



WMS/LSS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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A 501(c)3 Corporation and Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

The Warm Mineral Springs/Little Salt Spring Archaeological Society meets the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM (except June, July, and August) at the North Port Community United Church of Christ, 3450 S. Biscayne Blvd., the building on the right (left side door). Join us for dinner at 5:00 PM at the Tarpon Point Grill & Marina on the Myakka River prior to the meeting. The Zoom link to the May 14 meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89602229117?pwd=SUVRZWU4MjB6ZlJMa0NVN1BDQm1GQT09> (copy and paste). Meeting ID: 896 0222 9117, Passcode: 118234; mobile connect with ID and passcode, 1 (305) 224-1968.

Note: The April meeting will be in-person and on Zoom. The next meeting, after our summer hiatus, will be September 10, 2024. Next season: NEW LOCATION, NEW TIME! (see article below)

WEEDS AND SEEDS: A HISTORY OF DINING IN SOUTHERN FLORIDA. TOPIC OF MAY 14, 2024 MEETING BY NATALIE DE LA TORRE SALAS

Cattle, citrus, and many other common foods today were brought to Florida by the Spanish, so what were people eating before then? This talk covers what people would have had for dinner in Southwest Florida 2,000 years ago. Topics of environment, flora and fauna, archaeological research, and historical documents all come together to answer this question.



May 14 speaker, Natalie De La Torre Salas

Natalie A. De La Torre Salas serves as the public archaeologist for the Florida Public Archaeology Network's Southwest region. She is a certified member of the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA) and is an active member of the Hispanic Access Foundation's Climate Council. Her primary objective with FPAN is to create archaeology programs and

public outreach initiatives tailored to "Latinx" communities in Southwest Florida. Additionally, she is the founder and co-host of the podcast 'Ecos Patrimoniales,' which delves into heritage and disaster-related topics within the context of Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean.

Additional resources for edible Florida native plants found here: <https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/florida-edible-native-plants.html>



Some edible plants available at Little Salt Spring (clockwise from upper left): beautyberry, smilax vine shoots, wild grapes, red mulberry, and heart of cabbage palm.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: NEW MEETING LOCATION AND TIME NEXT SEASON!

Next season, beginning September 10, we will switch meeting locations to the North Port Library in the Veranda Room, at 6:30 p.m. That is a half-hour earlier than our current

meeting times, because the Library closes at 8:00 PM. The only exception will be during the month of October, when we will meet the second Wednesday of the month, October 9th, as the room is booked on Tuesday, October 8th. Details of the change will be in the September/October WMS/LSSAS Newsletter.

DR. JEFFREY M. MITCHEM SPOKE AT OUR APRIL 9, 2024 MEETING; ON THE PARKIN SITE AND ITS LIKELY LINK TO THE DE SOTO EXPEDITION

'Investigating the Possible Base of the Cross Raised at Casqui by Hernando de Soto in 1541' was the topic of our April 9th meeting. The expedition party of Hernando de Soto landed at Tampa Bay in May 1539, with 798 Spanish men and 2 women, 240 horses, and some pigs.¹

After crossing the Tombigbee River, they entered Mississippi in December 1540, now numbering approximately 700 of the original party, plus captives.^{ibid} They spent the winter at Chicasa, a Chickasaw village, after the Chickasaw had abandoned the village to the Spanish and moved a few miles away. The chief still visited regularly, bearing gifts for the party. They remained until March 1541, when the Chickasaw conducted a surprise raid, and burned the village and livestock holding areas in an effort to evict the Spanish.

The raid killed many of the pigs (unfortunately not all) and caused the horses to stampede. This stampede caught the Chickasaw off guard, who, thinking the Spanish were rallying, fled. The Spanish, however, had been sleeping communally in thatched roof huts and were caught completely unprepared by the elimination of the guards, and some certainly failed to escape the sudden, unexpected inferno. Those who did survive found themselves at an extreme disadvantage, likely being disoriented and choking from the thick smoke, minimally-clothed, injured, and possibly even unarmed. Had the Chickasaw been aware of the reality of the predicament of the Spanish, they may have pressed the attack and stopped the expedition at Chicasa.

The party crossed the Mississippi River into present-day Arkansas in the summer of 1541. Shortly after having crossed the Mississippi, they learned of the great chief, Casqui (pronounced like Koski), who held sway over the immediate region. Upon visiting Casqui's village, de Soto's party were given gifts and were treated cordially. Survivors of the expedition describe how bison skulls (described as bull skulls by the Spanish) were hung over the entranceways to their structures.

