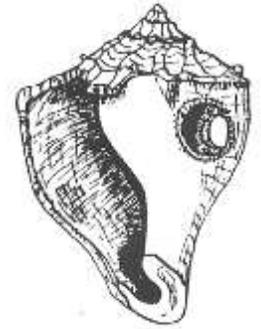


SWFAS

NEWSLETTER

THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



JOHN G. BERIAULT, ACTING EDITOR VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1 JANUARY, 2003



Chatham Bend: This is a postcard image of a famous bend in the Chatham River, and the home of the notorious Ed Watson, who was gunned down by some of the citizenry of Chokoloskee Island when he allegedly reached for his shotgun... long story, but you can read about it in Peter Matheson's book, *Killing Mr. Watson*. The house (now destroyed) sits on a several acre Indian shell mound and is now part of Everglades National Park.

GREAT NEWS ABOUT THE OTTER PARCEL ON MARCO ISLAND!!!

I have some good news about the Otter Parcel on Marco Island. On 12-04-02, Bob Carr and myself represented the owner at the Florida

Forever Committee meeting in Tallahassee. Ross Morrell, former director of the Division of Historic Sites and Properties spoke on our behalf as well. Shawn Henderson, a member of AHC also helped with the introductions and procedural matters. We were successful. By a unanimous vote, the nine-member committee made up of representatives

of the major divisions of State government voted to place the Otter "Mound" on the "A" List for purchase. They will be negotiating with the owner to purchase the site in the near future. The Archaeological and Historical Conservancy would like to thank everyone at SWFAS and the Marco Island Historical Society for their help and letters of support. Marco Island will now have its first protected archaeological site due in large part to your efforts and interest in seeing this happen.

SECOND AND LAST CHANCE! PLEASE FILL OUT QUESTIONNAIRE!!!

Inside this Newsletter

- 1 We have Moved! Florida Gulf Coast University is the new site of our General Meetings**
- 2 Can You Canoe? Read Robert Gore, Part Three...**

DON'T FORGET QUESTIONNAIRE !!!

THE DATE BOOK

December 11th SWFAS Board Meeting – Hampton Inn, Bonita Springs, 7:00 PM

December 15th SWFAS Picnic
7:30 PM Room 149, Reed Hall,
Florida Gulf Coast University



**POTSHERDS
AND
POTSHOTS... AN
ONGOING SERIES BY
ROBERT GORE**

About SWFAS

The directorate: President Betsy Perdichizzi, first vice president Tom Franchino, second vice president Corbett Torrence, membership secretary Charlie Strader, treasurer Charlie Strader, recording secretary Jo Ann Grey, directors Steve Tutko, Sue Long, Dottie Thompson, Jo Ann Grey, Don Taggart, Jack Thompson, John Beriault, Charlie Strader, Theresa (Torrence) Schober, and Dr Susan Stans.

The committees: Field: Beriault, 434-0624; Hospitality: position open; Membership: Charlie Strader, 941-992-6133; Publicity: Dottie Thompson, 597-2269; Sales: position open; Finances, Jack Thompson 597-2269, 774-8517; Lab: (774-8517), Art Lee, 261-4939, Walt Buschelman, 775-9734, Jack Thompson, 597-2269.

To Join: Address your check to the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 9965, Naples, FL 34101. Dues are: Individual \$20, Individual Sustaining \$50.00, Family \$35, Student \$15.

Any questions, comments, contributions to the Newsletter: John G. Beriault, acting editor, P.O. Box 9074, Naples, FL 34101-9074 or Email to: JGBeriault@aol.com.

