

"St. Augustine has long been celebrated as the Montpelier of North America. . . . the beauty and high order of the gardens, the neatness of the houses, and the air of comfort and cheerfulness every where around, were the admiration of the invalids and other strangers who resorted hither."

James G. Forbes, 1821

Tourism in the New Florida Territory

Tourism became St. Augustine's economic strength when Florida became a United States territory. The city's Spanish culture meshed with the warm climate and exotic vegetation to attract visitors from afar. The European charm of colonial St. Augustine mingled with American ideals, creating a unique city.

After 1821, visitors, called "strangers," began arriving by boat and the city gained a reputation as a health resort. In 1827 author Ralph Waldo Emerson spent ten weeks in St. Augustine as a treatment for tuberculosis. The climate impressed him, "The air and sky of this ancient sand-bank of a town are really delicious".

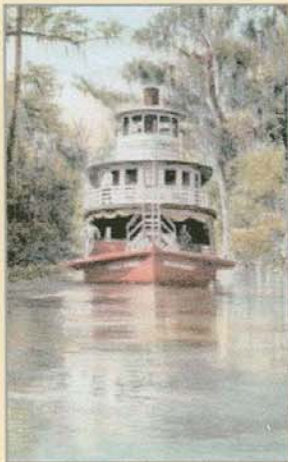
By the 1840s steamboats traveled from Savannah to Jacksonville and continued southward up the St. Johns River. Stage coaches transported passengers along the rugged stretch from the river to St. Augustine. The trip took five hours, and cost \$5.00 – a man's weekly wage.



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society

"You cannot be in St. Augustine a day without hearing some of its inhabitants speak of its agreeable climate . . . the weather has certainly been as delightful as I could imagine. . . a fresh breeze comes in from the sea sweeping through the broad piazzas, and breathing in at the windows. . . . I do not wonder, therefore, that it is so much the resort of invalids; it would be more so if the softness of its atmosphere, and the beauty and serenity of its seasons were generally known."

William Cullen Bryant, 1843



Tourism was successful, and the city met visitors' needs. Protestant churches and a public cemetery were built, and a library, a school and many businesses attracted visitors and new residents. From 1821-1861 St. Augustine catered to visitors. At times, the city's success was almost too great.

"several hundred invalids and pleasure seekers from the North spend the winter here. The town is continually full, from November to June. At this moment every hotel and boarding house is crowded, and we learn that hundreds on the St. John's River are deterred from coming by the lack of accommodations."

New York Times, 1860

A year later the United States divided in civil war. Tourism ceased. After the war tourism in St. Augustine quickly revived and continues as the city's major industry.

Florida Sunshine

"the orange groves were the wealth and ornament of St. Augustine, and their produce maintained the inhabitants in comfort. Orange-trees of the size and height of the pear-tree, often rising higher than the roofs of the houses, embowered the town in perpetual verdure."

William Cullen Bryant, writing of 1831



Oranges – Symbol of Florida Hospitality

Oranges were introduced to Florida by Spanish settlers, and between 1821 and 1834, two million were shipped from St. Augustine annually. The aroma of orange blossoms added to the exotic sense of the city, and the orange trees were noted often by visitors.

Sadly, a serious freeze in 1835 began a series of natural disasters which destroyed the commercial groves. By the 1870s the citrus industry moved southward, leaving residents to replant trees for personal use.

"St. Augustine has become celebrated for restoring tone to the system, in pulmonary and bronchial complaints. And invalids from every part of the United States resort here, during the winter season to avoid the severity of the northern frosts and to enjoy the mildness of our southern breezes. . . ."

John Lee Williams, 1837

Mrs. Whitehurst's Boarding House

Visitors to St. Augustine needed food and lodging. Residents set up "boarding houses," rented rooms in their homes, and provided meals to travelers. Single men and military officers from the fort roomed on the first floor, while families and unmarried women stayed upstairs. By the 1830s St. Augustine had six boarding houses.



