



## SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

# NEWSLETTER

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### **FROM THE EDITOR**

#### **Nominees for SEAC Offices**

The nominees for SEAC offices selected by the nominating committee are as follows:

for the Secretary-Elect position: Jeffrey Mitchem;

for the Executive Officer I position: Judy Bense, Marvin Smith.

SEAC members should have received their ballots and are encouraged to vote, especially for the contested position!

#### **1993 SEAC MEETING**

The 1993 meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference will be held between November 3-6, 1993 at the Radisson Plaza Hotel, Raleigh, North Carolina. Please check your April, 1993, Newsletter for details.

### **CURRENT RESEARCH**

#### **Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge**

##### **Identity of Plant 3,000 Years Old Baffles Botanists**

World experts remain baffled about the identity of a remarkably well-preserved 3,000-year-old plant, with tiny rootlets so strong that prehistoric people braided them for use as fishing lines.

Remnants of cord--scientifically dated back to 1600-1300 B.C.--were unearthed from what was once a popular prehistoric fishing spot on an ancient bayou near Lake Pontchartrain, according to LSU archeo-botanist Marie Standifer.

"The cord is among some of the oldest manufactured textile material found in Louisiana," LSU textile expert Jenna Kuttruff of the School of Human Ecology said. "No other textile has been dated this far back into the state's prehistory."

Hunters and gatherers painstakingly braided the tiny, stringy roots of the plant into lengths of cord, using them as trotlines to fish on Bayou Jasmine, then a freshwater channel of the Mississippi River. The bayou's use as a fishing spot spanned thousands of years, Standifer said.

There is no evidence that the ancient fishermen used the cord to make nets for seining, but their braiding techniques indicate that they could make the fishing lines as long and as strong as they needed, with multiple "Y" offshoots, said Kuttruff.

Remnants of braided cord were found with bone fishhooks and other fishing and hunting tools in spoilbanks thrown up during recent excavations for a highway along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain in St. John the Baptist Parish. Bulbous rhizomes of the plant with the tell-tale rootlets were also uncovered, all remarkably well preserved, said Standifer.

"The artifacts had been deeply buried in extremely wet conditions where you don't have microbes and decaying organisms at work.

"The plant seems to be one of the sedges, a grass-like plant that grows in very wet areas like bayous and marshes," she said. It resembles nutsedge, a pesty weed well-known to Louisiana gardeners.

"This plant artifact has never been identified in the archaeological literature," she said. "We've sent pictures to 20 prominent plant anatomists in the United States, Europe and Israel.

"We've sent pictures to Kew Gardens in England, the Missouri Botanical Garden and to people who have written books on sedges. None

could identify it. Identification is difficult because there are no leaves or flowers to go by, just root and rhizome."

"But, I'm sure the plant is still around. We just haven't found it yet. We believe that the Earth's flora had pretty much stabilized by the Late Pleistocene, so today's flora is roughly the same as that when this plant was growing."

The cordage was dated with accelerated mass spectroscopy, an advanced radiocarbon dating technique. The cordage existed in the period 1600 to 1292 B.C., while a loosely braided bundle of the cordage was dated at 1100 to 835 B.C., and the plant root itself between 800 and 410 B.C. Dating was funded by the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy.

"We have examples of cordage ranging from four to 10 strands," said Kuttruff. "We have some with knots, looped over to make 'Y' cords. The people took the little roots and split them, most probably with their fingernails. I can barely see the split strands without the microscope."

"They must have found that the cords were stronger if they split some of the roots and braided them in combination with whole root strings," said Kuttruff.

"They could make cords any length they wanted. You can see where they started and stopped to add strands to make it longer. And although the number of strands varied, the diameter of the braid remained consistent, evidence that this was something they were trying to achieve," said Kuttruff.

When first looking at a section of the plant with the scanning electron microscope, Standifer said she was "amazed to find cells and structure in a plant that was 3,000 years old."

"The cells are extremely long and thick-walled, making the roots strong and flexible, perfect to make string for fishing," she said.

For more information contact: Jenna Kuttruff (504) 388-1600; Marie Standifer (504) 388-8552; Terry English, LSU News Service (504) 388-3870.

