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Funding for this publication provided by the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council.

◀ Hand carved oak pillars in the former Hotel Ponce de León (now Flagler College)
Front cover: The kitchen house at the González-Álvarez House
Back cover: The Castillo de San Marcos National Monument



Welcome to St. Johns County, Florida

Home of St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra

This **Very Important Place** is where America's iconic culture began. In 1513—more than 100 years before the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock—Spanish explorer Ponce de León landed in St. Augustine and claimed La Florida for the King of Spain. Five centuries later, St. Augustine remains the single most important place to experience America's cultural beginnings and enjoy a diverse and vibrant arts and culinary scene.

Where else can you step inside America's longest standing masonry fort, wade into the waters of the nation's oldest port, or touch the soil of the first free African American settlement in North America? Imagine shopping on the oldest street in America, just like generations of Spanish, British, French, Greek, Menorcan and many others before you have done for more than 450 years. Visit the place where the Catholic Church made its American debut and see an 18th century Greek Orthodox Shrine.

St. Augustine was the preferred vacation destination for the rich and famous of the Gilded Age, thanks to the vision of one of America's greatest entrepreneurs, and as a result is now home to a stunning array of late 19th century art and architecture, including the world's largest stationary collection of Tiffany stained glass. The 20th century brought new beachfront development and social change: today, you can walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr. and Andrew Young and learn about St. Augustine's pivotal role in the passage of America's Civil Rights Act.

Our impact on America's culinary heritage is just as impressive, and we were the site of the first Thanksgiving, Christmas and St. Patrick's Day celebrations. We still celebrate these holidays, with events like Nights of Lights and an annual Celtic Festival. Our music scene is thriving, and you can enjoy local, regional and national acts in dozens of music venues (including our internationally renowned amphitheater) on every night of the year. There's so much more to share, and we hope that you enjoy reading about a few of the important people and places that truly make our destination America's Cultural VIP.

We are offering three exciting trips in 2022 for you to win to visit beautiful St. Johns County, Florida. Learn more on pages 22 and 23. Can't wait that long? Book one of the many direct flights to the Jacksonville International Airport, which is less than an hour away, to start enjoying our 42-miles of pristine beaches, fabulous food, and world class arts, culture and heritage.

We promise to treat **you** like a VIP as you make your way through this Very Important Place.

Visit AmericasCulturalVIP.com to learn more.



Warmly,

Christina Parrish Stone

Christina Parrish Stone, Executive Director
St. Johns Cultural Council
HistoricCoastCulture.com



A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICA'S OLDEST CITY

From Native American Village to Spanish Settlement to American Territory

In 1513—more than 500 years ago—Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León first set eyes on North America. Coming ashore, he noted the region's lush vegetation, which put him in mind of the nearing Easter holiday and one of its Spanish monikers, Pascua Florida, meaning feast of flowers. Inspired, Ponce named this land Florida and claimed it for Spain.

Despite this claim, Ponce de León was not the first person to discover this land or appreciate its natural beauty. The Timucua, a Native American people made up of tribes who spoke dialects of the same language, had lived in the region for more than 1,000 years before Europeans arrived (with some evidence they may have existed in Florida and Georgia since 3,000 B.C.).

Though Ponce de León did not find the gold he was searching for in Florida, while sailing along the coast he discovered that his ships were moving swiftly north riding upon a strong current. Now recognized as the Gulf Stream, it would play an important part in St. Augustine's future.

◀ Entrance to the Chapel of St. Mark in the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument
Castillo de San Marcos National Monument
▼



A Threat to the Spanish Claim and a Massacre in the Inlet

In 1564, the French established Fort Caroline near the mouth of the St. Johns River in what today is Jacksonville. This was a blatant trespass on Spanish territory and, even worse, a danger to Spanish treasure fleets returning to Spain from Central and South America. After diplomacy failed, King Phillip II of Spain gave Admiral General Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés a mission: found a settlement that will be Spain’s base of operations in Florida and drive out the French.

After searching the coast for the most defensible location, Menéndez spotted an inlet protected by sandbars on August 28, 1565, and named the land beyond the inlet for the saint whose feast day they were honoring: Saint Augustine of Hippo. After seeking out the location of Fort Caroline, the voyagers returned to this area. Coming ashore on September 8, 1565, they made their first settlement within the already established Timucuan village of Seloy, which was located on the shore of the small inlet and is now the site of the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park. The arrangement started off amicable but soured after a few months.

Menéndez arrived with sailors, soldiers and craftspeople, which included both free and enslaved people from African countries. While it is often mistakenly thought that the earliest Africans in North America were all slaves, these free and skilled African laborers were a vital part of the community, working on early fortifications, constructing buildings and beginning farming efforts. The first known African to set foot in North America was Juan Garrido. A native of the Kingdom of Kongo who traveled to Portugal as a young man, Garrido arrived in Florida as a member of Ponce de León’s retinue in 1513.

Having encountered the French in their previous exploration, the Spanish knew an attack was imminent. Menéndez took the offensive and marched overland with a force north during a violent storm to Fort Caroline. At the same time, the French marshalled their forces and set sail south to attack the nascent Spanish settlement. In a twist of fate that would end the French presence while solidifying Spanish rule over Florida for the next two hundred years, the storm blew the French ships south to their destruction, killing most on board. The Spanish arrived at the under protected Fort Caroline and easily captured the fort, slaughtering the men that remained and transporting the women and children out of Florida.

Back in St. Augustine, the Timucua brought news that survivors of the French fleet had gathered at an inlet south of St. Augustine. Menéndez and his soldiers found over 100 shipwrecked men almost near death and unable to put up a fight. He slaughtered all but a few, sparing only those who were Catholic and those with skills his colony needed. Thereafter, the inlet and river (and later the fort built there) were named Matanzas, which is Spanish for massacre.



Defense of the Land and Sea

Over the next 100 years, St. Augustine fought both figuratively and literally for its survival. When relations went bad with the Timucua after only nine months, Menéndez moved the settlement to what is now Anastasia Island. Six years later, the Spanish moved back to the mainland, re-establishing their colony south of their original settlement in the location that we know today.

With no precious metals or major crops, St. Augustine was a money-losing entity, but it was strategically important. Spain needed to control the Gulf Stream to ensure safe passage to Spanish ships returning home laden with goods from the Americas. To fund this effort, the colony was subsidized by taxes on settlements in Mexico. The Catholic Church also saw the importance of St. Augustine, using it as a base to convert tens of thousands of Native Americans.

During this period, the major enemy to the Spanish were the English who attacked St. Augustine numerous times. Most famously, Sir Francis Drake razed it to the ground in 1586. St. Augustine had an advantage in that it was difficult to attack by sea with both an island and a challenging maze of sandbars protecting it. To its disadvantage, all the city’s structures—including a series of nine forts—were made from wood. In a battle, wood burns.

The Construction of the Castillo de San Marcos

In 1672, with England’s Charles Town settlement now very near Spanish interests, Spain finally authorized the funds to build a stone fort in St. Augustine. Due to constant financial shortages, the Castillo de San Marcos took over 23 years to build. Compare that to Fort Matanzas, which prevented foreign vessels from using Matanzas Inlet to attack St. Augustine. Though much smaller, Fort Matanzas was built in only two years (1740-1742). Today, both forts are National Monuments operated by the U.S. National Park Service.

The Castillo’s walls were constructed of coquina (pronounced co-kee-na), a limestone composed of shells that was prevalent in the area. While legend says cannonballs bounced right off the coquina walls, that is an exaggeration. The coquina is porous, enabling the walls to compress and absorb the force when hit. Therefore, it is more likely that cannonballs made an impression on the walls before falling to the ground. Since coquina didn’t crack like brick, the walls were easy to repair after a battle or even at night when darkness required an enemy to pause its attack.

Finally completed in 1695, the fort had its first major test in 1702 when James Moore from the English province of Carolina laid siege to the town. While the settlement was once again destroyed, the fortress provided the people shelter until reinforcements from Havana could chase off the invaders. The Castillo had proven its worth.

