

St. Augustine Background

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As I was researching Florida history (with a particular interest in Spanish settlement, the Seminole Wars, and the impact of pirates in Florida) I found interesting information on St. Augustine and its environs. This included St Augustine, Amelia Island, and Fernandina. In doing so, I felt that the information gathered below would be of interest to those members of the Marco Men's Club who would be touring St. Augustine next December. This research came from multiple resources, some of which contradicted each other. However, the essence of history is consistent.

Florida and St. Augustine - Spanish Discovery

- 1420: Prince Henry of Portugal gathered maps of the Western Ocean (the Atlantic) from the geographers of Europe, including the Knights Templar. Prince Henry was known as "Henry the Navigator". He believed that the Earth was round. Henry the Navigator's Portuguese maps were made available to Columbus, since he married Henry the Navigator's daughter. A map, dated 1435, was discovered showing 4 islands to the west. One map showed Florida and was entitled Salvagio (the Savage Isle).
- 1513: Ponce de Leon sailed 3 ships from Puerto Rico to the Bahamas. In 11 days, he landed in Guanahani, the first island discovered by Columbus. He was the first discoverer of the Florida peninsula, looking for gold and slaves, but found none. Arriving during the Easter season, Ponce de Leon named the peninsula "La Florida" because it was discovered it in the time of the Flowerly Festival.
- 1565: St. Augustine was established. It is the oldest permanently occupied city in America. The third Thanksgiving was held in St. Augustine, which was shared with the Timucua Indians. It also had the first church, hospital, school, court of law, market and first city plan. Later, when Florida became a territory, there were two counties, West Florida and East Florida. St. Augustine was the capital of East Florida. After 1565, there were more than 30 Spanish cattle ranches along the St. John's River from Gainesville to the Suwannee River. St. Augustine was connected to Gainesville by the Camino Royal (the Royal Road) which supported the Franciscan missions.
- 1606: The first African American birth in North America was in St. Augustine.
- 1669: Escaped slaves built a settlement outside of St. Augustine, calling it Ft. Mose.
- 1818: Andrew Jackson built Fort Gadsden by the ruins of the Negro Fort. He attacked the Indians at Lake Miccosukee burned their villages and stole their cattle. Then, with 4,800 men, including 1,500 Creeks, he marched against the 1,000 Seminoles, destroying their settlements and crops. This ended the First Seminole War. Jackson went on to consolidate control of West Florida. In doing so, he conquered Pensacola, leaving St. Augustine as the only city under Spanish control.

St. Augustine – General

- 1763: With the Treaty of Paris after the French and Indian War, Spain ceded St. Augustine and all of Florida to the British; since Spain had been allies of France. Britain created 2 colonies – East Florida (capital, St. Augustine) and West Florida (capital, Pensacola). These became England's 14th and 15th colonies in America.
- 1776: During the Revolutionary War, Tory refugees from Savannah, Charleston, and other seaboard cities poured into St. Augustine.
- 1827: 3 acres of land in St. Augustine were deeded to the United States to construct a lighthouse.
- 1845: Florida became the 27th U.S. state. It came in as a "slave state" while, at the same time, Iowa came in as a "free state".

St. Augustine and Environs - French and Spanish invasions

- 1562: The French Commander, Jean Ribault, landed near the mouth of the St. John's River. He left behind a small garrison at the Charles Fort near Port Royal Sound in South Carolina, and then sailed back to France. It was a perfect base for attacking and plundering the Spanish treasure ships. The French sailed between Hispaniola, Cuba, and La Caroline.
- 1564: Frenchman, Rene de Goulaine returned with 200 soldiers, women, children and artisans to set up a permanent settlement on land claimed by Spain. The area was named La Caroline (land of Charles) after King Charles IX. La Caroline was about 40 miles north of St. Augustine. It began as a commercial venture, but with the French persecution of the Protestants (Huguenots), it also became a colony of refuge. The Timucan Indians helped build the village and Fort Caroline. Fort Caroline, near the mouth of the St. John's River was France's first attempt at a permanent settlement. When relations with the Native Americans soured, the colonists faced starvation. Many mutiny parties left to seek their fortune elsewhere. When some were captured by the Spanish, the Spanish became aware of the French presence in Florida.
- 1564: When Phillip II of Spain found out that Ribault had returned to Florida, Admiral Pedro Menendez de Avilles was sent ashore at the northern tip of the Florida River to get rid of the French. Menendez set up a base in St. Augustine, south of Fort Caroline. Named for King Charles IX, it became the heart of the Spanish coastal defenses in Florida. He named the settlement St. Augustine because he came ashore on the festival day of San Augustin. He brought cattle to feed the garrison, brought sugar cane and planted orange groves.
- 1565: Menendez attacked the French at Fort Caroline and renamed it San Mateo. The surviving French colonists were set to return to France. Ribault, however, returned to the mouth of the St. John's River instead, with a relief expedition of supplies and 600 soldiers, settlers, women, and children. Ribault sent a party to attack the Spanish at St. Augustine, but a hurricane scattered his ships and left them shipwrecked between Daytona Beach and Cape Canaveral. When Menendez found out that the French had left Fort Caroline unprotected, he sent an army of 500 soldiers back and attacked the shipwrecked French soldiers. He massacred about 350 of them and beheaded Ribault. The only ones saved were those that were Catholics or musicians, sparing only 60 women and children. The

French leader, Laudunniere, escaped with 40-50 citizens and sailed back to France, while the Spanish retained Fort Caroline and defended it.