**THE ORTONA ENIGMAS:
CANOES, CANALS,
COMMERCE, AND
CONVEYANCE: III. THE
ORTONA WATER
MANAGEMENT AND
SEWER DISTRICT**

First Question: Why build on a flood plain? First,, Answer:

Because it's there. But there may have been several other more logical reasons why. For example, it cannot be denied that unless one has a canoe, walking through water is usually not a whole lot of fun. There are solution holes to be stepped into, nasty reptilian beasts, hungry or venomous, that lie in wait, sucking mud to impede your progress, and the dreaded "Wampee," all too ready and willing to attach itself to your naked legs and suck your blood. On the other hand, if you also have two-legged enemies it is far better to be able to hear and see them approaching through the surrounding

moatlands, thus enabling the village to be roused and assembled to repel "boarders" as it were. Moreover, your food supply may be hunted or fished just below your dwellings. And, once caught, or trapped by flood-control boards within a canal section, might then be easily stored alive until needed for a meal, or for barter with tribes located farther upstream or downstream.

But the Lake Okeechobee Watershed was not then, and indeed never was perpetually wet, some historians, explorers and the military to the contrary. Based on local "pioneer tales" there were times even before the water management or flood-control districts were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when years of natural drought drew the Lake levels down so far that the upper banks became dead dry. It may then be assumed that Caloosahatchee River flow also decreased concomitantly. Now consider this. If a tribespeople wanted to dig a long canal and connect it to a River, it would be far easier to build that portion which would eventually extend to, and point downriver--to the west-southwest--at an angle. High-water flows from the Caloosahatchee, and associated drainages into the River would have less chance of backing up into a newly-excavated ditch, thereby backflooding it out, altering its configurations, and ruining all the hard labor.

But how does one build a second canal that (more or less) diagonally faces into the pervading water flow from the Lake? Quite simply, one doesn't (using the technology then extant) unless given a helping hand by Mother Nature during a drought cycle. Consider Lake Hicpochee at the headwaters of the Caloosahatchee River, for instance. The Seminoles named this Lake "Prairie Lake" because it had the perverse quality of drying down almost completely during some droughty years into little more than a low, muddy, wet spot on the prairie. Because the outflow from Lake Okeechobee would also be reduced, the sawgrass marshes westward of Okeechobee, and around Lake Hicpochee would also quickly become dry-stubble prairie. So, perhaps, the astute Ortonan engineering consortium would then marshal their labor force and 1) burn off the dry underbrush and stubble; and then 2) dig the eastern portion of the canal as best they could, racing against the return of the "regular" wet season.

Furthermore, there is no indication whether the two canals were built concurrently or consecutively. Given the amount of labor involved (see subsequent columns) it seems likely that whichever canal came first, regardless of its direction, would require at least the duration of a reasonably dry season before it

could at least be started, if not actually completed. This further implies that the other canal may have been more of an afterthought--or even a

requiring the removal approximately 317,000 cubic feet of earth per mile, or enough dirt to fill nearly 12,000 modern 20 cubic yard dump trucks. It would