◀ Cannon at the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument



The Changing of the Flags: Spanish to British to Spanish to American

Though never taken in battle, the fort along with St. Augustine changed hands several times over the next century. The first of these transfers of power occurred at the end of the Seven Years War, a conflict between France and England that Spain joined late on the side of the French. 1763's Treaty of Paris saw Florida handed over to the British. Leaving behind their land and homes, many Spanish residents of St. Augustine relocated to other Spanish colonies or back to Spain.

British rule was not long. At the end of the American Revolution, having aided the freedom-seeking colonies, Spain was rewarded at the Second Treaty of Paris with the return of Florida. In 1784, Spanish soldiers arrived from Cuba to reclaim the colony, and British Loyalists fled back to England, Canada or the nearby Bahamas.

Over time, relations between the U.S. and Spanish Florida grew tense. During the First Seminole War (1817-1818), the U.S. captured large areas of West Florida, and portions of West Florida briefly became a republic prior to being annexed by the U.S. Going forward, the U.S. government blamed Spain for Native American raids that were being launched from within Spanish Florida, and slaveholders wanted compensation for enslaved people who had escaped into the Spanish-controlled land. In 1818, General Andrew Jackson invaded Florida, sending the message to Spain that the European country could no longer hold this territory. In 1819 Secretary of State John Quincy Adams negotiated the Adams-Onís Treaty, selling both the provinces of West Florida and East Florida—including St. Augustine—to the United States.

At dawn on July 10, 1821, the Spanish flag was raised over the Castillo de San Marcos for the last time. That day saw the governor sign over East Florida from the Governor's House next to the Plaza de la Constitución and the U.S. and Spanish soldiers exchange gun salutes. At its end, the Stars and Stripes flew proudly over the Castillo, and St. Augustine and Florida were now a part of the United States of America.

In joining the United States, this land of “firsts” and “oldests”, of destruction and rebuilding, was given another new beginning. Read on to discover how America's oldest, continuously occupied, European-settled city persevered over the next 200 years...

▲ Sleeping quarters at Fort Matanzas

The Castillo standing watch over the Matanzas River and Atlantic Ocean ►



MUST SEE PLACES

Castillo de San Marcos

Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest masonry fort in the continental United States and the oldest structure in St. Augustine, is a National Monument run by the National Park Service that interprets more than 450 years of cultural intersections.

1 South Castillo Drive • 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily • \$15 adults; free for children 15 and under

Fort Matanzas

Located 15 miles south of St. Augustine, Fort Matanzas was built in 1742 by the Spanish to prevent ships using Matanzas Inlet to mount an attack on the city. Today, the fort is a National Monument maintained by the National Park Service and is accessible only via a passenger ferry.

8635 A1A S • Ferry runs from 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. • Fort and ferry are free. Obtain a pass at the Visitor Center

Ponce de León's Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park

This archaeological park is the site of the Timucuan village of Seloy and where Pedro Menéndez de Avilés came ashore, founding the city of St. Augustine on the spot. Today visitors can drink from Ponce de León's Spring of Eternal Hope and see blacksmith demonstrations, a recreated Timucuan village, weapons demonstrations and dozens of roaming peafowl.

11 Magnolia Avenue • 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily • \$19.95 adults; \$17.95 seniors; \$9.95 children
fountainofyouthflorida.com

LEARN MORE

Read “*Oldest City: The History of Saint Augustine*” by Susan Parker,

“*The Oldest City - St. Augustine: Saga of Survival*” edited by Jean Parker Waterbury or

“*The History of Florida*” edited by Michael Gannon





Flagler's St. Augustine

How an Oil Tycoon Changed the Face of Florida

Standard Oil Company co-founder Henry Morrison Flagler was spending the season in St. Augustine with his second wife, Ida Alice, in early 1885 when he received a telegram from business partner and friend John D. Rockefeller. Spring was allegedly around the corner, but New York was still in the grip of winter, he wrote. Flagler postponed his return north—and set in motion plans that would transform the small Florida city into one of the country's premier resort destinations.

Acquiring a six-acre parcel of land just west of downtown, Flagler embarked on a vision to build what would soon become the Hotel Ponce de León. The opulent 450-room Spanish Renaissance Revival resort was the first of many landmarks that Flagler would develop in St. Augustine with the help of the greatest American architects, inventors and craftsmen of the time, including Thomas Edison and Louis Comfort Tiffany.

Considered the father of modern Florida, Flagler was a master of timing. He became intrigued by St. Augustine in 1878 when he first visited with his wife, Mary, whose doctor had urged her to head south to recuperate from tuberculosis (from which she died three years later). Founded by the Spanish in 1565, the city had been attracting tourists who were drawn to its distinct European charm since the early part of the nineteenth century. But the accommodations weren't up to par for the Flaglers and friends. "He thought St. Augustine could be a great place to visit if it had a terrific hotel," says Dr. Leslee Keys, a principal with Keys and Associates and former director of historic preservation and faculty member at Flagler College, both in St. Augustine. Meanwhile, railroads were on their way to making the country more accessible to a growing class of well-heeled Americans.

Flagler bet Florida would figure prominently in this new paradigm as a refuge from harsh northerly climes. Together with Henry Plant and eleven other New York or New England investors, he established the Plant Investment Company in 1882 to develop the largely untouched southernmost frontier of the United States. Ultimately, the "Plant System" of rail track and steamships connected the state with the rest of the Eastern Seaboard, Cuba and the Bahamas, creating a market for industries such as citrus and lumber and—most importantly to Flagler—tourism.

Flagler tapped New York architects John Mervyn Carrère and Thomas Hastings to design the Hotel Ponce de León, now Flagler College. The partners would go on to work on such prominent projects as the House and Senate office buildings on Capitol Hill, the Manhattan Bridge and the New York Public Library, but the Ponce was their first major commission and is still considered their most important project. They met while studying at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and worked together at the firm McKim, Mead and White before establishing their own firm in 1885.

Hastings, in particular, had traveled widely in Spain, whose Golden-Age cathedrals and palaces are echoed throughout the hotel complex. For instance, the Ponce's composition calls to mind the Alcazar palace; its courtyards, fountains and loggias are inspired by the Alhambra in Granada; and the two 165-foot towers nod to Seville Cathedral's Giralda, originally built as a minaret and later topped with a Renaissance-style spire.

On top of its innovative design, the resort became known for its groundbreaking use of materials. Walls were made from unreinforced poured concrete, some as thick as four feet, using mortar imported from Hanover, Germany and incorporating St. Augustine's native coquina-shell stone. The dome and its flanking towers were exceptions, having been reinforced with track from Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway—a move precipitated by three hurricanes that hit the town during the 1886 season, which Keys says may well have contributed to the decision.

Flagler commissioned some of the most prominent artists of the day for the interiors. Louis Comfort Tiffany, whose focus had recently expanded from interior design to glassmaking, conceived the interior design and created the hotel's 79 stained-glass windows with help from glass artist Maitland Armstrong. The collection remains the largest in the world in its original location. George Willoughby Maynard painted the murals on the ceilings of the dining room and rotunda, depicting allegorical figures and the history of Spanish Florida—he would reproduce the series a decade later in the Treasures Gallery of the Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress—and Virgilio Tojetti created frescoes on canvas in the four quadrants of the grand parlor.



When it opened in 1888, the Ponce featured running water, steam heat and 4,000 lights powered by Thomas Edison's direct current electricity. The guest list was equally luminous with A-listers like Somerset Maugham, Babe Ruth, Babe Didrikson, Mark Twain and several U.S. presidents.

Flagler was on a roll and, soon after construction began on the Ponce, he commissioned Carrère and Hastings to design a sister hotel across King Street. The 300-room Hotel Alcazar, another poured concrete structure, was modeled on Rome's Villa Medici with brick and terra cotta details and elaborate courtyards. Its amenities included a grand ballroom, Turkish and Russian baths, massage rooms, a gymnasium, tennis courts and, most notably, the largest indoor swimming pool at the time.

The building of the Alcazar, now the Lightner Museum, displaced a Methodist church, which prompted Flagler to commission the Grace United Methodist Church one block north. Designed by Carrère and Hastings, the church was constructed with poured concrete and in the same Spanish Renaissance Revival style as the Ponce.

