

Newsletter



SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 9965, Naples, Florida 33941

Arthur R. Lee, editor

Volume IV, Number 5

SEPTEMBER, 1988

September meeting

SWFAS TO HEAR REPORT OF ADDISON KEY EXCAVATION

In the second program describing early work of the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society, President John Beriault Sept. 15 will show slides of the Addison Key dig, undertaken in December, 1981. Occasion will be the monthly meeting of SWFAS, to be held in the Community room of the First Federal Savings and Loan of Fort Myers, 3201 North Tamiami Trail, Naples, starting at 7:30 p.m. Last month he reported on the salvage at Bay West site the preceding year.

Addison Key was a 40-acre shell island four miles east of Marco Island. The Addison family farmed there for some 40 years beginning with the turn of the century and for two decades, starting in the 40s, it was mined for shell, used as road ballast by the Turner brothers, an operation which reduced it to a series of scattered islets, the largest two or three acres.

The SWFAS diggers, working over two weekends, took advantage of a vertical wall left by the excavators to get a comprehensive view of a midden area. In all, four test pits were dug, the deepest ending in a below water-level probe at about the 32nd 10-centimeter level.

Thirty ¹⁴C tests were run on materials from the dig by the University of Miami, yielding dates from A.D.400 to A.D.1,400. Analysis, still underway, already fills several bound note books.

Last month Beriault recounted the often-hazardous recovery operations as SWFASers dodged among earth-moving equipment to salvage Archaic era artifacts and human skeletal material from a pond being excavated north of Naples.

The site revealed burial practices very similar to those recently found at the Windover site near Cape Canaveral, and provided a number of glimpses into life of the hunter-gatherers of the fourth millenium B.C. It was reported in the June, 1981, Florida Anthropologist.

WELCOME TO SWFAS!

The Society has welcomed to membership Joanne Fischer of Fort Myers and Jennifer Tompkins of Naples, currently studying at Sarasota.

ARE YOU SAVING STUFF FOR THE FALL SWFAS GARAGE SALE? WE NEED A PILE.

President, John G. Beriault; first vicepresident, Gary Susdorf; second vice president, Doug Messineo; recording secretary, Barbara Logie; corresponding secretary, Lynn Lee; Treasurer, Jack Thompson. Trustees, Art Lee, Joe Long, Charlie Strader, Eleanor Young, Anne Waterhouse, Mary Ruth Winchell. Committees, Dorothy Thompson public relations; Isabelle Felsberg hospitality; John Beriault field; Art Lee newsletter, laboratory; Paul Benedict, education.

BOARD SETS SEPTEMBER 18 FOR ITS SECOND
ARTIFACT SESSION: SUPER SUNDAY SCRUB-UP

A second session for getting material from past digs out of temporary storage, cleaned, and into the Craighead lab ready for analysis has been set by the SWFAS board of directors for Sept.18th, Sunday. It's being billed as "Super Sunday Scrub-Up".

The first artifact cleaning extravaganza "The Great American Wash-In" was held July 24. At it 17 members put five large trays of material from a half-dozen digs onto laboratory shelves. In a holiday atmosphere, they filled all spaces at the large washing apparatus set up on the lab porch and the screen-spray combination at the paved area beside the building. There were free soft drinks and lunches were eaten in the airconditioned interior.

There'll be an extra added attraction to the Super Sunday Scrub-Up at the Craighead lab Sept.18. Collier County Museum Director Ron Jamro has arranged to have rest rooms there open for use of SWFAS members during the day, although the museum is normally closed Sundays.

Super Sunday Scrub-Up will offer prizes for those finding lucky oyster shells, free soft drinks and the good fellowship that made the Wash-In so enjoyable; as at it, participants are urged to bring their lunches to the Sept. 18 event. Festivities will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will continue into the afternoon

The occasion will offer an opportunity to view again the artifacts recovered at a number of digs, and to re-live the thrill of discovery.

Mini Wash-In September 1

The regular Thursday lab session Sept.1 turned into a mini Wash-In when Wayne and Shirley House and Pat Snearley of Pine Island joined Alice Ash, Lynn and Art Lee in scrubbing up a great batch of material from Chokoloskee.

