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## October 21: Crystal River & Hopewell Interaction

Learn about the Hopewell Interaction Sphere at the October 21 SWFAS meeting. The talk will begin at 7:30 p.m. (join us for snacks at 7) at the Bonita Springs Community House.

The Hopewell Interaction Sphere was a phenomenon that engulfed the entire Eastern and Central Woodlands areas.

Best expressed by exotic and carefully crafted works of stone, metal, shell, and minerals often found in Woodland (500 BC to AD 200) burial contexts, it has been the subject of much speculation. Some have characterized it as interregional trade, some as a shared religious cult, others as a series of mortuary practices involving elaborate burial mounds and rituals. It may well be all three and more.

This talk will discuss the Hopewellian

artifacts recovered from the famous Crystal River site in coastal Citrus County and discuss how large coastal sites may have acted as “gateways” for the movement of these goods and ideas from the heartland of North America out sites deep in the Florida’s interior.

Richard Estabrook has been involved with Florida archaeology since 1981. He holds degrees in Anthropology and History from the State University of New York at Stony Brook (now Stony Brook University), Applied Anthropology (Public Archaeology) from the University of South Florida (USF) and a graduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) from USF. Since 1986, Richard has focused on private sector applications



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for Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firms and government agencies. He is currently ABD in his Ph.D. research at USF where he is employed as the Director of the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) Center at the Crystal River Preserve State Park.

## Florida Keys Shipwrecks at the September meeting

*By Tom Franchino*

On September 16, Jeff Moates was generous enough to speak before SWFAS on Florida Keys shipwrecks. Jeff is the Director of the West Central Regional Center of the Florida Public Archaeology Network based in Tampa at U.S.F. Jeff’s professional experience includes that of underwater archaeologist with the Bureau of Archaeological Research (BAR) in Tallahassee.

The investigation of 18+ shipwrecks between 2004 and 2009 in the Florida Keys is the result of a partnership between BAR and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. In this joint effort, researchers have documented and in some cases redocumented historical shipwrecks from 1733 through the construction of Flager’s Overseas Railway.

Thirteen of the vessels investigated were involved in the 1733 Plate Fleet Disaster. On July 13, 1733, a fleet of 21 vessels left Havana for Spain with a cargo of precious metals and gems. A catastrophic storm, most likely a hurricane, sunk or grounded the fleet in the middle and upper Florida Keys. One vessel was able to be refloated and successfully made the trip back to Spain.

Spain made extensive efforts to chart the locations of all of the sunken Plate Fleet vessels and did salvage the treasures of six of the vessels. Surprisingly the amount of treasure salvaged exceeded the contents reflected on the ships’ manifests and in

the royal records.

The Plate Fleet wrecks were rediscovered by scuba divers in the 1960s. The Galleon Trail Project in 2004 sought to find, document and create a management plan for the 1733 Plate Fleet.

Thirteen of the vessels were located and the sites documented through drawings and photographs. No treasures and only a few artifacts were found during this process. The BAR in Tallahassee has copies available of the “1733 Spanish Galleon Trail,” which reports the results of the investigation.

In 2005, the project investigated the Mystery Wreck off Vaca Key near Marathon. The wreck was of a late 17th century vessel about 80 feet long. All that remains is a broken keel on a coral mound, the cause of the wreck. A large ballast pile formed a concretion on top of the coral mound, which is still visited by divers.

In 2006, the project investigated the Brick Wreck, so named as the only cargo found during its salvage in the 1970s and 1980s were red bricks. The vessel appeared to be about 85-87 feet long and of early 19th century construction. A cup plate found in the wreck was traced to 1839-1842 Boston. As a result, it is believed that the vessel was delivering its cargo of New England brick to either Fort Jefferson or Fort Tylor,

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## Digital Archaeology: Rosetta Stoned

*By Jack Harvey*

Perhaps the stupidest blunder mankind ever committed was losing the ability to read its own written history. If past is prologue and hindsight has clarity while those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, how could presumably intelligent creatures forget their language?

As preposterous as it sounds, apparently Eurasian scholars completely forgot how to read Egyptian hieroglyphs. Not even the priesthood, presumably the caretakers of knowledge,

could decipher ancient Egyptian writing.

At the end of the 18th century, Napoleon’s and England’s militaries squabbled over “backward” but prized Egypt and its resources. Not the least of the treasures was the vast array of antiquities. The strategic Mediterranean port city of Rashid was occupied by the French (who called it Rosetta) and it was there that a large stele, weighing nearly a ton, was discovered. Unlike most stelai that had only a few unreadable

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which were under construction when it sank.

