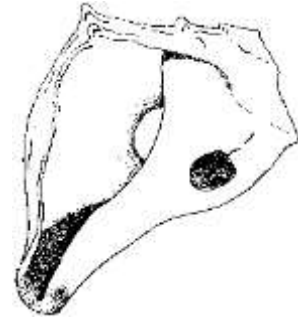


Southwest Florida Archaeological Society Newsletter



BETSY MCCARTHY, EDITOR

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MAY 2005

MAY 2005 MEETING

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society will meet on Wednesday, May 18 at 7:00 pm at the Bonita Springs Community Center at Old 41 and Reynolds Street. The public is invited to attend this meeting.

Corbett Torrence will present results from his anthropological work in Haiti that included several seasons working for the Folklore department of the Smithsonian. Corbett assisted ethnomusicologist Thomas Venum in documenting regional variations and evolutionary trends in voodoo music, which involved numerous interviews. Corbett's senior project in Anthropology at the University of Vermont involved living in Haiti for five months—traveling extensively throughout the country observing Haitian lifeways and learning local customs. During this time, he participated in a survey with Haiti's University de Agronomy on farming practices in the Leogone Valley.

This presentation will include many beautiful and incredible photographs of Haitian life with an anthropological narrative briefly describing the cultural history of the island and such topics as the country's geography, land-use practices, land tenure, marriage and inheritance practices, religious beliefs, and how Haiti's infamous markets operate.

Corbett Torrence is a PhD candidate in Archaeology at the Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. He also is Co-Director of the Mound House on Fort Myers Beach. He is an outstanding speaker.

CRAIGHEAD LAB NEWS

The complement of lab workers has diminished in the last weeks with Marilyn Mayo, and Jan Gooding leaving for the North Country. Liz Clement also left for Ireland to visit her daughter and family who live there.

Jack Thompson, Art Lee, Jack Harvey, Jean Belknap and Betsy McCarthy are working on the Strader site and the Olde Marco Inn site.

On Thursday April 28th we had about 30 home schoolers visit the lab during which Jack Thompson told them about the Calusa and showed them tools and bones, after which they toured the Lab itself.



TENT MEETING

By Jack Harvey

The April monthly SWFAS meeting was held on the 23rd in a tent on the bank of Estero Island (Ft. Myers Beach) next to Matanzas Pass. This was also a joint session with The Trail of the Lost Tribes lecture series and the Florida Humanities Council. Corbett Torrence was the principle speaker.



SWFAS April Tent Meeting

Speaking from the tent stage, Corbett gave a rousing lesson in Calusa village architecture and how it defined hierarchies as well as political and social relationships. He pointed out the strong similarities between Pinelands and Mound Key.

Indeed, over 50 Calusa mound sites reveal repeating spatial patterns. According to Corbett, Frank Cushing recognized this over a century ago, but didn't explain it. A major element of Corbett's work is spelling out just what these spatial patterns were and why. He related them to patterns seen in other early cultures, including the teepee arrangements of nomadic Plains Indian tribes.



Boat Departing for Mound Key

Following his tent lecture, a full boat-load of archaeology buffs and experts departed with him for Mound Key. Corbett extended his remarks on the boat and led a tour of the architectural features on Mound Key that illustrate his thesis. There was plenty to stay busy with back at the Mound House. About 20 children and their parents tried their hand at Calusa Crafts.

ABOUT SWFAS

The Directorate:

President – Corbett Torrence

1st VP – Theresa Schober

2nd VP – Tom Franchino

Recording Secretary – Jo Ann Grey

Treasurer – Charlie Strader

Membership – Charlie Strader

SWFAS Committees:

Field – John Beriault

Lab – Jack Thompson

Hospitality – Jeanne Sanders

Education – Dr. John Worth

Finance – Charlie Strader

Publicity – Victoria Rans

To Join: Address your check to:

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society,

PO Box 9965,

Naples FL 34101.

Dues are:

Individual - \$20. Sustaining - \$50.

Family - \$35. Student - \$15.