Flagler's triumvirate of Gilded Age hotels soon included the Hotel Cordova, directly southeast of the Ponce. Now the Casa Monica, the 200-room property with Spanish Baroque and Moorish elements was built and designed by Boston architect Franklin W. Smith, who pioneered the use of poured concrete. It opened within days of the Ponce and was acquired by Flagler after its first operating season.

In spring of 1889, Flagler's daughter, Jennie Louise Benedict, died from complications of childbirth, accelerating his plan to build a Presbyterian church on the corner northwest of the Ponce. Carrère and Hastings designed Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church, another poured concrete structure (reinforced this time) but in the Venetian Renaissance Revival style with flourishes that borrow from Baroque, Moorish, Roman and Spanish architecture, and a copper-plated dome topped by a 20-foot Greek cross. The interior is no less fanciful with Italian marble floors, mahogany pews and stained-glass windows designed by artisan Herman Schaldermundt.

In one final flourish, Flagler asked Carrère and Hastings to create a mausoleum on the west side of the church. The Colonial Revival domed addition was completed in 1911 upon which Flagler had his first wife Mary, daughter Jennie Louise and granddaughter Margery reinterred there. Two years later, Flagler himself was interred there when he died at the age of 83.



▲ Statue of Henry Flagler
◀ A Tiffany stained glass window at Flagler College
Flagler College campus with Memorial Presbyterian Church top left



▲
Casa Monica Hotel

MUST SEE PLACES

Flagler College

Located in the heart of St. Augustine, Flagler College has provided a rich liberal arts education to the community and nation for over 50 years. Its history, however, spans more than a century. Today, Flagler College is committed to preserving its campus’ opulent architecture that serves as a reminder of the economic and industrial growth of the Gilded Age.

74 King Street • For tour information, visit Flagler.edu

Casa Monica Hotel

Casa Monica Hotel, a member of Historic Hotels of America since 2001, is an opulent Gilded Age resort hotel constructed in 1888. With 138 guest rooms and suites, three eating and drinking establishments, private dining, a wine room and event facilities, this hotel transports visitors to the heyday of the Gilded Age in America.

95 Cordova Street • For reservations, call 904-827-1888

Memorial Presbyterian Church

St. Augustine’s Memorial Presbyterian Church was built in 1889 by Henry Morrison Flagler as a memorial to his daughter who passed away following childbirth that same year. When Flagler died in 1913, he was interred in a marble mausoleum connected to the church alongside his daughter Jennie Louise, his granddaughter Margery, and his first wife, Mary Harkness Flagler.

32 Sevilla Street • For tour information, visit memorialpcusa.org

The Lightner Museum

Located in the former Hotel Alcazar, the Lightner Museum is home to an extensive collection of Gilded Age artifacts including fine and decorative art, Tiffany glass, musical instruments and rare oddities. The museum’s Café Alcazar is located in what used to be the hotel’s indoor swimming pool, the world’s largest at the time.

775 King Street • 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily • \$17 adults; \$14 seniors • \$10 children (12-17 years) • lightnermuseum.org

LEARN MORE

Read “*Hotel Ponce de León: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Flagler’s Gilded Age Palace*” by Leslee F. Keys.

Download the free “Florida Stories” app to learn more about St. Augustine and some of Florida’s other unique small towns.



ARCHITECTURE SPOTLIGHT: The St. Augustine Colonial House

How the Merging of Cultures Led to Houses Unique to America’s Oldest European Settlement

St. Augustine was founded by Spain and ruled by that country for more than 200 years, leaving an indelible cultural mark on the city. That mark has been influenced and built upon by the many other cultures that have made the city their home. As a result, even an element as specific as the Spanish colonial house—which was a product of Spanish rule and colonial innovations—took on a unique St. Augustine look and feel when subjected to the city’s proverbial melting pot.

The Colonial Town Plan

“In 1572, Philip II implemented what are known as the New Ordinances of the Indies,” Charles Tingley, senior research librarian at the St. Augustine Historical Society, explains as he details the Spanish settlers’ processes in planning out what is now recognized as the Historic District. Once, this district was bounded by protective walls that kept out invaders. Today, it is roughly defined as the area between the streets of Cordova, Orange and St. Francis on three sides and Matanzas Bay on the east. As the oldest example of a city within the continental United States to follow the New Ordinances of the Indies, the St. Augustine Town Plan Historic District has been designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark District.

“These ordinances covered a lot of topics, detailing in a unified format the laws for governing Spain’s colonial possessions in America,” Tingley continued. “They included a 10-page planning document on how to lay out new towns. This is why wherever you travel in the former Spanish empire, there is a sameness to the cities.”

▲
Covered, garden-side patio at the González-Álvarez House



Spanish Houses, Native Influences and British Additions

In analyzing early Spanish houses in St. Augustine, two factors greatly impacted the layouts and construction. The houses needed to be able to withstand attacks and provide relief from the Florida heat.

Since the wood houses they initially built were susceptible to fire and the humid Florida climate, over time the colonists moved toward less-perishable local materials. Specifically, they used native coquina stone and tabby, a concrete made by hand-mixing sand, water, quicklime and an aggregate of oyster shell or coquina rubble. “They also use board shutters,” says Tingley. “Solid board shutters that can be locked up tight, especially on the street facade.”

The González-Álvarez House, one of the oldest surviving houses in St. Augustine, was built sometime in the early 1700s (though archaeological evidence indicates that the site has been occupied by a house since the 1600s). The house’s construction and layout provide ample evidence of the above defensive measures as well as innovative techniques for making the house cooler and more comfortable. On the east side (or garden side), a loggia—a type of open-air, covered patio—enabled the prevailing southeasterly winds to cool this terrace-like space and the house as the refreshing breeze passed through the windows. Inside, wide openings encouraged circulation of the cooler air while the thick coquina walls provided insulation from the hot weather.



Founded in 1565, the development of the settlement predates this decree. However, in 1586, Sir Francis Drake burned St. Augustine to the ground. “In the 1590s,” says Tingley, “Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canço wrote to the king of Spain something to the effect of, ‘I’ve re-laid out the town and established the market per the new ordinances’.” This provided documented proof that St. Augustine was a product of this plan.

The city square, originally called the Plaza de Armas (Military Parade Grounds) and known as the Plaza de la Constitución since 1813, was the central point from which the city grew. Following King Philip II’s ordinances, the square is rectangular, aligned with the compass points and has a length equal to 1.5 times the width, a design believed to promote harmony. Since its earliest days, the market within the plaza enabled vendors to set up and sell seafood, vegetables and other goods. Today, local vendors continue to sell their wares within the market, and on summer nights people gather for concerts in the plaza.

The plan also dictated that the streets, extending from the central plaza, be laid out in a symmetrical gridiron. To impress a strong moral and law-abiding core on its residents, important civic and religious buildings were built around the perimeter of the well-trafficked plaza. In St. Augustine, the plaza provided a balance between Church and State with the city’s main church on its east and the Government House—of which portions of the 1713 version still stand—on its west. Buildings on the north and south included the bishop’s house, now the site of Trinity Episcopal Church, customs house and hospital.

“The ordinances even go into the details of how in hot climates the streets should be narrow and buildings should be built on the front street line, so the buildings shade the passersby,” Tingley related. “This also has the benefit of being a defensive measure. If you have a narrow street, you can use your familiarity with your town to funnel attackers down these confined canyons, set up a firing squad at one end and eliminate your enemy.”

▲ Interior of the González-Álvarez House
The González-Álvarez House ►



“During the first 200 years, at least, many St. Augustine houses had thatched roofs,” says Tingley. “Palm thatch is not a technology known to the Spanish before arriving. That’s a Native American roof, almost identical to those found on the Seminoles’ chickees, which were shelters supported by posts with a raised floor, open sides and a thatched roof. So, you have rectangular Spanish houses with a Native American roof.”

When the British took possession of St. Augustine from 1763 to 1784, they brought their innovations, most prominently the introduction of water and wind-powered sawmills. This made building with lumber much less expensive. In addition to constructing new houses, the British added wooden second floors onto existing dwellings and modified flat roofs to gabled.

