



# Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS)

## OUR 46th YEAR

### February 2026 Newsletter

<https://swflarchaeology.org/>

#### **PRESIDENT'S CORNER** By *John F. Furey M.A., RPA*, [jffurey@charter.net](mailto:jffurey@charter.net)



February is Black History Month. Our presentation this month by noted local professor Jonathan Harrison documents the racial changes that took place in Ft. Myers between 1885 and 1930 as migration from former Confederate areas into Ft. Myers changed the laws and fueled the rise of the KKK domination of this area. These changes can still be seen in today's geographical population location.

The historic Naples Depot, a Collier County Museum, has reopened on January 14, 2026, after being damaged by Hurricane Ian. The depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and offers a glimpse into the days of the Roaring Twenties when railroads were the main method of travel to Florida. The museum is

located at the restored Seaboard Air Line Railway passenger station at 1051 Fifth Avenue South.

**Local History:** On February 20, 1865, 161 years ago and 48 days before the end of the U.S. Civil War, the battle of Fort Myers took place. The Union naval embargo had cut off the supply of foreign goods to the Confederacy and Union troops in Florida had stopped the shipment of beef cattle to the South by the Confederate 'Cow Cavalry.' It was not much of a battle but was the only local land action of the entire Civil War and has been celebrated as the 'southernmost battle east of the Mississippi River.'

#### **SWFAS DUES REMINDER 2026**



SWFAS dues for 2026 are due. Your support of archaeology, history, preservation, and education in Southwest Florida is critical. Our sole source of income is your dues and your gifts. SWFAS is a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit organization. Donations and gifts to SWFAS in December are tax deductible and benefit us both. Thanks to everyone that has already renewed their 2026 tax deductible membership. If you have not done so, we have two ways, you can renew online with a credit card at <https://swflarchaeology.org/>. On the Home page, go to "Select Member Level" and then "Add to Cart." Or send a check to: Charlie Strader, SWFAS Treasurer, 27655 Kent Road, Bonita Springs, FL 34135. If you have question re membership status, you may call/text Charlie at 239-992-6133.

#### **JANUARY 2026 PRESENTATION AND BOOK SIGNING - *Key West in the Civil War***



At the January SWFAS Meeting we were treated to a book signing and a meet and greet by the noted local author Robert N. Macomber. We had short business meeting including the election of SWFAS 2026 Officers & Directors (thank you all for your service). Mr. Macomber educated and entertained us on the crucial role of Key West, Florida, about Union naval strategy in the Civil War. It is easy to see why he is such a popular lecturer with his firm grasp of the naval war and the politics involved in the blockade of the Confederacy. In addition to a good overview of Key West and Florida's important roles during the Civil War, Macomber shared many lesser known historical facts, consequences, and coincidences.

In his conclusion, he encouraged us to visit Key West and informed us of remaining historical buildings and sites. He highlighted the history of currently existing places on the island such as Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park, Mallory Square, Clinton Square, Fort East Martello Museum, Key West Gardens at Fort West

Martello, Key West Museum of Art & History at the Custom House, Key West Veterans Memorial Garden at Bayview Park. Plus, with a boat tour, you can visit Fort Jefferson.

Thanks go to Mr. Macomber for his great presentation and the IMAG for hosting such a great place for presentations. In case you missed the opportunity to purchase some of Macomber's books and for more information about him, you may visit his website of <https://www.robertmacomber.com/>.



## **FEBRUARY PRESENTATION: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025, 7:00 PM FORT MYERS, IMAG HISTORY & SCIENCE CENTER**

**TOPIC: *JIM CROW IN FT. MYERS 1885-1930* by DR. JONATHAN HARRISON**



Join us at the IMAG History & Science Center for a free presentation by Dr. Jonathan Harrison on *Jim Crow in Ft. Myers 1885-1930*. Black history in this area began in 1867 with the arrival of Nelson Tillis and his purchase of 110 acres of land to raise his family that eventually totaled 11 children. At one time they lived on the Caloosahatchee River next to the Henry Ford estate on MacGregor Avenue. The arrival of the Atlantic Coast Railroad in Ft. Myers in 1904 ushered in the segregation of the city with an influx of Old Southern whites who were nakedly pro-Confederate and Blacks were pressured to move east of the railway line to an area called Safety Hill. In 1915 the KKK was revived in Atlanta and by 1923 the movement had spread to Ft. Myers where the Klan

paraded through the streets of town and in 1924, the *Fort Myers Press* advocated for a white voting primary and white supremacy. Two weeks later, two young black boys were lynched on the oak trees up Cranford Avenue. Learn about these and other stories about the Black historical experience in Ft. Myers.

