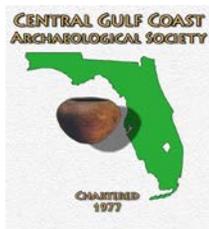


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# Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society

A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

[www.cgcas.org](http://www.cgcas.org)



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

October 2009



Editor: David Burns

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## October Meeting

### Thursday October 15th

at

**Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center  
1800 Weedon Dr. NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33702**

**7 – 8 PM.**

Recent Exploration on the 27-meter Ledge at Little Salt Spring



*Steve Koski, Site Manager, Little Salt Spring Research Station*

In July of 2009, two teams of archaeologists and science divers from the University of Miami and Florida Aquarium conducted a five-week National Geographic funded project on the 27-meter ledge at Little Salt Spring. The project was conducted to evaluate late Pleistocene deposits in two areas of the ledge where the bones of extinct animals were previously found and where an associated 12,000- year old wood artifact was recovered wedged between the plastron and carapace of an extinct giant tortoise. The results of this recent investigation will be presented and discussed.

This program is co-sponsored by CGCAS and the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center and is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is requested. Call 727-453-6500 to register and for further information.

## Field Trip!



To complement our October meeting presentation, CGCAS will be taking a field trip to visit Little Salt Spring on Saturday October 24, 2009.

Little Salt Spring ranks as one of the major archaeological sites in the western hemisphere. Even though only 5 percent of the spring has been explored, divers have found artifacts dating back 12,000 years ago.

Steve Koski is the site archaeologist and will be our fieldtrip guide. Archaeologists have discovered a wide range of preserved organic materials at the site, including wooden stakes, greenstone pendants, deer remains and bone tools, fossils of extinct prehistoric creatures, and a 7,000 year-old skull with brain tissue who's mitochondrial DNA revealed a genetic lineage not previously identified in the Americas. Because there is no dissolved oxygen in the water, bacteria cannot grow and decompose wood and the other organic materials, offering unique artifact preservation.

We will meet at 8:15 a.m. on the east side of the Publix parking lot, 5295 34th St. South in St. Petersburg and leave by 8:30 a.m., either by carpool or caravan. We will then regroup at Little Salt Springs in North Port. We plan to all meet for lunch after the tour.

**DIRECTIONS:** from St. Petersburg take I-75 south to exit 182 (so. of Venice), turn right onto Sumter Blvd for about 3 miles, turn right on W. Price for 2 mi., go left at Hyder Terrace and follow the dirt road to the site. For more information on Little Salt Spring, see link below: <http://experiencearchaeology.org/2009/07/new-discoveries-at-little-salt-spring-in-sarasota-co/>

## CGCAS Lecture Series for 2009-2010

We have another interesting line up of speakers for the coming year. All these presentations will be at the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. The dates are the second Thursday of the month with the lectures beginning at 7 pm. They are free and open to the public. Further information will be presented in future newsletters regarding each month's presentation.

**November 19, 2009** – *Bill Burger, M.A.*, Native Peoples of the Tampa Bay Area

**December 17, 2009** – *Asa Randall, M.A.*, Rethinking the Significance and Long-Term Histories of Archaic Shell Mounds along the Middle St. Johns River

**January 21, 2010** – *David Steadman, Ph.D.*, Using Prehistoric Archaeology to Study Modern Biodiversity

**February 18, 2010** – *Bob Carr, M.A.*, Bahamian and Florida Cultural Interactions in Prehistory through the Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century

**March 18, 2010** – *Bill Marquardt, Ph.D.*, Shell Mounds in the Southeastern U.S.: Middens, Monuments, Temple Mounds, Rings, or Works?

**April 15, 2010** – *Alison Elgart, Ph.D.*, Life and Death in Southeastern Florida during the Late Archaic

## Bayshore Homes Up-date

We have washed the material from Column Sample 4 and will begin sorting this material soon. Material from the excavation also needs to be washed and sorted. We will be doing this again at the Weedon Island Center on Saturday mornings starting at 10 AM. Watch your emails for updates. If you have not been a part of this before, you are invited to join us. It's fun and interesting too!