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society

Frequently, women operated these businesses, an occupation considered appropriate for them. Mrs. Margaret Cook purchased a large property on Hospital Street in the oldest and most fashionable area of the city. She substantially altered the buildings for boarding house use and brought Mrs. Eliza C. Whitehurst to St. Augustine to manage the business. Both women had lived in Charleston, and their families were interrelated.

"Mrs. Whitehurst's boarding house" served 23 guests, primarily from New England and New York. The house featured eight boarding rooms for guests. Customarily, boarding rooms were shared by two to three people.

Boarding houses competed with hotels for guests. Their reputations were based on food, and meals featured two courses of nine items each. Meats were not duplicated within a course; both domesticated and wild animals were used. Variety and creativity were important. Meals were cooked in a separate kitchen building where the fires burned continuously.

"As a rule, the tables of the boarding houses are better kept than those of the hotels"

Daniel G. Brinton, 1869

The House

The boarding house was built in 1798 by Spaniard Andres Ximenez and his Minorcan wife, the former Juana Pellicer, as their general store and residence. The large, two-story building included two, single-story warehouses which formed an "L" off the main section. A kitchen building paralleled the house, enclosing a Spanish courtyard from which entry was gained to the complex. These structures were built of coquina, the native stone used for the Castillo de San Marcos. A frame wash house was behind the kitchen.

By 1830, a new owner, Margaret Cook made improvements to the buildings for boarding house use. The house featured a lobby, dining room and parlor on the first floor and private quarters for the proprietress on the upper floor. The warehouses were enlarged to provide eight guest rooms, each with a fireplace and private entrance. A long, covered porch overlooked the Spanish courtyard. Floors were tabby or ormigon, both mixtures of shell, lime and sand, and the courtyard was crushed coquina. The kitchen roof was raised, adding living quarters for slaves.



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society

The Enterprising Margaret Cook

At age 19, Margaret Cook was recorded in Charleston and later in St. Augustine "as a sole and separate dealer, in buying, selling, bartering and exchanging, and retailing all goods, wares, merchandizes and commodities whatsoever." She was a bride, mother, widow and bride, again, before her 20th birthday; and she owned slaves.

Mrs. Cook managed each of her husbands' estates after their deaths and was a party in legal disputes to protect her business interests. For 50 of her nearly 90 years, she was active in real estate, owning property in town and in the county.

In 1838, Margaret Cook sold the boarding house and became a business partner with her widowed son-in-law, John Hanson. He served in the Second Seminole War and held numerous public offices. Business interests included a sugar plantation and a steamship line. During their 40-year partnership, Hanson represented the businesses publicly, and Mrs. Cook oversaw operations of their joint and her individual businesses.

"The Second Seminole War had begun, and the population of St. Augustine became swollen with white refugees and their slaves, flocking to the town for safety."

George E. Baker, 1983

Sarah Anderson, Seminole Indians and Statehood

Tourism brought economic growth to St. Augustine. In 1835, the Second Seminole War made the city a refuge for plantation owners and their families, and the movement toward statehood attracted new citizens.



"There are some few old English families, . . . and together with the few Americans whom the delightful climate has enticed, constitute the best society. . . . the easy and cordial hospitality all extend to officers, is what has captivated so many within the past few years."

Lieutenant William Tecumseh Sherman, 1842

St. Augustine became an important base of operations during the war, and the population increased by almost fifty percent. Troops escorted stage coach travelers on the overland route from the river to the safety of the walled city. The City Gates were locked and guarded from dusk to dawn, with limited admittance granted to women and children.



The Siege of the Sugar House, 1842
Museum of Arts and Sciences, Beth and Robert Vickroy Collection

Sarah Petty Anderson

Sarah Anderson and her family were war refugees who escaped before Indians burned their sugar plantation, Dunlawton, the first of sixteen to suffer that fate. Henry Sumner, a Charleston lawyer visiting the city in 1837 noted,



"The Society in this place is good. . . . I spent the evening at Mrs. Anderson's - where I had the pleasure of being made acquainted with General Hernandez. . . ."