A native of the UK, Dr. Jonathan Harrison completed his PhD at the University of Leicester and is visiting professor at Florida Gulf Coast University. His doctorate focused on the history of racism, and he was inspired by the PBS documentary, "Eyes on the Prize", and the writings of W.E.B. DuBois. After moving to Southwest Florida, Dr. Harrison realized that the region had opportunity for academic study within the area of his social science research.

### ***DIRECTIONS TO THE IMAG***



The IMAG is at **2000 Cranford Ave, Fort Myers, FL 33916**. Take the 75 fwy toward Ft. Myers, then take the FL-82 exit, EXIT 138, toward ML King Jr Blvd/Ft Myers/Immokalee. Turn west onto FL-82/State Road 82. Continue to follow FL-82. Go 3.60 miles, then turn left onto Cranford Ave. Go 0.09 miles, and the IMAG is on the right.

## SWFAS PRESENTATION SCHEDULE 2026

*Note that all SWFAS presentations are free to the public*

*Also note that newsletters will be distributed each month except June - September*

**FEBRUARY 18, 2026, 7:00 PM, FT. MYERS, IMAG MUSEUM**

**Dr. Jonathan Harrison, Adjunct Professor Hodges University**

**Visiting Professor FGCU**

**Topic: The Rise of Jim Crow in Fort Myers 1885-1930**

**MARCH 18, 2026, 7:00 PM, FT. MYERS, IMAG MUSEUM**

**Alf Monaghan, Lecturer**

**Topic: Ireland: A Sacred Island Before Christianity**

**APRIL 15, 2026, 7:00 PM, BONITA SPRINGS, BONITA SPRINGS FIRE STATION 24**

**Dr. Harry Maisch IV, Instructor, Florida Gulf Coast University**

**Topic: Fossil Shark Tooth Identification and Preservation**

**MAY 8, 9, and 10, 2026**

**Florida Anthropological Society ANNUAL Meeting**

**JUNE – OCTOBER – SUMMER SABBATICAL**

**NOVEMBER 18, 2026, 7:00 PM, BONITA SPRINGS FIRE STATION 24**

**Presentation: TBA**

**DECEMBER 5 OR 12, 2026**

**Field Trip: TBA**

## SWFAS BOARD ELECTED FOR 2026

SWFAS board members were elected at the January 2026 meeting. Congratulations to the board members and thank you for agreeing to serve on the board. They are:

### Officers

President: John Furey

First Vice-President: *open*

Second Vice-President: *open*

Treasurer: Charlie Strader

Secretary: Susan Harrington

Editor: John Furey

Craighead Lab Director: Susan Harrington

### Directors

First of 3-year term:

*open*

Second of 3-year term

Dr. Tiffany Bannworth

Amanda Townsend

Third of 3-year term:

Theresa Schober (Chapter Rep.)

Mary Southall

## RECENT RESEARCH

### ***EVOLUTION OF A NEW BLOOD GROUP THAT SPLIT NEANDERTHALS AND HOMO ERECTUS***



*Image credit: Dieter Hawlan/  
Shutterstock.com*

Scientists at Aix-Marseille University in France sequenced the genome of 22 H. sapiens and 14 Neanderthals from Eurasia dating between 120,000 and 20,000 years ago. The findings showed that H. sapiens underwent huge changes and developed a new genetic blood variant shortly after migrating out of Africa and into Eurasia. These new alleles were not present in the existing Neanderthal population and is absent in modern sub-Saharan Africans. It is believed that while these new alleles provided an evolutionary advantage to H. sapiens, it created high risks with newborn viability when inbreeding with Neanderthals and may have been a factor in their demise. Source: *IFL Science at*

<https://www.iflscience.com/evolution-of-a-new-blood-group-split-neanderthals-and-homo-sapiens-in-eurasia-77777>



## THE DARKENING OF THE OCEAN



Image credit: Dieter Hawlan/  
Shutterstock.com

Recent studies by researchers at the University of Plymouth and the Plymouth Marine Laboratory in the UK have found that fully 21% of the global ocean had become darker between 2003 and 2022. Doctor Thomas Davies and Professor Tim Smythe, both marine scientists, found that this limits the depth that sunlight can reach and the implications are that this could impact marine plants, animals, and fish forcing animals and fish to come closer to the surface for food and limit the depth at which marine plants can grow. Reasons for this were algal blooms, shifts in the sea surface temperatures, and artificial light. Source: *Oceanographic Magazine* at [https://oceanographicmagazine.com/news/a-darkening-ocean-could-](https://oceanographicmagazine.com/news/a-darkening-ocean-could-have-a-profound-impact-on-marine-life/)

[have-a-profound-impact-on-marine-life/](https://oceanographicmagazine.com/news/a-darkening-ocean-could-have-a-profound-impact-on-marine-life/) .