Maps made by the Spanish denote the area with different spellings, such as Casquin and Ycasqui. These spelling inconsistencies can be explained by the party's need to employ multiple layers of translation in order to communicate. As there were many dialects spoken throughout the wide region they traveled, any information had to be filtered through many layers of translation by the dozens of Native People who were now in the party before an understanding could be reached.

The expedition had been accompanied by Catholic priests, and it was decided that a cross would be erected upon the mound that served as the platform for the Chief's house. Mass

was conducted, and the party departed after a few days, with the cross remaining standing. Wooden posts being placed atop mounds was a common occurrence in the Mississippian period, so it would not have seemed out of the ordinary to the residents of Casqui for a post to be erected and allowed to stand for an extended period of time.

Artifacts from the de Soto expedition party began to be found at what is now known as the Parkin Site in the 1960s, such as early 16th-century brass and bronze Clarksdale bells, lead shot, and a seven-layer, faceted chevron bead (see photo). The bells and the faceted bead are diagnostic of a specific, short window of time contemporaneous with the party. In 1966, noted archaeologists Charles "Bob" McGimsey and Hester Davis worked at the Parkin Site after Arkansas Archeological Survey members discovered a wooden post embedded in the top of the mound. Samples were taken, and the post was covered in Visqueen plastic and reburied. Those samples, tested in the 1990s, showed that the post could be radiocarbon dated to between A.D. 1515 and A.D. 1663.

In 2016, the Elfrieda Frank Foundation provided a grant to cover the cost of additional excavation and testing of the post. Dr. Mitchem and his crew re-excavated the post in order to acquire additional samples and to determine whether there was enough tree-ring data to be able to make a determination as to the fell date. The post was not embedded that deeply, and its hole was found to have cut through another post hole in which the previous post had been burned away, presumably to erect the newer one. Their chronology can be based not only on radiocarbon dating, but on the way their outlines overlapped in the soil. The most recent wooden post was of bald cypress.

Dr. Mitchem and his crew carefully wrapped and removed the remains of the post, packed it with the utmost of care and delicacy, and Mitchem transported it in his personal vehicle across the state, with much trepidation every time he hit a slight bump, to Dr. David Stahle, a noted tree-ring expert. Unfortunately, despite their valiant efforts, Stahle still found it too broken and incomplete to make a determination. However, the grant provided funding for six radiocarbon dates and Beta Analytic found all six samples nearly identical, providing a calibrated range of A.D. 1445-1650.

In 2017, having unspent grant funds, the Foundation permitted testing of the wood from the other post, which yielded a range of A.D. 1435-1615, which supports the contention that the other post pre-dated the purported de Soto cross. If Dr. Mitchem and his colleagues are correct, which seems highly likely, then the Parkin Site is likely the site of the first Catholic Mass ever held in Arkansas.

After their visit to Casqui, the party continued exploring the state until de Soto's death in 1542. After this, the remaining members elected to attempt to reach the Spanish settlements in Mexico. Of the original party of 800 souls, only around 300 survived to reach Mexico in September of 1543. A painting serving as a marker at the site, memorializes the event, albeit showing the Spanish with all their gear and finery which they most likely no longer possessed. Likely, the Spaniards were wearing buckskins at the time, having lost most of their provisions and supplies during their harrowing journey.



April speaker, Dr. Jeffrey M. Mitchem, with WMS/LSS Director Karen Malesky



Marker depicting artist Tom Hall's representation of the raising of the cross for Mass at the Parkin Site

We greatly appreciate Dr. Mitchem's travels from Arkansas for a presentation on his involvement in this exciting research.

<https://archeology.uark.edu/who-we-are/50moments/parkincross/>

1. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=84690>



(top row) Clarksdale bell fragments; (bottom row) fired lead shot, unfired lead shot, faceted chevron bead

DR. JESSICA JENKINS SPOKE AT OUR MARCH 12, 2024 MEETING ON 'WHAT CAN THE SHELL TELL?' (via Zoom)

by Judi and John Crescenzo

On March 12, 2024, Dr. Jessica Jenkins presented "What Can the Shell Tell?" Jenkins completed her undergraduate degree at William and Mary where she studied shell middens.