## Mac Perry Presentation

On Saturday November 28<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM Mac Perry will give a talk entitled "Life and Lunch in a 12<sup>th</sup> Century Florida Indian Village." At the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. Mac has done extensive research on the foods eaten by Florida's native people. Subjects he will discuss include: foods introduced from the Old World; Florida plant foods available in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century; daily life in a 12<sup>th</sup>-century Manasota Culture Village on Tampa Bay; the role of the village Gatherer; plant foods used for thickening and sweetening, spices, dyes, teas, breads, salt, oil, smoking; how toxins were removed; and more. Guests will be offered a small sample of typical 12<sup>th</sup>- century foods.

## CGCAS Helps Maximo Beach Park



On Saturday September 19, and Saturday September 26, the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) under the direction of Jeff Moates, profiled a long section of exposed midden at Maximo Beach Park in St. Petersburg. Several members of CGCAS helped with this project by drawing the profile and screening the dirt removed by the city while removing vegetation along the shoreline. Lori Collins and Travis Doering from USF did a 3-D laser scan of the midden profile. CGCAS members who participated included Linda Allred, Mary Askew, Bob Austin, Dave Burns, James Coffey, Marcie Connors, Jen Doyle, Angela Hammett, Allison Harvey, Cindy Martin, and Tina Miller.

## 2009 SEAC Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference will be held in Mobile, Alabama from November 4-7, 2009. Several CGCAS members will be presenting papers at the meeting. If you have never gone to a SEAC meeting you are missing a great opportunity to learn about archaeological projects throughout the southeast as well as in Florida. Further information is available at <http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org/>

## Christmas Party 2009

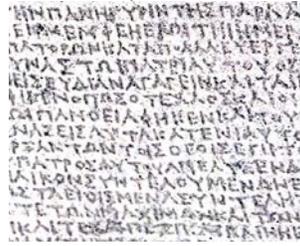
We have chosen Sunday, December 13, 2009 as the date for this year's Christmas Party. However, we have not decided where it will be held. If you have a suggestion for a venue, please let us know.

## DIGITAL ARCHAEOLOGY: Rosetta Stoned

By Jack Harvey



Hieroglyphs



Greek

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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 stelae that had only a few unreadable 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 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.

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? *Send suggestions for topics to: jakharve@earthlink.net*

## 2010 FAS Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting in 2010 will be hosted by the Southwest Florida Archeological Society (SWFAS) in Ft. Myers from May 7-9, 2010. Further information on this meeting will be presented in future newsletters as well as on the FAS website [www.fasweb.org](http://www.fasweb.org)

## FAS Membership

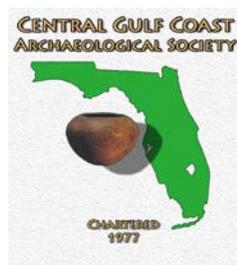
The Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) is open to persons interested in anthropology, archaeology, preservation of cultural resources and community education. Membership is made up of both professional and avocational archaeologists. Benefits of membership include the journal *The Florida Anthropologist*, the *FAS Newsletter* and participation in the annual meeting in May. More information and membership forms can be found on the web site [www.fasweb.org](http://www.fasweb.org) or by writing to the Membership Secretary at P.O. Box 13191, Pensacola, FL 32591. Dues are: Student - \$15; Regular and Institutional - \$30; Family - \$35; Sustaining - \$100; Patron - \$500; Benefactor - \$2500 or more.

### CGCAS Officers/Directors

President	Bob Austin	P.O. Box 2818, Riverview, FL 33568	(813)677-2280
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Editorial Assistants	Dorrine Burns and Bob Austin		

## The Society

Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society (CGCAS) is an association of amateur and professional archaeologists and concerned citizens dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of Florida's great cultural heritage. CGCAS is a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) and is a state chartered non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.



### **Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society**

P.O. Box 1563,  
Pinellas Park, FL 33780-1563

## Membership

Membership is open to anyone with a sincere interest in the cultural past of Florida and who is dedicated to the understanding and preservation of that heritage

Amateurs, professionals and concerned citizens are welcomed as members. Membership is yearly and all dues are payable in January. Contact Karin Lovik, 1225 Jeffords St., Apt 225A, Clearwater, FL.

#### Dues

Regular	\$20.00
Student	10.00
Family	25.00
Life	150.00

