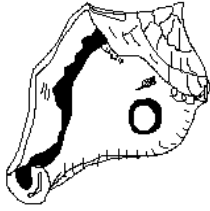


# SWFAS



## SOUTHWEST FLORIDA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## Work at the Olde Marco Inn Progresses: SWFAS Gets To Participate

**W**ork on the development of the property surrounding the Olde Marco Inn has begun again in earnest after a several-month halt. A new group of developers led by Jim Jenkins has already begun work on what will ultimately become a hotel and conference center. The good news is that the historic portion of the Olde Marco Inn (whose core structure dates from 1883) will be preserved. Earlier plans had much more

extensive alterations planned. As before, the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy has been engaged to provide archaeological monitoring and mitigation. Members of both the Marco Island Historical Society and the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society have been actively involved with the mitigative efforts, which included the digging of four 2-meter by 2-meter test pits, sifting, bagging, and all the other activities occurring in a full-blown excavation. Over 27 volunteers have participated in this latest work to date. Valuable prehistoric and historic information has been gained and over 400 pounds weight of archaeological material collected. In addition, an eleven-level column sample has been removed intact to be sent to a regional university for faunal and other analysis. A very complex series of prehistoric use/activity areas and features were discovered to the southeast of the Inn building within two test pits placed there. Evidence of organized efforts at shell reduction in the form of regularly spaced "anvils" (lightning whelks placed crown up), fire pits, trash dumps, net repair (hundreds of pierced *Arca* shell weights), and post molds of a structure of indeterminate kind were some of the many "finds" made. There will continue to be monitoring and salvage work done at the site. People interested in helping out may call John Beriault at (941) 434-0624 and leave a



message.

**The Olde Marco Inn a Few Years Before We worked there...Old postcard view to the southwest circa 1910**

**DR. ROBERT GORE BEGINS A SERIES OF ARTICLES CONCERNING ARCHAEOLOGY**

Dr. Robert Gore, well-known ecologist and environmentalist, begins his "exposure" to SWFAS in our current issue with a fascinating piece about "Thong Trees". He intends to contribute articles under the byline "Potsherds and Potshots". It certainly sounds like these will be a "shot in the arm" for SWFAS! Thanks, Bob!

### THE DATEBOOK

**April 14th - SWFAS Board of Directors Meeting**, Hampton Inn, Bonita Springs, 7:00 PM

**April 21st - General Meeting** Bonita Springs Community Center, 7:30 PM

### About SWFAS

**The directorate:** President Wayne ("Bud") House, first vice president Don Taggart, second vice president Betsy Perdichizzi, membership secretary Brenda Hamilton, treasurer Jack Thompson, recording secretary Jo Ann Grey, directors Valerie Flanigan, Sue Long, Dottie Thompson, Jo Ann Grey, Charles Dugan, Annette Snapp, Tom Franchino, John Beriault and Charlie Strader.

The committees: Field: Beriault, 434-0624; Hospitality: position open; Membership: Brenda Hamilton; Publicity: Dottie Thompson, 597-2269; Sales: Valerie Flanigan, 262-8394; 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](mailto:JGBeriault@aol.com).

## Archaeology on the Web

By Linda Ballou

World Atlatl Magazine: the Online Magazine of Primitive Technology made its debut on the internet in November. Atlatls are the spear throwers used by ancient hunters to extend their range. SWFAS members may remember them from more recent history when some friendly atlatl competition was among the activities at our annual picnics at the Strader homesite.

The editors of the e-zine consider the atlatl to be "the primitive technology that brought man out of the realm of scavenger and into the role of hunter, warrior, and thinker." Whether you agree with that lofty assessment or not, you may find their site worth a browse.

The inaugural issue consists of technical well referenced articles on atlatls as well as more speculative, albeit thought provoking, pieces on the origin of the tool. Some rather silly, sophomoric attempts at humor can be distracting, but are easily bypassed with a click of your mouse. The contents include depictions of the atlatl in ancient rock art and atlatls from the archaeological record. You'll even find atlatl poetry, this haiku for example:

Atlatl spirit  
Hunter fires burn  
on the shores  
Of man's invention  
  
For those of you who are

artistically inclined, World Atlatl Magazine offers an opportunity to win an atlatl of your very own.

