



# NEWSLETTER OF THE LOUISIANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Fall 2021

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## Louisiana Archaeology Month 2021

### Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation

Archaeology of the Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation gives a better understanding of the daily lives of African-Americans in Ascension Parish. These artifacts help determine the kinds of food they ate, items they used, and even games they played in the 1800s.

#### Enslaved Women on Ashland Plantation Who Receive Clothes on July 2, 1854

Clara · Josephene · Louisa (Harry) · Polly Manish · Violet · Clarinda · Rachel Wilson · Diez · Beckey · Lucy Ann · Fanny Clark · Emly · Eliza Patterson · Betsy Stansbury · Eliza Arch · Sophy · Rachial · Addelle · Mary (Narcisee) · Tinsy · Nancy Patty · Madaline · Milly Randel · Argott · Milly Lupran · Lucy Spencer · Pelligee · Elizabeth Randle · Dinah · Mary Ann Johnson · Betsy (little) · Grace · Jane (Texas) · Lucy · Adaline · Kattiase · Amy · Anness · Ellin · Milly Carrol · Easter · Rachel Rolla · Jane (Ky) · Nancy Charles · Caroline French · Mary Moses · Henny · Charlotte · Lylla · Sylvia · Betsy Lem · Amanda Gorrard · Old Polly · Caroline (Cook) · Fine · Matilda (Texas) · Patsy · Hannah Cherry · Judy · Fanny (Little) · Watsy · Hannah (Texas) · Mary Long · Lucy (Texas) · Charlotte · Saul · Estline · Louisa Stansburg · Amanda Taylor · Dolly · Kissy · Sarah Jane · Kitty · Cely · Martha · Ann · Old Patty · Nancy Phil · Dinah · Mary Gill · Eliza Branch



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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Mark A. Rees

Louisiana Public Archaeology Lab

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Unexpectedly cool air swept across the prairies and cheniers of southwest Louisiana last night, leaving a radiant blue sky this morning. From the summit of Mound A overlooking Bayou Maçon at [Poverty Point World Heritage Site](#) to the natural levee along the lower reaches of Bayou Lafourche, *it's a perfect day for archaeology in Louisiana*. Communities in the delta and Florida parishes are still recovering from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ida a month ago. There's another major storm brewing faraway in the Atlantic, but the National Hurricane Center app in my phone assures me Sam is not threatening the U.S. or Gulf Coast. Thank you, Sam. With the cooler, drier weather, hopefully the worst of this year's hurricane season is over.

There's no better time to be outdoors, to take to the road, and to do archaeological fieldwork. This issue of the LAS *Newsletter* arrives at the start of 2021 Louisiana [Archaeology Month](#). As seen on the cover page, this year's Archaeology Month [poster](#) features material culture of African Americans at Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation in Ascension Parish. What better way to begin Archaeology Month than with fieldwork? The [Poverty Point](#) Station Archaeology Program is re-opening excavation units that may have exposed house floors in one of the earthen ridges. Volunteers can assist with excavation and screening through October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Louisiana State Archaeologist, Chip McGimsey, and long-time LAS member Jim Fogleman are also looking for volunteers through October 3<sup>rd</sup> to help investigate Early Woodland Tchefuncte and Middle Woodland Marksville (500 BCE – 400 CE) cultural features at the Mildred Jackson site (16AV155) in Avoyelles Parish. This issue of the *Newsletter* has information on [Archaeology Month](#) and how to get involved.

As evident in this issue of the *Newsletter*, archaeology in Louisiana is fascinating and diverse – and there's a lot of it going on, especially as cultural resources management (CRM). From a retrospective, personal account of CRM archaeology over the past five

decades, to recent and ongoing research at Louisiana's universities, this issue is packed with interesting articles, important announcements, and perhaps even a few surprises. There's a field school partnership between the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and Louisiana Public Archaeology Lab at UL Lafayette, and a report from UNO Anthropology on two summer projects in Austria. LAS members are also involved in a wide range of archaeological pursuits. The *Newsletter* is the ideal venue to share information and advance research.

Among the biggest news is the upcoming annual LAS meeting, scheduled for February 11-13, 2022 in Baton Rouge. Between hurricanes and seemingly recurrent pandemic surges, maybe we're resuming a more familiar routine. Information on meeting accommodations and paper submissions is provided in this issue, along with a tentative schedule. Check out the [LAS website](#) for details, registration, and updates.

Lastly, but never least, there's an update from the [Poverty Point](#) Station Archaeology Program. [News](#) is spreading of remarkable recent [findings](#), including some startling [discoveries](#) published in the latest issue of *Southeastern Archaeology* that may change what we think we know about that enigmatic, monumental place. Want to know more? Follow the links and read on.

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## CRM AND PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN LOUISIANA

*Editor's Note: the following is the first installment of a three-part series for the LAS Newsletter column, CRM AND PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN LOUISIANA.*

### **CRM Archaeology in Louisiana (and a Few Other Places): It's Been an Interesting Forty-Six Years**

Richard A. Weinstein  
Coastal Environments, Inc.

To paraphrase Lou Gehrig, I consider myself one of the luckiest archaeologists on the face of the earth. It was just two months before graduating with an M.A. degree in Anthropology from LSU in December of 1974 when I attended that year's Southeastern Archaeological Conference (SEAC) in Atlanta, Georgia. President Nixon had only a few years earlier issued Executive Order 11593 requiring all federal agencies, or anyone needing a federal permit, or anyone receiving federal money, to determine if any cultural resources (archaeological sites, standing structures, etc.) were eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and if they would be affected by whatever project was being planned, as a means to satisfy the requirements of Section 106 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

As such, I was approached at SEAC by three different archaeologists from three different cities to see if I'd be willing to join them in addressing the requirements of that executive order. One was Charles McNutt, a professor at Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis), who needed someone to aid in the excavations of Fort Pillow, a Civil War fort near Memphis that had been the scene of a massacre of black troops by Confederate forces. Another was Carl Kuttruff, archaeologist with the Tennessee Division of Archaeology in Nashville, who was looking for someone to excavate Fort Loudoun, a British fort built in 1756-57 on the Little Tennessee River to protect settlers in the region from Indian attacks during the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War). The third was Sherwood M. (Woody) Gagliano of Coastal Environments, Inc. (CEI) in Baton Rouge. Woody was about to receive a contract from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, to assess the potential for archaeological remains (shipwrecks and drowned prehistoric sites)

on the outer continental shelf of the Gulf of Mexico, as the Park Service was concerned that activities related to oil and gas extraction (drilling platforms and their associated pipelines) could detrimentally affect those resources.

Although excavation of either of the two forts seemed much more interesting to me than searching for hypothetical sites out in the Gulf of Mexico, it eventually became clear that work at the forts would be delayed for months, if not years, and I needed to eat. So, I accepted Woody's offer and became the first non-Woody archaeologist at CEI in February 1975. I've been there ever since. As one can imagine, I've seen a lot of interesting things in my 46+ years at CEI. So, let me see if I can provide some of the more intriguing aspects of that work, some of which are comical, some slightly frightening (and/or weird), and some just plain rewarding. Most other CRM (cultural resources management) archaeologists likely have similar stories, so mine certainly aren't unique, but I'm hopeful they provide a brief glimpse into the life of at least one CRM archaeologist in Louisiana.

### **Part One: The "Comical"**

#### *Why Did I Do That?*

Back in the late 1970s, CEI received a contract from the New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), to conduct an archaeological survey along the Mississippi River where a revetment was to be built near White Castle, Louisiana (see Gagliano et al. 1979). Several of us, including me, George Castille, Kathleen "Kit" McCloskey, and the late Sherwood "Woody" Gagliano (president and founder of CEI), decided to check out the survey area, and began walking along the edge of the river looking for artifacts that had eroded out of the riverbank. Almost immediately, we began to find a lot of historic material related to nineteenth-century settlement, including several flat (or sad) irons (Figure 1). Woody decided to collect the irons while we were walking, and probably had accumulated five or six of them by the time we had walked for a few miles. Of course, such irons are not light like feathers, and five or six of them weighed probably 30 pounds or more.





*Figure 1. Two of the flat (or sad) irons that Woody Gagliano carried for several miles during our visit to the White Castle revetment in the late 1970s. These irons are still at CEI's office in Baton Rouge as mementos of that exhausting trek.*

Well, Woody carried those irons all the way from one end of the survey area to the other, and then back again, probably something like four or five miles. By the time we got back to the CEI truck, Woody was exhausted. I'll never forget his statement at that time: "Why did I do that? That was one of the dumbest things I've ever done. I should have left the irons on the ground and picked them up on the way back." Obviously, those of us with Woody, thought that was quite funny. More to the point, it shows that even a noted scientist like Woody, who contributed significantly to Louisiana archaeology (Figure 2), and who helped lead the fight against coastal erosion, can do some goofy things, just like the rest of us.

#### *I Dare You*

During the summer of 1987, CEI was hired by the Galveston District, USACE, to conduct test excavations at site 41CH63, a Late Archaic to Historic period site on the bank of Lake Charlotte in Cedar Hill Park, Chambers County, Texas. We mapped the locale and dug several 1-by-1-m test units at the site, which consisted of a fairly large *Rangia cuneata* shell midden atop a low bluff overlooking the lake (Weinstein et al. 1989). Since the site was adjacent to water, we set up water screens at the lake edge to screen the contents of our test units (Figure 3).



*Figure 2. Woody Gagliano and David Kelley examining and recording vibracore samples retrieved from locations on the continental shelf off the coasts of Louisiana and Texas during CEI's search for drowned prehistoric archaeological sites in the Gulf of Mexico, 1984.*

We used nested screens of 1/4, 1/8 and 1/16-inch wire mesh to try to capture even the smallest flakes and bone fragments. As to be expected, such screens captured a lot more than just artifacts and tiny vertebrate faunal remains. They also caught a lot of grubs and earthworms, which were picked up and tossed from the screens by the trowels that the screeners used to help move the soil around on the screens.

At one point, I decided to help one of my crew members, the late Sylvia Duay, with the screening. So, I climbed down the bluff to the edge of the lake





*Figure 3. Jan Delgehausen (to the left) and Sylvia Duay (to the right) water screening at the edge of Lake Charlotte during testing of site 41CH63 at Cedar Hill Park, Chambers County, Texas, August 6, 1987.*

and took a position at Sylvia's screen, opposite her. I don't recall why Sylvia and I got into an argument, but at one point she jokingly threatened to throw a worm at me unless I agreed with her. Since I figured the chance of her hitting me with a worm tossed by a trowel was practically non-existent, I decided to egg her on even more by saying, "OK, go ahead, I dare you," and then opened my mouth as wide as I could. That obviously was a big mistake. With one deft move of her wrist, Sylvia captured a wiggling worm on the end of her trowel and flicked it directly into my mouth, along with some dirt, a few flecks of *Rangia* shell, and all sorts of other nasty things. I gagged, spit out the worm and the other bits and pieces of prehistoric midden and soil, and then headed for a bottle of water to wash out my mouth. Needless to say, that was the last time I dared anyone to throw something into my mouth. I can still taste that nasty worm to this day.

