



WMS/LSS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 35, No. 5 November/December 2024

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
New time and new meeting place: North Port Public Library 13800 Tamiami Trail at 6:30 PM (Veranda Room).

Join us for dinner at 4:30 PM at the Tarpon Point Grill & Marina, on the Myakka River, prior to the meeting.

Meeting link to our November (in-person meeting w/ Zoom) and December (Zoomed in to in-person meeting):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87591169750?pwd=hilFHc42hY3N6EhXs4KS0rP2jnVJal.1>

November & December Meeting ID: 875 9116 9750 Passcode: 049553

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FORGOTTEN COLONY, TOPIC OF NOVEMBER 12 MEETING BY STEPHEN VALDES

Florida was the first colony in the now-United States to have had its own militia by 1567, during its time as a territory of Spain. Tensions between England and Spain played out in skirmishes across East and West Florida over the next 200 or so years. British West Florida was governed as an English colony, comprising parts of what is now Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, from 1763 until 1783, when the Peace of Paris declared an end to the First British Empire and to the hostilities between England and Spain. The American Revolutionaries in the Continental Congress in 1774 had asked those in Florida to join the Revolution, but the offer was refused, as the ties to England were too strong. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 also known as the Florida Purchase Treaty, ceded Florida to the United States, but was not in effect long as successive treaties declared Mexican independence, leading to a final treaty between Mexico and the United States which ultimately



November Speaker, Stephen Valdes

COASTAL MIGRATIONS AND INTERREGIONAL EXCHANGE: COONTIE ISLAND AND THE ORIGINS OF THE THORNHILL LAKE PHASE, TOPIC OF DECEMBER 10 MEETING BY DR. JON ENDONINO

Analysis of Archaic chipped and groundstone artifacts from Coontie Island has enhanced our understanding of interregional exchange between Florida and the greater southeastern coastal plain. Beads, bannerstones, and bifaces signal connections between Atlantic coastal Thornhill Lake phase groups and their contemporaries in north and central Florida, bead-makers in Mississippi, and bannerstone crafting communities in the Savannah River Valley. Non-local ground and polished stone objects were an important element of Thornhill Lake phase rituals and mound construction. Similarities between mound-building communities in Mississippi and northeast Florida warrant a reassessment of the role of interregional connections and migration in the development of the Thornhill Lake phase.



December Speaker, Dr. Jon Endonino

COASTAL MIGRATIONS... (cont. from page 1)

Jon Endonino is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Eastern Kentucky University. His primary research interests are social and ecological conditions associated with mortuary monument construction by Thornhill Lake phase groups of the late Mount Taylor culture who inhabited the middle St. Johns River Valley and Atlantic coast of northeast Florida. In addition, Dr. Endonino also has long-standing research interests in lithic technology and determining the sources of stone used in tool production in Florida. When not teaching or conducting research, Jon can be found restoring his turn-of-the-century Victorian home, collecting records, working in his yard and garden, and kayaking.

A SHORT HISTORY... (cont. from page 1)

recognized the border provided for in the Adams-Onís Treaty.

Florida became a safer haven for Native Americans who were being pushed south from the expanding colonies to the north, as well as for runaway slaves who were escaping servitude on southern plantations. This led to the Seminole Wars. On January 10, 1861, Florida became the third state to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy. However, until the invention of air conditioning by Dr. John Gorrie, in Apalachicola (used to treat fever in malaria patients), Florida was basically an ignored footnote to history.

Stephen Valdes is a retired director for Johnson & Johnson International. He joined the Military Heritage Museum (www.militaryheritagemuseum.org), in Punta Gorda, six years ago. He now acts as the museum's Media Historian. He previously spent twelve years in the education department of the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, Alabama. Mr. Valdes also served as an instructor for Soviet Studies and related military doctrine for the United States Army. In that role, he developed the core curriculum for Soviet theory and practices for the Fort Jackson Military Police School.

For the past twelve years, he has been an Adjunct Professor of business and economics at Polytechnic University, a civil engineering university based in Puerto Rico, with two campuses in Florida. Stephen Valdes' family has deep ties to Florida, as he is a fourth-generation Floridian, and his wife's family first settled here in 1825.