## ARTICLES - Preview

### AFRICATOWN

In 1860 the famous slave ship Clotilda illegally brought 110 African slaves to Mobile, Alabama. A group of 32 Africans on that voyage were kept on a local plantation owned by Timothy Meaher, a shipbuilder and planter who had financed the voyage of the Clotilda. After the Civil War the group saved money to purchase the land from Meaher and formed a community of people from the same linguistic area in Africa and called it Africatown. Their descendants are still there today. See below

### FIRST PREHISTORIC TRAVOIS MARKS FOUND AT WHITE SANDS NATIONAL PARK IN NEW MEXICO

Researchers from Bournemouth University (UK) uncovered tracks up to 150 feet long made by a travois. They identified two types of travois from the tracks. This was how heavy loads were moved. Human footprints in the mud were found alongside the travois marks. See below.

### 78,000 -YEAR-OLD CAVE ARTIFACTS CHANGES ATTITUDES FOR EAST AFRICA

The first substantial cave record from coastal Kenya opened the archaeological record of this area for the first time. Cave habitation allowed them to survive when drought hit other areas of the coastal forest. These hunters were using both the forest and the ocean for their subsistence needs. The shell beads found are the oldest from Kenya. See below.

## ARTICLES

### AFRICATOWN

From Wikipedia at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africatown>



Africatown, also known as AfricaTown USA and Plateau, is a historic community located three miles (5 km) north of downtown Mobile, Alabama. It was formed by a group of 32 West Africans, who in 1860 were bought and transported against their will in the last known illegal shipment of slaves to the United States. The Atlantic slave trade had been banned since 1808, but 110 slaves held by the Kingdom of Dahomey were smuggled into Mobile on the Clotilda, which was burned and scuttled to try to conceal its illicit cargo. More than 30 of these people, believed to be ethnic Yoruba, Ewe, and Fon, founded and

created their own community in what became Africatown.[2] They retained their West African customs and language into the 1950s, while their children and some elders also learned English. Cudjo Kazoola Lewis, a founder of Africatown, lived until 1935 and was long thought to be the last survivor of the slaves from the Clotilda living in Africatown.[3]

In 2019, scholar Hannah Durkin from Newcastle University documented Redoshi, a West African woman who was believed at the time to be the last survivor of slaves from the Clotilda. Also known as Sally Smith, she lived to 1937. She had been sold to a planter who lived in Dallas County, Alabama. Redoshi and her family continued to live there after emancipation, working on the same plantation.[4][5] Durkin later published research indicating that another slave, Matilda McCrear, in fact outlived Smith, dying in 1940.[6][7]

The population of Africatown has declined markedly from a peak population of 12,000 in the 20th century, when paper mills operated there. In the early 21st century, the community has about 2,000 residents. It is estimated 100 of them are descendants of the people from the Clotilda. Other descendants live across the country. In 2009, the neighborhood was designated as a site on Mobile's African American Heritage Trail. The Africatown Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012. Its related Old Plateau Cemetery, also known as Africatown Graveyard, was founded in 1876. It has been given a large historical plaque telling its history.

### *History*

Although the Atlantic slave trade had been prohibited by the United States by the 1807 Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, many smugglers continued to deliver slaves while evading federal authorities. In 1860, a group of wealthy slaveholders in Mobile, Alabama decided to make a friendly bet between themselves and a group of men from New England that they could sneak a shipment of slaves into the country without being captured by federal agents.[8] Timothy Meaher, a shipbuilder and landowner; his brother Byrnes (also spelled Burns) Meaher; John Dabey; and others invested money to hire a crew and captain for one of Meaher's ships to go to Africa and buy Africans enslaved by the chiefs of Dahomey.