### *Flags for My Turkey*

A year after the worm episode, I was in west-central Mississippi conducting data-recovery investigations at the Rock Levee site (22BO637), a late Marksville through Mississippi period locale adjacent to the Mississippi River levee near the town of Beulah in Bolivar County, this time for the Vicksburg District, USACE (Weinstein et al. 1995). My crew again included Sylvia Duay, along with archaeologists from Louisiana and Mississippi (Figure 4). However, it also included Jing-Xuan Xu, a Chinese geologist from Shanghai who was in Baton Rouge because his wife was working on her Ph.D. at LSU. Xu had met Bob Neuman, who then was the Curator of Anthropology in the Museum of Natural Science at LSU, and Bob had suggested that Xu contact folks at CEI to see if he could work as a field technician on some of our archaeological projects. Bob figured it wouldn't hurt to have a geologist help with archaeology. So, CEI





*Figure 4. The Rock Levee (22BO637) field crew on the levee adjacent to the site, April 18, 1988. Front row, left to right: Sue Duke, Rebecca Hathcock, Sylvia Duay, Jan Delgehausen. Back row, left to right: Shelby A. Duay, Jr., David Willis, Jing-Xuan Xu, and Rich Weinstein.*

hired Mr. Xu and off he went with me to the cotton fields of rural Mississippi.

Now, while Xu was extremely smart, he did not know the English language very well. He could communicate, but often confused words or was at a loss for what to say. This became quite evident about midway through the excavations at Rock Levee.

But let me backtrack a bit. First, before we began excavating, we mapped the site and established a typical archaeological grid. Metal pin flags were placed every 10 m along the grid and marked with the grid coordinates of that specific point. Thus, Xu learned the word “flag.” In addition, since there

weren’t any hotels in Beulah, the CEI crew stayed in Cleveland, Mississippi, about 15 miles to the east. On our way back and forth to the site each day, we passed by a house that had several turkeys in its front yard. Xu learned the word “turkey.” While working at the Rock Levee site, Xu often helped water screen the contents removed from our excavations, as we established a water-screening operation at the edge of a large levee borrow pit near the site. While screening one day, Xu spotted a little red-eared turtle at the side of the pit, which he promptly captured to take home to his son in Baton Rouge as a pet. He even bought a little fish tank and set up a home for the turtle in his hotel room in Cleveland.

Well, one day the crew was sitting around eating lunch, when Xu jumps up, grabs the hat he had been wearing, which was a wide-brimmed Chinese-type hat, and started running through the adjacent cotton field flapping the hat in the air. We all watched in bemused amazement trying to figure out what Xu was doing. Finally, Sylvia yelled out, "Xu, what in the world are you doing?" "I'm catching flags for my turkey," came the reply. "What?" we all asked. "I'm catching flags for my turkey," came the reply once again. Finally, Sylvia realized what he meant. "Oh, you mean that you're catching flies for you turtle." "Yes," said Xu. "That's what I meant." We all got a big kick out of that, and I'll never forget those immortal words, "I'm catching flags for my turkey."



*(To be continued in the next issue of the LAS Newsletter – the Editor)*

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## LAS CHAPTER AND MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### Acadiana Chapter

Contact: Sadie Schoeffler, President  
Email: [acadianalas@gmail.com](mailto:acadianalas@gmail.com)

### Baton Rouge Chapter

Contact: Brandy Kerr or Margeaux Murray, Co-Presidents  
Email: [batonrougelas1975@gmail.com](mailto:batonrougelas1975@gmail.com)

On July 28, 2021, Ken Tremblay gave a presentation entitled "[Exploring Diet from Fragmentary and Commingled Remains: A Case Study from the Lake St. Agnes Mound Site \(16AV26\)](#)," the subject of his M.A. thesis at LSU. His presentation is now available on [YouTube](#).

### Delta Chapter

Contact: Brian Ostahowski  
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[www.facebook.com/DeltaChapterLAS](https://www.facebook.com/DeltaChapterLAS)

The Delta Chapter meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at Tulane University and will host a Spring lecture series from January through April of 2022. Contact Brian Ostahowski for more details.

### Northwest Chapter

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The Northwest Chapter of the LAS held its first in-person meeting since the pandemic on September 9, 2021. Reginald Walden gave a talk on archaeology and fake archaeology. Archaeology Day was held at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum in Shreveport on September 18. The Northwest Chapter plans to continue holding in-person meetings on the second Thursday of every other month. We have a slate of scheduled speakers for the next few months. For information email Tad Britt at: [tad.britt@gmail.com](mailto:tad.britt@gmail.com) or Jeffrey Girard at: [jeffreygirard@att.net](mailto:jeffreygirard@att.net)

### West Louisiana Archaeology Club

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## LOUISIANA ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

Every year in October, the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, [Division of Archaeology](#), promotes statewide programs and events as part of Louisiana [Archaeology Month](#) to encourage residents and visitors to learn more about the archaeology and history of the state. Louisiana [Archaeology Month](#) promotes the preservation and enjoyment of important sites, places, resources, and shared cultural heritage. Although events were cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, this year's Archaeology Month will include virtual and in-person exhibits, presentations, and other events.

The 2021 Archaeology Month [poster](#) highlights a collection of artifacts from Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation, focusing on African Americans who lived in Ascension Parish during the 1800s. The Division of

Archaeology partnered with the [River Road African American Museum](#) on this year's [poster](#). Be sure to visit their *Slavery & Freedom* [virtual exhibit](#). Among the other scheduled events are:

- Seeking New Data on Possible Old House Floors at [Poverty Point](#) World Heritage Site, 6859 LA-577, Pioneer (Sept. 24 – Oct. 2). Call 318-926-3314 in advance to participate (see the following page).
- Mardi Gras Shipwreck Exhibition at [Capitol Park Museum](#), 660 N. 4<sup>th</sup> St, Baton Rouge (throughout October).
- Smithsonian Institution's Water/Ways Exhibition at [Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum](#), 133 Mabel Dr, Madisonville (Aug. 28 – Oct. 9).

See the Archaeology Month 2021 [calendar of events](#) for additional information and events.

# Louisiana Archaeology Month 2021

## Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation

Archaeology of the Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation gives a better understanding of the daily lives of African-Americans in Ascension Parish. These artifacts help determine the kinds of food they ate, items they used, and even games they played in the 1800s.

### Enslaved Women on Ashland Plantation Who Receive Clothes on July 2, 1854

Clara - Josephine - Louisa (Harry) - Polly Manish - Violet  
 - Clarinda - Rachel Wilson - Diez - Beckey - Lucy Ann -  
 Fanny Clark - Emily - Eliza Patterson - Betsy Stansbury -  
 Eliza Arch - Sophy - Rachial - Addelle - Mary (Narcisee)  
 - Tinsy - Nancy Patty - Madaline - Milly Randel - Argott -  
 Milly Lupran - Lucy Spencer - Pelligee - Elizabeth Randle  
 - Dinah - Mary Ann Johnson - Betsy (Little) - Grace -  
 Jane (Texas) - Lucy - Adaline - Kattiasse - Amy - Anness  
 - Ellin - Milly Carrol - Easter - Rachel Rolla - Jane (Ky) -  
 Nancy Charles - Caroline French - Mary Moses - Henny -  
 Charlotte - Lylla - Sylvia - Betsy Lem - Amanda Gorrard  
 - Old Polly - Caroline (Cook) - Fine - Matilda (Texas) -  
 Patsy - Hannah Cherry - Judy - Fanny (Little) - Watsy -  
 Hannah (Texas) - Mary Long - Lucy (Texas) - Charlotte  
 Saul - Estline - Louisa Stansbury - Amanda Taylor -  
 Dolly - Kissy - Sarah Jane - Kitty - Cely - Martha - Ann -  
 Old Patty - Nancy Phil - Dinah - Mary Gill - Eliza Branch



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## FIELD NOTES AND RECENT RESEARCH

### Poverty Point Station Archaeology Program Update

Diana M. Greenlee

In 1991, archaeologists Glen Greene (Northeast Louisiana University, now the University of Louisiana at Monroe) and Roger Nance (University of Alabama Birmingham) collaborated on an excavation at the Poverty Point archaeological site (16WC5). Their field school investigated an unusual deposit discovered by Greene in 1989 in a soil core on Ridge 2 in the Northwest Sector (Figure 1). The deposit was described as two silty-clay-loam surfaces separated by a thin burned layer. Greene suggested the anomalies may be prepared clay house floors. This was quite exciting because, although the concentric earthen ridge system at Poverty Point had long been assumed to be the habitation area of the site, no strong evidence of house structures had ever been uncovered.

Sixteen 2 x 2 m units were excavated to examine the possible prepared surfaces. The lower stratum contained abundant artifacts, as well as three hearth/earth oven features (Figure 2). Charred cane fragments from one of the features produced a radiocarbon date of  $3180 \pm 70$  years BP (Beta-47965; 1616-1281 cal years BC), which fits easily within the accepted time frame for the site's Late Archaic period construction and occupation.

As reported previously (see *LAS Newsletter*, Vol. 48, No. 3 [Winter 2020/2021]), students have been at work on the collection, digitizing the field records and cataloging and re-housing the artifact collection to current standards. Several samples of macro-botanical remains from midden and feature contexts have been submitted for analysis.

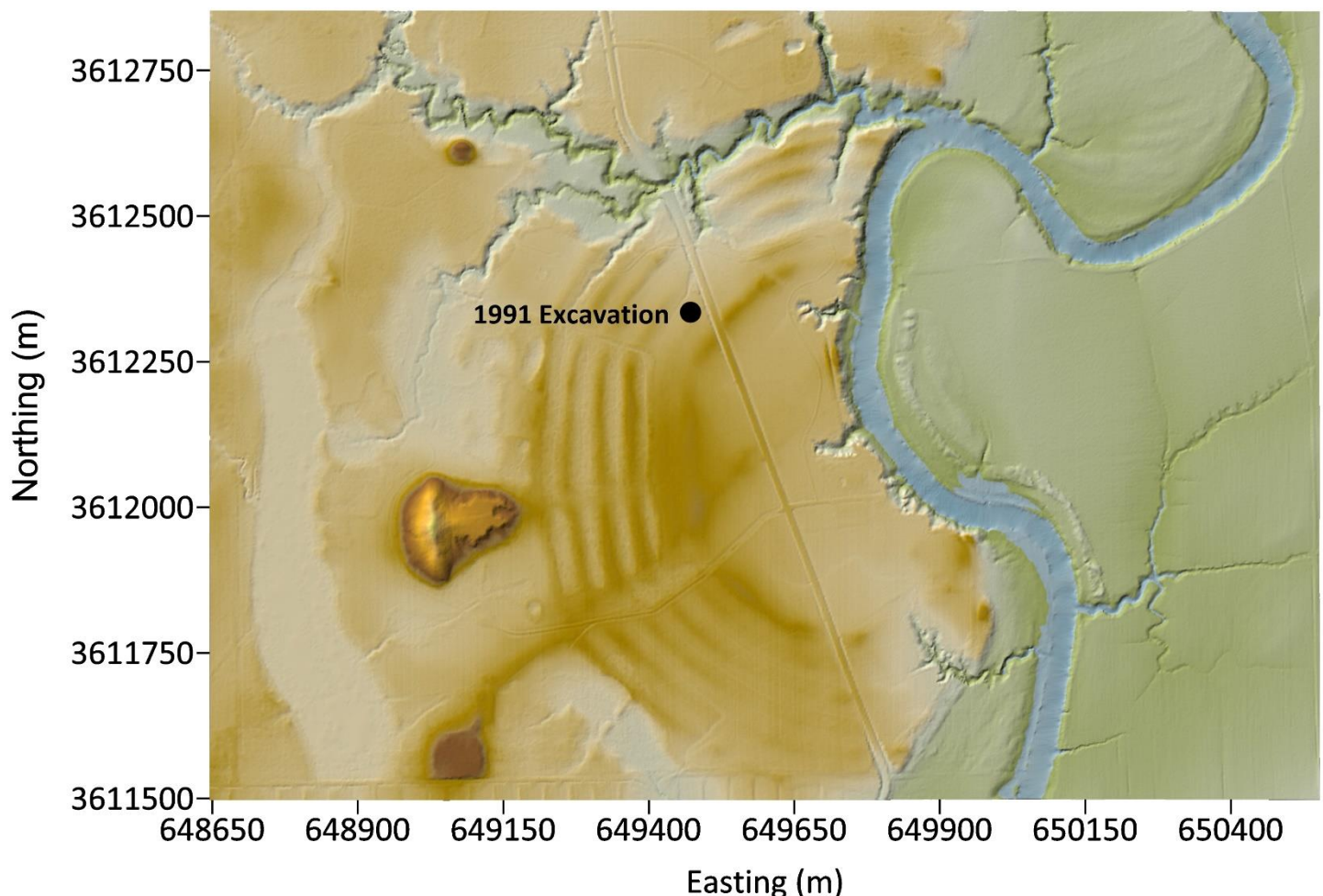


Figure 1. Location of the 1991 excavation on a LiDAR surface model of the Poverty Point World Heritage Site.