THE POTSDHERDS WE DIG

On dune-bluff "black dirt" midden sites of Marco Island SWFASers have found Orange Series fiber-tempered incised ware. Its designs usually are linear/geometric. The tempering agent, which may have been dried Spanish moss fibers, gives the sherds a termite-ridden look from the tiny holes it left. The pottery dates to the late Archaic to the early Transitional -- ca. 1,300-800 B.C.



NEWS OF SISTER CHAPTERS

Miami -- The Archaeological Society of Southern Florida is participating in the restoration of Indian Key, offshore from the Overseas highway just south of Islamorada. Kick-off for the project, which is chaired by past president Irving Eyster, was August 27. Indian key, a part of the Florida state park system, was the first county seat for Dade county.

The Society has temporarily discontinued its field school.

Gainesville -- Bill Johnson is the new editor of the Florida Anthropological Society Newsletter. Some SWFASers will remember having worked with him on a dig in the Miami area a couple years ago.

Fort Lauderdale -- Broward County Archaeological Society members Sheila Soltis, Gypsy Graves and Betje Carlson joined Dr. William J. Kennedy of Florida Atlantic University for a three-week survey of a medieval monastery in Trim, Ireland. A three- to six-year survey-and-excavation is planned there.

The Society's archaeological museum opens Oct.1 after being closed for the summer; volunteers are tidying it up.

SWFAS GEARS UP TO GLEAN MAXIMUM INFORMATION FROM CERAMICS FINDS

The bulk of the potsherds we remove from the soil are of a type once called gritty ware, and, more latterly, Glades plain, or sand-tempered plain. It comes in varying shades of color, thicknesses and shapes, but it generally, as the name implies, has quartz as a tempering agent, which gives it a rather coarse, porous, finish.

As it happened, the combination of clay and sand which lends it that quality also made it a very practical type of pottery for the use to which it was put -- standing up to the rigours of cooking and handling in rather primitive conditions. This ruggedness resulted in its having been used from centuries before the time of Christ to after the arrival of the Spanish.

Because the sherds from the earlier levels tend to look pretty much like those nearer the surface, archaeologists have had to rely on associated artifacts such as decorated pottery or ¹⁴C analyses of charcoal or shell to date the pieces of sand-tempered plain, reversing the common circumstance in which pottery itself is used as a dating agent.

In an attempt to smoke out differences in samples of this humble ware from various places at various time periods, researchers are looking into the composition of the paste -- the combination of clay and additives -- from which they were made. Such analyses are part of the University of Florida's Southwest Florida project, headed by Dr. William Marquardt. Thus far, Ann S. Cordell of Florida State Museum has analyzed some 4,000 sherds from sites in Lee and Charlotte counties and has reported on paste differences she discerned among them.

Looking forward to the day when all the material from past digs will be safely stored on lab shelves and the start of analysis, SWFAS has decided to support this effort to the extent of its ability by going a step beyond the simple classification of sherds by conventional types and making a more detailed description. These preparations have been made:

- * We have the use of Charlie Strader's monocular microscope and some tests have been made to determine its suitability for working with sherds (usually, binocular microscopes are used);
- * Arrangements have been made with a local educational organization for occasional use of one of its binocular microscopes;
- * Some minimal chemical apparatus and reagents are on hand for use in analyzing certain tempering agents;
- * Tools for measuring sherd dimensions, hardness, and curvature are provided;
- * Optics are available to assess porosity and grain size in sherds;
- * Charts have been set up to give analysts a common language to use in describing sherd shapes, and rim and lip treatment;
- * A form to provide an orderly and consistent means of describing various sherd attributes is in its umpteenth revision.

Miss Cordell and Dr. Marquardt have been generous with their time in providing information of help to SWFAS lab personnel.

THE FINE SCREEN

The current issue of Abode, a bi-monthly publication of the Collier County Builders and Contractors Association, Inc., has the renovation of the county museum as its cover story. It notes, in part: ". . . the Friends allied with local archaeologists to see that the field laboratory of noted naturalist Frank C. Craighead was added to the Museum's growing inventory. Fully restored by the two groups, the Craighead Lab is re-used today as an "exhibitory" -- part learning laboratory and part scientific workplace.'