SEPTEMBER 10 PRESENTATION ON ANCIENT HIGHWAYS: TRAILS, WATERWAYS, AND CANALS

by Michelle Calhoun

At our September meeting, archaeologist Steve Koski discussed various modes of transportation utilized in Florida prior to, and after, the arrival of Europeans to the southeast in the 16th century. He shared his insights on previous research on canoes, canals, and using historic maps, identified "Indian trails," many of which were used by the European arrivals. Some of these trails became military trails, horse and wagon roads, shell roads, paved roads, and portions of highways. This is a developing and interesting line of research for Steve.

There are at least five pre-European canals in Florida: Pine Island Canal (8LL34), Ortona Canal (8GL4A [East] & 8GL4B

[West]), Naples Canal (8CR59), Snake Bight Canal (8MO29), and Mud Lake Canal (8MO32). It was once believed that the "Cape Coral Canal" existed, but Dr. George Luer was able to determine that what was believed to be an Indigenous canal was nothing more than a defunct, logging tramway from ca. 1900.¹ The Pine Island Canal and the others, however, are engineering marvels! These canals are not very deep (averaging only a few feet), but they take into account local topography along their length, maintaining a specific depth over long distances. They were used to shorten the distance between destinations to which travel over traditional waterways would be impossible or impractical and which would take a significant amount of time to traverse over land.

Much of the evidence for parts of these canals has been lost to development, but certain stretches still exist, and can still be seen, especially at Mud Lake Canal, which is 6.3 km (3.9 mi) long. This waterway linked Bear Lake to Whitewater Bay and has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark.

Mud Lake and Snake Bight Canals are both located near Cape Sable at the "extreme southern part of the continental United States mainland...[which] marks the juncture of the freshwater Everglades and the saltwater of Florida Bay."² Snake Bight Canal is currently 1.5-2 mi. long and 1-2 ft. deep, but it is unknown from where it originated and to what water body it was connecting. There is some disagreement as to whether it actually IS an Indigenous canal. More testing will be needed to determine its provenance.

Naples Canal was most likely the deepest, with its engineers having dug to the water table in order to allow the canal to consistently hold water. This canal shortened the distance between Gordon's Pass and Doctor's Pass by half and was much less perilous than paddling through open water. Unfortunately, this canal has been lost to development.³

Canoes in pre-Contact Florida were constructed primarily from cypress and pine. They are often found during periods of drought, having been exposed by the lower water levels. As these artifacts require consistent inundation to preserve them, they often fall to pieces if not properly treated or returned to the water as soon as they are located. The once-hard wood turns to powder once exposed to the air and sunlight, and simply crumbles away, just like other ancient wooden objects which are exposed without subsequent preservation. At Newnan's Lake (Lake Pitchlachoco), over 101 canoes were discovered during a drought in 2000. The dates for these canoes ranged from the Archaic to the Historic period!⁴

1. Luer, George M.

1999 Surface Hydrology and an Illusory Canal in Cape Coral, Florida. *The Florida Anthropologist* 52(4):255-266.

2. National Parks Service

2008 National Historic Landmark Documentation for Mud Lake Canal. Florida Master Site File.

3. Fillmon, Tim

2018 The Naples Canal. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=127697>

4. Laskow, Sarah

2017 Florida Has More Archaeological Canoes Than Anywhere Else in the World.

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/dugouts-florida-archaeology-canoes-native-americans>

OCTOBER 8, 2024 PRESENTATION POSTPONED DUE TO HURRICANE MILTON TO APRIL 8TH 2024.

The October meeting by Kathy Gerace on the 'Discovery of Christopher Columbus' Landing' was unfortunately postponed by Hurricane Milton. Kathy kindly agreed to be our April 8th 2024 speaker! We are looking forward to getting an update on the Columbus research. It should be a great talk!

GIANT GROUND SLOTHS: NEW DISCOVERIES

by Michelle Calhoun and Steve Koski

Many species of giant ground sloths, including *Megalonyx jeffersonii*, once roamed the Americas from Patagonia (the southernmost tip of South America) to Alaska.¹ While it was initially presumed that all giant ground sloths were strictly herbivores, nitrogen isotope ratios of certain amino acids preserved in the bones of one specific type (*Mylodon darwini*), showed that these Pleistocene ground sloths were "opportunistic omnivores."² It is suggested that a dearth of carnivores and available plant biomass at the time this species roamed led these sloths to become scavengers.