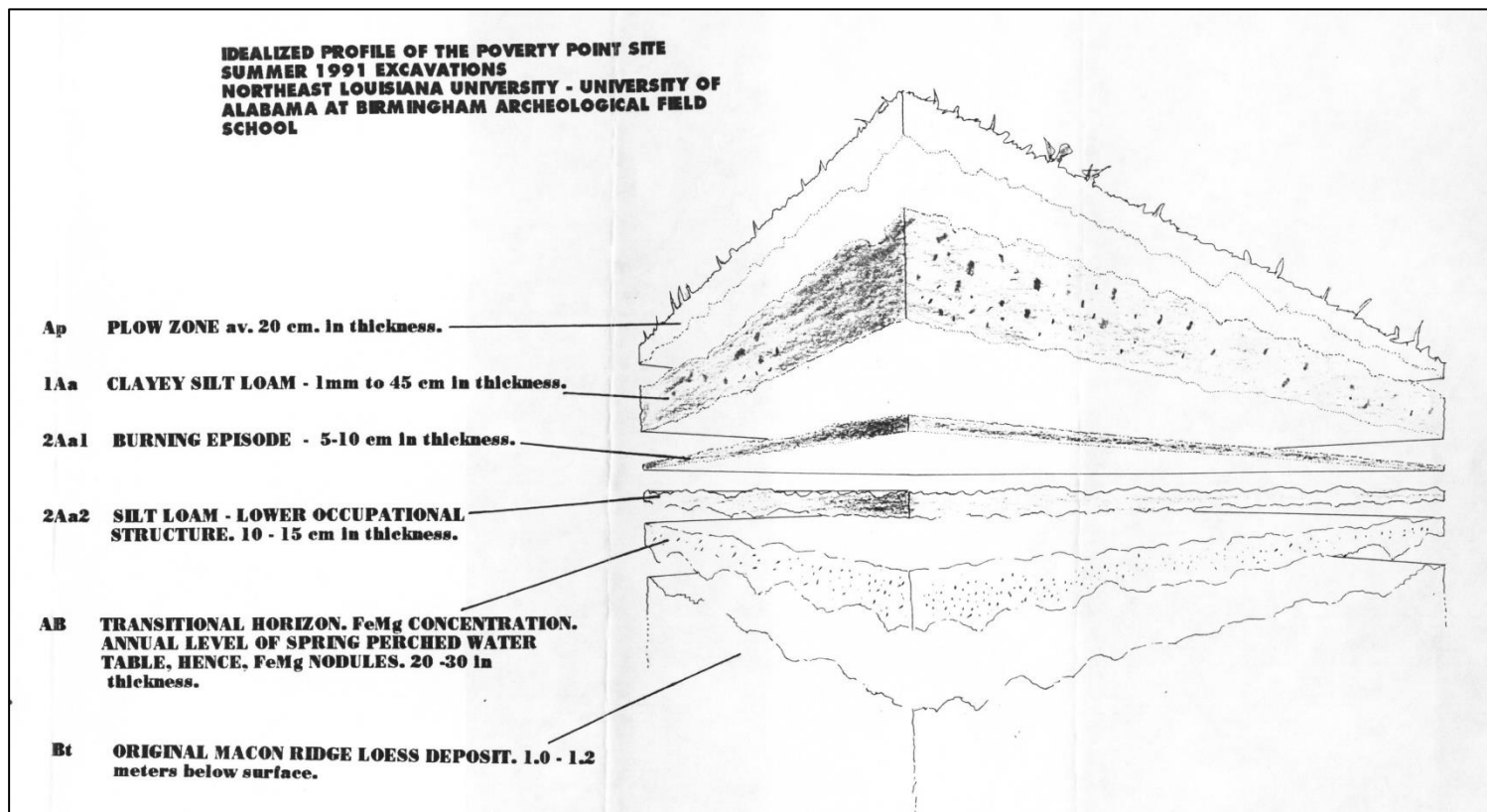


Figure 2. Schematic of deposits in Ridge 2 NW (Credit: Glen S. Greene).

### An Early Start to Archaeology Month

Because no project photographs have been located and the field notes are not very detailed, it is not possible to address the idea that the deposits were indeed prepared surfaces. Beginning on Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup> and continuing throughout the last week of September, Station staff and volunteers will re-open two of the units and remove the intervening balk in order to expose 4.5 m-long profile walls. Because some of the excavated deposits were not screened, we will screen the backfill to locate any missed artifacts.

During the first week of October, the exposed profiles will be documented and sampled for multiple analyses, including magnetic susceptibility, micromorphology, soil texture and chemistry, and radiocarbon dating. It is hoped that this approach will allow an assessment of the hypothesis that the deposits represent prepared surfaces or floors.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact the Poverty Point Station Archaeologist, Diana Greenlee (318-926-3314; [greenlee@ulm.edu](mailto:greenlee@ulm.edu)). Otherwise, feel free to come by and check out the (hopefully) very cool stratigraphy (for example, as seen in Figure 3).

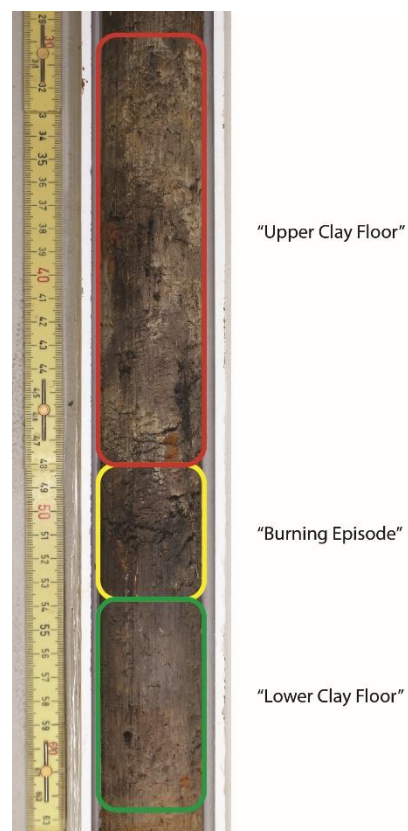


Figure 3. Deposits of interest in a 5 cm diameter core extracted from a balk adjacent to one of the 1991 units.



## Archaeology Field School Partnership: Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Mark A. Rees and Linda Langley

In partnership with the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, the Louisiana Public Archaeology Lab and Anthropology program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette offered an archaeology field school during the Summer of 2021. Students gained experience in scientific techniques of excavation, survey, and site investigation while participating in applied research at historic Coushatta sites in southwest Louisiana. Due to pandemic restrictions, two sessions with limited enrollment were held in May and June. The Coushatta historical archaeology

project is investigating the homesites and villages of Coushatta who moved to Louisiana in the 1790s, having moved from eastern Tennessee to Alabama during the previous century.

Beginning in the winter of 2019, Coushatta tribal members have participated in archaeological surveys along the Red, Sabine, and Calcasieu rivers. Tribal members visited the site of the field school and interpreted cultural features under excavation. This project is providing material evidence for a better understanding of Coushatta history, as well as a model for research partnerships between tribes and universities. One student's experience during the archaeology field school is described in the following essay by Conan Mills.



*UL Lafayette Summer 2021 Session 1 Archaeology Field School Crew. Left to right: G. Parro, G. Crunkleton, J. Borders, M. Machen C. Alfonso, C. Mills, J. Funkhouser, S. Huey, A. Landry, and A. Landry.*





*UL Lafayette Summer 2021 Session 2 Archaeology Field School Crew. Left to right: J. Vicknair, A. Lewis, R. Delaune, O. Mosley, H. Rebaradi, G. Crunkleton, A. Landry, and S. Huey.*

### **ULL 2021 Archaeology Field School: Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

Conan Mills, Louisiana State University

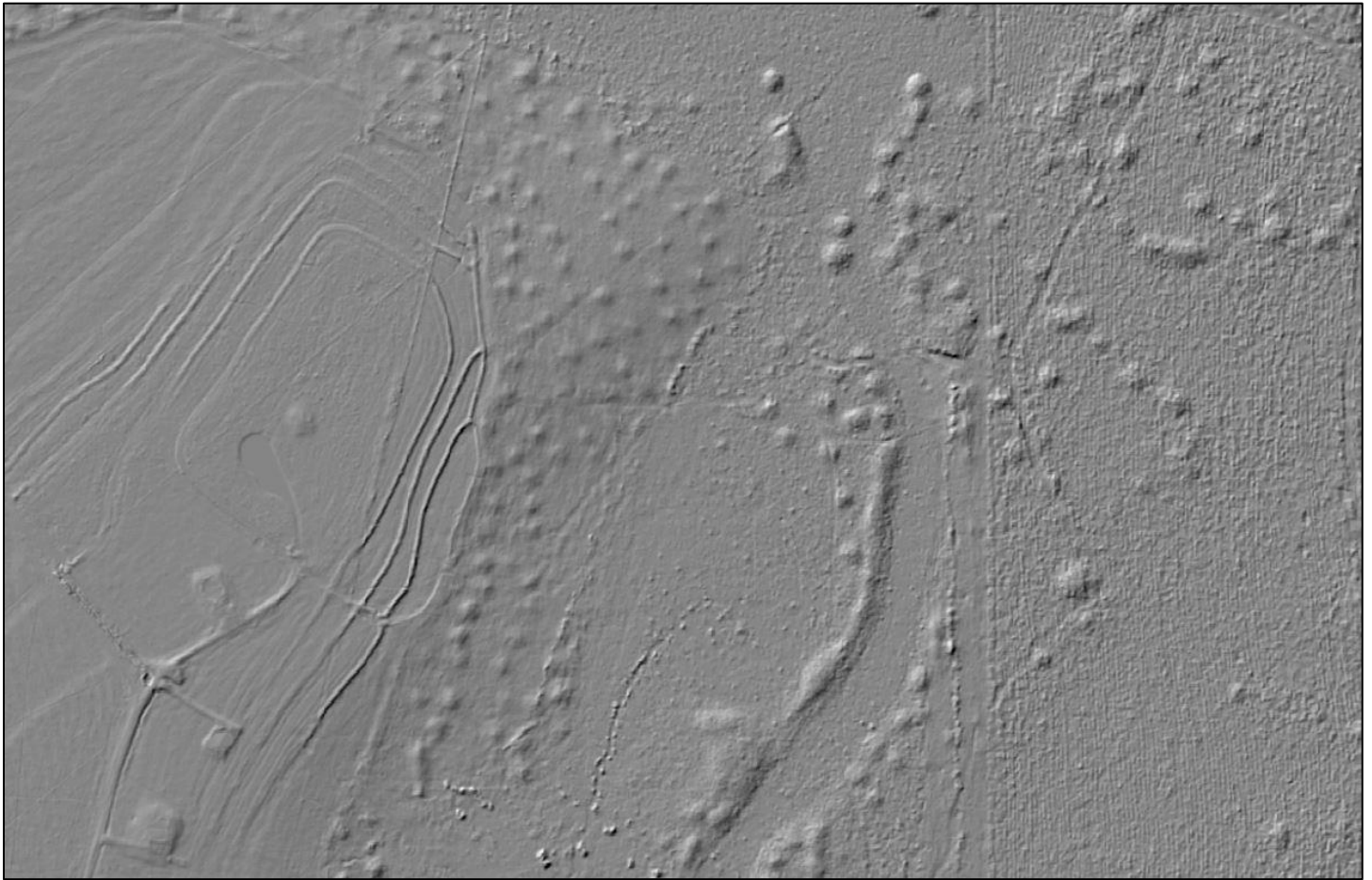
In 2019 I retired from the Air Force and went to work for a company doing almost the exact same job I had done the previous 20 years. I enjoyed the work, but there were some strings attached that I no longer felt comfortable with. My daughter graduated from high school in 2020 and this proved to be the catalyst I needed for a change. I started attending Louisiana State University in the 2020 fall semester and at the end of that semester, I changed my major from Information Systems to Anthropology. In May of 2021, I received an email from an LSU archaeology professor that the University of Louisiana at Lafayette was putting on a field school. I jumped at the opportunity to attend.