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#### North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Historic Sites

Archaeologists from the Historic Sites Section have recently conducted archaeological and

historical research on four state-owned historic properties:

At **Somerset Place** in Washington County, the Somerset Place Foundation (the official non-profit support group for this State Historic Site) sponsored the excavation of a structure along "the street" at the nineteenth-century plantation in July and August 1992. The work was funded by a grant from the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Inc., and performed by a team from the Institute for Historical and Cultural Research at East Carolina University, Greenville. The area of "the street" was first uncovered in 1954 using earth-moving machinery in order to reveal building remains identified through oral history research. The informant recalled a line of buildings along a dirt road, "the street", which included the overseer's house, a meat house, slave chapel, hospital, fieldhand kitchen, and possibly a number of quarters. The 1992 excavations revealed a rectangular structure, 20 ft. by 25 ft., with an exterior brick chimney on the north end. The brick pier supports for the structure were disturbed, probably a result of its use as a barnyard in the early 20th century. The team was under the direction of Dr. David Phelps, and field director, John E. Byrd, of the Research Institute. Artifact processing is still underway and report preparation has begun.

In October 1992 limited archaeological testing was conducted by the Archaeology Branch at the Tap Room in **Historic Halifax**, North Carolina. The Tap Room is being restored and rehabilitated for use as a gift shop for the Historical Halifax Restoration Association. Dating from the eighteenth century, the Tap Room is the oldest structure on its original lot in the colonial town. Early evidence of a structure on the lot dates to C.J. Sauthier's 1769 Map of Halifax which shows a building the size and shape of what we now call the Tap Room but oriented differently. This structure was probably rotated 90 degrees in the 1820s so that its gable end is perpendicular to the street. At that time it became part of a larger complex of buildings known as the Mansion House Property and later as **Pope's Hotel**. The roof was changed from gable to gambrel during this remodeling and an interior partition wall was removed creating one large room. Over the years a thick level of soil had accumulated around the buildings requiring that the structure be raised as

part of the restoration. Archaeological testing revealed that the extant brick piers the structure rested on were actually constructed on top of an earlier stone footing. Bricks used in the piers appeared to be re-used. Careful examination at the top of the brick piers showed that shims had been used to level the building when it was raised in the late 19th or early 20th century. Testing also indicated a cellar north of the Tap Room which was probably associated with the larger hotel complex. Based on this research the brick piers have been replaced with a stone footing as part of the restoration.

Two building sites have been the focus of archaeological research at the **Home Creek Living Historical Farm**, located in Surry County. The farm, located in a rural setting in the upper piedmont, was owned and operated by the Hauser family from the 1870s up until the late 1940s. In October 1991, excavations were conducted in the vicinity of the "New" barn, a term used by the family descendants to distinguish it from an extant double-crib log barn. The "new" barn was built in ca. 1900 and collapsed in the mid-1960s. Excavations revealed a foundation of stone piers approximately 30 x 30 ft., with three distinct activity areas, and over 2300 artifacts (mostly metal) mapped in situ. The southern portion of the barn had been partitioned into four rectangularly-shaped animal stalls. Relatively few artifacts were recovered in this area. The middle third of the building had, according to oral tradition, served as a shuck pen or milking area for cows. This section of the barn contained the greatest concentration of tack and stable gear, agricultural equipment, and architectural debris suggesting it must also have served as a storage room. The northern third of the barn had been used to store two wagons parked rear to rear, with special holes cut into the doors for the wagon tongues to protrude, based on information given by a Hauser family member. Artifact distribution in this area was concentrated in the center and edges along what were once walls. Based on the archaeological evidence and oral testimony, the Section plans to reconstruct and furnish this barn to serve as an animal shelter and storage facility for the living history program at this site.

As restoration efforts at **Home Creek Living Historical Farm** proceeded, the extant kitchen became the target for floor and sill replacement.

Once the rotted floor was removed, archaeological excavations were conducted within the building. Originally built in 1875, this structure served as the family home until the larger two-story addition was added to the front (or south) end in 1880. The 1875 cabin was essentially a hall-and-palor plan with a hearth located on the north wall and opposing doors on the east and west elevations. A boxed stairway, accessible from the kitchen side, provided entry to the upper story, also partitioned into two rooms. What served as the "palor" side later became the dining room. Excavations revealed details of a hearth (previously floored over), a "recent" plumbing intrusion in one corner, stone piers (possibly earlier supports for rotting floor joists), and several charred stains into the hard-packed clay (interpreted as evidence of pre-cabin crop/field burnoffs). Among the 1200 artifacts recovered, most interesting was a brass Confederate Infantry button, marked with manufacturer and location and considered to be a "blockade" item. Historical research discovered that a Thomas Hauser (died 1901) had served in the infantry and returned to the home place to work out his last days as a farmer. Other artifacts provided useful information regarding early lighting devices. The architectural and archaeological data garnered through this project will be used to restore and refurnish the farm kitchen to a late nineteenth appearance.