They used Timothy Meaher's ship Clotilda, which had been designed for the lumber trade. It was commanded by Captain William Foster. While the ship was in port at Whydah in the Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day port of Ouidah in Benin), additional work was done to accommodate and conceal the transport of enslaved people. Foster bought the slaves and loaded them. The ship sailed in May 1860 from Dahomey for its final destination, Mobile, with 110 persons held as slaves. Foster had paid for 125 slaves, but as he was preparing for departure, he saw steamers offshore and rapidly departed to evade them. The captives were said to be mostly of the "Tarkbar" tribe, but research in the 21st century suggests that they were Takpa people, a band of Yoruba or Nupe people from the interior of present-day Nigeria.[9] They had been taken captive by forces of the King of Dahomey. He sold them into slavery at the market of Whydah. The captured people were sold for \$100 each to Foster, captain of the Clotilda.[3][10] In early July 1860, the Clotilda entered Mobile Bay and approached the port of Mobile. Trying to evade discovery, Foster had the ship towed at night upriver beyond the port. He loaded the slaves onto a steam riverboat and sent them ashore; he set fire to the Clotilda and scuttled it to hide the evidence of its smuggling slaves. The Africans were mostly distributed as slaves among the parties who had invested in the venture. Before being taken from Mobile, they were on their own in terms of surviving. They built shelters out of whatever they could find growing in the Alabama lowlands, and adapted their hunting to the rich game.

Some slaves were sold to areas more distant from Mobile. Among them were Redoshi, a woman from the Clotilda, and a man who became her husband, who were both sold to Washington Smith of Dallas County, Alabama. He had a plantation in the upcountry of the state, and later founded the Bank of Selma. Redoshi was known as Sally Smith as a slave. She married and the couple had a daughter. The family continued to work at the Smith plantation after emancipation. While Redoshi Smith was interviewed by Zora Neale Hurston and known by others, later in her life and after her death, she was forgotten. In 2019, researcher Hannah Durkin published new information about her: she documented that Redoshi Smith lived until 1937, making her apparently the last survivor of the slaves from the Clotilda.[4][5]

### *US v. Byrnes Meaher, Timothy Meaher and John Dabey*

Federal authorities prosecuted Meaher and his partners, including Foster. Lacking the ship and related evidence, such as its manifest, the 1861 federal court case of *US v. Byrnes Meaher, Timothy Meaher and John Dabey* did not find sufficient grounds to convict Meaher. The case was dismissed. Historians believe the start of the American Civil War contributed to the federal government's dropping the case.[3][10]

### *Post-Civil War to World War II*

Meaher initially used 32 of the enslaved Africans as workers on his plantation. After the Civil War (1861–1865) they were emancipated, but they continued to work Meaher's property in the delta north of Mobile on the west side of the river. The former slaves founded a community known as Africatown, bounded on three sides by water: a bayou, Three Mile Creek (formerly Chickasabogag Creek),[11] and the Mobile River. Among the founders of Africatown was a man named Cudjoe Kazoola Lewis (his Yoruba name was Kazoola or Kossola). He was said to be the oldest slave on the Clotilda and a chief. Accounts also refer to Charlie Poteet as a chief. Their medicine man was named Jabez, or Jaba. Charles Lewis (Oluale was his Yoruba name) and his future wife Maggie were also among the Africans on the Clotilda. Cudjoe Lewis lived until 1935 and until 2019 was thought to be the last survivor of the original group. He was a spokesman for the community and was interviewed by early 20th-century writers Emma Langdon Roche and Zora Neale Hurston, among others, who both relied on his accounts for the history of the capture, voyage and community.[3][10]

In the post-Civil War and emancipation period, the people in Africatown were joined by people from the same ethnic groups who were living in the Mobile area. They gathered as a community to live independently and evade supervision by whites. The community had two major sections: the first and larger one, of about 50 acres, and a second section of about 7 acres, located about two miles west.[12] The latter area was called Lewis Quarters after founder Charlie Oluale Lewis[12] and his wife Maggie. Cudjo Lewis's son Joe (Joseph) learned to read and write at the church which the settlers founded in Africatown.[13] He helped preserve the story of his father and the Clotilda, as did the families and later community schools, through oral histories. The women raised and sold crops, and the men worked in mills for \$1 a day, saving money to purchase the land from Meaher. When possible, they avoided white people. They established the African Church, later known as the Old Landmark Church. In 1876, they opened the Old Plateau Cemetery, also known as the Africatown Graveyard. In the early 20th century, they replaced the old church with the brick Union Missionary Baptist Church, which is still in use. The community started its first public school in 1880; it is known as the Mobile County Technical School.