The field school started, for me, with a Zoom conference call. We covered the usual things for a first class: syllabus, how the course was going to be graded, and overall expectations. We covered safety,

because being outdoors in the Louisiana woods during late spring and summer comes with some hazards. Then we got into the meat and potatoes of the class: some of the history of the Coushatta, the two sites targeted for the field school, archaeological processes, and terminology. The project director Samuel Huey covered what work had already been done at the two sites and explained the goals of the project. A syllabus and additional reading materials were provided. The instructors strongly encouraged us to look it over, which I did. But I wanted more.

Using my background as an intelligence analyst, I started digging further. I taught myself in a few hours how to process Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data from the U.S. Geological Survey and to incorporate it into Geographical Information Systems (GIS). As it turned out, I learned to do it the hard way. This still worked out in the end, because the final product provided greater detail. With terrain data in hand, I decided to look at modes of transportation the Coushatta could have used in relation to the two contemporaneously occupied sites.





*Figure 1. LiDAR image of the landforms and features around one of the UL Lafayette field school sites.*

I knew one of the sites was right next to the Calcasieu River based on modern maps, but that does not mean the river was there when the site was occupied. The LiDAR data, however, suggested the river was near the site when it was occupied. While the other site is not currently near the river, the LiDAR data suggested the river passed closer to it at some point in history. Were both sites next to the river at the same time? It is plausible, but without further environmental data and research, it would be difficult to know for sure. The instructors were a little shocked when I showed up with LiDAR data for the sites at the beginning of the field school (Figure 1).

The first week of the field school was spent dodging thunderstorms and doing site clean-up. We cleared the area of fallen trees and brush, and cleared additional space so we could get in and out of the site safely with equipment. Some of the team started flagging ground finds as well as potential safety hazards. It was cleared so well that I lost my visual

cues for the entrance and had to reorient myself on how to get out. By the end of the week we were shovel testing. The team completed around 12 shovel tests, which allowed us to hone in on areas of interest for test units.

We continued to dodge thunderstorms during week two. On Monday, Dr. Rees was able to bring out a fluxgate gradiometer and performed a geophysical assessment of a portion of the site. By the end of lunch we had identified additional areas of interest based on the results of the geophysical survey. Shortly after, test units were being laid out. Shovel skimming, screening, and keeping the walls nice and tidy were on the menu. Every few minutes someone was calling for an instructor to look at a pottery sherdlet, a piece of glass, metal, or white stoneware from their unit. One unit fizzled out while others continued to produce features and artifacts.

Week two also continued the use of GIS on the project. Two goals were identified for its use. One was

the possible location of the Indian Village labeled on a map from 1875 and the second was the location of trails historically used by the Coushatta. With the map in hand, the task of finding these locations began. According to oral tradition, Highway 383 on modern maps has been at the same location for as long as can be remembered. So, the highway was used for reference points to overlay the digitized map from 1875 onto modern satellite imagery (Figure 2). While the scale of the maps did not match and some changes to the road had occurred over the last 145 years, I used the rubber sheeting method in GIS to carefully align the known features on the maps. One possible location for the village had already been ruled out due to extensive quarrying, and another location was identified for investigation.

The second task was the identification of historic trails. I spoke with Mr. Ernest Sickey, then Chairman

of the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, and he suggested the trails were used as trade routes and for couriers to deliver messages between villages. Extensive searches were done utilizing LiDAR in the areas identified on the 1875 map. While most of the trails have been obliterated by agriculture, three possible locations for trails are still visible in the LiDAR data. These locations were provided to the project director for further investigation.

During the third week, additional test units were opened and work continued on existing units. One unit ended up having what appeared to be a hearth and another had a feature that appeared to be a post mold. Following bisection of this feature and further excavation, a second possible post mold appeared. Sadly, work had to stop and the partially-excavated test unit still holds its secrets. The thunderstorms won this round, but archaeology will prevail.

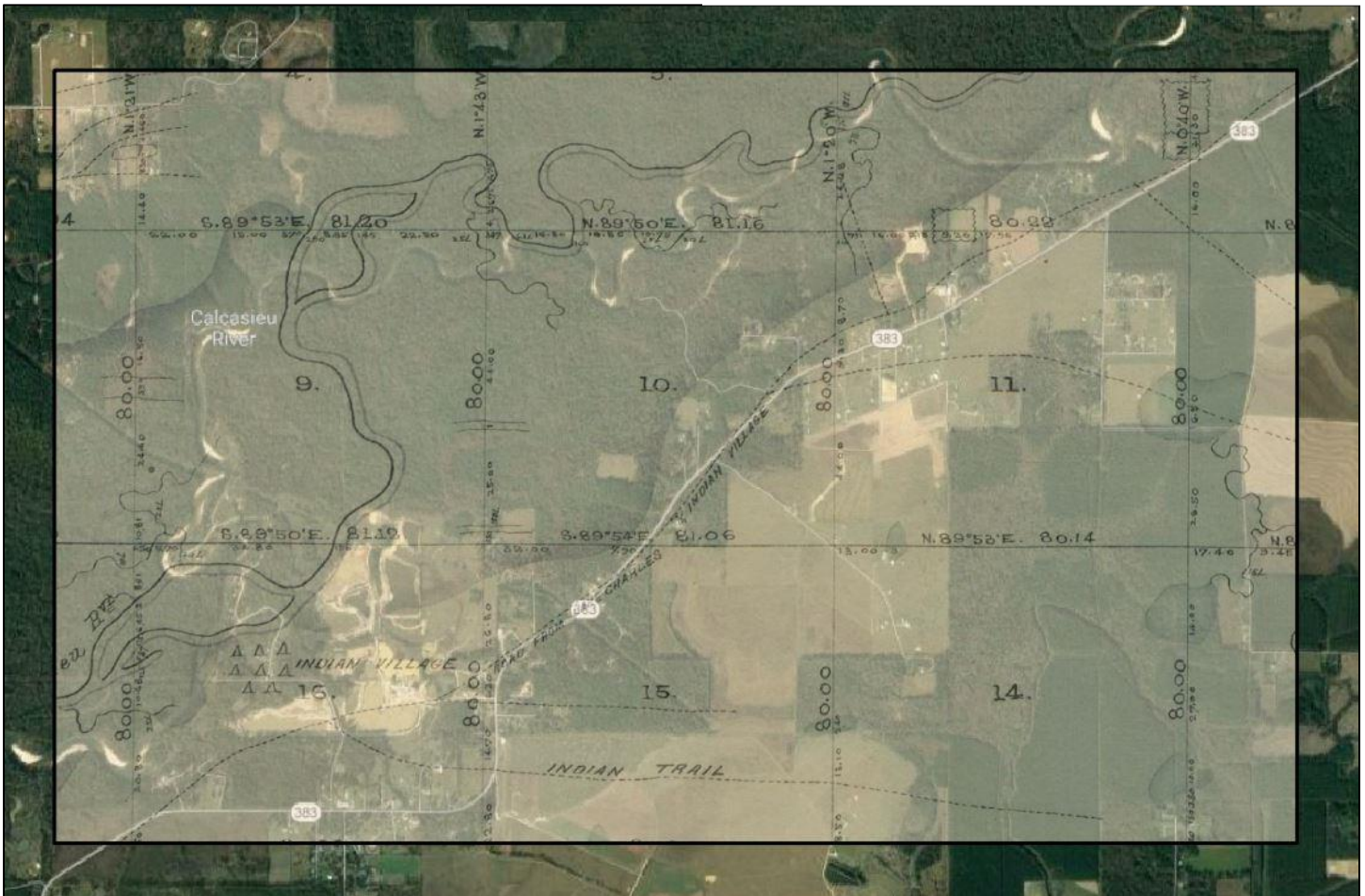


Figure 2. Overlay of the 1875 map on an aerial image in GIS.



The whole purpose of the field school was to have students learn about archaeological techniques in conjunction with a research project associated with the Coshatta Tribe of Louisiana. In the three weeks of the field school, we opened seven test units. Of those test units, most had features in them. One feature was determined to be a hearth based on accounts given by the Coshatta who visited the site. One test unit had what appeared to be two post holes in it, and another adjacent unit had a feature that lined up with those. Two of the units contained a midden with multiple layers. Pottery that fit the description of the ceramics used by the Coshatta was found all over the site.

The combination of oral and written history, the archaeological finds, and the use of technology is helping to build a picture of the site and Coshatta

culture during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Coshatta Elders, Coshatta Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Coshatta Tribe of Louisiana, seven students, two student research assistants, the project director, and two instructors made this happen. Without the effort of all those involved, it would not have been possible.

The amount of work we completed over the course of three weeks, even with constant thunderstorms, was quite astonishing. With 20 years of experience in the military, I don't recall seeing a team jell as quickly as this one, in such a short amount of time. Experience, technology, and determination helped the field school achieve its goals. This was a team effort, and everyone brought something to the table to make it happen.



*Editor's Note: the preceding essay was the winner of an archaeology field school essay contest. Congratulations Conan!*

## UNO Anthropology Update

D. Ryan Gray

University of New Orleans

It was a busy summer for University of New Orleans (UNO) Anthropology, with two projects in Austria! While the pandemic meant that we could not do either of them as traditional field schools, we still managed to bring a small team. We hope that we'll be back with a larger group in Summer 2022! We anticipate having a few spots for non-UNO students on both of the following projects, so contact Professor Ryan Gray at [drgray1@uno.edu](mailto:drgray1@uno.edu) if you'd like more details.