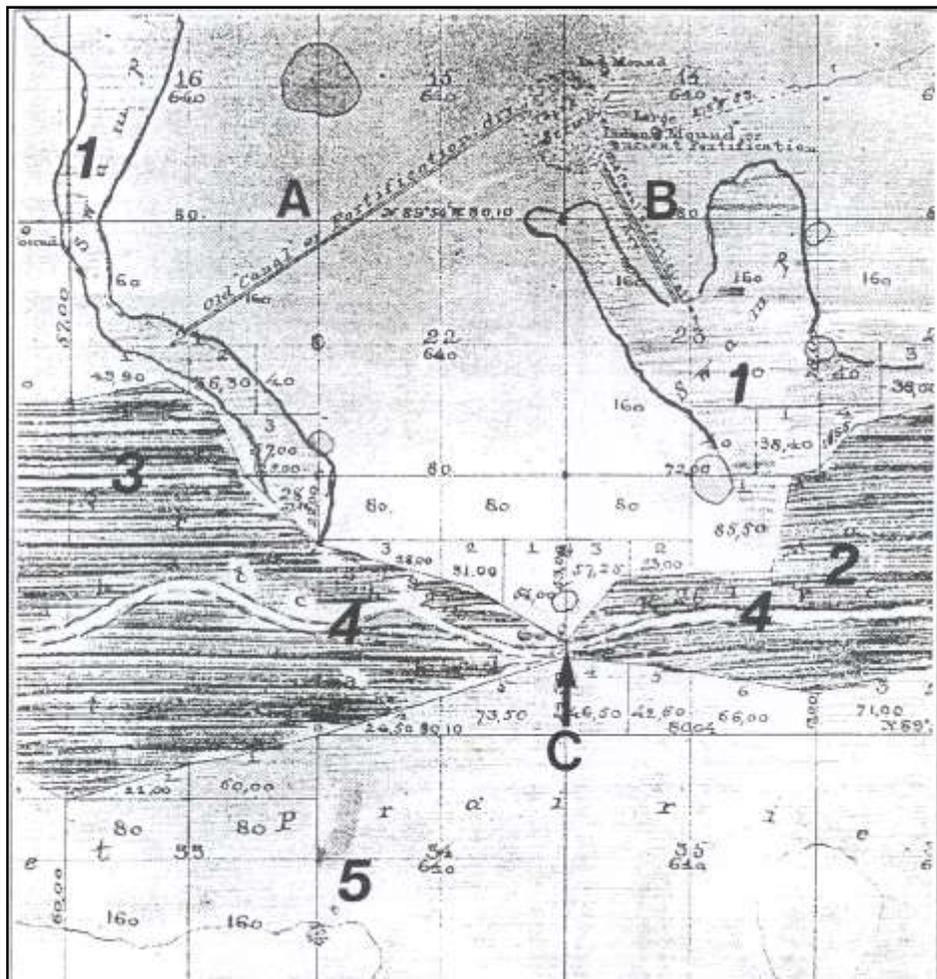


FIGURE 6: U. S. Government survey plat map, by J. D. Tannehill, 1871. A, B,) Old canals; C, and arrow) The Ford in the Caloosahatchee River, where the River narrows. Note the terms 1) "Swamp," 2) "Marsh," and 3) "Sawgrass", along the northern bank of the River; 4) "Caloosahatchee River" meander line through the center; and 5) "Wet Prairie" to the south. Map magnified and modified from Carr et al., 2002, after Tannehill, with some physiographic features emphasized.

second "good idea" whose time had come (see below). After all, digging 3 foot deep, 20 foot wide canals is slow and tedious work,

seem then that canal construction proceeded rather slowly in the dry season, and perhaps not at all in the wet season--a situation we

will consider in greater detail later. Which raises the next question, already partially considered: Why long canals in the first place? If they were built only to provide access to the Caloosahatchee River, than the shorter the canal, the better, right? Why go through all the hassles of labor to built two canals, each several miles long? One answer, as a third assumption, is that maybe the original canals were short but still eventually reached the River. Consider this. The layout of the canals as indicated on the Tannehill Survey Map of 1871, shows that each emptied into a vegetated hydrological feature; viz. Turkey Creek Swamp to the west, and an-unnamed swamp to the east. Both swamps emptied downhill into the Caloosahatchee River. This double alternative may have been a partial solution for the first and second assumptions: viz., water is nice and necessary, but too much can be as bad as too little. So perhaps the two main canals, eventually about two miles or so long, were 1) much shorter when originally constructed, and by their connection to the two swamps 2) were meant to function NOT ONLY as canoe-ways but also as drainage ditches to help keep the seasonal surface sheetwater flowing at least past, if not away from, the village- mound in the days when water was not nearly so abundant as in later centuries. In fact, such ditches may well have been standard hydrological engineering practice within the Lake Okeechobee watershed, particularly as seasonal conditions both through and over the years changed.

Most mounds have mound-associated ditches. The nearest example is located just around the Caloosahatchee corner at the Fort Center mound on Fisheating Creek. Excavations by Dr. William H. Sears revealed ditches around the mounds that Sears specifically said "were drainage ditches . . . [whose] bases were dug below the hardpan so that water would drain across the hardpan and into the ditch." And from there eventually into Fisheating Creek. As will be shown next time, there was precious little "hard-pan" where the Ortonans were working, but even so, drainage is drainage, whether it functions across hard-pan or through sand.