- 1568: The French returned under Dominique de Gourgues, attacking and burning Fort Caroline, killing the Spanish that didn't escape. Those who escaped sailed back to Spain.
- 1569: Menendez then came back again and killed the French in an area known as "Matanzas" which means "Place of Slaughter". Spain rebuilt Fort Caroline but then abandoned it.
- 1639: The Spanish opened a sea route between the St. Marks River and St. Augustine. They built Fort San Marcos de Apalachee for protection. However, in 1682, the pirates attacked, showing how vulnerable the Spanish outposts were.

St. Augustine and Environs - English Invasions

- 1498: England sent John Cabot to discover new lands. Cabot sailed southeast and touched land in Carolina, then moved down the coast to Florida. England was upset that the Pope cut them off from having a chance at reaching India or Cathay.
- 1586: Sir Francis Drake (English) arrived in St. Augustine and destroyed the city. He was known by the English as "The Prince of the Privateers". When Drake destroyed St Augustine, he took the Spanish tools and implements for Sir Walter Raleigh to use in Roanoke, Virginia.
- 1658: The English settled in South Carolina and again raided St Augustine in 1665 and 1668.
- 1738 The British sanctioned the first free African American settlement at Fort Mose, north of St. Augustine. It was a forerunner to the Underground Railroad as a sanctuary for slaves.
- 1740: Governor Oglethorpe of Georgia blockaded St. Augustine for a 39-day siege and destroyed Fort Mose. He attacked again in 1742 but was driven away.

Castillo de San Marcos (Fort Marion)

- 1695: The Castillo de San Marcos (the Castle of St. Marks) was constructed in St. Augustine. It was named after St. Mark, a disciple of Jesus. This was the 10th Spanish fort on the site. The Spanish built Castillo de San Marcos to defend St. Augustine against the French and English threats, but was exposed to the south through the Matanzas River. Eventually, it was renamed re-named Fort Marion after Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, famous in the Revolutionary War. During the Revolutionary War British loyalists sought refuge in St. Augustine. Fort Marion was controlled by the Confederacy during the Civil War, held Indian prisoners in the 1870's, and was a military prison during the Spanish-American War.

Fort Matanzas

- 1742: The Spanish built Ft. Matanzas, south of St. Augustine. St. Augustine was the heart of the Spanish coastal defense in Florida. Fort Matanzas guarded the southern approach to St. Augustine, protecting the Matanzas Inlet from a British invasion.
- 1742: Governor Oglethorpe tried a second time to attack, but again failed.

1821: The United States took possession of Fort Matanzas, but it was so deteriorated it could not be used.

Amelia Island

1562: Amelia Island was founded on May 3rd by Frenchman, Jean Ribault. He named the island Isle de Mai.

1565-1763: The Spanish controlled the island with the founding of St. Augustine by Menendez. The island was named Santa Maria, derived from the Spanish mission.

1702: The British, under Governor Oglethorpe destroyed the mission, and renamed it Amelia after the daughter of King George III.

1777-1778: American revolutionary forces invaded Amelia Island.

1783-1821: Britain ceded Amelia Island back to Spain.

1794-1795: The French illegally occupied the island.

1807: President Jefferson's Embargo Act closed U.S. ports to foreign shipping. With that, Amelia Island became a hotbed for smuggling.

1812: During the War of 1812, American patriots overthrew the Spanish.

1816: Spain demanded that Amelia Island be returned. In order to protect Fernandina, Spain completed construction of Fort San Carlos,.

1817: After the War of 1812 when the British left Florida, the east coast was left unprotected. General Gregor MacGregor had visions of taking over Florida. He had fought with Simon Bolivar in the liberation of Venezuela. With an army of 150 soldiers, he took over the fort on Amelia Island and called the island a republic. However, he ran out of money and his men deserted him. He then sold Amelia Island to the pirate, Louis Aury for \$50,000, who turned it into a haven for pirates, slave smugglers and other criminals. This lasted only months, when the Spanish took Amelia Island.

1820: Commodore David Porter of the U.S. Naval Squadron eradicated the pirates from the Gulf and the Caribbean. Between 1815 and 1823 there were 3,000 acts of piracy in the West Indies and along the Florida coast.

1821: Spain ceded Florida back to the United States, who regained control of Amelia Island

1847: The United States built Fort Clinch on Amelia Island at the mouth of the St. John's River. It was named after General Duncan Lamont Clinch, a prominent figure during the Second Seminole War. It was built to protect the deep-water port of Fernandina.

1861-1862: During the Civil War, Confederate troops took over Fort Clinch; but Federal troops regained it in 1862. They occupied it for the remainder of the Civil War.

Fernandina

1492: Fernandina was named by Christopher Columbus as a tribute to King Ferdinand of Spain.

1565: The first Spanish outpost was constructed.

1567: Fernandina was settled, making it the second oldest continuously occupied city in the United States. It was a conduit for smuggling slaves into the U.S.

1875-1900: These were the Golden Years of Fernandina. It prospered from tourism with steamships coming from New York, the shipping of lumber and phosphates, as well as its use for naval storage. During the Spanish American War, gun running from Fernandina was common, until the United States stopped it. In the early 20th Century, the shrimping, the oyster and crab industries prospered until the Depression.

Henry Flagler

1888: Henry Flagler opened the Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine. He bought the Augustine and Halifax Railroad, which became the Florida East Coast Railroad. After the Spanish-American War and the subsequent quarantine, land was being bought up along the East Coast. Cities along the railroad grew as the railroad expanded southward. The railroad created the towns of Ft. Lauderdale, Lantana, Lake Worth, Boynton Beach, Del Rey, Boca Raton, Deerfield, Pompano, Hallandale, Onus, Dania and Homestead. Flagler built luxury hotels in these new towns along the way for the guests.

1895: Flagler's railroad reached Miami.

1912: The Florida East Coast Railway eventually connected Jacksonville to Key West.

1968: The Ponce de Leon Hotel became Flagler College.