The editors are requesting help in creating a logo for the new e-zine. They are sponsoring a contest for

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a design that is "both memorable and sublime." The winner will receive a prize of a Warrior Atlatl and three darts. E-mail entries may be sent to [wam@atlatl.net](mailto:wam@atlatl.net) or snail-mailed to: World Atlatl Magazine, P.O. Box 772, Bozeman, Montana 59771. For more information, and to visit their site go to <http://www.atlatl.net>

## **A POSSIBLE THONG-TREE TRAIL MARKER IN COLLIER COUNTY**

by Dr. Robert H. Gore

Until about 1880 most of the central and lower peninsula of Florida was covered either periodically, or in some cases continually, with water. Old maps and charts that depicted this situation were at one time believed to be more the products of the cartographer's mind than the geographer's facts. My research has shown that, on the contrary, many of these same maps and charts (within certain accepted limitations) were relatively accurate insofar as indicating the general location and approximate size of many hydrological features on the peninsula. In fact, historical

cartographic data now suggest that getting around south Florida from the region immediately above Lake Okeechobee down to the peninsular tip was a tripartite exercise requiring knowledge of the location, direction, and seasonality of the major waterways and flowways in the region. There is abundant support for this in the historical literature. For example, it was a common jibe in the 1800s that a white man crossing the Everglades required ten days to two weeks travel time, while for the Seminole Indians it was a matter of three days. We may suppose from this that the pre-contact aboriginal tribes (Tequesta, Tancha, Muspa, Calusa, Mayaimi, Guacata) required a similar time frame. For all these peoples, as daunting in physical labor and rate of progress as the Everglades might be at ground level, crossing this vast expanse of sawgrass nonetheless devolved to a simple problem of maintaining directionality. Markers very probably included the sun by day and certain stars by night (for those who might be caught at sundown without a tree island on which to camp). However, a major problem did arise once the Big Cypress Swamp was reached. Anyone threading their way through the then extensive cypress swamps and mesic swamp forests in the days before logging reduced the arboreal species richness, could well experience difficulty in ascertaining, let alone maintaining, direction. The very

presence of the trees themselves, the knees or buttress roots, the numerous deadfalls, or even caprock "reefs" must have often forced numerous detours, particularly when dugout canoes were the watercraft employed. Anyone who has hiked through a flooded deep cypress swamp cannot help but be struck by the observation that long, heavy canoes would not seem to be the most maneuverable or amenable means of travel in certain areas. At the same time, careful observation often reveals natural open "leads" discernible through the trees. It stands to reason that marking these waterpaths would at the least aid in directionality even if they did not necessarily lend themselves to easing the labor of travel.

Consequently, on-the-ground markers were employed. One such marker was the "thong tree," which was used much like a modern day road sign to point in the general direction of travel, or to act as a temporal or distance indicator along commonly traveled pathways or watercourses. Coming upon such a tree the traveler not only knew that he was proceeding in the right general direction, but that (s)he might be only a given period of time away from their destination. Thong trees were used by many of the so-called woodland tribes in the southeastern United States. They were easily made. A sapling or slightly larger tree was bent or cut along one side and pointed in the appropriate direction. The

upper portion of the tree was secured to the ground by deerskin thongs or other tie-down methods so that the tree remained bent.

Because the tree was not killed it

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would continue to grow and at the same time point in the requisite direction. After a number of years the tree would have enlarged through natural growth so that it became a permanently bent directional marker. The process occurs naturally and commonly when, for example, larger trees are blown down onto adjacent younger, more supple trees, bending them over



**Figure 1. A possible "thong tree" or directional marker tree deliberately cut and bent toward a presently unknown destination. The upper trunk of the cypress points approximately 240 degrees or SW by W. The hat brim is 14 inches in diameter.**

and forcing them to grow horizontally rather than vertically. Such natural examples certainly provided the idea of directional markers to the early woodland Native Americans. It may also have occurred to aboriginals or

their supplanting compatriot Indians in Collier County. Naithloriendun Wildlife Sanctuary is a 230 acre, privately owned, relatively undisturbed mesic/hydric swamp forest located in eastern Golden Gate Estates in Collier County. While establishing trails to enhance our mission of environmental education of schoolchildren I came upon what appeared to be such a thong tree; a large, old cypress. At first I thought that the tree had merely been snapped in half by some windstorm and had managed to recover enough to continue its growth horizontally. The broken area, for example, had become supplanted by a large rounded burl, and the previously upright trunk was now pointed in a more or less westward direction. The original trunk had long ago broken off but several supplemental trunks had coppiced out along the original.

