

**COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY FESTIVAL
AT FORT FREDERICA NATIONAL MONUMENT**

by

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The first annual “*Digging History*” at *Fort Frederica: Community Archaeology Festival* was held on May 22, 2010, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on the grounds of Fort Frederica National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service, on St. Simons Island, Georgia. The purpose of the festival was to promote community stewardship of archaeological resources, as well as educate the public about the scientific process of archaeology as a method to learn about people who lived in the past. Visitors of all ages were encouraged to attend the festival. The festival was held in May to coincide with the State of Georgia’s Archaeology Month. The festival attracted over 300 visitors, many of whom were from the local community.

Fort Frederica National Monument has already been serving over 1,000 4th-grade students in an award-winning archaeology education program in partnership with the Glynn County School System and Board of Education. The SEAC Public Outreach Grant helped fund an expansion of this program into a community archaeology festival. In addition to the one-day festival, the staff at Fort Frederica welcomed students from a local after-school program on the afternoon preceding the festival. It was the intention of the staff to have local Boys and Girls Club students attend the pre-festival event, but bus transportation was needed. Originally the staff was told that transportation would not be a problem, but due to a conflict, the bus was not able to transport the students. We did not have funds to transport students since this was not anticipated in advance. However, students in kindergarten through fifth grade in the after-school program at Wesley United Methodist Church were able to attend the pre-festival event. There were 25 students and 5 adults. The students were the first to participate in the hands-on discovery station activities. This served as a preliminary test of the activities before the public arrived the next day. Park staff was able to make important changes, such as placement of activities and objects, based on observations of the students.

Hands-On Discovery Stations were set up outside of the visitor center in the backyard (see attached layout diagram for more detailed description.) Tents belonging to the National Park Service were used to provide both visitors and the activities with shelter in case of inclement weather. There were 6 stations set up outside. The stations were: research, primary and secondary documents, gridding, classification, preservation and ethics. In addition, the Society for Georgia Archaeology’s *Archaeobus* was open for touring. Visitors also participated in lectures presented by Dr. Nick Honerkamp about archaeology at Frederica, as well as ground penetrating radar demonstrations given by archaeologist Dan Elliott. There were also games and a children’s field notebook challenge.

The festival was advertised through fliers. About 50 festival fliers were posted in shops around St. Simons Island and sent to local schools. A press release was submitted to area media outlets. The most visible forms of advertising local events are two billboards located at the foot of the Torres Causeway, a very busy road that links St. Simons Island to the mainland. Several visitors commented that

they had learned of the festival through this method of advertising, which was determined to have been very successful and will be used again for other park events.

Volunteers distributed evaluation forms on the breezeway of the visitor center. Sixteen evaluation forms were completed. One hundred percent of the people who completed the evaluation forms think archaeology is an important science because it helps them learn about the past and teaches them about history. When asked about the content (exhibits, activities, and interactive games) and flow of the discovery stations, most people replied that they were able to learn about the scientific process fairly easily.

The year 2011 marks the 275th anniversary of the founding of Fort Frederica. The staff at Fort Frederica intends to make the archaeology festival an annual event. Next year we will try to have more artifacts on display that focus on the colonists of Frederica as well as revising some of the exhibits and exhibit text in the visitor center. We will also add different layers of activities for all age groups and illustrate other types of archaeology, such as underwater and prehistoric.

The staff at Fort Frederica would like to thank the SEAC Public Outreach Grant Committee for selecting our program to fund this year. The SEAC grant helped pay for supplies and materials for the interactive archaeology games and activities, as well as stipends for those assisting with the event.