In the summer's first project, done in coordination with the U.S. Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, we partnered with the University of Innsbruck to begin excavations at a WWII B-17G bomber crash site near the border of Austria and Slovenia (Figure 1). The site was literally located on the side of a mountain, so the excavation was a new kind of challenge for us. Local Alpenrescue and mountain safety technicians from our Innsbruck partners helped provide support for team safety during excavations, with rope guide

lines, climbing harnesses, and rock helmets. We located a heavy concentration of aircraft wreckage, and we intend to return for larger-scale excavations next summer, in the hopes of successfully recovering the remains of a missing American airman.

After this, our team shifted to Innsbruck, where we joined our friends at the University of Innsbruck on the Operation Trautson Castle Peace Project (Figure 2). In this multi-year effort, archaeologists are excavating a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle in the community of Matrei am Brenner, Austria, near the modern border with Italy. The castle and town were heavily damaged in Allied bombing at the end of World War II. The excavation by a bi-national team is meant to be a symbol of unity and friendship for the future. This summer, we worked on excavating the castle keep and other buildings destroyed in the bombing, discovering in the process material dating from post WWII clean-up efforts all the way back to the Roman era.







*Figure 1. UNO students working at a WWII bomber crash site in Austria.*



*Figure 2. UNO students and staff posing with University of Innsbruck students and staff.*



## The Benachi House: An (Almost) Forgotten Delta Chapter Excavation of the 1980s

D. Ryan Gray

University of New Orleans

Over the past two years, the University of New Orleans has been working on a project to review and assess previous archaeological research conducted in the City of New Orleans. The Louisiana Division of Archaeology's on-line Cultural Resources Database has been an invaluable tool in this regard, making information about projects and previously-reported sites much more readily available to researchers than ever before. However, there are many examples of projects over the years that have fallen through the cracks. This past spring, we learned about one such project, an excavation at the Benachi House at 2257 Bayou Road in the Esplanade Ridge Historic District of New Orleans, conducted by the Delta Chapter of the Louisiana Archaeological Society in 1983-1984 (Figures 1 and 2). We don't know where any records of this excavation have gone, but I am sharing information here in the hopes that some of the readership of the *LAS Newsletter* might have more to share.

We first learned of the project thanks to Mr. James Derbes, owner of the ca. 1859 [Benachi House](#) for almost four decades. Back in 1983, while in the process of renovating the house, he reached out to local archaeologists, including Dr. Richard Shenkel of UNO, who in turn introduced him to members of the Delta Chapter. The Delta Chapter organized a series of weekend excavations at the address, which

continued over the course of the second half of 1983 and the beginning of 1984.

Aside from this article, the only other direct record of the excavations is a collection of artifacts still in possession of Mr. Derbes, which he allowed me to access and photograph (Figures 3-9). Based on the fact that many are marked with numbers presumably indicating units and/or strata, we may assume that the excavations were conducted with at least some attention to provenience, something that Mr. Derbes confirmed as well. Many of the ceramic and glass vessels were painstakingly reconstructed by volunteers, with the vast majority of ceramics English tablewares typical of the first half of the nineteenth century. While an artifact inventory with some level of analytical information was prepared at the time, the artifacts were then 'divvied up' among volunteers



Figures 1 and 2. Two photographs by James Derbes from 1984, showing some of the ceramics from the Benachi excavations.



Figure 3. Blue hand-painted pearlware saucer.



Figure 4. Blue transfer-printed pearlware saucer and cup.



Figure 5. Polychrome hand-painted whiteware pitcher.



Figure 6. Worm-trailed and slip-trailed whiteware bowl.



Figure 7. Whiteware lid to a pharmaceutical jar.

and the property owner, so what he has in his possession is only a small portion of the total collection.

The fragmentary nature of the collection and the lack of supporting documents makes it unlikely that there can be substantive research on the excavations at the Benachi House. However, given the limited number of intensive investigations of intact pre-Civil War sites that have taken place along this portion of Bayou Road, the site is still of considerable interest. In the early 1980s, urban historical archaeology as a discipline was still developing, and there had been relatively few excavations at historic sites outside of the modern French Quarter. Mr. Derbes has assembled a vast archive of information about the history of the Benachi House property, and with a little bit more information we could potentially make some specific linkages to households in the area. If nothing else, the Benachi House collection is a reminder of the archaeological potential of the Bayou Road and Bayou St. John area, much of which is private residential property and thus less likely to be impacted by large-scale federally funded projects to which the National Historic Preservation Act applies. To bring this part of the archaeological record to light, it requires private property owners and members of

the public to work in concert with professional archaeologists and volunteers, and professional archaeologists to take seriously the obligation to share the results of that work.

Mr. Derbes shared an article from the *Times Picayune* (Figure 10), which describes a party that he and his wife had at the conclusion of the Benachi excavation. It lists a number of Delta Chapter members, including many who will be familiar to present LAS members and to those involved in New Orleans archaeology.

*We're searching for records of this excavation, especially photographs, inventories, and/or field notes. Please contact Ryan Gray ([drgray1@uno.edu](mailto:drgray1@uno.edu)) and James Derbes ([jgd@jamesderbes.com](mailto:jgd@jamesderbes.com)) if you have any information.*





Figure 8. Transfer-printed whiteware, Mycenae pattern.



Figure 9. Transfer-printed whiteware plate and platter.

## Vivant

### Present partying caps a dig into the past

By NELL NOLAN  
Social columnist

First the dig, then the do!

Erected in 1859 for Nicholas M. Benachi, consul of Greece in New Orleans, the Greek Revival house at 2257 Bayou Road has been the site of unusual unearthings. Archival digging tells us that the residence, known as the *Rendez-vous des Chasseurs*, was purchased in 1886 by Joseph and Peter Torre, whose family residence it was until it was bequeathed to the Louisiana Landmarks Society by Miss Venetia S. Torre and her brother, Louis J. Torre,

in 1978. The building was then bought with covenants for use and interior preservation by Robin and James G. "Jim" Derbes, who restored it in 1982, the same year that it was designated as an Orleans Parish landmark (and subject to a facade servitude donation for exterior preservation in favor of the Preservation Resource Center).

When the ground was being leveled for the manifold improvements, the new owners marveled at several shards they found. After a couple of phone calls, the Delta Chapter of the Louisiana Archaeology Society was

called in for the preliminary perusal and the test pits. From that moment on the dig was on!

The most repeated item was a chamber pot! About 35 were found, a fact that elicited amusing conjecture. "They must have been disposable pots," commented Ray Bergeron during a dig.

Pottery was found a-plenty, with the bulk being from approximately 1820-1830. Transfer ware, too, caught the eye. One depiction was that of a man in Quaker dress walking in front of the house.

Then there were the assorted bottles; the seal of one dated to 1824. Another bottle featured a flat side to ensure easier shipment and a continually moistened cork.

The bounty of the grape became the past and present link when Robin and Jim Derbes held a party to say *danke* to the diggers for their year-long efforts. "You are invited for wine and cheese and to choose from among the artifacts removed from this site," read the invite.

The members of the society who dug chose two-thirds of the items, while the host couple took the remaining third. Alexander, their 6-year-old, did most of the choosing, but Labrador Cleaver tried to "scoop" him initially.

Cleaver kibitzed at the archaeological outset, and found his just desserts



### Social Scene

in some of the beef and venison bones the members unearthed. By dint of habit, Cleaver took off with some of the bones, before being coaxed back by the LAS members.

Maybe he was also after the blue and white china with the rabbits on it.

Among the Sunday afternoon socializers were president Roger Baudier; Bill Edwards, vice president; and respective secretary and treasurer, Norma Bissel and Clarence Savoie.

Besty Bergeron represented herself and spouse Ray, who had to be out of town. Jeannine Samuels represented herself and, by extension, WYES-TV. She bought the Delta dig at the station's auction.

Christopher Quail — whose wife, Florence, also made party rounds — has made his mark concerning the Benachi-Torre-Derbes *maison*. His sketch of the house graced the invitation. (It was also the cover come-on for the holiday party given by the League of Women Voters at that significant spot.)



Jim and Robin Derbes are greeted by Cleaver

Then there were Delores Martin, who, along with Florence, had been particularly expert at piecing things together; Jill Kaplan; Polly and Hubert Stringer; Marjorie Friedman; Linda and Whitner Church; Justin E. Derbes; Nancy and Kirk Dix — he had started the unearthing by suggesting to his LAS cohorts where to dig; and Deedee and Dominick Cuccia, who admired

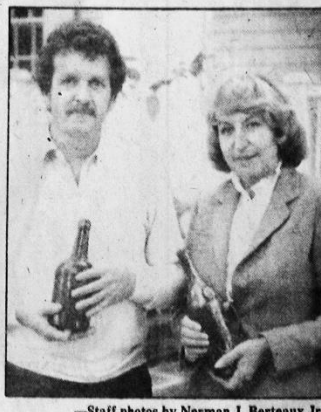
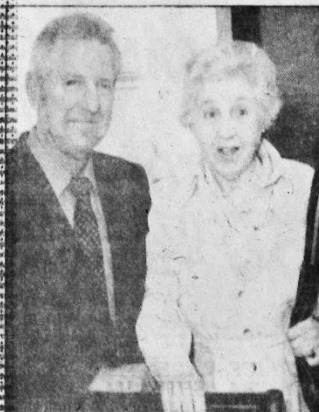
many beautiful patterns of the transfer ware.

An amethyst was the temporary fixation of Bettie Pendley, who includes digs abroad to her credit.

Almost all of the devoted diggers rendezvoused at the Derbes to-do, where the bounty of the backyard was the reason for the revelry.



Delores Martin (center) with Florence and Christopher Quail



—Staff photos by Norman J. Berteaux Jr.



Sylvan Pendley, Rosemary Baudier, Nancy Newfield (right)



Jeannine Samuels, Dr. Richard Datzman

Figure 10. Article from the *Times Picayune* (January 12, 1984) describing the Benachi House excavation.



## The Marble Site: A Small but Peculiar Assemblage including a Waco Sinker and a Drilled Bannerstone

James Fogleman

The Marble site is a sparse collection of Native American artifacts mingled with a richer assortment of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century homestead debris. Generally, under the best conditions, the site yields only a few prehistoric artifacts along with several marbles, porcelain buttons, and other historic artifacts per visit. The historic items are fairly generic with nothing remarkable. It is the very limited prehistoric component that justifies this brief article.

### The Setting

Marble is located atop a slight rise on the eastern face of an outcrop of late Pleistocene Deweyville terrace in northern St. Landry Parish in central Louisiana. The soil is yellow eolian late Pleistocene deposit listed as Memphis (Murphy et al. 1986). Immediately east of the site, the terrace has been cut into by the Teche-Mississippi distributary and perhaps earlier Mississippi River channels. The relief between the two landforms exceeds 3 meters. The site would have been dry except during exceptional spring floods. It would have been an excellent permanent habitation if not for the lack of a year-round water source.

Light artifact scatters occur all along the highest east face of this terrace. The most common sites are small farm houses now evident as small clusters of historic materials. The large numbers of such sites are testimony to the tremendous decrease in the local population with the advent of mechanized farming. Prehistoric sites of note along the east face include Middle Archaic mounds and a large Tchefuncte site, both of which occur where year-round water abuts the eastern edge of this low terrace.