The Rib Wreck was investigated in 2007 and is also located in the Middle Keys. It is named after the iron ribs remaining, which evidence a composite construction of the vessel. Similarly, the Bronze Pin Wreck investigated in 2008 is so named due to the bronze pins fastening pieces of the wood structure of the vessel.

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words commemorating something, one surface of this slab was densely covered with many thousands of small symbols. Moreover, they were in three groups. At the top of the stele was a big group of incomprehensible Egyptian hieroglyphics. The middle group was the equally unreadable Demotic script. But the final group of symbols at the bottom of the stele consisted of Greek alphabet letters such as sigma, lambda and omega.

Antiquity experts rightly guessed the three groups had the same meaning in three different languages and so possession of this plum was hotly contested by French and English interests. Somehow it ended up in the British Museum in 1802 but as diplomatic relations between the two powers improved, French scholars also got access to the Rosetta stele.

Over the next two decades Briton Thomas Young and French scholar Jean-Francois Champollion worked out the basic translations of the Demotic and hieroglyphic texts using the readable Greek portion as a key. By 1858, three undergraduates at the University of Pennsylvania could publish the complete text in English. Ironically the Rosetta Stone became an exemplar for keys to knowledge.

This saga of blundering loss followed by heroic recovery allowed us to finally read the great pyramids and learn their ages. Suddenly the ancient Mediterranean civilizations were speaking to us. Imagine what it would mean to Florida archaeology if the decoration on our aboriginal ceramics, the punctuation, scribe marks and stamps, was a rich syntactical language speaking the detailed lore of families, tribes, chiefs and wars. It was such a flash of light from the Rosetta Stone that spotlighted the past of our western civilization and we almost missed it.

In the new digital world, we are in danger of repeating the hieroglyph blunder. If we aren't careful, we will lose the ability to read our own digital record and the precise history it contains. It is already happening. Ironically, we can now read the 2,300 year old Rosetta Stone but we can't read digital data recorded only decades ago. Many of you probably still have floppy diskettes that were used in an old computer you replaced with a new model. That new model can't access the data you stored on the floppies, but uses the incompatible CD-ROM and DVD technology instead.

*If you would like to join SWFAS, please address your check to: The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society; P.O. Box 9965; Naples, FL 34101  
Dues are: Individual - \$20; Sustaining - \$50; Family - \$35; Student \$15  
Learn more at: <http://www.explorationsinc.com/swfl-archaeology/index.html>*

In 2009, the Marker 29 Wreck was investigated by the project. This vessel was a large workhorse utilized in the construction of Flagler's Overseas Railway.

As the joint effort between BAR and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary continues, additional wrecks are expected to be investigated in the coming years.

And the problem isn't limited to physical incompatibilities in the new devices. Digital data formats are rapidly changing to provide more flexibility and efficiency. This means old computer programs can't read the new formats.

These changes aren't arbitrary; the new technologies are major improvements, eagerly snapped up by users. And the capacity of digital data storage is improving so fast that it now appears storage space may be increasing faster than the world's billion computer users can create new data. We may never need to delete data again. But will we remember how to read it?

Is this potential problem a warning to archaeologists (and other scientists) to shun dependence on digital data storage for our foundation documents? Should we continue to publish critical knowledge by stamping tiny ink symbols on sheets of cellulose fibers?

Computer industry leaders are aware of the obsolescence problem and several efforts are underway to avoid the hieroglyph blunder. Two possibilities depend on the Internet. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has initiated a scheme to digitize the world's knowledge base to a standard format, and then maintain the entire knowledge base in perpetuity in updated formats compatible with evolving computing facilities.

Another prospect is that the economics of data storage may make local data storage on hard drives, floppies, DVDs, flash drives, etc., too costly and risky. Instead, the cheapest, fastest and safest storage may be the Internet itself. No longer will our computer files be lost in a hard drive crash because we forgot to back them up. Instead, our personal computers will send our data through the net to giant fully automated storage complexes that back themselves up across continents so that even major earthquakes can't destroy all copies.

There are already precursors of this world-wide Cloud Utility. YouTube, Pando, Google Docs, SkyDrive and the thousands of blog sites are major examples. Ask your favorite search engine for "online storage" to see what's available today. Encryption insures privacy and you can make selected documents available to designated colleagues or business associates by simply telling the Cloud to allow access to them. How's that for a low-cost Forever Stamp?

*Board meetings are usually held prior to the regular meeting on the third Wednesday of the month at the Bonita Springs Community Hall at 27381 Old U.S. 41 (by the banyan tree). All are welcome. Board meetings begin at 6 p.m. Regular meetings begin at 7:30 (with coffee served at 7).*

## October 2009 Newsletter

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