge over the door, where he could sit and look out through the iron bars onto the

court below. One can imagine nothing more pathetic than the sad face of this brave warrior as he sat there looking out through the iron bars of this cruel prison, waiting and hoping for the day when his unjust imprisonment would be ended and he might again enjoy the freedom of his native wilds—the day which never came. Osceola was captured when under the protection of a flag of truce on October 22, 1837. He was confined in Fort Marion until January 1, 1838, when he was transferred to Fort Moultry in Charleston Harbor, where he died, broken-hearted, on the 30th of that month.

### **COUNCIL CHAMBER AND POWDER MAGAZINE.**

In the northwest corner of the court is the room used as the council chamber. Leading from this is a dungeon, which was used as the powder magazine. At one side near the top of the magazine is a large niche with a small opening looking into the council room, but not visible from that side. It is supposed that this was so arranged in order that the Commandant could listen to the proceedings of the council without their knowledge.

### **CHAPEL.**

At the north side of the court, directly opposite the sallyport, is the chapel. The entrance to this room was very ornamental. This work, which had become nearly obliterated by the action of the elements, has recently been reconstructed by the war department. Great care being taken in following the original plans which were

obtained from the Spanish Government. Entering we see on each side the niches for holy water; just beyond, on the right, pieces of cedar imbedded in the masonry mark the place where the confessional was fastened to the wall. At the rear is a raised stone platform for the altar, and above the altar a large niche where stood the patron saint, Saint Augustine. Looking up we see near the spring of the arch the ends of the old timbers which supported the platform of the choir. Directly overhead, near the middle of the room, is a square hole from which hung an immense wooden cross called the rood. On either side of the chapel are doorways, through the iron bars of which prisoners could hear mass before being executed. The bars were necessary, as, at that time, if a prisoner gained access to a chapel and knelt at the altar, he could claim the right of sanctuary.

### SECRET DUNGEONS.

At the northeast corner of the court is a room called the "pennancarrah." On the south wall of this room can be seen the marks where six crosses were fastened to the wall. Under these crosses prisoners were suspended in chains in such a manner they could neither sit or lie down. In this room were also several shrines. At the north side of this room we enter a dungeon, 30 feet long on the west side, 16 feet on the east, 17 feet on the south and 20 feet on the north. This, we are told, was a prison. Through an opening at the north side of this room we enter a room five feet wide at the east end, seven feet at the west, 20 feet long and 15 feet high. This room was used as a torture chamber. Several feet above the floor are the holes

where the rotting timbers of a rack are said to have been found. The rack was a frame on which a man was fastened so that when the frame was stretched by means of levers the man's joints could be separated. If carried to the extreme he would be torn limb from limb. From this room we find a small opening 36 inches wide by 30 inches high. This opening had been carefully walled up in such a manner as to almost baffle discovery, but was found by Lieutenant Tuttle and Colonel Dancy in 1835. Passing through this opening we enter a dungeon 20 feet long, 13 feet wide, and about seven feet high. In this dismal place, where not the faintest ray of daylight ever penetrates, and far from the sounds of the outside world, were found crumbled human bones. No one disputes the finding of these bones, but historians disagree somewhat as to the position in which they were found. In one corner is the outline of a hole called the oublette, which tradition tells us extended down to quicksand and was used for the disposal of the dead. A visit to these rooms, which were accidentally discovered by the United States Government in 1835, should convince the most skeptical of the cruelty of those early days.

### MOAT.

Around the fort is a moat 40 feet wide which is now filled in to the depth of about six feet in sand. Protecting the entrance in the barbican, which the waters of the moat formed into an island; access being gained to the barbican and thence to the fort by means of drawbridges. Inside the drawbridge was the portcullis, which ran in a groove still to be seen, directly above the portcullis may still be seen a hole, some five



or six inches in diameter, through which melted lead could be poured upon the heads of invaders, should they succeed in crossing the drawbridge which, however, they never did. Outside the moat on three sides is the covered way, a narrow level space for the massing of troops, which widens in spots called places of arms. Outside of all, except on the water front, is the glacis, an earthen embankment leading up to the fort and so constructed that the guns on the walls could sweep every foot of it.

### HOT SHOT OVEN.

The hot shot oven and water battery were constructed by the United States Government in 1835-42, the object being to heat shot white hot in the oven and fire them from the mortars at the vessels of an approaching enemy. The present sea wall was constructed at this time at an expense of one hundred thousand dollars.

In the walls of the fort, both front and back of the hot shot oven, can be seen the bullet holes where prisoners were executed.