### The Historic Component

The author is rather jaundiced towards historic artifacts but since so many of the more interesting sites are now either under homes, in pasture or timber, or owned by people unsympathetic to the collector, I have fallen back to lesser sites often heavily slanted towards historic. As a result, this small site which I first discovered decades ago has

become one I visit regularly. Its historic artifact assemblage is mostly fragments of broken glass, pieces of iron (most likely related to ongoing farming), brick fragments, historic glazed ceramics, porcelain doll appendages (arms, legs, and heads [n=7]), porcelain buttons, and marbles (Figure 1). It was the large number of marbles that inspired the name. The marbles range from clay to 'cat eye' glass. A random sample of the marbles (n=36) consisted of six non-glass specimens, including one reddish brown, two blue and white (one of which is oversized and possibly a taw, an oversized marble used as a shooter), and a broken, white taw that actually may be a piece of polished marble. The remaining 30 were glass, including two 'cat eyes'.



Figure 1. Porcelain doll parts, ceramic marbles, glass marbles, ceramic buttons, wheat pennies, tax token, ceramic pipe fragment, metal suspender part.

Playing marbles was common a half century ago when children and adults played various marble games of which I was often a participant. Marbles are much more common than doll parts. Assuming marbles were generally acquired by boys, possible explanations include: all things being equal, a boy required more marbles for recreational needs than a girl required dolls; perhaps the family had more boys than girls; boys needed more marbles as replacements, as marbles are more easily lost; maybe girls take better care of their toys; or combinations of these possibilities.



Four pieces of slate have been found and are more likely from a small chalk board rather than prehistoric artifacts, but the verdict is still out. A few coins, such as badly eroded wheat pennies and a possible tax token have been found, along with the metal part of a presumed clothing suspender adorned with a shore bird (Figure 1). Metal detecting yielded nothing else of importance.

### Prehistoric Materials

The Marble site prehistoric assemblage includes items running from at least the Middle Archaic to the Woodland period. None of them is very common. Of especial note is the lack of any arrowheads.

#### Ceramics

Native American pottery is rather rare ( $n=14$ ) and limited to grog tempered Troyville Plain, a couple of which have a hint of sand. One very eroded sherd may be Pontchartrain Check Stamped. The scarcity of ceramics is consistent with the lack of arrow points, suggesting the lack of a late prehistoric population.

#### Lithics

The few projectile points ( $n = 9$ ) are mostly expanding base points typical of the Middle Archaic, with the remainder fitting best within the Late Archaic (Figure 2). Flint chips are similarly rare, although collecting bias may have reduced this number somewhat. The chips and points are all of material that would be available 30 to 40 km to the northwest, near Indian Creek State Park.



Figure 2. Dart points ranging from Middle Archaic on the left to Late Archaic on the right. An unidentified crystal, pumice fragment, and small celt to the right of the scale.

David Guillory found the only known celt from the site (Figure 2). It is rather small and its bit is dull to the point that it may have never been finished. Surprisingly, the bit appears to have signs of use. In St. Landry and Avoyelles parishes, celts have been found by the author at sites ranging from Middle Archaic to Coles Creek/Plaquemine. So, it would be difficult to use it for dating the site (Fogleman 2017). A small piece of what appears to be pumice was recovered (Figure 2). It has the texture of pumice and it floats. The material is not particularly uncommon and has been found at several other nearby sites ranging from Middle Archaic to early Coles Creek. As with most samples, this piece appears unworked. Custis and Freeman collected a small piece during their journey up the Red River in 1806, unfortunately they did not give a specific location for the find (Flores, ed. 1984).

Surprisingly, the most common artifact based on weight is flat, well-consolidated sand stone ( $n= 11$ ). The largest measures 24.5 cm. by 7.4 cm by 1.8 cm. Most of them show a noticeable sheen as if they had been used to polish something. One piece of white, highly friable sandstone and another dark red piece of ferruginous sandstone were also recovered. Other large objects include a possible nutting stone/metate and a hard (igneous?) rock showing evidence of use for battering.

A fragment of a broken winged bannerstone was also found by Guillory on one of our visits. The object was a small, heavily damaged fragment, but along with two other pieces found later, it is obvious that at one time it had been a magnificent piece (Figure 3). The damage is most likely tractor trauma (damage done by a farmer during cultivation). Winged bannerstones are more common farther to the north and east in Louisiana. They are generally considered to date from the Middle to Late Archaic.

This spring I walked for several hours in a field to the south of the Marble site. Not liking to return empty handed, I stopped at Marble to pick up a few marbles. While I found only a couple of historic items and no chipped stone, I located a highly polished yet unimpressive bar weight (Figure 3). Bar weights are fairly common in Tchefuncte and earlier times,



Figure 3. Top row: three fragments of a single-winged bannerstone. Bottom: a polished quartzite bar weight.

possibly dating back to the Middle Archaic. They are believed to be associated with atlatls or dart throwing devices.

The Marble site yielded a *plummet* with a groove around its smaller end (Figure 4). Locally, these occur most frequently at Middle Archaic and Tchefuncte sites. Amazingly, this plummet was made of trachyte, a material the author has not seen in St. Landry or Avoyelles parishes. Its nearest outcrops would be in the Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas (Horton 2018). A photo of a beautiful stone turtle made from this material graces the cover of *Exploring Southeastern Archaeology*, a book dedicated to Samuel Brookes (Galloway and Peacock, ed. 2015). The turtle was found in a Middle Archaic setting.

This spring, after yet another ‘pointless’ search elsewhere, I visited the Marble site yet again in desperation. On this occasion I stumbled across an artifact I had thought was only found in east-central Texas. Although crude and also suffering from tractor trauma, the unusual artifact is most likely a Waco sinker (Figure 4). A Waco sinker is a somewhat football-shaped object with a groove on the two small rounded ends. Some have grooves encircling the object along its long axis. It is an object of much debated function commonly found at Middle Archaic sites near Waco, Texas, hence the name (Turner et al. 2011). The specimen from the Marble site is a dirty



Figure 4. Top: a ringed plummet of trachyte. Bottom: a Waco sinker of fine-grained consolidated sandstone.

brown consolidated sandstone artifact, measuring 5.0 cm from grooved end to grooved end. It is 3.7 cm wide and 2.8 cm high. The grooves are 0.7 cm wide and 0.2 cm deep. In a personal communication with Jon Gibson, he related that he had come across one at the Cade Mound near Catahoula Lake. In his article he mentions finding plummets and what he called at the time a ‘fishing sinker’. Cade mound is probably Middle Archaic and is noted for its stone bead manufacturing (Gibson 1968). Sam Brookes noted that specimens were attained from a Middle Archaic site in Washington County, Mississippi. He sent me a drawing that Sam McGahey had made of five well-made ‘classic’ Waco sinkers from the Clyde Wood collection (McGahey 2021).

#### What Does It All Mean?

The Marble site is essentially the location of a historic farm house. The small prehistoric artifact inventory is what makes it notable. Even though the locale would



have been a nice hunting/camping spot, especially during spring floods for many millennia, it was only sporadically and very lightly utilized. While artifact counts are small, the quality and rarity of the artifacts and material are most noteworthy. The bannerstone, Waco sinker, and trachyte plummet are all locally one-of-a-kind artifacts. The same is true of the material used for the bannerstone and the plummet.

The question remains: was this site a special place during the Middle Archaic, or was it just an amazing coincidence that these unusual artifacts were found here? It would be nice to think the Marble site was a special place, with special items left there by visitors for some esoteric reasons. The trachyte plummet and winged bannerstone would have made impressive offerings. The dull celt, somewhat polished bar weight, and poorly executed Waco sinker, however, would have been less impressive. In conclusion, while it would be nice to think the Marble site was a special place of worship or veneration, it appears much more probable that it was only infrequently visited for several thousand years. Maybe once or twice a millennium, an object of interest was deposited or more likely lost on this high spot at the edge of the Mississippi River flood plain.

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## IN THE NEWS

### This Historical Fish Tale Can Guide Future Conservation Policy, UNO Researchers Say

From [UNO Campus News](#)

August 17, 2021

Analysis of sheephead bones by researchers at the University of New Orleans has unearthed information they say can help guide policymakers facing the critical challenge of overfishing in the Gulf of Mexico, which is an important fishery that provides food and livelihoods to many in Louisiana and beyond.

The research, conducted by UNO anthropology professor Ryan Gray, earth and environmental sciences professor Martin O'Connell and anthropology research associate Ryan Kennedy, uses size estimation and stable isotope analysis of archaeological sheephead bones from New Orleans to identify two previously unknown, but important, overfishing events in Gulf waters.

The work not only highlights the history of fishing in New Orleans but also has important conservation implications for fish in southeastern Louisiana and the broader Gulf of Mexico, the researchers said. "Our findings indicate that sheephead have to be considered in broader conservation plans, as any efforts to protect other species in the Gulf of Mexico could potentially lead to increased pressure on sheephead, which we now know are susceptible to overfishing," Kennedy said.

While sheephead might appear plentiful and are overlooked by many in New Orleans compared to the popular red drum species, sheephead are likely to come under increased fishing pressure if or when commercial fishers are unable to harvest other fish in Louisiana and other Gulf of Mexico waters, researchers said. "At the end of the day, our results serve as a reminder that policy needs to consider ecosystems as

a whole and not just individual species,” Kennedy said. That research, conducted in conjunction with researchers at the University of Leicester in England and Trent University in Canada, has been published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Researchers say overfishing is a critical challenge today but that policy makers and environmental scientists are often hampered by a lack of empirical data about fisheries prior to the mid-20th century.

Archaeological fish bones offer a unique view into historical fisheries and past human impacts to fish populations that can extend baseline data about the health of fish species hundreds or thousands of years in the past. “In this case, our analysis of sheepshead bones provides the earliest evidence of overfishing of this species in the Gulf of Mexico, indicating that not only are sheepshead vulnerable to overfishing but also that modern sheepshead populations in Louisiana may still be recovering from past overfishing,” said Kennedy, a zooarchaeologist whose expertise is in analyzing animal bones. “Knowing about past overfishing of sheepshead can help inform future policy decisions.”

The research also showed how rising urban populations drove increased demand for sheepshead that ultimately led to overfishing in surrounding waters, said Kennedy, who describes sheepshead as the “fish that fed New Orleans,” particularly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. “To me, one of the most interesting results of this research is that the expansion of fishing locations beginning in the 1820s and the subsequent quick crash of new sheepshead populations corresponds with a period of extended population growth in New Orleans,” Kennedy said. “New Orleans’ urban population grew 366% between 1830 and 1860!”

“Aside from documenting previously unknown overfishing of sheepshead in the past, our results also show how rising urban populations drove increased demand that ultimately led to overfishing in surrounding waters.” The recent study is part of ongoing research by Gray, O’Connell and Kennedy using archaeological fish bones to examine changes in fishing practices over the past 2,500 years in the New Orleans area.



*UNO researchers’ analysis of sheepshead bones provides the earliest evidence of overfishing of the historically popular New Orleans fish. Most of the bones analyzed were recovered from archaeological sites in New Orleans, such as Passebon Cottage.*

Most of the sheepshead bones analyzed in the study are curated at UNO by Gray and many were recovered from archaeological sites in New Orleans by Gray and his students as part of archaeological sites around the city, such as the Passebon Cottage and 810 Royal Street. Gray, a leading expert in the archaeology of New Orleans, was responsible for determining what time period sheepshead bones dated from by examining site histories and the kinds of artifacts recovered from each site.