She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Florida, with a focus on oysters. After earning her Ph.D., she returned to William and Mary for a fellowship. Jenkins is currently a Professor of Anthropological Archaeology at Flagler College in St. Augustine. Themes in her studies include human variants in relationships and human impacts on the environment and resources, Anthropogenic (originating in human activity) land and seascapes, the Anthropocene (a term some use to describe the current age where humans have had a substantial impact on a global level), human dominance, and histories of sustainability. Jenkins has learned about people from the past through her studies of oysters. Early on, she noticed that the First Peoples Nations of the Northwest Coast built clam gardens out of rocks for sustainability, and she wondered if this was done with oysters on the East Coast as well.



In 2014, at Apalachicola Bay, she found that Native People had indeed returned oyster shells to reefs in certain areas, presumably to allow the spat (young oysters) some structure to which to attach to form a cluster. In other areas, they did not, the practice being likened to leaving a field fallow. Once oysters attach, they do not move over their lifetime.

There are two types of oyster beds. Subtidal, or fully submerged, oyster beds are reached by boat, and the oysters in these beds are usually bigger and tastier. Intertidal beds are closer to shore, with the clusters being just beneath the surface offshore. There, the oysters are easier to harvest, but they are less flavorful. Jenkins believes that these oysters were probably once gathered by the women and children. Measuring the height (longest part) and length (width) provides a ratio and gives the shape of an oyster. Environmental conditions affect the size and shape of shells. Boring sponges appear as red marks on oysters, indicating that they lived in sub-tidal water with high salinity, leaving scars and tiny holes on shells, showing where they once subsisted on the oysters.

At the sites which she studied, oysters were harvested for about 150 years and used for mound building. The shell middens were created during the Middle Woodland period (A.D. 400-650) and were used for different purposes. There are three mounds near Cedar Key at which Jenkins conducted her research: Shell Mound was used for feasting during the summer solstice, Palmetto Mound was for interments, and Dennis Creek Mound was used for ceremonial purposes. The mounds, which also contain turtle and fish bones that are likely the remnants of

past meals began being built between A.D. 430 and A.D. 545. In her study, Jenkins analyzed 3,252 shells. She believes that she has found no evidence of overharvesting, because the relative size of the oysters did not change.

The top side of an oyster is flat, and the bottom side is cupped to hold the oyster. Few top shells were found at the mounds. The tops may have been selected to put into the reef and the bottoms moved to the mounds. The hypothesis is that perhaps the halves were used in midden building, as a form of recycling. Shell hammers were used to break apart oyster clumps and were found at the sites studied. The unusual, very large, horseshoe-shaped shell midden, with shell mounds to either side, known as the Komar Site (8Lv290), may be an example of mariculture, i.e., oyster cultivation, management, and harvesting. Oysters have clearly been popular for millennia.



Fresh oysters on the half-shell

SUMMER LECTURE SERIES AT THE SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

May 28, 2024: 'Cuban Ranco Heritage'; Sara Alvarez, Education and Volunteer Specialist, Manatee County Natural Resources Department.

June 18, 2024: 'Designing for the Sunshine State: How Creative Architecture Made Florida More Livable'; Dr. Josh Goodman, Manager of Sarasota County History Center and Jorge Danta-Spector, Sarasota County Historic Preservation Specialist for historic and architectural adventure of Sarasota County

Presentations are free and open to the public. The presentations are at 2-3 PM and held at the Osprey Public Library and History Center of Sarasota County, located at 337 N. Tamiami Trail, Osprey, Florida.

THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S 76th ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE - MAY 10-12, 2024, PENSACOLA (JOINT MEETING WITH ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

This year's conference will be held at the University of West Florida's Downtown Campus in historic Pensacola. Participants can enjoy a free Friday reception and Saturday night's award banquet at Apple Annie's, in the Seville Quarter entertainment complex, which includes historic structures and architectural features from across the Gulf coast. Sunday morning tours will highlight the unique archaeology of Pensacola by either kayak or on foot. If interested in attending the conference, visit www.fasweb.org for more information.

FIELD TRIP TO HISTORIC SPANISH POINT HELD , SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024

by Michelle Calhoun

On Saturday, March 30th, the WMS/LSSAS hosted a field trip to Historic Spanish Point (HSP). We met up at the Osprey Public Library, near the entrance to HSP, formerly the Osprey School, built in 1926, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), receiving a gracious welcome and a great tour of the Sarasota County History Center (SCHC) by Assistant Manager, Leah Lapszynski.

Leah cheerfully outlined the resources which the County has to offer to researchers and other interested parties, such as on-site research with access to a large library of relevant publications, historic manuscripts, photographs, etc. She also detailed how one can request information which may not be available on-site and the turn-around times for any requests for off-site material.