Again, the González-Álvarez house serves as an example. “The second floor has much larger windows with greater cross ventilation and, like several other houses in St. Augustine, the parlor has a tea tray ceiling, which is a recessed ceiling that’s built up into the attic,” says Tingley. “It can give the space another two feet or so of headroom, and a taller room is a cooler room.”

So, while the Spanish Colonial Plan and its laws dictated a certain unified look to Spanish settlements and often the houses, St. Augustine’s melding of cultures resulted in houses and buildings that were unique to the city. Tingley sums it up nicely: “When the British come in, they superimpose their idea of building a wooden house on top of the Spanish idea of a stone house, and so you get this hybrid architecture of one culture, literally imposing their ideas on how to build a house on the other. It’s what sets St. Augustine-style houses apart from houses in Cuba or the Yucatan.”

A City Unlike Any Other

Walking St. Augustine’s Historic District today, one can stroll down Aviles Street, the first platted street in America, and appreciate how the Spanish crown’s decree from the 1500s has impacted the city. Then walk by or explore the many buildings that still exist from the 1700s, such as the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum, Peña-Peck House or Llambias House. St. Augustine is an American city with a European feel that is, nonetheless, unlike any city you’ll find in Europe.

▲ The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum



▲ Sitting room in The González-Álvarez House

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González-Álvarez House

The González-Álvarez House is an authentically restored colonial house with a beautiful walled garden (see front cover photo). Also known as The Oldest House, this site is a National Historic Landmark operated by the St. Augustine Historical Society.

14 St Francis Street • 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily • \$10 adults; \$7 seniors • [staughs.com](#)

Ximenez-Fatio House Museum

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum, one of the best-preserved colonial structures in St. Augustine, was once the city’s premier boarding house. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, visitors can explore the meticulously interpreted rooms while tour guides recount expertly researched stories that bring the past to life.

20 Aviles Street • Mon - Sat, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. • \$10 adults; \$8 seniors • [ximenezfatiohouse.org](#)

Peña-Peck House

This native coquina stone and frame building was a home to the Spanish Royal Treasurer, the British governor and other notable tenants throughout its storied past. Docents bring its life full circle, telling its stories as they guide you through the house and showing its collection of 19th-century art and antique furnishings.

143 St. George Street • Thurs - Sat, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. • Free, but donations support the Woman’s Exchange Scholarship Fund for women over 30 returning to school • [penapeckhouse.com](#)

LEARN MORE

Read “*The Houses of St. Augustine*” by David Nolan, “*Walking St. Augustine*” by Elsbeth Gordon or “*Sixteenth Century St. Augustine: The People and Their Homes*” by Albert Manucy.

Coquina

In the late 1600s, when royal funds arrived in St. Augustine to construct a stone fortress, colonists learned how to quarry coquina, a natural shell-stone found on Anastasia Island. The resulting immense Castillo de San Marcos and the later Fort Matanzas, both of which you can visit today, are engineering marvels and the only coquina forts in the United States. Once the construction of the Castillo was complete, the King of Spain permitted colonists to purchase the stone for use in building their homes.





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Each trip includes two round-trip airline tickets from anywhere in the continental U.S. to the Jacksonville, Florida International Airport, four nights of luxurious accommodations and curated VIP experiences featuring the best of St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra.

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THE COLLECTOR LUXURY INN & GARDENS

Trips include four nights of luxury accommodations from fabulous hotels and inns in St. Augustine or Ponte Vedra, including The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens.

Featured in Travel + Leisure, Condé Nast, Southern Living and more, the Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens is St. Augustine's newest crown jewel. Comprised of nine historic homes dating from 1790 to 1910, this luxurious property spans an entire city block and has all the amenities to make any guest feel like a VIP.

St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival

May 5-8, 2022

This event, named one of the top 10 food festivals in Florida by USA Today, features local and celebrity chefs' culinary treasures from around the world, beverage tastings and live music.



Sing Out Loud Music Festival

September 2022

St. Augustine's "month of music" celebrates all genres of music with performances by local, regional and nationally acclaimed artists at various venues including the beautiful St. Augustine Amphitheater.



Nights of Lights

December 2022

Listed among the top 10 holiday light displays in the world by National Geographic, Nights of Lights features millions of twinkling lights illuminating five centuries of architecture to create a magical atmosphere in the nation's oldest city.



A PIVOTAL ROLE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

FROM FORT MOSE TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

St. Augustine’s popular beaches, hotels and historic streets were crowded with more than just vacationers seeking rest and relaxation in the Spring of 1964. That April, Dr. Robert Hayling—a young Black dentist and local civil rights activist—summoned northern college students to come spend their spring break in St. Augustine—not to catch sun but to catch heat of a different sort. They came by the busload to join local civil rights demonstrations.

The outspoken Hayling moved to St. Augustine in 1960—an era of strict Jim Crow laws and segregation—and quickly became a leader in the city’s thriving Black community. Like many other Black professionals and entrepreneurs, Hayling lived and worked in Lincolnville, a thriving Black neighborhood that had been established as an unincorporated freedmen’s town in 1866. Two centuries later, the community was home to families, businesses and influential Black churches. As the racial turmoil roiling across the South reached St. Augustine, Lincolnville became a prime target of the Ku Klux Klan, which had a strong presence in the region. Klan members riddled Hayling’s home with bullets from high-powered rifles. “If my wife and I had been home, we’d have been killed,” he recalled during an interview for the “Voices of the Civil Rights Movement” oral history project. But Hayling and others were undaunted.

In 1963, sixteen students from Florida Normal College, an HBCU that was then located in St. Augustine, were arrested at a Woolworth sit-in. The NAACP called federal attention to the school district’s failure to abide by Brown v. Board of Education because only six Black children attended St. Augustine’s white schools. Civil rights rallies and protests were countered by Klan rallies; clashes were frequent and violent. “It’s hotter in more ways than one in St. Augustine,” observed the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

◀ St. Augustine Foot Soldiers Monument in the Plaza de la Constitución

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Dr. King made the historic city a strategic centerpiece of his national campaign during May and June 1964, a critical time when civil rights momentum seemed to be waning. Alongside Andrew Young, Ralph Abernathy and other leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. King led marches and rallies at St. Paul's Church. He was arrested while trying to be served at St. Augustine's Monson Motor Lodge restaurant, as were 17 rabbis he urged to come to St. Johns County to join the cause. "If St. Augustine is to be not only an ancient city but also a great-hearted city, it will not happen until the raw hate, the ignorant prejudices, the unrecognized fears that now grip so many of its citizens are exorcised from its soul. We come not as tourists but as ones who thought we could add to the healing process of America," the rabbis wrote from the St. Johns County Jail in their manifesto, "Why We Went."



There were sit-ins, kneel-ins at white churches and wade-ins at motel pools and white beaches, photographs of which made national news. The timing and the location was ripe: pending civil rights legislation was languishing under U.S. Senate filibuster; meanwhile St. Augustine, with a tourism-based economy vulnerable to disruption, was in the national limelight thanks to its 400th anniversary celebration. For a few pivotal months in 1964, the nation's oldest city became center stage for one of the nation's oldest and deepest injustices. In fact, Dr. King was in St. Augustine when he and his SCLC colleagues got news that the senate filibuster ended and the Civil Rights Act finally passed.

DEEP ROOTS

"Many people don't know what happened in St. Augustine," says Gayle Phillips, executive director of the Lincolntonville Museum and Cultural Center, dedicated to preserving, promoting and perpetuating the history of African Americans in North Florida. Both the Lincolntonville Museum—situated in the heart of Lincolntonville in the former Excelsior High School, the city's first high school for Blacks—and its neighboring ACCORD (Anniversary to Commemorate the Civil Rights Demonstrations) Museum and Freedom Trail (which includes 31 sites) give visitors an in-depth accounting of St. Augustine's significant role as a civil rights battleground, a role that actually is an extension of a 450-year long history of Black presence in St. Johns County, Phillips explains.