However, conversations with Chris Andersen, at that time an Urban Forestry expert, and his subsequent on-site examination, suggested to us both that the bent cypress may, in fact, be a thong tree. Certain other hydro-geological indications support this hypothesis. The tree is located alongside what is clearly an ancient limestone riffle or caprock-ledged water flowway that must have been a flowing stream prior to the disastrous Gulf American drainage scheme that forever altered the hydrological character of the region. Moreover, the tree points in the general

direction of a large laurel oak hammock that is clearly on higher ground some 200 yards farther west. Further directionality is suggested because the tree also points westward in the general direction of the Gulf coast rather than north or south.

If it is in fact a thong-tree, when might it have been cut? The age of the tree was estimated by measuring DBH in inches of the burl base and multiplying this diameter by 10 years per inch. The result suggests that the tree was bent, or cut, at least 180 years ago and possibly even earlier. The size of the trunk and the rounded burl are substantially larger than the "pointer" trunk. The tree today, except for its mutilation and subsequent contortion, is healthy and growing.

But is it, in fact, a thong tree? The evidence is circumstantial but provocative. The Seminole Indians were known to have numerous trails through the Big Cypress Swamp. An 1856 military map shows at least half a dozen that proceed in the general direction of the area where the suspect tree now exists. In a more modern vein, an illustrated flier issued by the U.S. Forestry Service describing "thong-trees" almost duplicates the physiography of the altered cypress in Naithloriendun and the latter could have served as a model. Nevertheless, that the tree in question was merely a

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coincidental environmental accident cannot be disproved. On

the other hand, neither can it be disproved that the altered tree might also have been a fortuitous accident that was subsequently used by the Indians as a water-trail marker. And there is one more intriguing bit of evidence. Another such "thong-tree" exists some 400 yards to the north of the tree in Naithloriendun--and points in the same general direction.



**Figure 2. Leaflet produced by the Forest Service, USDA explaining and depicting "thong trees." Note the striking similarity of example # 3 to the cypress located in Naithloriendun Wildlife Sanctuary. (Courtesy Chris Andersen).**

Both trees are located on private, posted and guarded property. Their precise locations will remain indeterminate to forestall idle sightseers, and potential vandalism, in the adjacent oak hammock. Bona fide members of SWFAS may contact me to arrange a visit. (all information,

copyright Robert H. Gore)

**CRAIGHEAD LAB REPORT**

by  
Ella May Ablahat

Much excitement in the Lab. (No verb necessary.) Art Lee was presented with a coffee mug which explained the meaning of his name. "Art is Noble." Of course, we knew that all along. Now we needed coffee to utilize the mug so Jan Gooding presented us with a nice new coffee maker. WE NOW HAVE COFFEE!

Betsy McCarthy made our work softer by bringing in two new and comfortable chairs to replace the metal ones which have been retired.

Maura Duncan is back with us for a few weeks. She came from England just to help us with our old standby: Chokoloskee.

In the meanwhile, Jack Thompson and Art are working on Firebreak. Walt Buschelman is keeping us organized with his methodical engineer's expertise.

Next week we'll be having an open house and are working to get the Lab in shape for our visitors. More about that next month.



**Shake Hands With the Past...**porcelain doll arm from the turn of the century, Olde Marco Inn



**Dad Gunit, Here's a Plummet!** plummet made from Melongena corona (king's crown) columella, Olde Marco Inn

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## **PINELAND TOURS**

The Randell Research Center is offering archaeological tours of the Pineland site. The Pineland site is a 240-acre Calusa Indian village that consists of five mounds over 20 feet in height. The tours focus on the lives and technology of the Calusa Indians. People will see how cords, nets and shell tools were manufactured and will sort through samples of ancient middens to identify and interpret the diet of the Calusas.

The relationship between the Calusa culture and the environment is stressed, said archaeologist Corbett Torrence. Tours will be held Saturdays at 10a.m. Admission costs \$5 for adults and \$3 for children. Reservations can be made by calling 941-283-2062.

**JOHN G. BERIAULT, acting editor**

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# **NEWSLETTER**