



About NPS Cannon School

The Historic Weapons Program has been at the core of the Castillo de San Marcos' interpretive history program for over fifty years. We are the largest and longest running Historic Weapons Program in the Nation. But without help from volunteers, there would not be sufficient staff to perform cannon firings at the Castillo.

The NPS Cannon School was designed as a program to recruit and train interested individuals as National Park Service living history volunteers. Living history is an innovative way of interpreting and presenting history by recreating the clothing, technology and life ways of the past and presenting them in the context of today. In a sense we are "reenacting" the past.

Purpose

We teach this course to train new park volunteers in interpretive or "living" history, so they may safely demonstrate the firing of an 18th century cannon in such a way that the visitors to the Fort learn something from the experience.

The Cannon School includes both hands-on safety training and background information about 18th century history so that volunteer cannons can both fire black powder cannon *and* accurately answer visitors questions about the experience. We also train volunteers from other State and Local Parks and organizations with similar programs and assist with weapons firing programs around the country.

Content

We will teach participants how to safely and correctly load and fire a six pounder garrison cannon using the appropriate 18th century drill, either the Spanish 1740 garrison drill or the Stevens British/American field drill. These drills and procedures are used in many other historic sites in the National and State Park systems. We will also introduce you to living history and historical interpretation and research.

We have a limited wardrobe of uniforms and equipment for on-site use by our volunteers. Our staff and veteran volunteers are likewise an excellent resource for information, assisting in research and for guidance in obtaining period clothing and goods.

Benefits

While we can only certify you to participate in the black powder programs at the Castillo de San Marco and Ft. Matanzas Monuments, the training you will receive is generally looked favorably upon at other sites and events.

You will also have the opportunity to work with Park Rangers, historical specialists, and veteran reenactors in the oldest masonry fort in North America, to be a part of the premier historic weapons program in the Nation, and be able to have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped make an experience for the Park's visitors that they will carry with them for years. It's not unusual for visitors to come up to the crew after a shot and hear them say, "I remember seeing them fire cannon here when I was a kid, years ago and I brought mine back to see it."

Requirements

Age: Federal regulations require that volunteers handling black powder must be at least 16 years old.

Sex: Cannon crews at the Castillo are made up of both men and women *but* for historical integrity women participants in the black powder program dress in military uniforms as men. However there are other opportunities in the living history program to portray female roles.

Physical Requirements: Our reenactors are required to march, climb stairs, and be moderately active in the warm and humid weather of Florida. Good physical health is essential.

Time: We do require that you participate in at least four black powder demonstrations per year to remain current and qualified in the program

Class Size

Due to safety and time constraints class participation is limited to a maximum of 24 volunteers unless special arrangements have been made.

If you are interested in becoming a living history volunteer and/or attending the next NPS Cannon School please contact Rangers Joe Brehm or Jeffrey Edel at the Castillo de San Marcos NM, (904) 829-6506 x233