O’Connell is an expert on the various fish species of southeast Louisiana and helped the team interpret the archaeological data in the context of modern fish ecology in the area. For example, a chemical analysis of sheepshead bones showed that some sheepshead from the mid-19th century had a chemical signature unique to fish living in seagrass beds. O’Connell’s knowledge of southeast Louisiana fish ecology was critical in connecting these data with historic fishing activities in the Chandeleur Islands and other nearby locations where seagrass is common.

Kennedy’s work focused on identifying all sheepshead bones at the study sites by comparing archaeological fish bones to modern fish skeletons from known species, many of which were collected by O’Connell and his students.





## Indian Mounds of Bienville Parish

Chip McGimsey, Louisiana Division of Archaeology

Brad Dison, editor of the *Bienville Parish Journal* found a short article on the Indian mounds of Bienville Parish in the files of the State Library of Louisiana. It was written in 1935, probably by Lavinia Egan of Gibsland. It is filed with the papers of the Works Progress Administration, so was apparently written as part of a project during the Depression. It provides a brief overview of some known sites in and around Gibsland. Much of the information came from William Walker Todd of Gibsland, who later also assisted professional archaeologists record most of the sites. The article is reproduced below. The only edits are to add the state site numbers where appropriate.

*Numerous as are the Indian Mounds and Camp sites in Bienville Parish, their value to the archaeologist is still only a potential one, since none of the Mounds has ever been bisected and the Camp sites have been only cursorily investigated.*

*A hundred years ago, when the earliest settlers came to the region of which Bienville Parish, is a part, there were no Indian villages in the area, though hunters and trappers from the Caddo and allied tribes had made not infrequent excursions, camping here and there on sandy plateaus common to the locality, or beside the salt lick which abound near the streams and water-courses. Two well-defined Indian trails crossed the area from the Arkansas country above to the Natchitoches settlement below, one [in] Bienville Parish on the west and another on the east from the village of Mount Lebanon, which was the earliest established location in the region.*

*As recently as fifty years ago – as the writer of this continuity is aware of her own knowledge – it was not uncommon for children playing about the hillslopes or the sandy plateaus at Mount Lebanon or other of the older settlements, to come upon bleached and broken human bones or to pick up bits of rock crystal and arrow-heads and bird-points with which the surface of the terrain at that time may be said to have abounded. At a much more recent date – even at the present time, in fact – arrow-heads continue to be turned up by the plow at various localities and in*

*greater or less abundance through the area. But, since both of the Colleges at Mount Lebanon ceased to operate at the time of the Civil War, and, thereafter, the local schools of the parish did not include the teaching of the natural as part of their curricula, no interest in archaeology was aroused by the specimens that were found, and that constituted a part of every child's "play things" for a time to be treasured and again lost or merged into the lore of the country-side.*

*(For the following detailed data on the Indian Mounds and Camp Sites of the locality, the writer of this continuity is indebted to Mr. William Walker Todd of Gibsland, well-known musician, a member of the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra, and instructor of music at Gibsland High School. Mr. Todd is interested in local archaeology as a hobby and has collected some interesting specimens from the surface of Mounds and Camp Sites in the vicinity of Gibsland and Mount Lebanon.)*

*At the eastern extremity of Gibsland, as Highway 80 crosses the railroad tracks, on the right and lying between the track of the Illinois Central and the Louisiana and Northwestern railroads, an Indian Mound [can] be clearly distinguished [16IB90, Gibsland Mound]. This mound, covered with a growth of trees and shrubs, is on land belonging to Smith Gibbs, a local Negro. The mound, which is domiciliary in character, is ovate in form, with base about 100 by 50 or 60 feet, and 12 or more feet in height, and more or less flat on top. Numerous potsherds, arrow-heads and bird-points have been found on this mound.*

*Also east of Gibsland and about one and a half miles south of Highway 80, on the farm of Mr. Arch Greer, is located what, so far as is known, is the largest camp site and burial mound in Bienville Parish [16BI1, Arch Greer site]. Here have been found whole pottery bowls, one "wagon-wheel" composed of five skeletons, and bones in such quantities as to give evidence that a massacre must have taken place here. There is also evidence of the continuance of this mound across Black Lake bayou on the place of Mr. Will Foster [not recorded].*

About one mile west of Gibsland, south of Highway 80, on the farm of Mr. J.P. Colbert, is a camp site unusual in that it is located on top of a hill [16IB2, Colbert place]. Here were found numbers of burial sites, evidence of pottery making, pot-sherds in vast quantities, and the only specimen of Hopewell cultural to be found in North Louisiana. Specimens from this site have been sent to the Smithsonian Institution.

About one mile west of this location, or two miles west of Gibsland, on both sides of Highway 80, on land belonging to Mrs. T.S. Walker, Jr., of Gibsland, and Mrs. Viola Walker Washburn of Monroe, is a large camp site extending three quarters to a mile in length, where bones, fragments and flints were found [16IBB7, Walker-Washburn place]. Domiciliary evidences were very clearly discernable here. This site was unknown until 1933. During the spring of that year unusual freshets caused the surrounding streams to overflow their banks and submerge the land for a considerable period. When the water at length receded, washing much of the topsoil along with it, the remains of former Indian domiciles were exposed and the site was investigated. Apparently a succession of domiciles was erected upon the same site, remains of several houses having been exposed by the reeding waters.

About 9 miles distinct from Gibsland, or 7 miles west of Mount Lebanon, on a country road leading west of State Highway 418, on the farm of a Negro, Herbert Matthews, below the place of Mr. Carroll Carter, is located a Temple Mound, pyramidal in shape, rising 18 feet in height from a 70 foot base to a plateau approximately 36 by 36 feet square [perhaps 16IB6]. Several diggings were made into this mound extending to a depth of 6 to 8 feet, but nothing was found except one or two bits of rock crystal such as were used by the Indians in their religious and burial ceremonies. Incidentally, it may be stated here, that all bits of rock crystal found in this area must have been brought from Hot springs, Arkansas, which was the source of supply of this material for the Caddos and allied tribes.

Adjacent to this Temple Mound on the south is a camp site extending over about two acres, where

fragments of bones, pot-sherds and points were found in abundance [site not recorded].

The old village of Mount Lebanon is said to be especially rich in Indian relics, many interesting points and other specimens having been found on the hillslopes surrounding "Erinville", the home-farm settled in 1847 by Dr. Bartholomew Egan, a native of Killarney, Ireland, who emigrated to America in 1819, settling first in Virginia, which he removed to Louisiana.

Perhaps the most interesting find in the whole Bienville Parish area is that of a type of point called locally "fish-tail" point, which seems to be peculiar to the section. About an inch and a half in length, divided or "fish-tailed" at the base and sloping gradually to a blunt point, they represent, so far as is known, an individual flint culture. They have been found west of Gibsland on Highway 80 around Taylor and northward as far as the Claiborne Parish line.

Among the artifacts in the collection of Mr. Todd at Gibsland, or that have been found in Bienville Parish and fully identified are:

- Flints, ranging from 8 inches to the tiniest bird-points, hardly a quarter of an inch in length.
- An agricultural implement resembling a hoe.
- Spear-heads from 8 inches to less.
- Knives, both hunting and war points.
- Unusual number of bird-points – found in burial mounds.
- Various types of perforators or drills.
- Great number of sandstone celts.
- Chisels, from very small to as large as 12 inches in length.
- Some ceremonial celts of highly polished stone.
- Portion of butter-fly type bannerstone.
- One very finely finished ovate gorget.
- One well-drilled large bead, ½ of an inch in diameter.
- Axes and tomahawks of various sizes.
- One plummet.
- A number of stone pipes.

It is interesting to note that no boatstones were found in any of the mounds or camp sites.



Although most of the sites mentioned in the preceding article have been recorded, this article provides more information on each than the current site form. None of the sites have been visited since their initial documentation in the mid-1900s. Clarence Webb recorded 16IB1, the Arch Greer site, in 1935 and noted a burial with two bowls had been recently found. A collection at the Williamson Museum, Northwestern State University, includes two reconstructed late pre-contact ceramic vessels (which may or may not be the bowls noted by Webb) and two boxes of ceramic and lithic artifacts. Analysis of this collection is a future project.

Mr. William Todd's collection is housed at the Lincoln Parish Museum in Ruston (Jeff Girard, personal

communication, 2021). None of the artifacts are labeled as to which site they came from, and it is not possible to segregate the collection into site assemblages.

The article also mentions that several items had been sent to the Smithsonian Institution. In 2001, I had the opportunity to visit the Smithsonian and was provided with a copy of the artifact catalog from Louisiana. Unfortunately, there are no artifacts listed as being from Bienville Parish.

Mr. Dison is hoping to contact the landowners of the site identified in this article and to obtain permission for us to visit them. Hopefully, there will be an update in a future newsletter.



## Poverty Point WHS in the News

Mark A. Rees, LAS Newsletter Editor

Research at Poverty Point, recently published in *Southeastern Archaeology*, is drawing the attention of science journalists and news media, including [Nature](#), the [Smithsonian magazine](#), and [New York Post](#). A [press release](#) from Washington University in St. Louis states the new findings “paint a drastically different picture of America’s first civilization.” The two recent articles in *Southeastern Archaeology* are based in part on geoarchaeological analyses of Ridge West 3 (RW3) and geophysical remote sensing in the plaza and innermost ridges.

The first [article](#), by Michael Hargrave, R. Berle Clay, Rinita Dalan, and Diana Greenlee (2021), examines the construction history of Poverty Point’s timber circles and monumental concentric ridges through magnetic gradient surveys, magnetic susceptibility studies, coring, and excavations. Poverty Point’s massive plaza had at least 36 timber circles, some as large as 62 m (203.4 ft) in diameter. Their research indicates some timber circles were rebuilt, while portions of some ridges were built in multiple episodes, repaired, and removed. According to the authors, the two innermost ridges were the earliest, with “evidence for longer, more complex construction histories than the outer ridges.”

The second [article](#), by T.R. Kidder and colleagues (Kidder et al. 2021), is based on geoarchaeological

analyses and the re-excavation and reanalysis of a unit excavated in RW3 by Jon Gibson in 1991. Gibson (1993) had concluded RW3 was constructed quickly. By radiocarbon dating and using new methods, such as magnetic susceptibility and micromorphology, the authors of the new study found evidence for the “exceptionally rapid” construction of RW3.

Together, these two studies add to the accumulating evidence that the construction of Poverty Point’s monumental architecture was more rapid but also much more complex than previously suspected.

## References Cited

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1993 In Helena’s Shadow: Excavations in the Western Rings of Poverty Point, 1991. Center for Archaeological Studies, Report 11. Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette.
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- Kidder, Tristram R. Su Kai, Edward R. Henry, Seth B. Grooms, and Kelly Ervin  
2021 Multi-method geoarchaeological analyses demonstrates exceptionally rapid construction of Ridge West 3 at Poverty Point. *Southeastern Archaeology* 40(3):212-227. DOI:10.1080/0734578X.2021.1958445; <https://doi.org/10.1080/0734578X.2021.1958445>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MEETINGS

**Avocational Researcher Seeking Partners to Record Sites in Tensas Parish**

Frank McMains

Tensas Parish in northeast Louisiana has been the subject of archaeological analyses since at least the steamboat-borne explorations of C.B. Moore, followed by more work by Harvard and Tulane universities. The parish is rural, sparsely populated, and largely given over to large-scale farming. I have been lucky enough to get access to substantial parts of this farmland. There are village and hamlet sites dating from the late Coles Creek period to the Marksville period and earlier, with artifacts generously sprinkled across the landscape.