"Lincolntonville Museum goes beyond the civil rights era to give the whole scope of Blacks' contribution to local culture," says Phillips. A scope that stretches back to 1565 when Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, accompanied by free and enslaved Africans, first arrived

and established St. Augustine. The museum houses some of the nation's oldest birth and marriage records from those early Black settlers, she adds. It also tells the story of Fort Mose, established in 1738 as North America's first legal free Black settlement, two miles north of St. Augustine. There, escaped slaves who swore allegiance to the Spanish crown and converted to Catholicism could enjoy freedom in accord with a 1693 decree from Spain's King Charles II.

For Sandra Parks, a Lincolntonville native who serves on the boards of the Florida Historical Society, Fort Mose and the Lincolntonville Museum, the museum "is the only place that gives a quick and rich bird's eye view of African American history in St. Augustine, including Black military

▲ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. leads protestors toward downtown St. Augustine

Re-enactor at Fort Mose Historic ▶ State Park

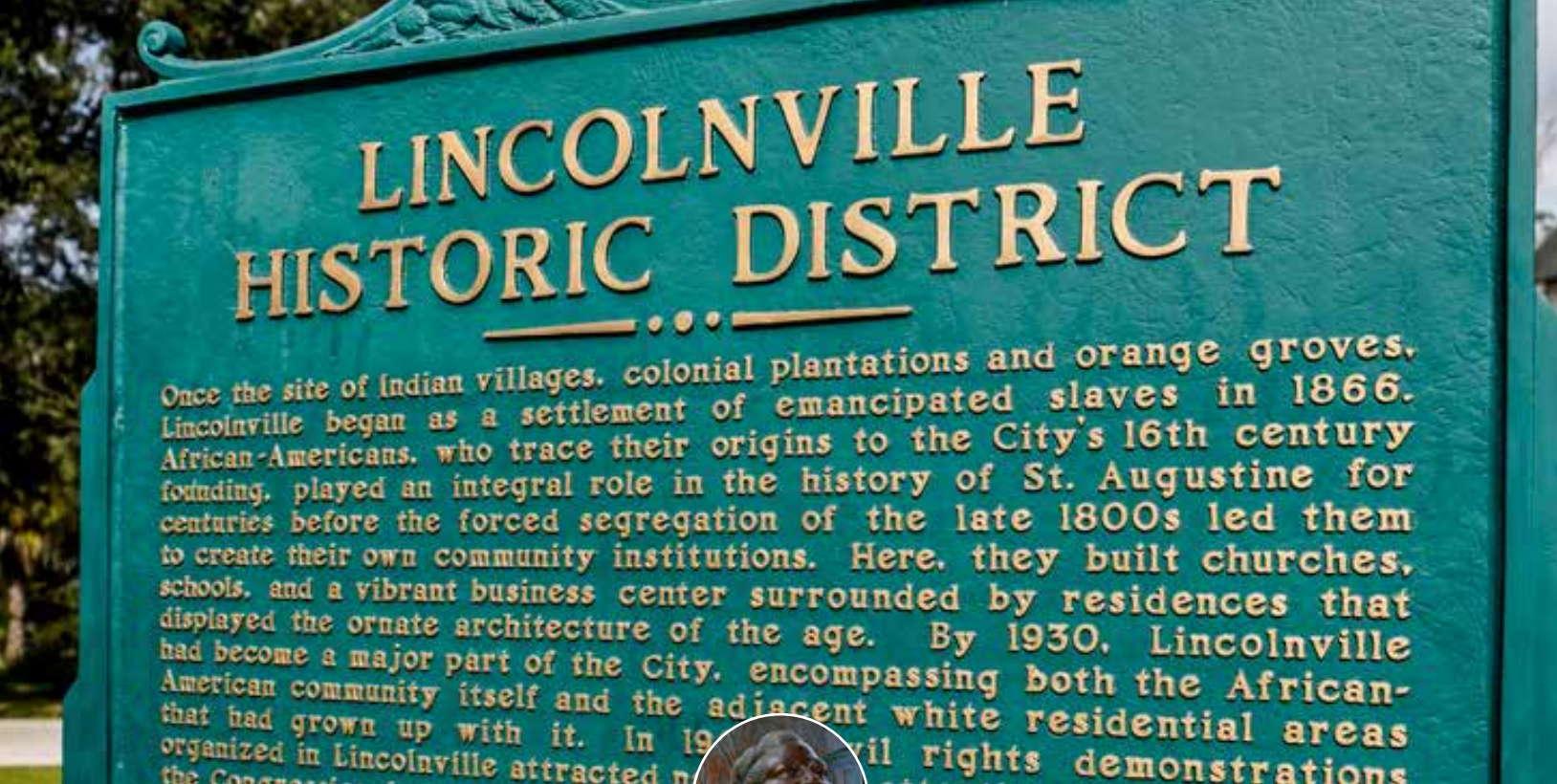


history and women's history." It also portrays the once-vibrant cultural and social life of the Black middle class in Lincolntonville, Butler Beach and beyond. "My father owned jukeboxes all around the county. When I accompanied him on his rounds, I saw successful Black businesses, clubs and social establishments like Odd Fellows Hall, places that most people don't know existed. The museum tells that story too."

Today Lincolntonville is home to people of all backgrounds and races, as well as to some of St. Augustine's heralded restaurants and B&Bs. Martin Luther King Avenue—one of only two namesake avenues in the country that Dr. King actually walked on—runs through the neighborhood.. Today everyone, regardless of race, is free to follow in his footsteps—past the former SCLC headquarters; past the former Lincolntonville Public Library where the NAACP president trained sit-in participants in the ways of non-violence; past the homes of Dr. Hayling and many other "foot soldiers" for the cause; past numerous civil rights landmarks and toward a more inclusive future.

▼ Dr. King and Rev. Ralph Abernathy (center) were refused entry into The Monson Motor Lodge's restaurant and then arrested





MUST SEE PLACES

ACCORD Freedom Trail

The ACCORD Freedom Trail is made up of 31 civil rights markers throughout the community that tell the story of how St. Augustine became the final push for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Free • accordfreedomtrail.org

Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center

The Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center showcases the community's civil rights journey, including periods when restrictive laws like the "Black Codes" allowed unjust arrests, when entrepreneurs created a thriving Black business district and when activists fought the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan.

102 M. L. King Avenue • 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Tue – Fri • \$10 adults; \$9 seniors; \$5 children • lincolnvillemuseum.org

Fort Mose Historic State Park

The site of the first legally sanctioned, free African settlement in what is now the United States, Fort Mose is a state park, a National Historic Landmark and a precursor site of the National Underground Railroad Network.

15 Fort Mose Trail • Grounds hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily • Free • Museum hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Thur – Mon • \$2 adults • fortmose.org

Foot Soldiers Monument in the Plaza de la Constitución

The Foot Soldiers Monument, located in St. Augustine's Plaza de la Constitución, honors the men and women who engaged in various forms of peaceful protest to advance civil rights contributing to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Between Cathedral Place and King Street near the Bridge of Lions

LEARN MORE

Read *"Living in The Shadows of A Legend: Heroes and 'Sheroes' Who Marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."* by Deric A. Gilliard.

Watch *"Crossing in St. Augustine"* by Ambassador Andrew Young and *"Dare Not Walk Alone"* by Jeremy Dean.

THE BIRTH OF CATHOLICISM IN NORTH AMERICA



"I'm living in a place where the Catholic Church in America began"

▲
Father Pedro Camps Memorial Monument



Sailing across more than 3,000 nautical miles of uncharted waters would be an act of faith for most anyone, even today with GPS at the ready and Gore-Tex to keep sailors warm and dry. In 1565, it was literally an act of faith when conquistador Pedro Menéndez de Avilés sailed with 11 ships and over a thousand men across the Atlantic, landing in what is now known as St. Augustine. The men sailed under the Spanish flag, and after coming ashore near what is now the site of Mission Nombre de Dios, they claimed the land first for the Catholic Church and then for the Spanish crown.

“The sailors initially stayed offshore, sending a priest and soldiers to scout things out,” says Father Christopher Liguori, pastor of St. Patrick Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Augustine. “The first thing they did was create an altar to celebrate the holy sacrifice, and after that was ready, Pedro Menéndez came ashore. Father Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales celebrated the mass, the first one ever on these shores.” This holy act, celebrated on September 8, the feast day of Saint Augustine of Hippo, both gave the nation’s oldest city its name, and made St. Augustine the first Catholic parish of a continuously occupied settlement in North America.