Cudjoe Lewis helped his fellow Africans to adapt to their new country, although they had been badly treated by whites. For decades, he served as a spokesman for the people of Africatown. He was visited by American writers Emma Langdon Roche and Zora Neale Hurston, and educator Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute. Roche published a book in 1914 about American slavery and the Africatown community. In 1927, Hurston interviewed Cudjo Lewis for the *Journal of Negro History*. Although she never published the article, she made a short film about him. She returned later and frequently visited Lewis over a period of three months. She wrote a book about this experience and Lewis's life but was unable to get it published. Her book was posthumously published as *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"*, in an annotated edition in May 2018.

During interviews, Lewis would tell about the civil wars in West Africa, in which members of the losing side were sold into slavery to Africans and Europeans. His were Takpa people, who had lived in a village in the interior. Cudjo related how he and others from his village had been captured by warriors from neighboring Dahomey, taken to Ouidah and imprisoned within a large slave compound. They were sold by the King of Dahomey to Foster and transported to the U.S. on the Clotilda.[14] After the Civil War and emancipation, the people asked the U.S. government to repatriate them to Africa, but they were refused. The community developed along the spine of Telegraph Road in the early 20th century, becoming known both as Plateau, for its

high ground, and Magazine. Those areas became part of the cities of Mobile and Prichard, respectively. Considerable company housing was built in Prichard for workers at the shipyards and paper mills.

### *Post-World War II changes*

Up until World War II, Africatown survived as a distinct community, but later it was absorbed as a neighborhood of Mobile. It was also known as Plateau. The Cudjo Lewis Memorial Statue was placed in front of the Union Missionary Baptist Church in 1959, in recognition of his leadership in the community.[3] In 1977 the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, in cooperation with the Amoco Foundation, gave a bronze plaque to the City of Mobile to commemorate the life of Lewis. It was installed in Bienville Square downtown.[11] Africatown expanded as newcomers arrived to work in the paper mills of International Paper (IP) and Scott Paper. In this period, the population reached a peak of 12,000. But it declined later in the 20th century, following the closing of the major industries.

In 1997, descendants and friends founded the AfricaTown Mobilization Project to campaign for the community to be designated as an historic district and to promote its redevelopment.[10] The Africatown Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places on December 4, 2012.[1] In 2010, Neil Norman of the College of William and Mary conducted an archeological excavation and preservation project in Africatown. It was funded by local and state agencies. He excavated three homesites of former enslaved people trafficked on the Clotilda: Peter Lee, Cudjo Kazoola Lewis, and Charlie Lewis. They identified some artifacts that may have been brought from Africa.[15] In 2012, there was clean-up work in the newly designated historic district, and the cemetery was cleaned and restored. Also, a large historical marker has been installed outside the cemetery that explains its history and significance.[16]

About 2,000 people live there in 2018, including 100 known descendants of survivors of Clotilda.[13] Among the descendants of Charles Lewis and his wife Maggie, who was also born in Africa, is a great-great-great grandson Ahmir Khalib Thompson, the 21st-century drummer and music producer known as Questlove. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he is descended from their son Joseph and his wife.[17]

### *Africatown Historic District*

Most of the community now lies within Mobile's city limits. Its people passed down the story of its founders and how they were brought to the United States, preserving their history through families, the church, and schools. Part of the community's land was appropriated by the government for the development of the western approach of the Cochrane-Africatown USA Bridge, completed in 1992. In 1997, descendants and friends formed the Africatown Community Mobilization Project to seek recognition of an Africatown Historic District and encourage the restoration and development of the town site.[3] In 2000 it submitted documentation as a Local Legacy Project to the Library of Congress, through Representative Sonny Callahan from Alabama's 1st congressional district. "Materials include[d] 16 pages of text, 11 color photographs, a map of the AfricaTown district, newspaper articles, information on the AfricaTown Mobilization Project, and a videotape, "AfricaTown, USA," made by a local news station." [10] Defined as roughly bounded by Jakes Lane, Paper Mill and Warren roads, and Chin and Railroad streets,[1] the historic district was designated in 2009 as a site on Mobile's African American Heritage Trail.[18] The Africatown Historic District was subsequently affirmed as significant by the state and the National Park Service, and it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 4, 2012.[1]

### *2017 pollution lawsuit*

Given its location along waterways, this area was developed for mills and other industrial uses, especially in the early 20th century. A paper plant was built in 1928 and operated for decades on land first owned by A. Meaher Jr. on the edge of Africatown. Residents say they have a serious industrial pollution and public health problem, which has caused a high rate of cancer since the late 20th century. In 2017, a group of about 1,200 residents launched a lawsuit against International Paper (IP), as this company had owned the now-shuttered paper plant.