No doubt, this military leader spoke of the war raging outside the city. Shortly thereafter, he captured the famed Seminole leader, Osceola.

At the height of the war, Mrs. Anderson bought the boarding house and made additional improvements. She opened the house to military officers, and the war was a frequent topic of conversation.

The Dilemma of Statehood

Florida's movement toward statehood increased in fervor as the Indian war accelerated. Beginning in 1839, supporters proclaimed that only statehood would ensure equal participation in the national government and continue U.S. troops' aid in the war effort.

Many of St. Augustine's leading families supported statehood, but called for two new states, East and West Florida. St. Augustine would continue as the capital of the peninsula; those families would retain their power and prestige. Sarah Anderson's family included statehood delegates and supporters, her son George Anderson, son-in-law and nephew John Beard and future grand son-in-law George Rainsford Fairbanks. Unquestionably, her house in St. Augustine hosted active discussion on the subject.

The U.S. Congress mandated that only a unified Florida with the capital at Tallahassee would be admitted. St. Augustine's delegation opposed this move publicly, successfully postponing statehood until 1845. After admission of the 27th State, several Anderson family members moved to Tallahassee and held positions in the new government.

"the hotels and boarding-houses are all under the management of Southern individuals with 'Northern principles' of domestic economy. From personal experience I can only speak of one of these establishments kept by Miss Fatio, a most estimable and popular lady; and if the others are as home-like and comfortable as this, the ancient city may well be proud of her houses for the accommodations of travelers and invalids"

Charles Lanman, 1856

Fatio House



Miss Louisa Fatio

Louisa Fatio was born at New Switzerland, her grandparents' riverfront plantation northwest of St. Augustine. The grandchildren learned English, French, Spanish and Italian and enjoyed a 12,000 volume library. As a young woman she escaped an Indian attack, helped raise her sisters, traveled to Central and South America and overcame the death of her fiancé. She was godmother to at least thirteen children. During the Second Seminole War, she evacuated the plantation for St. Augustine.

About 1851 Louisa Fatio began operating Mrs. Anderson's Hospital Street property as a boarding house and purchased the property four years later. Visitors came from the northeastern U.S., Canada and Europe. Reservations and letters of introduction were required.

"...the place for strangers is the private boarding house, of which there are, luckily, quite a number; and they seem so well patronized that, it is needful to make application a week before your arrival. Mrs. Abbott's, Mrs. Gardner's, Madame Fatio's, and Mrs. Dummet's are among the best known, and are all pleasant homes, and furnish excellent accommodations, at about half the price of the hotels."

Lanyard Bill, 1869



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society



In addition to the accommodations, Fatio House was noted for the food served, "wild turkey, venison, quail, turtle soup, garden vegetables and tropical fruits like native oranges and figs". The boarding house catered to its wealthy and well-traveled visitors, providing a menu beyond that customary in St. Augustine.

A frequent and famous guest at Fatio House was Constance Fenimore Woolson, grandniece of author James Fenimore Cooper. Her fictionalized adaptation of one visit was published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*,

"The house on Hospital Street was a large white mansion, built of coquina, with a peaked roof and overhanging balcony. . . . We had the balconied room upstairs, and the sound of the distant surf came in through the open window in the intense stillness of the night."

Constance Fenimore Woolson, 1874-1875



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society

Balcony: Mrs. Emma Bangs and Prof. Hood in foreground, betrothed to Prof. Hood's recently deceased daughter in background. Left to right in street: Miss Bangs, Mrs. W.W. Dewhurst (who lived at Fatio House), Mrs. J.E. Shields, Miss Nellie Shields and Miss Kate Shields.



IMAGE BY ST. AUGUSTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

View of rear service yard of Fatio House property

"Ownership of this property by the Colonial Dames has insured that survival of the house.... Private projects of this sort have been the leaders in the American historic preservation movement."