In January 1993 a research project, precipitated by clearance, was carried out on the **Palmer-Marsh House** (built in 1751) in the colonial town of Bath, North Carolina. Fieldwork was done along the south side of the house where evidence of an earlier porch was suspected according to the 1769 map of the town and house by C. J. Sauthier. Installation of a new waterline to provide the house with fire protection required this area to be tested. An area 10 x 47 feet was excavated in one week's time and revealed the foundation remains of at least three previous porches dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Three postmolds, not aligned with the house, suggested an earlier eighteenth century structure on this lot. Stanley South's excavations (done 1959-1961) in the north yard of the house exposed a pre-1751 cellar, possibly related to these post molds in the south yard. Hundreds of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century domestic-related artifacts were recovered

and are now being processed. Of special interest was a large number of gravel-sized and small ballast stones which were found to litter the yard area. References have been found to document the use of small-sized ballast (flints) in trans-continental voyages as early as 1644. Further historical research may reveal the suspected use of these pebble-to-gravel sized, smooth-surfaced stones as paving for walks or thoroughfares in the colonial town.

For additional information regarding these projects, or the Historic Sites Archaeology Branch, please contact Linda F. Carnes-McNaughton or Terry Harper at 109 E. Jones Street, Raleigh, or 919/733-9033.

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### **Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research**

The Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research has worked with the Florida Departments of Law Enforcement, Environmental Protection, and Agriculture as well as the Florida Game and Fish Commission, the National Park Service, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and the Florida Archaeological Council in the design of two training programs to be instituted in 1993. This effort was in response to a legislative mandate to improve the state's archaeological preservation laws and to institute appropriate training for law enforcement personnel within the state. Beginning July 1, 1993, all law enforcement officers undergoing basic training in the State of Florida will receive instruction on archaeological resource protection. Recruits will be trained in the implementation of Chapters 267 and 872 Florida Statutes concerning archaeological resources on state lands and unmarked human burials. In addition, a special eight hour archaeological resource protection program has been designed for training officers who are already certified in law enforcement and who can specialize in archaeological cases.

In accordance with procedures implementing Florida's unmarked burial law, Native American remains have been reinterred at two sites, an early historic Timucuan site and a Guala mission site. The reburial followed a detailed analysis of the skeletal material by a physical anthropologist.

The Bureau has established four underwater shipwreck preserves and a fifth will be established

within the next few months. The preserves are nominated by local citizens and established on the basis of geographical location, site significance and interpretive potential. Also, during the last year the bureau has identified what appears to be the oldest known historic shipwreck in Florida waters. The 16th Century Spanish vessel was discovered by bureau archaeologists during a survey of Pensacola Bay and has since become the focal point of a joint research effort by the University of West Florida and the Bureau's underwater archaeology program.

The systematic survey of state-owned lands is continuing through the efforts of the Bureau's Conservation and Recreation Lands survey team. The team has conducted survey's excavations or other site management activities at 28 different locations during the past year.

Research continues at San Luis Archaeological and Historical Site. Efforts during the past year have focused on the excavation of the 17th Century fort site and mission related cemetery.

The Bureau's Conservation Laboratory has been active during the past year. In addition to the ongoing conservation of archaeological materials from Florida, the lab is involved with stabilization projects on a contractual basis with the National Park Service.

Six volumes are currently available in the Bureau's FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGY series and over thirty technical reports have been completed for the Florida Archaeological Report series. A complete price list and order form can be obtained by writing: Bureau of Archaeological Research, R.A. Gray Building, 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250.

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**PROPOSAL FOR A NEW SEAC MONOGRAPH SERIES==  
REQUEST FOR COMMENT FROM THE MEMBERSHIP**

At the 1992 Executive Council meeting, President Vincas Steponaitis charged a committee to investigate the feasibility of starting a SEAC monograph series to publish both older out-of-print reports and deserving new works that will appeal to the membership. President-Elect Galloway was asked to work with the outgoing and incoming Southeastern Archaeology editors, Davis and Sassaman, to come up with a proposal to implement such a plan.

