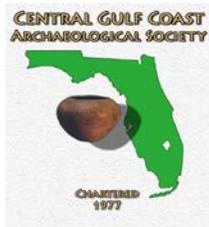

Central Gulf Coast Archaeological Society

A Chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society

www.cgcas.org



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 2008



Editor: David Burns

December Meeting

Thursday December 18th

at

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

7 – 8 PM.

Using Portable XRF for Elemental Analysis of Archaeological Materials



Robert H. Tykot, Ph.D.

This month's presentation features Robert H. Tykot, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, University of South Florida. Using a new, portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometer, analyses have been done on large collections of different archaeological materials to study technology and trade patterns. This presentation discusses the many advantages and the few disadvantages of this kind of analysis. Study examples include metal artifacts at the Tampa and Orlando Art Museums, stone tools from Florida and Italy, ceramics from Florida and Georgia, and human remains. This program is co-sponsored by the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center and is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is requested. For further information or to register, call (727) 453-6500.

Christmas Party 2008

The CGCAS Christmas Party will be held at the home of Tom and Marcie Connors on Sunday December 14th, from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 p.m. A brief board meeting will take place at 12:00 noon. Again this year, it will be a Dog Party. Bring an unwanted item from home. If we wrap or bag the item, we can make this like a Chinese gift exchange.

The party will be potluck, and CGCAS will supply the drinks/spirits.

The Connors' live at 19327 Wind Dancer St. in Lutz. If you get lost or need directions, their phone number is (813) 920-4198 or check with them at tjconnors@verizon.net.

Tis the Season for Dues Payment

Yes, along with the Christmas holiday, it's also time to give that gift of a CGCAS membership to yourself and someone else who also loves archaeology and Florida history. For a small tax-deductible membership amount, you can enjoy receiving the CGCAS newsletter (full of information!) every month, have official membership in the CGCAS, participate in field and lab work, and take pride in knowing you are helping others learn about Florida history with monthly meetings that include lectures on Florida archaeology and history. All memberships to CGCAS run from January to January. To join or renew your membership for the 2009 year, go to www.cgcas.org and follow the instructions at PayPal or mail your completed form and membership dues to our new post office box address: Membership Chair, P.O. Box 1563, Pinellas Park, FL 33780-1563. Membership rates can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Hermann Trappman's Artwork on Display

An exhibit, "Obscured by Time: Discovering Florida's Gulf Coast Ancient People", featuring paintings and pencil drawings by Hermann Trappman a well-known artist from Gulfport, opens December 7, 2008 at the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. Trappman has extensively studied forensic sculpture to understand the physical nature of his subjects and he works with archaeologists to create paintings of native prehistoric existence. His artwork reflects the lives of Florida's native people and shows the amount of research done prior to creating them. Make sure you stop by and see his work. The exhibit will be on display during normal Center hours through February 1, 2009.

November Meeting Presentation

On Thursday November 20th, James Pepe presented an interesting talk entitled "Lakeside Ranch: A Glimpse at Early Settlement along Lake Okeechobee", that focused on ongoing work at Lakeside Ranch, a CERP subcomponent located in Martin County along the eastern edge of Lake Okeechobee. Analysis conducted to date indicates use of this area dating to the late Archaic period, perhaps as early as

4,000 years ago. Jim's talk provided an interesting glimpse into the early history of Lake Okeechobee and the prehistoric occupation of central southern Florida.

CGCAS Lecture Series 2008-2009

Our lecture series for 2008-2009 includes a wide variety of topics and geographic areas: prehistoric, historic, and underwater archaeology conducted in Florida, the Caribbean, and the Yucatan. All the presentations are held at the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center on the third Thursday of every month from September through April. The lectures begin at 7 pm and are free and open to the public. Further information will be presented in future newsletters regarding each month's presentation.

December 18, 2008 – *Robert Tykot*, Ph.D. – Using Portable XRF for Elemental Analysis of Stone, Metal, Ceramic, Bone, Soil & Other Archaeological Materials

January 15, 2009 – *Barbara Purdy*, Ph.D. – Pre-Clovis: True or False? The View from a Site in Marion County, Florida.

February 19, 2009 – *Michael Russo*, Ph.D. – Discovering C.B. Moore's Lost Mounds and Rings in North Florida

March 19, 2009 – *Uzi Baram*, Ph.D. – Looking for Angola: New Approaches & Evidence in the Search for an Early 19th Century Maroon Community on the Manatee River

April 16, 2009 – *Allan Meyers*, Ph.D. – Lost Hacienda: Reconstructing the Lives of Laborers on a Yucatan Plantation

Digital Archaeology: The New Tools

By Jack Harvey

Computers have been seen at the pyramids. No, I don't mean the encrusted bronze mechanical gadgets the ancients used to forecast solstices and perhaps navigate their galleys. I mean modern electronic machines with Intel Inside and Windows on the monitor. They are one of the new digital tools available to archaeologists now and, I think, are destined to become as vital as the shovel and sifting screen.

Computers certainly won't replace shovels and sifting screens; they are new tools bringing new capabilities. The capabilities enhance and greatly speed some analysis tasks but many still require human eyes and brains. Pottery sherd identification is one example where computers are (currently) useless.