### CITY GATES AND EARLY DEFENSES OF 1702—ST. AUGUSTINE—1727.

St. Augustine being surrounded by water on three sides, there was little danger of an attack except from the north. To guard against this, three lines of defense were constructed across the peninsula from the Matanzas to the San Sebastian Rivers. Fort Moosa

was located on the Matanzas River, about two and one-half miles north of the present postoffice. This fort was of considerable size. It was a complete fortress with four bastions, moat, drawbridge, etc., and garrisoned at one time with 133 men. A line of defense extended from this fort to the San Sebastian. The second line of defense extended across the peninsula near what is now Myrtle Avenue. The inner and last line ran from Fort Marion to the San Sebastian and the present CITY GATES were then the only entrance to the city. The gates as we see them today were built of stone, but the rest of the wall was of logs stood on end. On the outer side of this wall was a moat or deep ditch (a section of this may still be seen near the San Sebastian) filled with water, and the approach to the gates was over a drawbridge which was pulled up at night. An additional line of defense consisting of a breastworks of earth having on its summit several rows of Spanish bayonets planted so closely as to be almost impenetrable extended from the northern wall south on what is now the line of Cordova Street to a point almost abreast the Barracks, from where it ran east and joined the Matanzas.

Fort Marion is in all respects a castle built after the plan of those of the Middle Ages, and is today one of the best preserved specimens of the military architecture of its time. It has withstood many sieges and proven itself capable on all occasions of resisting the enemy. Its casemates and dungeons are viewed with wonder and amazement by more than one hundred thousand visitors annually.

## ST. AUGUSTINE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

- 1513—March 27, Florida discovered by Ponce de Leon.  
1564—July, Huguenot settlement on St. Johns River.  
1565—Aug. 28th, St. Augustine settled by Menendez.  
1565—Massacre of 350 French by Menendez, on Anastasia Island.  
1580—Coquina discovered on Anastasia Island.  
1586—Sir Francis Drake attacks St. Augustine.  
1638-40—Appalachian Indians captured and sent to St. Augustine to labor on public works.  
1665—Attack on St. Augustine by Pirate John Davis.  
1665—Present fort commenced.  
1690—Commencement of first sea wall.  
1702—Governor Moore, of Carolina, attacks St. Augustine.  
1702-27—City Gates constructed.  
1740—Gov. Oglethorpe, of Georgia, besieges fort.  
1740-43—Fort Matanzas built.  
1756—Completion of Fort Marion,  
1763—Florida ceded to England.  
1767—Nicholas Turnbull brings Minorcans to Florida.  
1776—Minorcans freed by courts from contract with Turnbull and settle at St. Augustine.  
1783—Florida re-ceded by Great Britain to Spain.  
1793—St. Augustine Cathedral begun.  
1812—Spanish monument erected in plaza.  
1821—July 12th, Stars and Stripes raised over Fort Marion.  
1833—Protestant Episcopal Church consecrated.  
1835-42—Present sea wall built by U. S. Government.  
1835—Massacre of 139 men under Major Dade.  
1835-42—Seminole war.  
1837—Escape of Coacooche and Hadjo from Fort Marion.

- 1861—Fort Marion seized by Florida troops.  
1862—March 11, Fort Marion occupied by Federal troops.  
1872—Confederate monument erected in plaza.  
1887—Cathedral burned.  
1885-87—Ponce de Leon Hotel built.  
1886-87—Band of Apaches prisoners of war at Fort Marion.  
1887—Methodist Church built.  
1888—Cathedral rebuilt.  
1890—Presbyterian Church built.  
1906—Y. M. C. A. building erected.  
1913—Chamber of Commerce organized.  
1914—April 2nd, the big fire.  
1915—St. Augustine Historical Society and Institute of Science moved into their home, Fort Marion.  
1915—John Anderson Highway completed, between St. Augustine and Jacksonville.  
1915—July 17th City adopts Commission Form of Government.  
1915—July, New \$100,000, 18-hole Golf Course, located just north of City, in progress.



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For a more complete history of the points of interest in St. Augustine see Historical St. Augustine, the new guide book by the same publishers. Fully illustrated with 62 color plates.

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*St. Augustine Institute of  
Science and  
Historical Society*

*HOME IN OLD FORT MARION*

**W**HERE the Society maintains, and is continually adding to its valuable and interesting collection of historic relics. Competent and courteous guide service is maintained at the Fort from 8:00 a. m. to 5:00 p. m. on week days, of which visitors so desiring may avail themselves. These guides receive no fixed fee but the compensation which the society shall receive for their work is left to the discretion of the visitor.

Having recently lost its valuable collection by fire the Society is now actively engaged in accumulating another and with this object in view urges, that anyone possessing any old relics, documents, etc., kindly turn them over to the Society, either as a loan or donation for safe keeping in this fire-proof structure. Any donations for the purchase of historic relics will also be greatly appreciated.

*St. Augustine Institute of Science  
and Historical Society,*

*St. Augustine, Florida*