As a result of lengthy discussions and investigations, the committee has determined that such a project is certainly feasible, but it is recommending that the Conference not commit to a definite series of publications until it has adequate information to draft a specific business plan for it. To obtain that information, the committee recommends that a single monograph be published using the same mechanism and the same physical specifications as Southeastern Archaeology so that specific figures may be gathered on publication costs, distribution problems, and sales figures. The monograph would be sold to members at cost or close to cost, and to others at a fair market price.

It remains to decide what to publish. The list below is certainly not exhaustive, since it represents the suggestions of a very limited sample of the membership, but at least it gives an idea of what we have in mind. We are now turning to the membership with the following questions:

1. Of the works listed below, which single report would you be most likely to purchase for your library?
2. If you do not see your "most-wanted" unavailable report below, what is it?

The subject of the monograph series publication will be discussed at both the Executive Council and Business meetings at the SEAC meetings in Raleigh, North Carolina, in November, and we would like to hear from you before then. You may write to Galloway c/o Research Laboratories of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120 or telephone the members of the committee: Galloway, (919) 933-6493; Davis, (919) 962-3845; Sassaman, (803) 725-3623.

**Possible Proposals for a SEAC Monograph Series**

Previously Published Reports

Caldwell, Joseph R., and Catherine McCann  
1941 The Irene Mound Site, Chatham County, Georgia. Series in Anthropology No. 1. University of Georgia, Athens.

Clafin, William H.  
1931 The Stalling's Island Mound, Columbia County, Georgia. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology Vol. 14(1). Harvard University, Cambridge.

Crane, Verner  
1928 The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

Ford, James A., Philip Phillips, and William G. Haag  
1955 The Jaketown Site in West-Central Mississippi. Anthropological Papers Vol. 45, Part 1. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Ford, James A., and George I. Quimby, Jr.  
1945 The Tchefuncte Culture, An Early Occupation of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Memoir No. 2. Society for American Archaeology, Salt Lake City.



Ford, James A., and Clarence H. Webb  
1956 Poverty Point, A Late Archaic Site in Louisiana. Anthropological Papers Vol. 46, Part 1. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Kelly, Arthur R.  
1938 A Preliminary Report on Archaeological Explorations at Macon, Ga. Bulletin 119. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

Moore, Clarence B.  
1894-1918 [Series of 32+ reports of archaeological investigations in the Southeast]. Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Sears, William H.  
1951-1956 Excavations at Kolomoki... [4 reports]. Series in Anthropology No. 2-5. University of Georgia, Athens.

Setzler, Frank M., and Jesse D. Jennings  
1941 Peachtree Mound and Village Site, Cherokee County, North Carolina. Bulletin 131. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

Swanton, John R.  
1911 Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Bulletin 43. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

Webb, William S.  
1938 An Archaeological Survey of the Norris Basin in Eastern Tennessee. Bulletin 118. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

1939 An Archaeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama. Bulletin 122. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

Webb, William S., and David L. DeJarnette  
1942 An Archaeological Survey of Pickwick Basin in the Adjacent Portions of the States of Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Bulletin 129. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

Webb, William S., and C. G. Wilder  
1951 An Archaeological Survey of the Guntersville Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama. University of Kentucky Press, Lexington.

#### Unpublished Reports

Anderson, David, and Ken Sassaman, eds.  
Paleoindian and Early Archaic Research in the Lower Southeast. Collection of papers.

Claggett, S.R., and J.S. Cable, eds.  
Haw River Sites. Contract report.

Daniel, Randy  
Hardaway. Dissertation, University of North Carolina.

Driskell, Boyce, ed.  
Dust Cave, Alabama. 1993 SEAC symposium.

Ferguson, Leland  
South Appalachian Mississippian. Dissertation, University of North Carolina.

House, John  
The Kent Phase. Dissertation, Southern Illinois University.

Kidder, T.R.  
Coles Creek. Dissertation, Harvard University.

Kimball, Larry R., ed.  
Methodological and Substantive Contributions to Microwear Studies. 1991 SEAC symposium.

Peebles, Chris, ed.  
Prehistoric Agricultural Communities in West Central Alabama. Contract report, 1983.

Williams, Mark  
Shinholser, Scull Shoals, Little River, Shoulderbone. LAMAR Institute reports.