The term "drainage ditch," of course, may also be a euphemism for sewer line, a mundane but nonetheless necessary artifact for human habitation sites, particularly a village containing an estimated 200-300 people. Sewage disposal has received scant attention in the archaeological literature. A brief survey of some studies in the far west showed one reason why; at least some villagers simply "stooped and pooped" (as one archaeologist termed it) whenever and wherever the need came upon them. And why not? The concept of

bacterially-initiated disease and vermiform parasitosis was still millennia in the future. But aesthetics may have eventually crept in--at least for the Ortonans. In other words, either canal might also have functioned serendipitously as a (usually) constantly flowing latrine into which, either via direct deposits bankside, or ancillary via baskets, human waste could be dumped. Which might account in part for the layer of organic-sandy materials discovered millennia later in their flowway floors.

The third assumption (a tautology, and accepted, it seems, simply by virtue of its existence) is that the canals "prove" why they were built). This is based on two self-fulfilling suppositions: viz. that the village-mound complex was 1) specifically emplaced to take advantage of the higher-drier, shrub-scrub oak and cabbage palm biotope between Turkey Creek to the west and the unnamed swamp on the east; and 2) to take advantage of the ever-flowing main east-west "highway" almost on Its doorstep--the Caloosahatchee River. Perhaps so; these propositions at least seem logical. But they also beg the larger questions because it then implies that the village 1) was not only deliberately built where it was for no other good reason; and 2) that the Caloosahatchee Riverbed had not meandered away from it; and 3) that the twin canals, dug either at the time the village was founded, or later, or even before (to be discussed in a subsequent

column) were either originally or secondarily designed to take advantage of already well-known canoe routes on the River. But was there something else as well?

This may sound a lot like after-the-fact County Commissioner- style reasoning. Yet what is unarguable is that the Ortona mounds

were built north of the Caloosahatchee River (NOT south), and on (relatively) higher-dryer ground. But again, why specifically there? The answer quite probably'-lies in local upland hydrology. Today at least two small creeks feed into the general area of the Ortona mounds. How many more did so 1,700 years ago is not known but may have been considerable. If so, it thus adds yet another bright idea to the series of bright ideas that resulted in the canals in the first place. After all, a dry sluice-way or latrine is one thing; but what good is a dry canal?

In either case, the positioning of the Ortona village-mound system would conceivably have had drier access (and control of traffic thereof?) to either Lake Okeechobee in the east, or the Caloosahatchee and Charlotte Harbor regions to the west, at least during certain wet seasons or years. As the aboriginal realtors might have said: Location, Location, Location.

There is, as noted, two subtle but nonetheless critical Ifs" in all this. What IF, owing to years of excessive outflow from Lake Okeechobee, the riverbed of the Caloosahatchee had begun to shift