We then proceeded a short distance down the historic driveway to the site itself, where a rich tapestry of Sarasota County's past was revealed. Evidence of Native Peoples' habitation at this site can first be seen in the archaeological record during the Late Archaic period more than 4,000 years ago, with fiber-tempered pottery at the site's lowest levels, and extending into the Manasota period (ca. 2500 B.C. - A.D. 800 and into the early Safety Harbor period. Native occupation of the site appears to have ceased ca. A.D. 1000 - 1100. Interestingly, sites on the nearby barrier island on the other side of the bay, such as Casey Key (8So17) and Midnight Pass (8So7), were apparently still being utilized after the cessation of use at HSP, for both interments and resource procurement.

HSP is the former homestead of John Webb, who moved to the site in 1867 from Utica, New York with his family on the advice of a Spanish trader whom they met in Key West. He suggested the location to them, leading Webb to name it Spanish Point to honor him. The Webb family planted sugar cane, vegetables, and citrus, and built a packing house and a boat dock, so that the produce could be carefully packaged and quickly loaded and shipped to distant, northern markets before it could spoil.

The site is also the former winter estate ('Osprey Point') of Bertha Potter Palmer, who acquired more than 80,000 acres in what was then Manatee County. Sarasota County split from Manatee County in 1921. She and her family preserved the Native and early pioneer history of HSP, and welcomed archaeological research. Her family assisted with the nomination of HSP to the NRHP in 1975, the first site to be listed in Sarasota County. Now owned and operated by Selby Botanical Gardens, HSP is located at 401 N. Tamiami Trail, Osprey, FL 34229.

After the tour of the History Center, Koski led the tour of HSP, first passing the sand burial mound located near the entrance, while detailing the historical aspects of the site, of both the Indigenous occupations who created the middens, shell mounds, and sand mound, as well as the Historic period's Webb and Palmer occupations. Archaeologists Ripley and Adelaide Bullen excavated half the mound in the early 1970s, which included Indigenous individuals, but also an alligator and four

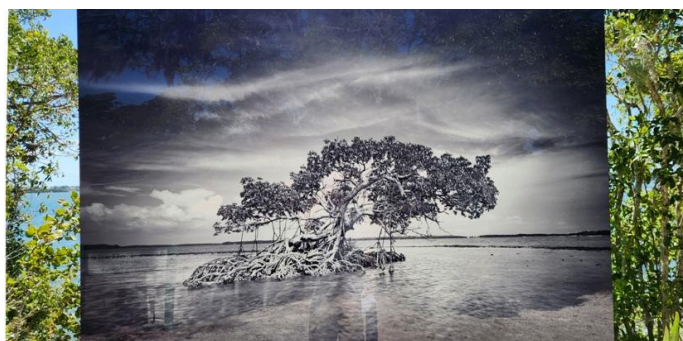
dogs, interred ceremonially. The alligator was the last interment at the mound before the mound was capped and the site abandoned. The remainder of the mound has been protected, since the Bullen's excavations, by the previous stewards, The Gulf Coast Heritage Association, and by the current stewards, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.



WMS/LSSAS members at HSP: (L to R; seated) Kathy Gerace and Rita Bass; (L to R; standing) Michelle Calhoun, Hugh Bass, Steve Koski, Beverly Brue, and Herbert Dickey

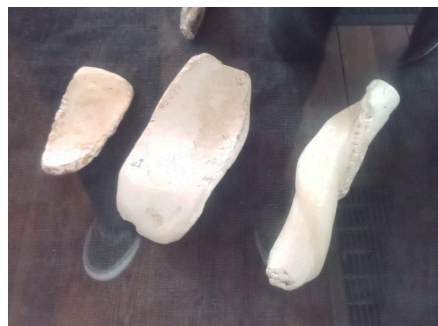
After ascending the front steps of the restored Guptill House, former home of Frank Guptill and Lizzie Webb (daughter of John Webb), we entered for a tour of the interior. The house was built in 1901, and rests atop an 18-foot, semi-circular shell mound which fronts the bay, with a spring in its center. The site is surrounded by large live oaks, cedar and cabbage palms, providing an outstandingly beautiful setting. The house's knowledgeable docent provided more information on the former occupants. We were struck by the fine workmanship of the wood paneling throughout the house and the intricacy of the stair molding. Frank Guptill was clearly a gifted woodworker! Excitingly, there were shell tools on display, one of them being a very uncommon type for which I am currently researching the distribution.