After the mass of thanksgiving, the explorers shared a meal with the Timucua, the native people of this region. “So, the first Thanksgiving was actually here in St. Augustine, a fact we celebrate on our Founder’s Day,” says Kathleen Bagg, director of communications for the diocese. Dr. Michael Gannon, a former priest and nationally recognized historian, famously quipped that “by the time the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, St. Augustine was already up for urban renewal.”

The mission of the settlers of Mission Nombre de Dios was to share their faith and create a North American foothold for the Catholic Church but, according to Father Liguori, their way of evangelizing was dynamic and educational, not forceful. “The Franciscans’ goal was to evangelize, but not by force. They learned the Timucua language and got to know the villages. The Timucua were a very spiritual people, but they had never heard of the one God and Christ, and many were attracted to this new idea,” explains Father Liguori. “Many became Catholic and set up missions across Northern Florida where Indians would come celebrate mass.” Research underway by Dr. Timothy Johnson, Craig and Audrey Thorn Distinguished Professor of Religion specializing in Roman Catholic theology at Flagler College, confirms this.

“What we’ve discovered is that there was a back and forth between the Franciscans and the Timucua, especially when it came to learning and creating the catechism,” Johnson explains. “The Timucuan culture was matrilineal with women very involved in the teaching of the faith, so we begin to see many feminine references in the texts. St. Augustine has what I call a feminine landscape with most of the religious structures named for women.” Indeed, among those churches and missions are ones of significant relevance to the history of Catholicism in the United States.

THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF LA LECHE

On the site of Mission Nombre de Dios is a small chapel with the graceful curves of Spanish architecture covered in ivy. In addition to this being the historical site of the first parish Mass, this is the site of the first shrine in North America to be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The picturesque mission chapel there now, a popular tourist destination, was built in 1915, but in the early 1600s a statue (also called “a devotion”) of Mary nursing the infant Jesus, Our Lady of La Leche y Buen Parto, was placed there by Spanish settlers in a small chapel that has long since decayed, the footings of which are currently being excavated. The settlers, sailors who had survived a dangerous hurricane en route to the New World, credited their safe passage to their prayers to the devotion.

For 450 years, Our Lady of La Leche has been a pilgrimage site, especially for women seeking fertility blessings, and in 2019 was elevated to an official National Shrine by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In October 2021, the statue of Our Lady of La Leche will be crowned with the highest possible distinction—a Canonical Coronation, as decreed by the Pope. The coronation will be celebrated as part of the 150th anniversary of the diocese and will mark only the fourth Mary crowned in the United States.



▲ The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche

Altar in the Cathedral Basilica of ►
St. Augustine



THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA AND ST. BENEDICT THE MOOR

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine, a National Historic Landmark, is located in the heart of downtown St. Augustine and, as the cathedral church of the first parish and oldest diocese of North America, holds a place of symbolic and historic significance in American Catholicism. The current Spanish Renaissance and Neoclassical structure was built in the late 1880s, with funds contributed in part by Henry Flagler, after the 1797 structure burned. The first bishop of St. Augustine, Rev. Augustin Verot, who served from 1870 to 1876, was committed to education—especially for freed slaves—during a time when it was illegal to educate Blacks. He brought the Sisters of St. Joseph from France to establish St. Benedict the Moor, St. Augustine's first school for Black children, in 1871. According to Father Liguori, several of the nuns were arrested as a result of their efforts to educate and minister the students. A few years after this in 1889, the diocese founded St. Benedict the Moor Church in Lincolnville to minister to the spiritual needs of freed slaves. This historic church building, constructed in 1911, is a continuation of St. Johns County's long history of Catholicism dating to Fort Mose.

“To know that I’m living in a place where the Catholic Church in America began, and continues to thrive, gives me a deeper sense of being a part of the church,” says Father Liguori. “It’s a privilege to keep that alive through evangelization.”



MUST SEE PLACES

Mission Nombre de Dios and Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche

The Mission Nombre de Dios and Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche goes back to the founding of St. Augustine. On September 8, 1565, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés landed and proclaimed the site for Spain and the Church. It was on these grounds that Father López would celebrate the first parish Mass and begin the work at America’s first mission.

101 San Marco Avenue • 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Mon – Sat; 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. Sun • missionandshrine.org

Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine is the oldest Catholic Church in the city and the seat of the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine. The cathedral walls are adorned with exquisite murals that depict scenes from the history of the Catholic Church in the development of the New World. Guided tours are offered throughout the day, and visitors are welcome to light candles for loved ones at any time.

35 Treasury Street

St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine

Just steps from St. Augustine’s historic city gates at St. George Street, the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine, an institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, is dedicated to the first colony of Greek people who came to America in 1768.

41 St. George Street • 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Sun – Sat • Donations gratefully accepted • stphotios.org

Grace United Methodist Church

Built by Henry Morrison Flagler, Grace United Methodist Church is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance. Designed by architects John Mervyn Carrère and Thomas Hastings, the building boasts a Spanish Renaissance Revival architectural style, complementing the structures built by Flagler in St. Augustine.

8 Carrera Street • The church is open to the public for tours most weekday afternoons from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

LEARN MORE

Read “*The Cross in the Sand: The Early Catholic Church in Florida, 1513-1870*” by Michael V. Gannon or “*Cross & Crozier: The History of the Diocese of Saint Augustine*” by Charles R. Gallagher, Ph.D.

- ◀ Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine (far left)
- ◀ Statue of the first parish priest, Father Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales, and The Great Cross at Mission Nombre de Dios

OUR NATION'S OLDEST PORT



▲ Anastasia Island and the St. Augustine Lighthouse

Towering over the oak trees which it has watched grow, the St. Augustine Lighthouse with its iconic black and white swirled exterior and fire engine red top stands resolute over Anastasia Island. This current structure, one of a line that extends back to at least the 1580s, may be more than 145 years old, but it's still used today as a navigational aid for maritime vessels journeying to and from our nation's oldest port. The property is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the museum is accredited through the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate Museum. To learn the history of the lighthouse is to discover how fraught with danger and uncertainty life was for the people of St. Augustine.

THE OLD SPANISH WATCHTOWER

The first known reference to a watchtower on Anastasia Island comes from a map that was published by Italian cartographer Giovanni Battista Boazio in 1589. Boazio had voyaged to St. Augustine as a member of Sir Francis Drake's raid so, ironically, he was noting the wooden structure on the island as Drake was burning the town to the ground.

Located at the north end of the island which offered a better view of the sea than could be found in town, the tower's primary purpose at this time was as an alert system for St. Augustine. The settlement was crucial in controlling the Gulf Stream, which Spanish ships carrying treasures from South America used for a faster passage home to Spain. The town was constantly under attack, especially by the English. Soldiers would stand watch on the tower, which started off as just a platform, but over time and multiple rebuilds grew into a larger structure with some fortifications. Watching for ships of both friend and foe, the lookouts would raise flags or row to the mainland in a canoe stationed nearby to alert the town accordingly. Later, they had a cannon, not so much for defense but to literally "sound the alarm" to those on the mainland.

The Over-400-Year History of St. Augustine's Lighthouse, America's Oldest Watchtower and Aid to Navigation Site



THE FIRST LIGHTHOUSE

In 1763, as a result of The Seven Years War's Treaty of Paris, the British took control of Florida and added a beacon to the watchtower, turning the existing coquina and wood structure into a navigational aid. The British didn't hold Florida or St. Augustine long, and by 1784, after the American Revolution, Spain was once again in control. The Spanish, not seeing the need for a navigational aid, removed the wooden construction atop the old watchtower and refortified the tower with coquina. Florida became a United States territory in 1821, and the watchtower vs. navigational aid debate ended once and for all when the U.S. established the area's first lighthouse.