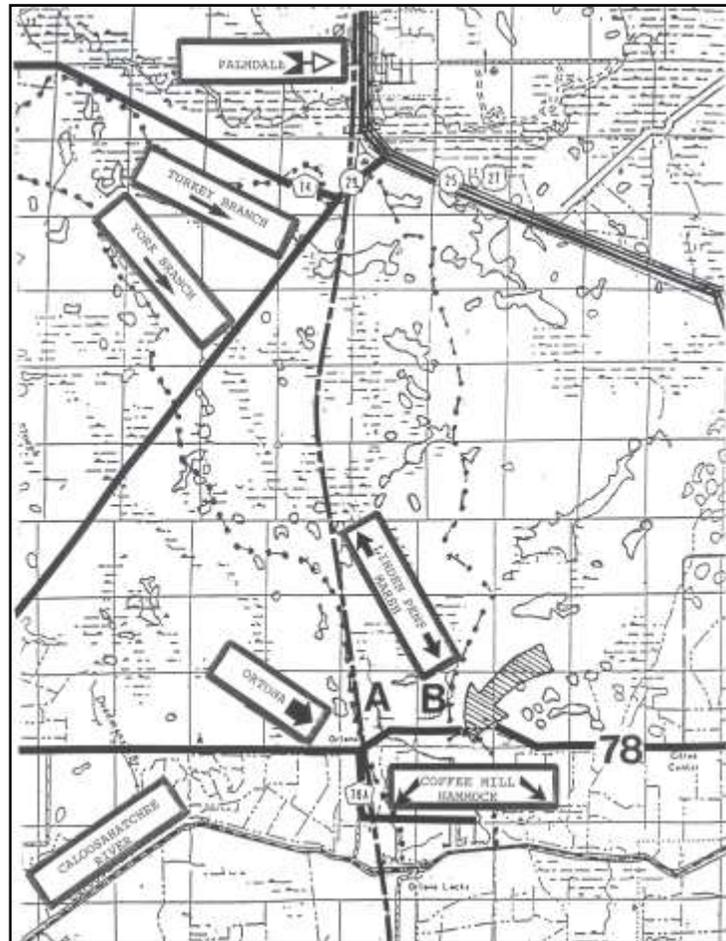


Figure 7: Obsolete or defunct stream-bed hydrology north of the Ortona Mound Complex. A) Turkey Creek (or Turkey Branch); B) Linden Pens Creek. Connected dots indicate general watershed boundaries; Hatched arrow points to general vicinity of the two canals. Map modified from Carr, 1991.

away from the more upland site of the mound-village after the village had been built? Did the once shorter canals (IF already constructed) then undergo a continual process of being lengthened to "keep up" with the wandering river? Only a detailed physiographic survey of the older Riverbed and the two swamps could

answer these questions. And, owing to their continuing alteration in the twentieth century the answers may never be attainable. We'll examine another aspect of this later. Now to the next consideration. As any canoeist knows, paddling downstream is eminently to be desired--it's the upstream return that causes the sweat and calluses, particularly on any river whose

headwater-flow originated and was controlled by freshwater sheet flow both adjacent to, and via overflow from, the Lake. On the other hand, periods of low water, which can be assumed to have happened seasonally, as well as during drought years (even as they do today) meant that (lacking canals) any canoes would either have to have been portaged from the Ortona village-mound complex on higher ground down to the Caloosahatchee River, or even stored someplace nearby on its banks. This, to put it some- what crudely, was probably as much a pain in the rear then as it would be today. Imagine having to walk a mile each way to load or unload a wooden dugout canoe for any voyage, wet season or dry.

Moreover, canoes in those days were not light fiberglass, nor even bark-lined watercraft, but heavy, elongate, fire-carved and hand-chiseled tree trunks, weighing up to several hundred pounds, and which might take as long as a year to build. Thus, the idea of having access canals from the River to Ortona quite probably came quickly to mind. But whether this was their first thought, although seemingly logical in our hindsight, is unknown. What was probably known was that a canal-way, or any sort of water-path from the emergent populated mound-complex and down to the River, would immensely ease both the ingress and egress for the heavy canoes, provided the canal remained filled with water. At the same time, this possibility, if true, raises serious questions as to the archaeological validity of the so-

called "baton- pond," which we will examine in a future column.

But there is yet another possibility hinted at earlier. Was the mound-village itself merely an afterthought in relation to the canals? What if the canals were originally and specifically constructed NOT as by-pass routes around the Caloosahatchee rapids AND Lake Flirt, but around the very narrow riverine constriction known as the "Ford"?

Is It not conceivable that the currents of the Caloosahatchee, pouring out of the Lake during high-water periods, might produce at the Ford a briefly treacherous stretch of River? And, during low-water flows, create a stretch greatly overgrown with sawgrass and other plants, thereby making Its passage extremely difficult? Even Lake Flirt, perhaps normally passable, might seasonally become overgrown with Alligator Flag, Maiden Cane, Water Shield, Spatterdocks, Water Lilies, Pickerel Weed, Arrowheads, and various sedges and rushes. Anyone who has ever canoed through waters choked with these plants knows what a trial that can be in even a modern light canoe. So perhaps the canals were sort of a map-directive: "If Lake or River Access Clogged--Use

Alternate Route" for trips into or out from the larger Lake Okeechobee.