The environmental group claim that IP's improper handling of waste through the decades contaminated the land and water, and the company did not clean up the site as required after closing the plant.[19]

#### *Discovery of the wreck of the Clotilda*

In January 2018, reporter Ben Raines found the charred remains of a ship that he thought might prove to be the Clotilda.[20][21][22] On March 5, 2018, Raines announced that the wreck he had discovered was likely not the Clotilda as the wreckage appeared to be "simply too big, with a significant portion hidden beneath mud and deep water".[23] A few weeks later, Ben Raines and a team from the University of Southern Mississippi returned to the river and performed the first ever modern survey of the 12 Mile Island section of the Mobile River. One week later, Raines and Monty Graham, head of Marine Sciences at the University of Southern Mississippi, explored several of the 11 wrecks identified in the survey, along with Joe Turner and a team from Underwater Works Dive Shop. On April 13, the team pulled up the first piece of Clotilda to see the light of day in 160 years. The coordinates and survey data were shared with the Alabama Historical Commission, which hired Search Inc., to verify the find. The discovery was kept secret for a year, until the verification process was complete. On May 22, 2019, the Alabama Historical Commission announced that the wreckage of the Clotilda had been found in the Mobile River near Africatown.[20][24][25]

#### *Representation in other media*

In 2020, Alabama author Beth Duke featured Africatown in her novel *Tapestry*, which won a Southern Fiction medal from Publishers Weekly. "Tapestry incorporates important African-American history everyone should learn and remember. I urge people to read this book and visit the places it introduces, testaments to the strength and resilience of our ancestors," said Frazine Taylor, President of the Elmore County Association of Black Heritage, Chair of the Black Heritage Council of the Alabama Historical Commission and President of the Alabama Historical Association

- A local Mobile TV news program produced a program, "AfricaTown, USA", about the settlement and its history.[10]
- In Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *Finding Your Roots*, Season 4, Episode 9: "Southern Roots", December 12, 2017, he showed census data for Mobile and Captain William Foster's journal from the Clotilda, as part of explaining the family history of Questlove, a drummer and producer, head of The Roots. His 3× great-grandparents Charles Lewis (b. c. 1820) and his wife Maggie (b. 1830), listed in the 1880 census as born in Africa, were among the captives brought from West Africa on the slave ship Clotilda. Gates also discussed an article from *The Tarboro Southerner*, which reported on July 14, 1860, that 110 Africans had arrived in Mobile on Clotilda. A *Pittsburgh Post* article of April 15, 1894, recounted the "wager" that Captain Timothy Meaher made in 1859 – that he could smuggle in "a cargo" within two years, which he accomplished in 1860.[26][27][28]
- Natalie S. Robertson's book *The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Making of AfricaTown, U.S.A.: Spirit of Our Ancestors* is the only comprehensive work that identifies the West African geographical and cultural origins of the Clotilda Africans. Robertson's book, which began as her doctoral dissertation entitled "The African Ancestry Of The Founders Of AfricaTown, Alabama" (published in 1996), is based upon 15 years of transatlantic research that was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Stanley-UI Foundation, PASALA (Project for the Study of Art and Life in Africa), the CIC-Mellon Award, and the UNCF-Mellon Award (through Spelman College).
- Zora Neale Hurston's book *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"*, edited and with an introduction by Deborah G. Plant, New York: Amistad Press (HarperCollins), was published May 2018.[29]
- On The Media produced a podcast episode where they interviewed residents of Africatown, descendants of captives of the slave ship Clotilda, and other historians.[30]
- The *Extinction Tapes*, a 2019 documentary made for BBC Radio 4, argued that the discovery of the wreck of the Clotilda was only possible due to the 2006 extinction by pollution of the Alabama pigtoe river mussel (*Pleurobema johannis*), whose filter-feeding would have otherwise ensured the wreck remained buried in



silt. The program's presenter, Rob Newman, also contended that the 20th century decline of the mussel should have been treated as a warning for the looming health crisis of Africatown's human population, due to filter-feeding species' status as barometers of water cleanliness.[31]