THE MENORCANS, KEEPERS OF THE LIGHT

When the U.S. established the St. Augustine Lighthouse, Juan Andreu was the first lighthouse keeper. He, like many of those after him, was from Menorca, an island off the coast of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea. The first Menorcans arrived in Florida in 1768 during the British period as indentured servants to Andrew Turnbull's New Smyrna plantation. Conditions were brutal and the people fled en masse, walking the 70 miles to St. Augustine where the governor granted them asylum and land.

Coming from an island, the Menorcan people were skilled seafarers and fishermen, and those traits continued among their colonial descendants. Due to sandbars along the coast, St. Augustine was not an easy port to navigate. Captains would hire pilots who could steer around the underwater hazards and manage the tides to bring ships in safely. These local pilots were often Menorcans.

Many of the early lighthouse keepers, including Juan Andreu, were Menorcan pilots. If a ship found itself in trouble, either stuck or shipwrecked, the keepers would spot them and, knowing the waterways, could either help free or rescue them.

KEEPING THE LIGHT ON

The current St. Augustine Lighthouse was built in 1871. This lighthouse is still a navigational aid that sends a light into the dark every night to facilitate safe passage. Visitors can explore the connected museum, which has a research arm—the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP)—that investigates recovered artifacts found on the shores. For a truly thrilling experience, sightseers can also climb to the top of the tower—all 219 steps—to enjoy a breathtaking view of the land and sea.

▲
St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum

◀ Steps leading to the top of the lighthouse

The first lighthouse sometime in the 1870s ▶



MARIA ANDREU, THE FIRST HISPANIC, FEMALE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER

In 1860 Maria Andreu was hired as the light keeper for the St. Augustine Lighthouse, becoming the first Hispanic female to run a lighthouse. Since the United States Revenue Cutter Service, a precursor to the Coast Guard, oversaw lighthouses at that time, the Coast Guard recognizes her as the first Hispanic-American woman to serve in the Coast Guard and first to command a federal shore installation.

Maria, a Menorcan, took on the role after her husband Joseph Andreu (a cousin of Juan Andreu, the first light keeper) died tragically right before Christmas when his scaffolding gave way while making repairs to the top of the tower. Legend has it that faced with no source of income for her and her children, Maria called out from the top of the lighthouse, "What shall I do?," and her husband's voice replied softly on the wind, "Tend to the light."

With overwhelming support from the St. Augustine community, Maria took on the job at the age of 58. Lighthouse keeping was hard work. Oil for the lamp had to be carried to the top. Repairs had to be made constantly. Yet, by all accounts, Maria's tenure, which lasted until the lighthouse went dark during the Civil War, was a success. Having set a precedent for females serving in the military and earning the same compensation as St. Augustine's previous male light keepers, Maria's legacy demonstrates there should be no limits placed on people based on gender. Maria climbed high, both to the top of the lighthouse and through the glass ceiling, and today she is recognized for that fortitude.



▲
St. Augustine Beach Pier

MUST SEE PLACES

St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum

This 145-year-old lighthouse offers a spectacular view of the city and ocean. Visitors to this 501(c)(3) non-profit organization can climb the 219 steps to the top of the lighthouse, experience life at a Light Station through exhibits in the Keeper's House, stroll the picturesque grounds or enjoy a "Behind the Scenes" guided tour.

100 Red Cox Drive • 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily • \$14.95 adult; \$12.95 seniors and children • staugustinelighthouse.org

Anastasia State Park

This Florida state park includes 1,600 acres of rich ecosystems and abundant wildlife. Explore up to four miles of pristine beach, the estuarine tidal marsh teeming with plant and animal life or the scenic nature trails, which run through the maritime hammock and over ancient sand dunes. Visitors can also see the Coquina Quarry, an archaeological site where coquina rock was mined to construct the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, earning the quarry a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

300 Anastasia Park Road • 8 a.m. - sundown daily • \$8 per vehicle

Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve

One of only 29 National Estuarine Research Reserves in the U.S, the GTM Research Reserve protects 76,760 acres in St. Johns and Flagler Counties that provide habitats for at least 44 mammal, 358 bird, 41 reptile, 21 amphibian, 303 fish and 580 plant species. Explore the trails, beaches and Visitor Center, which includes interpretive exhibits, aquariums and more.

Start at the Visitor Center: 505 Guana River Road, Ponte Vedra Beach • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Tue - Sat • To explore the exhibits: \$2 adult; \$1 children 10 - 17; Free under 10 • gtmnerr.org

St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier

The St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier, also known as the St. Augustine Beach Pier, was originally constructed as part of a 1930s WPA tourism development project that included two coquina buildings known as the St. Augustine Beach Hotel. The remaining hotel building is now a Cultural Arts Center housing a dance company and art studio. The Pier area features amenities including a visitor center, volleyball and bocce courts, a splash park, and a covered pavilion where concerts and other special events are held. The Pier Farmers Market showcases local growers and artisans on Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

350 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine Beach – 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily



SOWING THE SEEDS OF OUR GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT

Henry Flagler, oil tycoon and railroad magnate, was the visionary who saw how the swamplands of Florida could be transformed into a tourist paradise, bringing the growth of the Gilded Age to St. Augustine. His St. Augustine hotels would cater to the discerning palates of high society guests, and he needed to find a fresh source of produce. This search for fruits and vegetables ignited a new industry for St. Johns County that continues to be important to the region to this day.

▲
Datil Peppers



THREE FACTORS CONVERGE: RESORTS, RAILS & REFRIGERATION

“Flagler had a cousin by the name of Thomas Horace Hastings. Around 1890, Flagler tasked him with a project to see if he could grow vegetables for his hotels,” says County Commissioner Jeb Smith, who has spent his entire life farming in the area.

Thomas Horace Hastings—not to be confused with the Thomas Hastings who was an architect of Flagler's hotels—traveled about 18 miles west of St. Augustine into what was mostly wilderness. He cleared the land, built his home, constructed greenhouses and established an over 1500-acre farm named Prairie Garden. At this time, his sole purpose was to grow winter vegetables for his cousin's nearby resorts, which were packed with guests from the Northeast and Midwest staying for the season.

Being related to a builder of railroads had advantages for Thomas Horace Hastings. “For him, it wasn’t just the production of vegetables that led to his success, but also the transportation of those vegetables,” says Commissioner Smith. “Henry Flagler built a railroad that went right to St. Augustine to serve the hotels. But, from there, it also then hit the main rail line and could haul those vegetables north. New York. Philadelphia. Boston. Now, the people in these areas also have access to vegetables in the winter months.”

Other farmers recognized the opportunity, and a community sprouted. In 1896, due to poor health, Thomas Horace Hastings gave up farming and returned to an easier life in Louisville, KY. Nonetheless, his mark had been made. Around 1909, when the community was granted a charter, the town was called Hastings.

“Thomas Horace Hastings started with the production of Irish potatoes, a type of white potato; sweet potatoes; cabbage and greenhouse vegetables,” Commissioner Smith explains. “He began with the production of potatoes because potatoes are heartier and didn’t require cooling.”

In 1907, St. Augustine’s power plant, which had been developed by Flagler, was expanded into an ice plant, making it the first Florida facility to generate commercial blocks of ice. Now, with the ability to keep produce cool in refrigerated rail cars, farmers could more easily and reliably transport their harvests.

Today, Philip McDaniel, CEO and co-founder of St. Augustine Distillery, offers tours and distills authentic Florida spirits out of the renovated ice and power plant. He sums up the convergence of these forces by saying, “It was pretty bleak here after the Civil War. Agriculture really helped lead the reconstruction of Northeast Florida. Suddenly, we had visitors, we had farming, we had a rail line and we had the ability to transport whatever crops were not consumed by the hotels and put them on a rail car. We could chill and ship them north where they didn’t have these fresh vegetables in the winter. Now we had an industry.”

▲ Spirits from St. Augustine Distillery
Cabbage Harvest in St. Johns County ►

HASTINGS, THE POTATO CAPITAL OF FLORIDA

By 1917, Hastings excelled in the production of potatoes, and when potato prices spiked that year, the region boomed. Farmers became wealthy, which made possible and encouraged the introduction of more modern machinery and fertilization methods. The Dixie Highway was extended to Hastings from St. Augustine, further easing transport and bringing in the earliest agritourists eager to see the operations and the digging seasons.