Then, of course, it may be further and rhetorically asked: How long would it take the Ortonans to come up with the idea of a toll station for other tribespeople who might want to use THEIR canals. Where to put the toll booth? How about on the mound midway between the two now-existing canals? How did the mounds get built? Perhaps by using canal spoil, as we'll discuss next time.

THE ORTONA ENIGMAS: JANUARY MEETING

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society will hold its January meeting at Florida Gulf Coast University in Reed Hall, Room 149 at 7:30 P.M. January 15th. Dr. John Worth will be the speaker. The title of his presentation will be "Tracking The Calusa in Spanish Archives".

Dr. Worth will present some of the latest results of his ongoing research into Calusa ethnohistory using documentary sources in Spanish archives, including new details about the Spanish Fort at Mound Key, as well as new information and interpretation about the social geography of the Calusa chiefdom. Those who heard this talk at the May FAS Annual Meeting highly recommend it.

SWFAS MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE SURVEY, 2002

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. FORM MAY BE RETURNED AT A MEETING TO A DIRECTOR OR MAILED TO: SWFAS, P.O. BOX 9965, NAPLES, FL 34901.

A. **PURPOSE OF QUESTIONNAIRE:** The Bylaws of SWFAS provides for the activation of committees depending on the needs of the society and the availability of qualified members. Budgets for committee activities are developed by the committee and approved by the Board of Directors. Please circle each committee you would be interested in being a part of, so that the Board may decide which committees to activate.

NAME (S): _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE#: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

1. Are you a year round resident? Yes ____ No ____

If no, what month or dates are you out of the areas: _____

2. Are you retired? Yes ____ No ____ (If no, list current profession) _____

3. Are you presently a student? Yes ____ No ____ (if yes, where) _____

4. Time that you may be available for committee activities:

Year round _____ Months _____

Days of the week preferred: Sun ____, Mon ____, Tues ____, Wed ____, Thu ____, Fri ____, Sat ____

Mornings ____, Afternoons ____, Evenings ____

5. Member of SWFAS since (approximately) _____ years.

B. PLEASE CIRCLE THOSE COMMITTEES YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN.

a. The Field Committee shall organize, survey, excavation of test pits, soil sampling, and similar activities, including the maintenance of appropriate records and protection of material removed from sites. It shall be responsible for preparation and submission of site forms to the state.

b. The Laboratory Committee shall be in charge of cleaning, identifying, marking and storing material from surveys and test pits prior to their being returned to the owners of sites or their being donated or placed on long term loan with the Collier County Museum or other similar institution, including the provision and maintenance of necessary equipment and material, and arrangements for outside laboratory or expert services. It shall actively assist those writing technical papers based on activities of the Society. It is responsible for maintenance of the laboratory building.

c. The Program Committee shall be responsible for the provision of speakers and other programs for general meetings of the Society and for field trips.

d. The Hospitality/Social Committee shall greet guests and new members, provide refreshments, and keep our organization fun and enjoyable.

e. The Education Committee shall maintain and cooperate contact, with education museum and library officials of Collier and Lee counties and assist them in providing programs to increase students' knowledge of the area's past and respect for it.

f. The Finance Committee shall be in charge of fund-raising activities such tax deductible gifts, as the sale of T shirts and holding garage sales.

g. The Governmental Relations Committee shall keep SWFAS informed of legal matters bearing on the area's pre-history and, in consultation with the directorate, make such representations as may be considered appropriate.

h. The Public Relations/Media Committee shall publicize meetings and other activities of the Society in print and electronic media, in cooperation with other committees.

i. The Newsletter Committee shall be charged with editing and publishing a monthly Newsletter to acquaint members with the organization's activities and related matters and to further the Society's goal of self education.

j. The University Liaison Committee will work at generating interest in our society amongst the student body and faculty of FGCU. The Committee will also seek to promote cooperation, and the sharing of resources, between the Society and the student body and faculty. The committee may also provide scholarships to selected students.