Charles E. Peterson, FAIA, Philadelphia, 1972

Rescue and Restoration



Courtesy St. Augustine Historical Society

After Louisa Fatio's death in 1875 the boarding house stood stalwart, waiting for the next chapter in its intriguing life. By 1920 windows and doors downstairs were boarded, and most of the house was empty. Artists and craftspeople used a few rooms. The north and west yards were sold. The washhouse had collapsed. In 1929, the nation suffered the Great Depression and tourism ended.

Federal "New Deal" programs and private efforts attempted to revive the economy. The St. Augustine Historical Program created by the Carnegie Institution of Washington focused on the city's Spanish colonial buildings. The "nation's oldest city" became part of America's infant historic preservation movement.

In 1939 The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in The State of Florida purchased the Fatio House from Judge David Ross Dunham, Louisa Fatio's great-nephew.

"Considering when the restoration was begun, 1939, the present condition of the house is a tribute to those women who presided over it. They were preservationists as opposed to restorationists; everybody else is just now coming around to their thinking."

William Seale, Architectural Historian, Alexandria, Virginia, 1974



Experts studied the building's construction, investigated the property archaeologically, and recommended furnishings for its use as a house museum.



The house would remain as altered in the mid-19th century. Whitewashed plaster covered coquina walls; floors were tabby or hardwood; woodwork and doors were painted; early warbled glass would remain in the sash windows. Exterior shutters were returned to the windows. Mechanical systems and conveniences would remain absent from museum rooms. The detached kitchen building would be studied and restored to its mid-19th century appearance.

"Remember, a museum house is a three dimensional historical document and is worth saving on the criteria of architecture, or association with a historical person, or both."

William Murtaugh, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1963

"It is remarkable that the remodeling of the 1830-1848 has been the only major change made since original construction. . . . This excellent state of preservation further enhances the historic significance of this important structure."

Herschel E. Shepard, AIA, 1974

"I must say there are few houses I have liked as much—that subtle combination of the vernacular and 'style' presents exciting possibilities. . . . the generation before has bequeathed the present a noble and un-tampered piece of history."

William Seale, 1975

"Rather, the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Florida, the owner and guardian of this site, has wisely chosen a point in the life of these extant structures well after they were built. The buildings and site are interpreted at the flower of their vitality, at a point where the buildings and landscape had matured, grown accustomed to their usage, but had not yet started down the path of neglect and decay."

Charles Phillips, AIA, Charleston, 1979

World War II Rationing

Beginning in May 1942, the United States rationed gasoline as a wartime measure. Civilians carpooled or rode in buses. Gasoline was available for only essential trips. Traffic on roads was heavy—with military vehicles.

Rationing affected, but did not deter, the Florida Dames from their goal of preserving the Ximenez-Fatio House. With their acquisition of this historic property only a mere three years old and a mortgage to satisfy, they came almost daily from Jacksonville to St. Augustine. This bumpy, dirty, un-air conditioned ride consumed nearly two-hours at either end of their volunteer work day. Their dedication resulted, not only in ownership of the property, but opening of the Ximenez-Fatio House as a museum in 1946.

"The Ximenez-Fatio site may be the most-excavated site in St. Augustine. We probably know more about the property from under the ground than we do from above it."

Dr. Kathleen A. Deagan, Distinguished Research Curator, Florida Museum of Natural History



Courtesy Anthropology Division of the Florida Museum of Natural History

Underground St. Augustine

The Ximenez-Fatio House stands in the center of the original town of St. Augustine dating to 1572. This site contains information from the 16th century to today. Property owners were all well-to-do citizens who left evidence about their lives through personal and household items.

Much of the information learned has been through archaeological studies which started in 1963. Beginning in 1972, Florida State University and the University of Florida investigated the property as part of a larger project to study colonial St. Augustine. The latter institution's efforts have continued for more than two decades.

Simple dwellings existed on the site in the 16th and 17th centuries. Artifacts found from these times included Spanish ceramics, Oriental porcelain, fragments of brass furniture inlay, glass vessels and a Venetian glass perfume bottle and beads.