Every professional archaeologist I know has begun to use computers in some way, at least for email. Certainly a large fraction of the SWFAS non-professional membership is now comfortable with email and perhaps a majority receives this Newsletter that way. But this isn't just an archaeology trend; all sciences are doing the same. Some think there may be a major revolution coming in how science is done, triggered by just email. More about that later.

While computers can't tell the difference between a Sanibel Incised rim sherd and a lightning whelk hammer (yet), they're great for keeping track of those we identify. All the human has to do is write down what it is and pertinent data about it, such as weight, size, color or hafting as needed to summarize what has been found. This is data and it is keyed into the computer, along with other relevant information such as provenience and storage location.

When keyed into a computer, the archaeological data from identification of artifacts or material becomes a *database*. One dictionary defines a database as: “a comprehensive collection of related data organized for convenient access, generally in a computer”. A critical word here is “organized”, and note the word “generally”, hinting that a computer isn’t always required. In fact we all have a large database in our homes that we use frequently without a computer. It’s the white pages phone directory. The conventional directory of residential phones is “organized” by last name, meaning they are sorted alphabetically. When you get to the Smiths, they are all sorted by the first name and middle initial. So this database can be easily searched by eye if you know the person’s name. Computer not required.

Ah, but suppose you only have a residential street address and want the name and phone of the family living there. The printed phone book by your telephone is nearly useless. However if that same phone number database is in a computer, the computer can find the name and phone number in an eye blink. Similarly, it can find all the people with first name Cleopatra.

In a Florida archaeological database, analogous *queries* (searches) might be made to find all hammers made of Fighting Conch. Although such queries are easily done, computer database query systems can answer much more general and comprehensive questions. We’ll talk about this later.

The new digital tools aren’t limited to computers with keyboard and mouse. The Global Positioning System (GPS) instantly solves a long standing puzzle of archaeological field work: Where am I? Simple pocket GPS units for about \$100 will locate you to within ten or twenty meters, sufficient for recording your find in the Florida Master Site File. Differential GPS equipment can be much more accurate. Even simple measurements such as weight have gone digital, speeding work and reducing error.

Email is just one of the tools the Internet has brought. The net has suddenly enabled instant access to vast literature libraries and unlike conventional libraries with their tediously maintained card catalogs, the on-line library of billions of documents is more easily searched using one of the great engines such as Yahoo!, Ask Jeeves or Google. The Florida Anthropological Society has recognized the importance of Internet access by putting much of its archeological literature on line. We’ll go into these impacts in depth at a future time.

As commonplace as digital cameras have become, they are also important new tools for archaeology. Combined with image processing software in computers, they enable detailed photos of very long contiguous stratigraphy profiles in narrow excavation trenches. Since a digital camera works by converting an image to numbers, it can also measure the color of potsherds.

A related tool is the digital imaging microscope, eliminating the need to peer into an eyepiece, one person at a time. Instead, the live image is displayed on a computer monitor, or projected onto a large screen for a classroom of students.

The revolutionary new digital tools aren’t entirely problem-free. One that’s already bitten SWFAS is technology

obsolescence. Early issues of this Newsletter were formatted for software that no longer works with newer computers. And for some, the digital file has been lost and only hardcopies exist. (Fortunately, we were able to find a conversion program that reformatted the early versions for access by current software systems, but where only hardcopy exists, tedious text scanning and proofreading will be required to restore those issues.)

Technical obsolescence of recording media (floppy disk, CD-ROM, DVD, Blu-Ray, etc.) is an industry-wide problem, however, and not unique to archeology. There are several industry efforts addressing the issue and goals of essentially unlimited lifespan for digital databases appear realistic.

Earlier, I suggested that computers may someday be able to identify decorated pottery sherds and that may happen. However, the hard question is when. Back in 1958, when it appeared that Soviet ICBM technology was well ahead of ours, we were desperately short of people to translate Russian engineering documents to English. Great efforts were made to get computers to do the job, to no avail. Now, 50 years later, language translation by computers is still very poor. Identifying people by images of their faces is coming along but still nowhere as good as our own eyes. But I think we can usefully describe what has to happen before a computer can tell Fort Drum Incised from Gordon Pass Incised.

Digital Archaeology is a very new topic in the broad field of computers, where I have more experience. I would like to hear what you think of this topic and ideas you may have about the possibilities. Send suggestions for topics to: jakharve@earthlink.net. Used with permission of the author.

In Print

The December issue of Smithsonian Magazine has an article by Abigail Tucker entitled *Sketching the Earliest Views of the New World*. It details the travels and the watercolors produced by John White after an expedition in 1585 to found a colony on Roanoke Island. They gave English people their first glimpse of the people and animals that the colonists encountered in America. Many of his pictures accompany the article.

FAS Membership

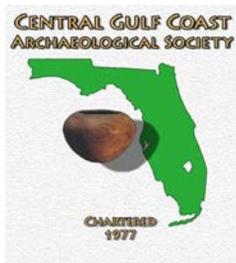
The Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) is open to persons interested in anthropology, archaeology, preservation of cultural resources and community education. Membership is made up of both professional and avocational archaeologists. Benefits of membership include the journal *The Florida Anthropologist*, 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 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.

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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