QUESTIONS, comments or contributions to the newsletter: Betsy McCarthy, 909-8 Augusta Blvd., Naples, FL, 34113, or e-mail:

popismom@hotmail.com

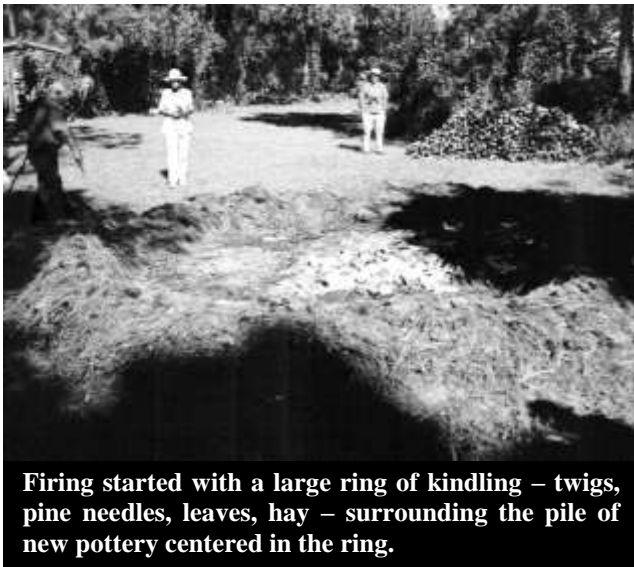
or groucho@naples.net

Board meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7 PM, Hampton Inn, Bonita Springs
All welcome

RING OF FIRE

By Jack Harvey

Dr. Robin Brown's spring training camp for Indian Crafts concluded on April 9 with the firing of clay pottery created at the session a week earlier. Training in other crafts, such as making cord and rope from native plants was done also.



Firing started with a large ring of kindling – twigs, pine needles, leaves, hay – surrounding the pile of new pottery centered in the ring.

The chemistry of making durable waterproof ceramic pots and utensils hasn't changed since early humans discovered it. You must form the moist clay into the desired shape and allow it to dry.



Since the new white pottery has little strength it is intermixed with darker fired potsherds to provide support and protection from ash and coals.

Then the shape is heated slowly over a period of three or four hours until it reaches a temperature of at least 2000° F, glowing a dull red. Higher temperatures are needed for porcelain.

During this hours-long heating, the clay goes through several stages of further drying when the shape shrinks by as much as 10 percent.



Margaret supervises Cotton Brown as he makes a flame using an ancient Indian method.

As the temperature continues to rise, crystal geometry changes. The shape actually increases a couple of percent in volume and cracking is a problem if some regions expand faster than others.

Finally, when the maximum temperature is reached, the microscopic crystals in the clay can knit together, lower melting point flux materials are liquefied and vitrification (glass-forming) begins. When slowly cooled, extremely durable ceramic vessels result that last for tens of thousands of years.

Modern technology for the most part has simply automated the process with electrically heated kilns and precision temperature sensors to control the heat.



The kindling ring is set aflame and small branches quickly added to establish a strong fire. Small logs and then larger logs burn to produce a ring of extremely hot coals. The ring is gradually pushed inward over a period of several hours, slowly raising the temperature of the pottery in the center.

However, these high-tech kilns have made one other change – they have made pottery firing a very clean process. No longer is the clay subjected to gassy flames, charcoal and wood ash. No bits of burning wood land in pots and mar the surfaces with embedded impurities and stray concentrations of random color.



The ring of hot coals are now very close to (but not on) the pots and their temperature is nearly high enough. More logs are piled on the coals to keep them at maximum heat. It is almost impossible to work within 10 feet of the fiery ring.

And yet an important branch of modern ceramic art called Raku from 16th century Japan is reviving use of the ancient “dirty” firing methods to produce beautiful pottery surface colors and figures impossible to do with conventional glazing.



Hot ash and coals are lightly tossed over the pottery, completely covering it in a blanket of intense heat. Adding fuel stops and the fire is allowed to burn out while the new ceramic slowly cools. Extreme patience is required.

Raku doesn't come finished out of the ashes. The artist must clean rough surfaces under water with steel wool and fine polishing compounds to achieve the characteristic sheen and luminous color.

Who knows? Robin Brown's craft camp and John Beriault's ring of fire driven by SWFAS members' enthusiasm may produce strikingly beautiful objects.

Editor's Note

Just a note to recognize the tremendous help and creativity Jack Harvey supplies each month to this newsletter. He makes it possible for the newsletter to be posted on the web site. Without his expertise and unflinching aid this newsletter would not be possible.