- Descendant, a 2022 Netflix documentary, tells the story of activists in Africatown, a Black community in Alabama, as they fight to reclaim their history.[32]

*Note: For notes in brackets [ ], please go to website above.*

## **ARCHAEOLOGY BREAKTHROUGH ENDS DECADES OF MYSTERY AS HUGE INSIGHT INTO PREHISTORIC LIFE UNCOVERED**

by: George Bunn

February 28, 2025

From GB News at <https://www.gbnews.com/science/archaeology-breakthrough-ends-decades-mystery-huge-insight-prehistoric-life-uncovered>



Gabriel Ugueto/Bournemouth University

Archaeologists have discovered the earliest known evidence of prehistoric handcarts at White Sands National Park in New Mexico, USA, dating back an astonishing 22,000 years. The remarkable find consists of long linear impressions extending up to 150 feet alongside human footprints preserved in ancient dried mud. Researchers from Bournemouth University believe these track marks were created by primitive wooden transportation devices used long before the invention of the wheel. This breakthrough finally provides tangible evidence of how our earliest ancestors transported heavy loads during their migrations across the prehistoric landscape. The drag marks represent a type of primitive vehicle known as a travois, essentially "a

wheelbarrow without the wheel," according to Matthew Bennett from Bournemouth University. He added: "We know that our earliest ancestors must have used some form of transport to carry their possessions as they migrated around the world, but evidence in the form of wooden vehicles has rotted away."

These impressions provide the first concrete evidence of how prehistoric humans moved heavy and bulky loads before wheeled vehicles existed. The marks appear in multiple locations throughout the park, suggesting this transportation method was widespread rather than limited to "just one inventive family." Researchers identified two distinct types of travois designs from the ancient tracks. Some drag marks consist of a single line, likely made by two wooden pieces joined in a triangle shape with one ground contact point. Others show two parallel lines, probably created by an X-shaped design with two handles and two ground contact points, offering greater stability. "These drag-marks give us the first indication of how they moved heavy and bulky loads around before wheeled vehicles existed," said Bennett.

The drag marks often intersect with the footprints of the person presumed to be pulling the primitive vehicle. In some cases, parallel tracks of children's footprints have been discovered alongside the travois marks, indicating families walking together. Unlike travois used elsewhere in the world, there is no evidence that the White Sands people used animals to pull these devices.

The dating of these footprints and drag marks challenges conventional theories about human migration to the Americas. Bennett said: "The peopling of the Americas debate is a very controversial one, but we're fairly confident about the dates." Traditional theories suggested humans only entered the Americas around 15,000 years ago when ice sheets began retreating. "This discovery represents the oldest evidence of travois use in the world," Bennett emphasised. The findings suggest humans may have reached the Americas as early as 33,000 years ago, much earlier than previously thought. Bennett believes similar prehistoric tracks likely exist elsewhere but haven't been recognised for what they are.

## **DISCOVERY OF 78,000-YEAR-OLD ARTIFACTS IN EAST AFRICA CHANGES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE STONE AGE**

By Kara Goldfarb

Published February 26, 2025

From: *All That's Interesting* at <https://allthatsinteresting.com/artifacts-cave-africa>



Mohammad Shoaee

An international, interdisciplinary group of researchers have uncovered human innovations from at least 67,000 years ago. The artifacts were found in a cave located in a coastal area of Africa that, up until now, there was very little information on. The research, published in the journal *Nature Communications* gives us new information about human history and evolution. Nicole Boivin, from the Department of Archaeology at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Germany and an author of the study, spoke with *All That's Interesting* about the discoveries. She described the coastal East African cave, called Panga ya Saidi, as, “an enormous, beautiful, well-preserved

complex. The cave roofs had fallen in many thousands of years ago so the caves were open to the sky and dripping with vines.”

In human history, a cultural and technological transition happened between the Middle Stone Age and the Later Stone Age, which many archaeologists believe was due to a major revolution or migration. But ideas on how and why this happened come primarily from research on South Africa and the Rift Valley. That's because, until now, human history in coastal East Africa has been largely unexplored. This gap in research leaves us with gaps in information on our history.

Boivin was initially following up on an old report about artifacts in a smaller cave in 2009 when she and her colleagues discovered the huge Panga ya Saidi cave right next door. “We were with colleagues from the National Museum of Kenya's Coastal Forest Conservation Unit and they got really excited about the extraordinary biodiversity at the site, which had rare flowers and plants,” she said. “But the most spectacular finding for us was huge pieces of Iron Age ceramics sitting right on the surface. The cave system seemed remarkably undisturbed since Iron Age people had occupied it hundreds of years before.” The next season she returned with a team to investigate further, and that's when they “started to make the big discoveries we report in the paper.”