In the Santa Elina rock shelter in Central Brazil, bones of another giant ground sloth, *Glossotherium phoenesis*, dating to the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), ca. 26,000 to 20,000 BP, show evidence of incising, polishing, drilling, and use-wear smoothing which occurred prior to fossilization.³ The authors of the study believe that these bones were modified as items of personal adornment. Yet another type of ground sloth, *Thalassocnus natans*, lived in Peru during the Pliocene (ca. 5.33 million to 2.58 million BP). The habitat for this sloth was a desert during that time, leading researchers to conclude that this was a marine sloth which subsisted on seagrasses or seaweeds.⁴ The authors found notable similarities between the skeletal morphology of this sloth species and that of modern otters and beavers, with regards to their femurs and vertebrae, as well as in their limb proportions.

Our local connection to the giant ground sloth was realized in 1975, when archaeologist Sonny Cockrell identified and recovered a portion of a nearly complete skeleton of a partially articulated *Megalonyx jeffersonii* on the 45 ft ledge at Warm Minerals Springs. More than 35 bones of a young individual were recovered. It was found in proximity and stratigraphic association with numerous bones of a saber cat (*Smilodon fatalis*), also partially articulated on the 45 ft ledge. The sloth was found loosely embedded in Zone 3 sediments, the basal component of Feature 30. and is believed to be around 11,000 years old. In the 1980s, plaster casts of a portion of the specimen were made and displayed in a case in the entrance hall at Warm Mineral Springs, along with reproductions of other artifacts recovered from the 45-foot ledge.

Various skeletal elements of giant ground sloth were also found at Little Salt Spring in the 1970s on the 27 m ledge, under the direction of Carl Clausen, including radius and ulna bones, claws, and teeth.

In the 2008 through 2011 field sessions, during the University of Miami-sponsored project on the 27 m ledge, more isolated elements of sloth bones were found, including an

exceptionally well-preserved sloth radius, ribs, and several teeth. Additionally, extinct tortoise bones and three tapered wood items, potentially worked artifacts, were also discovered. That project was funded by National Geographic and the Florida Aquarium, and was directed by the late Dr. John A. Gifford.⁵



Artist depiction of the *Megalonyx jeffersonii* [Reddit]

1. Weighing Over 2,000 Pounds, Giant Ground Sloths Once Roamed the Americas
<http://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/weighing-over-2-000-pounds-giant-ground-sloths-once-roamed-the-americas>
2. Isotope data from amino acids indicate Darwin's ground sloth was not an herbivore
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-97996-9>
3. Evidence of artefacts made of giant sloth bones in central Brazil around the last glacial maximum
<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/epdf/10.1098/rspb.2023.0316>
4. An aquatic sloth from the Pliocene of Peru
<https://www.nature.com/articles/375224a0>
5. Gifford, John A., Steven H. Koski, Lee Ann Newsom, and Lauren Miliideo (2017) Little Salt Spring: Excavations on the 27 Meter Ledge, 2008-2011. In *The Archaeology of Underwater Caves*, edited by Peter B. Campbell, pp. 73-103. Highfield Press, Southampton, U.K.

NEW MEETING LOCATION AND TIME ANNOUNCED!

Please Note: Beginning this September 10, our new meeting location will be the Veranda Room at the North Port Public Library (backroom off children's section) located at 13800 Tamiami Trl, North Port, FL 34287. The new time for our meetings is 6:30 PM (see front page for Zoom links).

THE 2025 77th ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE OF THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEETING TO BE HELD IN GAINESVILLE IN MAY 2025.

The Florida Archaeological Council has volunteered to host the 2025 FAS Annual Meeting in Gainesville on May 9-11. The Friday night reception, Saturday paper presentations, evening banquet and awards ceremony, and Sunday field trips will be announced in the January/February WMS/LSSAS Newsletter and at www.fasweb.org. As an FAS Chapter, we encourage our members and their friends to attend!

