

11.1 Castillo FL DANP17_C_2Mb

The Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is a centerpiece of history in St. Augustine. Built in the late 1600s, this icon of conflict for the colonial era covers 20 plus acres, including the historic St. Augustine city gate, built in 1808. The city gate is part of a wall the Spanish built surrounding the city to protect residents from a host of different marauders who had sacked the town in the past. In the 21st century, the city gate leads to the developed tourist section in Old Town.

Across the law toward the harbor, Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest masonry fort in American. It was the 10th fort built to protect St. Augustine. The previous nine were all wood with relatively short longevity. It took 23 years to complete and was the largest Spanish fort built in the Americas. Large enough to fit the entire town when an attack was imminent.

My name is Julie Patterson. I'm a new Ranger here at the Castillo. I volunteered here for five years before I was hired. And my job is to interpret living history, both formally and informally, which is what I'm doing now. Right now, I'm walking the gun deck like a soldier would have been doing in the 1700s in the heyday of this fort.

Tell us about this fort and what was it like in its heyday?

The fort was built between 1672 and 1695. It's the oldest stone fortification in the United States. There were nine wooden forts here in St. Augustine before that.

This was built because, for a number of reasons, the wooden forts didn't survive. Was set up so that if, under siege, the entire population of the city of St. Augustine could come in and be safe from the enemy. Was put to that test first in 1702, again in 1740.

I guess, we say it was the heyday. That was the big time here. Those were the big sieges. Those were the two times that the English strongly attacked this fort, both times

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giving up and going home, saving the city of St. Augustine. Although, unfortunately, in 1702, they burned the city before they left.

Spain was a very rich country during the 1700s. They controlled 7/10 of the known world. So St. Augustine, although it was a poor Presidio, it was part of a very strong nation. Part of the history that is sometimes even more forgotten than St. Augustine in itself. We had the first free black settlement here in St. Augustine in 1738.

Escaped slaves from the English colonies, if they were able to make it this far, they were welcomed into Fort Mose. And there were only two things asked of them-- that they swore allegiance to the crown and they became Catholic. So here in St. Augustine, we feel like the Underground Railroad started much earlier. It started here with us. And we're very proud of that part of our history.

[MUSIC PLAYING]