So what exactly were these discoveries? Tools, arrowheads, blades, ostrich eggshell beads, exotic manuports, and around 30,000 knapped Stone Age artifacts. “The earliest bead is from the species *Conus*,” Boivin told us. “The species is usually associated with tropical and subtropical seas, so it shows that early hunter-gatherers were using the coast.” The bead, which dates back to around 63,000 years ago, is also the oldest bead recovered from Kenya. The researchers believe these artifacts show that humans lived long-term in the cave environments when things like drought made other parts of Africa inhospitable.

“The coastal forest was a key locale for early modern humans in the region. Once they were established there, they seem to have occupied the region for a long time,” explained Boivin. “They're subsisting in coastal tropical forests.” “Occupation in a tropical forest-grassland environment adds to our knowledge that our species lived in a variety of habitats in Africa,” said Group Leader of the Stable Isotopes Lab. Dr. Patrick Roberts. This could indicate the shift during the Stone Age had to do with human's ability to adapt more than a sudden change. That, “flexibility may be the hallmark of our species.”

These major findings should encourage other archeologists to explore previously overlooked regions, including places with higher altitude, cold settings, and dry places. “Archaeologists are in some ways low risk – we have to be if we want funding – so we go to places that we know will yield results,” said Boivin. “But this means we've developed a really limited understanding of the kinds of environments early *Homo sapiens* lived in.”

## **SWFAS OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2026**

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***Find us on Facebook at Southwest Florida Archaeological Society!***

***Check out our website at <http://swflarchaeology.org/>***

## **SWFAS AND FAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS**

We encourage those interested in Florida archaeology to become members of The Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) and The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS). Annual dues are due in January and membership applications to both organizations are attached. Membership in the FAS provides you with four annual volumes of *The Florida Anthropologist* and occasional newsletters on anthropological events in Florida in addition to the annual statewide meeting. More information on FAS can be found online at: [www.fasweb.org](http://www.fasweb.org). Membership in SWFAS offers you a local series of talks on archaeological and anthropological subjects that you can attend. The SWFAS monthly newsletter keeps you up to date on local events as well as other important archaeological topics. We urge you to support both with your membership. All of the SWFAS Lecture Series are open to the public at no charge.



# JOIN US!

## The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society

<http://swflarchaeology.org/>

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS) was founded in 1980 as a not-for profit corporation to provide a meeting place for people interested in the area's past.

Our goals are to:

- Learn more of the area's history
- Create a place for sharing of this information
- Advocate for preservation of cultural resources

Its members include professional and amateur archaeologists and interested members of the general public. Members come from all walks of life and age groups. They share a lively curiosity, a respect for the people who preceded them here, and a feeling of responsibility for the conservation of the places and objects they left behind.

The Society holds monthly meetings between October and April, attracting speakers who are in the forefront of archaeological and historical research. Occasionally members join in trips to historical and archaeological sites.

A monthly newsletter, Facebook page, and website keep members abreast of our events and happenings.

The organization is a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society, a statewide organization that publishes quarterly newsletters and a journal, *The Florida Anthropologist*, and holds an annual conference.

**I want to help The Southwest Florida Archaeology Society preserve and interpret Florida's heritage!**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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Check One:

Individual (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining Individual (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_

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Donation to Support SWFAS Speakers and Programs \_\_\_\_\_

Skills, training, interests: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to abide by the rules and bylaws of the Southwest Archaeological Society. I further release from any and all liability due to accident and injury to myself, dependents and any property owners cooperating with the society.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check out to SWFAS and mail to:

Charlie Strader  
SWFAS Treasurer  
27655 Kent Road  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135

REV. 12052017

# FAS Membership Categories

Membership in the Society is open to all interested individuals who are willing to abide by the Florida Anthropological Society Statement of Ethical Responsibilities, which can be found on our website [fasweb.org](http://fasweb.org). *Membership is for one year.* SELECT LEVEL BELOW.

<input type="checkbox"/> Student*	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional	\$50
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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**Send Membership Form and Dues Payment to:**

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*You can join online or pay Membership dues renewals via PayPal on our website [fasweb.org](http://fasweb.org).*

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