Drawing by Bill Glander
Courtesy Anthropology Division of the Florida Museum of Natural History

By the 18th century, written records were available. Cristoval Contreras, a Canary Island native, and his family lived on the property which included two tabby and one wooden structure and a tabby wall framing the site. In 1763, they evacuated to Cuba. Artifacts found from this period included Spanish, English, German, and French items, liquor and wine bottles, goblets, ornate buttons and glass beads.

"Tabby" is a mixture of shells, lime and sand. Floors in the Ximenez-Fatio House and on the porch are of this material. When the shells are crushed and mixed with lime and sand, the mixture is called "ormigon".

In 1798, Andres and Juana Ximenez built a complex from native "coquina". This material is the shell stone of which the fort, the Castillos de San Marcos, is constructed. This included a two-story house, and two one-story warehouses. A building remnant from the British Period was included in a new kitchen. A wood wash house completed the complex.



Dining and Diet



During the American Territorial Period, (1821-1845), this building complex became one of St. Augustine's premier boarding houses under a succession of women owners. This status was the result, in part, of the excellent table fare served.

In the mid-19th century the finest boarding houses boasted varied menus with imported items. Mealtimes afforded guests a choice of two seatings. Visitors feasted on two courses, each of which featured nine items. Meats were not duplicated in each course, so variety was a necessity.

Archaeologists located dietary evidence at the Ximenez-Fatio site. Bones, shells, and seeds were plentiful in the area around the kitchen. These materials explained much about food consumption at the boarding house which contrasted with dietary habits of St. Augustine residents.

Guests "dined on beef primarily, but also pork, venison and some mutton or goat . . . chicken, . . . gopher tortoise. Sea turtles were also a frequent menu item. Opossum, rabbits, raccoons, and diamond-back terrapin were also consumed. Rails, ducks and turkeys were eaten . . . Mulletts, sea catfishes, flounders, sheephead, sharks, rays, a gar, and a porcupine fish completed the bill of fare."

"I've never seen a cross like this one. The type has been found in the Southeast, the Caribbean and in Canada, but not here -- until now."

Carl D. Halbrit, City Archaeologist, St. Augustine

The Caravaca Cross



In July of 2002, shortly after beginning a dig at the Ximenez-Fatio site, an extraordinary artifact was retrieved from the tens-of-thousands of items in a trash pit. The relic was a small cross with two horizontal bars.

Found with ceramic artifacts made about 1650, this relic dates to a time when the settlement's population was about 500 hearty souls. San Agustín was concentrated south of the Plaza, north of the Convento de San Franciscan (now St. Francis Barracks), and east of Cordova Street. Construction of the Castillo de San Marcos would not begin for nearly 50 years. Metal, especially bronze, was unusual and a sacred article was quite valuable.

Treatment removed a dark patina of encrusted salts to expose the resplendent white bronze material and fine details. Held together with a bail at the top and peg at the bottom are front and back plates with wheat pattern incising. Circular openings may have revealed fabric or amulets originally set between the plates.



Mary Ruffin Hanbury, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Carl Halbrit, City Archaeologist, and volunteers.



Named for a hillside town in southeastern Spain, the Caravaca cross is believed to have become popular in the 17th century to celebrate the end of the plague. This style was then and continues to be used in Spain as a protection against rabies and lightning. One other 17th century Caravaca cross was found at the Santa Catalina mission site along the Georgia coast. A few Caribbean sites and shipwrecks yielded 18th century examples

Unsolved Mystery: *Why was the cross buried in a trash pit?*

Amazing Fact: *If underground utilities were not part of a new construction project at the site, the cross would have remained undiscovered.*

"an absolutely outstanding find. Whoever had this was a person of some means. This is in the top 10 or 20 percent of rarity. You just don't find something that intricately made."

John T. Powell, educator and conservator

City of St. Augustine Archaeology Program



One of the only city-sponsored archaeology efforts in the nation—this program requires excavation, artifact recovery, analysis, conservation and interpretation to ensure that the cultural heritage of the community is preserved. The city archaeologist and dedicated volunteers accomplish these tasks and add valuable information about life in St. Augustine.