As a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society, we are encouraged to have 10 members from the WMS/LSSAS join FAS. We are a member as an organization. Members receive a quarterly FAS Newsletter and *The Florida Anthropologist*, the journal of FAS, which details current and past archaeological research in Florida.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR 2025 WMSLSSAS MEMBERSHIP DRIVE!

by Michelle Calhoun, Membership Secretary

Greetings WMS/LSSAS members and friends! Many 501(c3) educational organizations have certainly had some challenges since Covid in 2020, and the WMS/LSSAS is no exception. Declining membership and meeting attendance are two of the challenges which we have faced.

We have had an excellent speaker series and fantastic events this past year, namely our field trip to Historic Spanish Point and North Port's Myakkahatchee Park picnic and mammoth hunt (with a presentation on Myakkahatchee Creek by archaeologist Steve Koski) [see March/April 2024 WMS/LSSAS Newsletter at: www.wmslss.org]. However, we unfortunately found that our expenses for 2023 and our expectations for 2024 have exceeded our income by several hundred dollars.

At the November 1 WMSLSSAS Board meeting, officers and directors discussed ways to increase membership, programming attendance, and our financial sustainability for 2025 and the coming years. Having been founded as an organization in 1990, we believe we provide value to the community and hope that our upcoming events and speakers will allow us to continue to do so.

After more than 15 years at the previous structure, we found it necessary to increase our membership dues (a modest amount) to keep pace with rising costs. The new membership structure is: Individual- \$25 (from \$15), Family- \$35 (from \$25), Non-Profit- \$35 (from \$30), Patron- \$50 (from \$25), Business- \$100 (from \$30), [the following have remained unchanged] Lifetime- \$250, Benefactor \$1000.

We have included a new membership form for our 2025 campaign for those who are up for 2025 renewal and who receive a hardcopy of our newsletter. Also, you will soon be able to join online at www.wmslss.org!

We are grateful for everyone's continued support of our organization and hope you will choose to join us for our upcoming meetings and events, free and open to the public. We couldn't do it without you!

SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER COMING UP THIS WINTER!

We are making steady progress on the planning and preparations for the upcoming silent auction in late February, early March 2025. As mentioned in the September/October WMS/LSSAS NL, there will be numerous items, including ceramic and artifact reproductions, posters, framed art, color prints of Little Salt Spring and the *Sacoila lanceolata* var. *paludicola* orchids at LSS, and much more! While still in the planning stage, we plan to serve light hors d'oeuvres, homemade chili with sides, as well as some vegetarian options for our non-meat-eating friends. We hope you'll join us! A heartfelt thank you to our awesome potter and friend, Deborah Lang, for providing some of her amazing ceramics for our auction!

Funds raised will go to our FAS student travel grant for first-time students who present research at an annual FAS meeting, continued orchid research at LSS (DNA analysis by Dr.

Tatiana Arias), the Chickee thatching fundraising campaign (of which we have raised \$2000!), and the general fund. Our general fund expenses include: newsletter printing/ mailing, annual insurance costs, P.O. box, speaker honorariums, speaker dinner and motel (if in town for in-person meetings), and other miscellaneous expenses.

NORTH PORT LIBRARY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2025!

Janita Wisch, Assistant Manager of the North Port Public Library informed us that the North Port Library is turning 50 years old next year! It had its humble beginnings in a small, one-story home on Biscayne Drive in 1975, which was demolished in 1992 to make room for the beautiful North Port Library we visit today.

To help celebrate, Janita asked Steve Koski to present a program on "Our Local Treasures, Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring" as a library celebration event, which he agreed to do. Steve's first job in Florida after completing graduate classes and exams at Arizona State University was at WMS as an assistant underwater archaeologist for the late Sonny Cockrell, in 1986 (through 1990). Sonny directed the WMS Research Project, funded by the Florida Legislature under Senator Bob Johnson, and administered through Florida State University (1985-1991). That position led to his more than 20-year research involvement in underwater archaeology at Little Salt Spring, with University of Miami professor, the late Dr. John A. Gifford.

The presentation will be held Friday, January 10, 2025, from 11:00 AM until noon at the North Port Library. More details on the history of the North Port Library and the presentation will be in the January/February WMSLSSAS Newsletter.

[A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE, Refer To: DTN3938713]

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Visit: www.wmslss.org for Society info and past newsletters

