

# Viva Mose! 1738 Fort Reconstruction at Fort Mose Historic State Park Opens with Momentous Ribbon-Cutting Celebration

*~America's First Site of Freedom ready to welcome visitors to St. Augustine's newest historic fort~*

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL, UNITED STATES, May 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A dream more than 30 years in the making, and carrying nearly three centuries of Floridian, American and African American history along with it, is now a reality.

“

Our hope is that, in the years to come, Fort Mose will inspire countless visitors from around the world the same way it has inspired us here today.”

*Kathleen Brennan, Florida State Parks Foundation Board President*

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 9, 2025, at America's "First Site of Freedom" — Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine — marked the official completion of the park's 1738 Fort Mose reconstruction project.

Following the ribbon-cutting, the full-scale, life-sized fort structure welcomed its first visitors as part of the annual St. Augustine History Festival.

Fort Mose, on the northern end of St. Augustine, was originally established by the Spanish as the first legally sanctioned free Black community in what would become the United States.

Historians estimate that approximately 100 formerly enslaved men, women and children made their homes there after fleeing the British Carolinas. Fort Mose was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

“Fort Mose is so much more than the walls, the roof and the landscaping we see here today,” said Fort Mose Historical Society President Charles Ellis, who performed the ceremonial ribbon cutting. “These things are all wonderful, and the finished fort has surpassed everything we dreamed it could be when we embarked on this project 30 years ago. But what really matters today is the tribute and testament to the people who risked their lives to come here in the 1700s. Having this new fort in place means that their stories will be told forever.”

"This is a truly historic moment for our state, our nation, and everyone who believes in the power of freedom," added Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation, which spearheaded fundraising efforts. "To be a part of something like this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we are so grateful to all the partners who believed in Fort Mose and helped make this day happen."

The reconstructed fort stands at more than 39 feet tall and is surrounded by a historically accurate moat and landscaping. The final cost for the project was \$3.2 million and was funded from public and private sources.



From left, Robert Yero, Julia Gill Woodward, Kathleen Brennan, Charles Ellis, Dr. Kathleen Deagan, Dr. Jane Landers and Chuck Hatcher cut the red ribbon to signify the opening of the 1738 fort reconstruction at Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine, Florida.

"Our team and partners have been working on this project for many years, and it's just amazing to see it finally complete," Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. "This new fort involves every aspect of our mission, which is to provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources. Our park staff, design and construction team and interpretive team are all the very best at what they do, and they all had a big hand in bringing this project to life."

During Friday morning's ceremony, visitors were greeted by an array of 1700s-era Spanish flags lining new walkways that lead to the fort structure. Banners and signage reading "Viva Mose," a common refrain among Fort Mose's inhabitants, surrounded the park grounds.

Ellis, who was among the original founders of the Fort Mose Historical Society in 1996, was part of a brief speaking program that also included Hatcher, Florida State Parks Foundation Board President Kathleen Brennan, Dr. Kathleen Deagan and Dr. Jane Landers.

Drs. Deagan and Landers were instrumental in the discovery and exploration of the Fort Mose site in the 1980s and are among the world's preeminent Fort Mose experts.

At the conclusion of the speaking program, several members of the Fort Mose Historical Society, in full militia attire, performed a ceremonial muster and cannon firing. Guests then participated in a ribbon-cutting photo opportunity and enjoyed a ranger-led tour of the new fort.

"This is one of the proudest days in the Florida State Parks Foundation's 30-plus-year history,"

Brennan, the Florida State Parks Foundation board president said. "To have played a part in a project of such historical and cultural significance, and then to celebrate it surrounded by our cherished partners, is truly an honor for us all."

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