I have been documenting these sites through surface collection, drone photography, and 3D modeling. I am posting the results to shareable databases and public websites. You can see models of some of the artifacts at: <https://sketchfab.com/frankmcmains>

I would like to share this information with people who would find it interesting or useful. The artifacts in Figures 1-4 were surface collected from sites in Tensas Parish. Please contact me if anything mentioned above would be helpful, or if you would like to collaborate on recording sites in Tensas Parish.

Email Frank McMains at: [frankmcmains@gmail.com](mailto:frankmcmains@gmail.com)

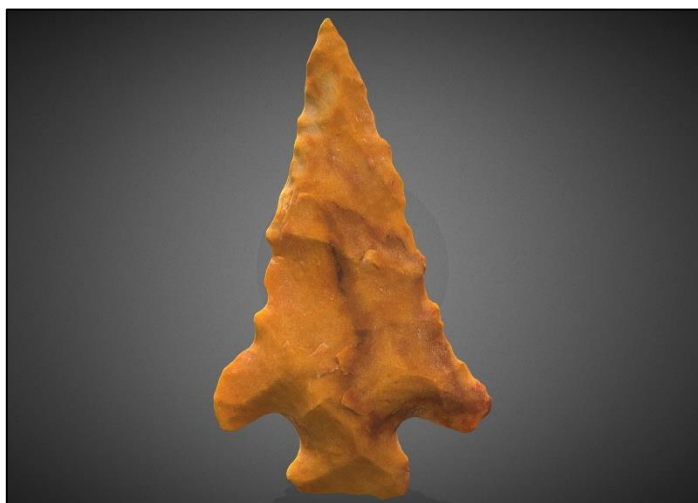


Figure 1. Partly scalloped agate bird point, Scallorn type, from site 16TE120. Coles Creek period, c. 700-1200 CE (29 by 16 mm, 0.9 g).

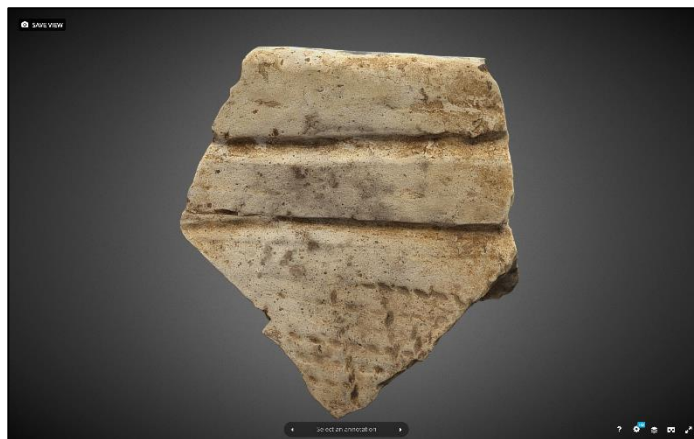


Figure 2. Mabin Stamped, var. Mabin, pottery rim sherd from site 16TE197. Early Marksville period, c. 1-200 CE.



Figure 3. French Fork Incised, var. Laborde, pottery rim sherd from site 16TE37. Early Coles Creek period, c. 700 CE - 1000 CE (41 by 37 by 6 mm, 9.9 g).

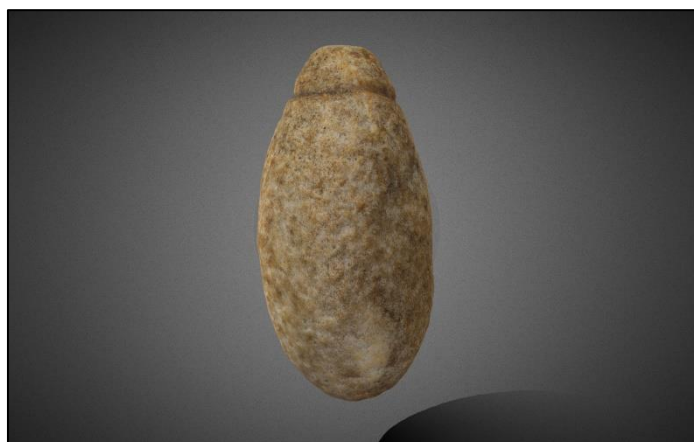


Figure 4. Sandstone plummet from site 16TE197, probably late Marksville or Baytown period



## Volunteers Needed in Avoyelles Parish

Chip McGimsey, Louisiana State Archaeologist, and Jim Fogleman with the LAS are looking for volunteers to help with the excavation of cultural features at the Mildred Jackson site (16AV155). The site is located between a Pleistocene terrace and the Red River floodplain in southern Avoyelles Parish, just north of Goudeau, LA. Artifacts at the site date from Early Woodland Tchefuncte and Middle Woodland Marksville occupations (500 BCE – 400 CE).



A fired clay-lined circular feature (above photo) was investigated in 2018 and radiocarbon dated to 100 BCE-70 CE. Two similar cultural features have recently been discovered at the site.

- Fieldwork is scheduled for three days, on Friday through Sunday, October 1 – 3, 2021, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (weather permitting).
- Email Chip McGimsey at [cmcgimsey@crt.la.gov](mailto:cmcgimsey@crt.la.gov) or text 225-454-9274 if you would like to help dig, screen, investigate, and/or document these features.



## Invitation to Publish Research in Louisiana Archaeology

**Louisiana Archaeology**, the peer-reviewed, annual bulletin of the Louisiana Archaeological Society is accepting article manuscripts and reports on archaeological research related to Louisiana, the Lower Mississippi Valley, and north-central Gulf Coast. The Bulletin Contributor Guidelines can be found on the LAS website at:

<https://www.laarchaeologicalsociety.org/>

Inquiries and submissions should be emailed to the editor at: [laarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:laarchaeology@gmail.com)

## Arkansas Archeological Society

The AAS held a virtual meeting in September of 2021. Participants were able to watch the keynote presentation *via* Zoom live stream. A number of interesting video presentations of possible interest to LAS members have been posted on YouTube by the AAS. Check out the [AAS website](#) and [2021 meeting link](#) to watch the video presentations on YouTube.

## Texas Archeological Society

*October 22 – 23, 2021*

The 92<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the TAS will be held virtually on Friday afternoon, October 22, and all day Saturday, October 23, via Zoom and YouTube Livestream. The [TAS website](#) has information on registration, the benefits of online participation, and a preliminary schedule for the TAS [annual meeting](#).

## Southeastern Archaeological Conference

*October 24 – 27, 2021*

The 77<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of SEAC will be held at the Durham Convention Center in Durham, North Carolina. The 2020 meeting in Durham was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out the [SEAC website](#) for [conference information](#), registration, and updates.

## Mississippi Archaeological Association

*Spring 2022*

The 2022 meeting of the MAA will be held at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum on Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The [MAA website](#) has information on scheduling and registration.

## Society for American Archaeology

*March 30 – April 3, 2022*

The 87<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the SAA will be held in Chicago, Illinois. The 2021 annual meeting was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The [preliminary program](#) for 2022 is now available online. Check out the [SAA website](#) for [meeting information](#), registration, and updates.

## Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Archaeological Society



**February 11-13, 2022**  
**Baton Rouge, LA**

The annual meeting of the LAS is scheduled for **February 11-13, 2022** at the [Hilton](#) Baton Rouge Capitol Center downtown, [201 Lafayette Street](#). A block of hotel rooms has been set aside for Friday and Saturday at \$139.00 per night. Booking code information will be posted soon on the [LAS website](#) and Facebook. Registration will be available on the [LAS website](#) and late registration will be available on-site Friday afternoon and Saturday morning.

The deadline to submit a presentation is **January 24, 2022**. Paper titles and abstracts should be submitted to the organizer, Rachel Watson, by email at [rwatson@crt.la.gov](mailto:rwatson@crt.la.gov) or Abbie Bleichner at [ableichner@crt.la.gov](mailto:ableichner@crt.la.gov).

As usual, a book and display room will be set up. Coffee and light breakfast foods will be provided on Saturday morning, with coffee offered again in the afternoon, followed by a reception with appetizers in the early evening. The guest speaker and Sunday tour will be announced soon. Check the [LAS website](#) for additional details and updates.

### **Tentative Schedule:**

#### Friday, February 11

3:30 – 7:00 pm: Registration

4:00 – 5:00 pm: LAS Executive Meeting

#### Saturday, February 12

8:00 – 9:00 am: Registration

9:00 – 12:00 pm: Morning Session Presentations

9:00 – 12:00 pm: Book and Display Room

12:00 – 1:30 pm: Lunch (everyone on their own)

1:30 – 5:00 pm: Afternoon Session Presentations

1:30 – 5:00 pm: Book and Display Room

5:00 – 6:00 pm: Reception

6:00 – 7:00 pm: Guest Speaker (to be announced)

#### Sunday, February 13

Tour: time and place to be announced soon!



**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND DUES RENEWAL – LOUISIANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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Visit the [LAS website](https://www.laarchaeologicalsociety.org/) at <https://www.laarchaeologicalsociety.org/> to join, renew, and order publications.**Membership Category:**

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**Back issues of the LAS bulletin, *Louisiana Archaeology*, are available for \$8.00 each.***Note: Out-of-print publications are available as free PDFs from the [LAS website](https://www.laarchaeologicalsociety.org/) (see out-of-print bulletins).*

No.	Year	Order	No.	Year	Order	No.	Year	Order	No.	Year	Order
1	1974	out-of-print	15	1988		29	2002		43	2016	
2	1975	out-of-print	16	1989		30	2003		44	2017	
3	1976	out-of-print	17	1990		31	2004		45	2018	
4	1977	out-of-print	18	1991		32	2005		46	2019	
5	1978	out-of-print	19	1992		33	2006		47	2020	
6	1979	out-of-print	20	1993		34	2007				
7	1980	out-of-print	21	1994		35	2008				
8	1981		22	1995		36	2009				
9	1982		23	1996		37	2010				
10	1983	out-of-print	24	1997		38	2011				
11	1984		25	1998		39	2012				
12	1985	out-of-print	26	1999		40	2013				
13	1986		27	2000		41	2014				
14	1987		28	2001		42	2015				

*Special Publication No. 1: Stone Points and Tools of Northwestern Louisiana* (\$4.00 each) Order: \_\_\_\_\_*Special Publication No. 2: Celebration of a Decade of Achievement* (out-of-print)*Special Publication No. 3: Louisiana's Archaeological Radiometric Database* (\$4.00 each) Order: \_\_\_\_\_*Special Publication No. 4: The Petite Anse Project* (\$40.00 each) Order: \_\_\_\_\_

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The *Newsletter of the Louisiana Archaeological Society* is published digitally three times a year for the society. Subscription is by membership in the Louisiana Archaeological Society (LAS). Annual membership dues are \$30 for individuals, \$5 for associated family members, \$15 for students (with valid student ID), \$45 for institutions such as libraries and universities. Life memberships for individuals or institutions are \$300. In addition to the newsletter, members receive one issue per year of the LAS bulletin, *Louisiana Archaeology*. Membership requests, dues, changes of address, and back issue bulletin orders should be directed to the LAS Treasurer. Unless otherwise indicated, opinions stated in the Newsletter and bulletin are those of the authors or editor and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints, positions, or policies of the LAS.

### Information for Contributors

Email all news, notes, reports, and *Newsletter* correspondence to:  
[laarchaeology@gmail.com](mailto:laarchaeology@gmail.com). Submissions should be in MS Word.

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