Following our tour of the house, we inspected the boat-building shop down on the shore and then traveled across Cock's Footbridge to visit the Window to the Past. Throughout our journey, we encountered several of the gorgeous Clyde Butcher Exhibit photographs, all of which, based on cleverly chosen spots, added to the ambience of the location.



One of Clyde Butcher's photographs (on metal), situated along the bay near White Cottage.

We next visited the Point Cottage, and then settled in at the cafe at White Cottage for a light lunch. Some of our group parted ways at this point, but others continued on to the fruit-packing house and dock after having briefly visited the shoreline. The last stop, before circling back around to the sand mound at the entrance, was the simple, but gorgeous Mary's Chapel, with its six original stained glass windows, and its adjoining cemetery. We would like to thank all who attended on this lovely day and hope that you can join us on our next field trip!



Shell tools on display at the Guptill House at HSP



Sunken garden and pagoda at HSP (with our wonderful members on the right).

USE OF QUEEN AND HORSE CONCH IN SOUTHERN FLORIDA

by Michelle Calhoun

In the southern part of Florida, due to the underlying geology, there are no available quarries from which to procure stone to make tools. Instead, Native Peoples in the south used shell as a stand-in for stone to create the tools they needed to procure resources and complete their daily tasks. Lightning whelk (*Sinistrofulgur perversum*; left), queen conch (*Aliger gigas*, formerly *Strombus gigas*; center), and horse conch (*Triplofusus giganteus*; right) were the most commonly-used shells from which to construct tools, due to their robusticity and size.



The three most commonly-used tool shells in south Florida

You have heard a lot from me about lightning whelk, but not much on the other two. Queen conch has a natural distribution range which includes the Caribbean Sea, the southern Gulf of Mexico, and around Bermuda, according to NOAA Fisheries. They are currently listed as Endangered due to overfishing and illegal harvesting. Native People used the lip of the queen conch to create shell adzes (see photo below). Adzes made from these large gastropods are found most often in the Caribbean and in southern Florida, though they have been found further north in areas outside the natural distribution range of the species.



Queen conch lip adze (L); Horse conch plane (R)

The horse conch is Florida's state shell, and its range is between North Carolina and Yucatan, Mexico. According to a recent research collaboration between Florida Fish and Wildlife and USF graduate students, published in *PLOS ONE*, the species is in critical danger, as it was learned that, despite their large size, they do not have a long life span and females do not start laying eggs until reaching the age of six. In their study, they found that the largest horse conch ever found (two feet long) in Florida, which is housed at the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum in Sanibel, is not more than 16 years old. Native People used the horse conch to make columella tools (hammers, cutting-edge tools, and planes [see photo above]) and hafted whole-shell tools.



Largest horse conch in the world (Sanibel, FL)

LSS CHICKEE THATCH FUNDRAISING UPDATE!

Our fundraiser is still on to re-thatch the waterside Seminole-style Chickee at Little Salt Spring. With \$1,700 of the \$3,500 to complete, we hope to ask another donor to match the effort. Interested in helping? The WMS/LSSAS is a 501(c)3

not-for-profit corporation. If you would like to assist with this endeavor, please send a tax-deductible donation to the WMS/LSSAS to P.O. Box 7797 North Port 34290, and reference "LSS Chickee Hut Thatching." To those who have already donated, thank you so much for your kind support! We are most grateful and look forward to seeing this effort come to fruition!

A SPECIAL THANKS to all who have supported the Society over the years through membership and donations! We could not do it without you. Membership is critical to operations. While our meetings and events are free and open to the public (unless fees apply to the destination), it is our loyal members who provide the financing to the speakers, for the newsletter, for events, for the FAS annual conference student travel grant, and more! Let's keep the momentum going!

We are planning an event this coming fall, considering a luncheon gathering and silent auction of crafts, artifact reproductions, nature and historic photos, color photos of Little Salt Spring by Steve Koski, artworks, or other items of that nature... Have something of historic interest you would like to donate? Please let us know. Details to follow in the September/October NL.

We hope you can make it to the May 14th meeting to hear Ms. Natalie A. De La Torre Salas present 'Weeds and Seeds.' It should be a great presentation!

A new season of excellent speakers will begin in September! Please consider renewing your membership and we hope you will recommend us to a friend. Thank you to all who responded to our membership drive! We appreciate you.

2023/2024 WMS/LSSAS OFFICERS

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