A merchant marine friend of John Beriault, at loose ends during a hiatus in his voyaging, accepted John's offer of a Saturday afternoon outing. His look of bewilderment on finding himself on the Craighead lab porch scrubbing oyster shells was classic.

From the north, Paul Benedict forwards a sheaf of ideas for working with local educational groups and advises that he and Phyllis won't be returning until late October, after a junket to India. They have seen the Ramses II exhibit at Boston Museum of Science.

DIRECTORY UP-DATE

Corresponding Secretary Lynn Lee has prepared an up-date of the 1988 SWFAS directory. It will be available at meetings at 25 cents, and by mail at 50 cents. Only members may buy the directory.

SWFAS GROUP VISITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON MARCO ISLAND

Archaeological sites spanning some 5,000 years were visited August 21 by 19 SWFASers as they followed the paths of researchers who have investigated aboriginal life on Marco Island for nearly a century.

The group met at the Craighead laboratory for an orientation by tour guide and SWFAS resident John Beriault, then caravanned to Marco where the visit started with a look at a residential area, once the site where Frank Hamilton Cushing and his crew felt around in nearly liquid peat muck for the carved and painted wooden ritual objects for which the site is famous.

A short way to the east, they saw the area dug by the Van Becks, a project which resulted in a notable report in the Florida Anthropologist, and where one of the early settlers, W.D. Collier, based some of his enterprises.

From this area, where prehistoric finds were largely quite late, some dating at about A.D. 1,300, the group drove to the southern, Caxambas Point, end of the island where artifacts going back to the Archaic have been found. Proof of the antiquity of the site was provided by small sherds of fiber-tempered pottery -- of the type which is the oldest ceramic in the Americas -- picked up near where one of the first SWFAS excavations was made in 1980.

At road stops the reel of time between the potters of 3,000 years B.C. and the 14th century mask makers unwound past the hunter-gatherers and the more sedentary aboriginal fishermen to the Spanish who found water there for their ships' crews, and to the hermit who fenced high ground with a million conch shells. In the course of that time transit the group climbed the highest point in Collier and Lee counties -- Indian hill.

Lunch at Goodland ended the outing, which was attended by Beriault, Walt and Mary Buschelman, Al and Isabelle Felsberg, Wayne and Shirley House, Art and Lynn Lee, Joe and Freda Long, Leo Ruble, Patricia Snearley, Charlie and Gall Strader, Gary Susdorf, James Ward, Suzan Watts and Mary Ruth Winchell.

DATEBOOK

*Sept. 10 and every Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Craighead lab, cleaning and sorting of archaeological materials. Y'all come!

*Sept. 13 and every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 a.m. at the Craighead lab, working on materials from past digs. All welcome.

*Sept. 15. Monthly meeting of SWFAS starting at 7:30 p.m. at the First Federal Savings and Loan of Ft. Myers, 3201 Tamiami Trail North, Naples.

*Sept. 18. Super Sunday Scrub-Up at Craighead lab starting at 9:30 a.m. Bring your lunch!

*Oct. 11. Board of Directors meeting at the Craighead lab on the Collier County Museum grounds starting at 6:30 p.m. All members welcome.

*Oct. 20. Monthly meeting of SWFAS starting at 7:30 p.m. at the First Federal Savings and Loan of Ft. Myers, 3201 Tamiami Trail North, Naples.

Need information? On membership, Newsletter distribution, call Lynn Lee at 261-4939; on field activities, call John Beriault at 261-0082; on the garage sale, call Barbara Logie at 597-4745; on lab activities, call Art Lee at 261-4939.

MORE SCREENINGS

Recent donations, now on SWFAS shelves at the Craighead laboratory, include Florida Archaeology No. 1, 1986, by the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research, entitled "Bibliography of Florida Archaeology Through 1980; The World of Reptiles" by Richard Carrington, published by American Elsevier, New York, and the latest issues of The Florida Anthropologist. To check out materials, on a 3x5 card one writes the title of the volume, one's name, and the date, and places it in the file provided, removing it when the volume is returned.

Virginia Read writes from Milwaukee, WI, of the joys of cleaning out an attic in 100° weather and adds "for years I have tried to have a field trip to Marco to look over the sites. Now that I am not in town - what do you do!"