



## **St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission**

### **Members Are Named By U. S. Secretary of the Interior**

U. S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has announced the members of the St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission. The secretarily-appointed members of the Commission will plan and carry out programs and activities to mark the 450th anniversary of the city's founding in 2015. The announcement was made on Friday, April 15 from the Secretary's Office.

"I am pleased that these passionate and accomplished individuals have agreed to serve St. Augustine and our nation by serving on this Commission," Secretary Salazar said. "As stewards of our nation's great history, the Department of the Interior and the Commission will work to ensure that the story of St. Augustine and our Spanish ancestors is recognized and preserved for generations to come."

"The story of St. Augustine is a microcosm of the story of America itself, with a tapestry weaved by Native Americans, Europeans and Africans as the city developed, changed hands in times of conflict, struggled with issues of justice and equality and eventually flourished," said Director of the National Park Service Jon Jarvis. "The members of the commission will ensure that the anniversary will be an opportunity to expand the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the founding and continuing history of the city."

"With today's announcement we are truly seeing the formation of a team that will develop an outstanding commemoration for our city," said St. Augustine Mayor Joe Boles. "With the groundwork already prepared by First America Foundation and the extensive internal planning by city staff, we join now with the federal commission and its tremendous resources to give our city the recognition it deserves on such an important occasion as this anniversary."

Congress established the Commission as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 and charged it with ensuring a suitable national observance of St. Augustine's 450th anniversary by complementing the programs and activities of the State of Florida and the City of St. Augustine.

The members of the St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission were appointed by the Secretary after considering the recommendations of the Mayor of St. Augustine, the St. Augustine City Commission, the Chancellor of the University System of Florida, the Governor of Florida, and the Florida delegation in Congress.

The members are:

- Joseph P. Boles, Mayor of St. Augustine
- Katharine H. Dickenson, historic preservationist
- Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Miami-Dade State Attorney
- Dr. Michael Francis, Professor of History, University of North Florida
- Dr. Michael Gannon, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of History, University of Florida
- Senator Bob Graham
- Jay Kislak, President Kislak Mortgage Corp., National Park Foundation Board
- Eduardo Padron, President of Miami Dade College
- Bruce Smathers, Former Florida Secretary of State
- Robert Stanton, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Department of the Interior
- Father Thomas S. Willis, Pastor Cathedral Parish, St. Augustine, Florida
- Gordon Wilson, Superintendent of Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monument
- Ambassador Andrew Young, former Congressman, Mayor of Atlanta, and UN Ambassador

More detailed biographies of the commissioners are available by [clicking here](#).

As outlined in the legislation creating the Commission, its duties are to:

- plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities appropriate for the commemoration;
- facilitate activities relating to the commemoration throughout the United States;
- encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, economic, and other organizations throughout the United States to organize and participate in anniversary activities to expand understanding and appreciation of the significance of the founding and continuing history of St. Augustine;
- provide technical assistance to States, localities, and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration;
- coordinate and facilitate for the public scholarly research on, publication about, and interpretation of, St. Augustine;
- ensure that the commemoration provides a lasting legacy and long-term public benefit by assisting in the development of appropriate programs; and
- help ensure that the observances of the foundation of St. Augustine are inclusive and appropriately recognize the experiences and heritage of all individuals present when St. Augustine was founded.

No date has been set for the Commission's inaugural meeting but plans are in the works to have that gathering in St. Augustine.

Spanish explorer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine in 1565 under a grant from King Phillip II of Spain. St. Augustine was often a site of conflict as European nations competed with each other for control of the New World, and, at various times, the flags of Spain, England and the United States have flown over the city. Union forces occupied the city in 1862. In the 1960's, St. Augustine was on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led efforts to end segregation and secure equal rights for African Americans.

St. Augustine is home to two National Park Service sites, the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments. The Castillo de San Marcos, a castle built by the Spanish in 1672 to protect their interests in La Florida, is located in downtown St. Augustine, Florida.