Realizing the need to form a collective bargaining organization that could leverage and negotiate the best prices for the potatoes, several smaller cooperatives merged in 1922 to form the Hastings Potato Growers Association, making the community the Potato Capital of Florida. The association’s building, erected in 1927, still stands proudly on the town’s main street as a testimony to this important chapter in Hastings history.



▲ Hastings Potato Growers Association building

FEEDING ST. AUGUSTINE’S HUNGRY RESTAURANT SCENE

More than 130 years ago, St. Johns County’s agriculture industry was born out of a need for farm-to-table ingredients for Flagler’s hotels. Today, St. Augustine has a thriving restaurant scene that builds upon that tradition.

“In order to create the best cuisine, you want to have the best ingredients. Part of that is the freshness and availability of those ingredients. While other areas of Florida may not have the best climate for farming, there’s an established agricultural scene here that chefs can draw from,” says Nick Carrera, owner of Urban Asado.

The restaurant scene of today also encapsulates and builds upon St. Augustine’s history as a melting pot of cultures. “There are chefs from all different places here, cooking in all different cuisines like French, Latin, Menorcan, American and many other areas of Europe,” says Carrera. “The camaraderie among the culinary community is unlike what most people would believe. The chefs here get together and with all their different cultures, backgrounds and influences, share ideas, advice and tips. Wealth of knowledge shared among the community can’t help but create an even better product. Really, everyone is being creative and pushing the envelope. I’ve never seen this anywhere else.”

McDaniels recommends people explore all the various destination districts. “It’s worth experiencing it all—from a classic cocktail on the Bayfront or on Aviles Street, the oldest street in America, to enjoying amazing tapas overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. You can check out the edgy, emerging west side of town, which would include the Lincolnville and West King Street neighborhoods. Or, to experience the beach vibe, there are a number of fun places to eat and drink in St. Augustine Beach. You really can’t go wrong.”





▲ Florida Cracker Cattle
Café Alcazar in the Lightner Museum ►

MUST SEE PLACES

St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival

This showcase of culinary, beverage and cultural offerings features celebrity guest chefs, winemakers and proprietors as well as local chefs, artisans and craft spirits and beers. The St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival was named one of the top 10 Food Festivals in Florida by USA Today.

The World Golf Village Renaissance Resort, 1 World Golf Place • May 4-8, 2022 • See site for times and ticket information: staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com

St. Augustine Distillery

Family-owned and operated, St. Augustine Distillery crafts world-class spirits using regionally harvested ingredients. Housed in Florida's oldest ice plant, the distillery offers free tours and tastings and is the most visited craft distillery in the U.S.

112 Riberia Street • 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. daily • Free tours & tastings • staugustinedistillery.com

County Line Produce

Selling produce since 1965, this fruit and vegetable stand on the 65-acre Bland family farm is one of the oldest seasonal businesses in St. Johns County. The farm grows carrots, beets, Brussels sprouts, all kinds of greens and Silver Queen corn. They also sell produce from other farms as well locally made honey, boiled peanuts and datil pepper sauce.

848 State Rd 207, Hastings • Seasonal, check for days and hours • facebook.com/countylineproduce

LEARN MORE

Read “*Hastings, Florida’s Potato Capital*” by Gregory Leonard

Florida Cracker Cattle

Descending from Spanish cattle brought to the New World in the early 1500s, the Florida Cracker breed was shaped by natural selection in an environment hostile to cattle. The breed is heat tolerant, parasite and disease resistant and productive on low-quality forage. Cracker cattle are considered a living part of Florida history, and a number of ranchers in St. Johns County have been maintaining herds.

Datil Peppers

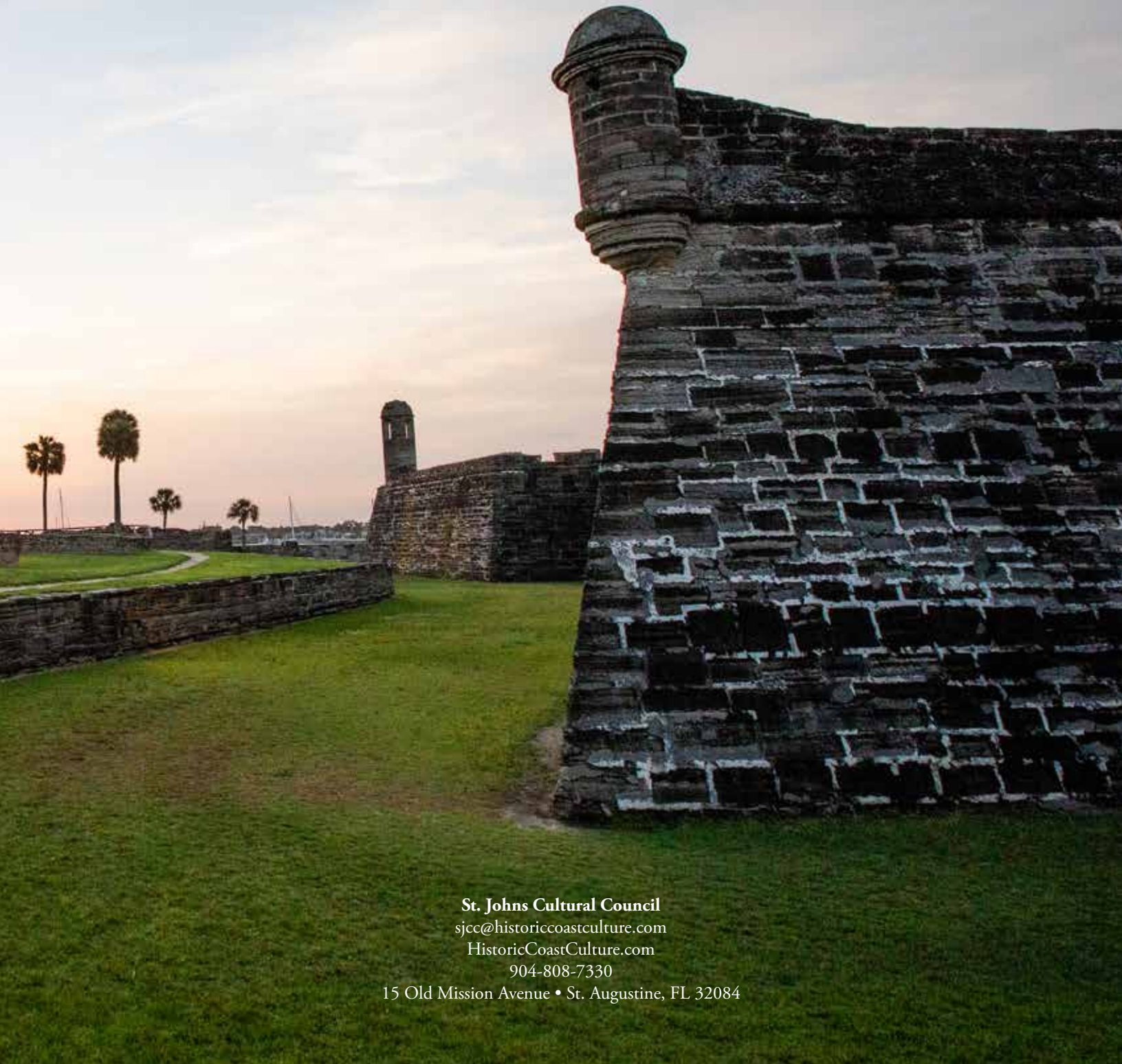
Grown almost exclusively in St. Johns County, the datil pepper is a very hot pepper with a little bit of sweetness. The name datil was derived from the Spanish and Catalan language meaning date palm, because the shape of a datil pepper resembles it. Each year, St. Augustine celebrates its culture and the pepper at the Datil Pepper Fall Festival.





ST. JOHNS
CULTURAL COUNCIL

ST. AUGUSTINE | PONTE VEDRA | FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®



St. Johns Cultural Council
sjcc@historiccoastculture.com
HistoricCoastCulture.com
904-808-7330

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