

First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project 2007-2009: Report on Archaeological and Historical Investigations and Other Project Activities



by Chuck Meide, Samuel P. Turner, and P. Brendan Burke



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and Other Project Activities**

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St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum
St. Augustine, Florida

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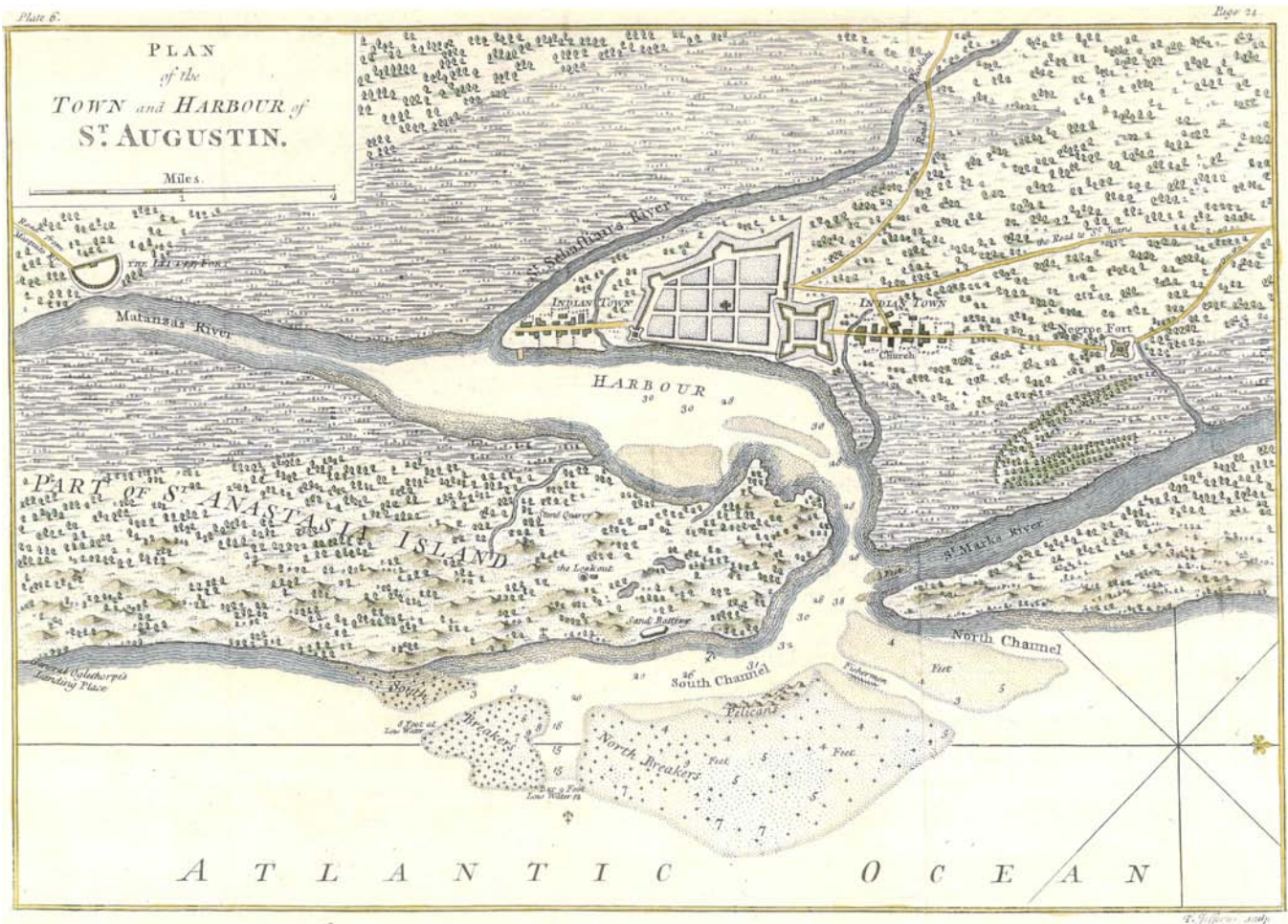
Thank you to former Volunteer Coordinator at the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, Debe Thompson. We owe much of our success to you. You may be succeeded, but never replaced. Likewise, thank you to all of the volunteers who have contributed so much time, effort, and expertise to LAMP’s and the Lighthouse’s research and educational programs. Your numbers are legion and we appreciate every one of you.

A very warm thanks to Kathy Fleming, the Executive Director of the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum. Her vision and leadership have shaped the oldest port city’s understanding of its rich history. Thank you also to the current and former members of the Board of Trustees, including Major General Gerald Maloney (Chair), Deborah Adams, Douglas Burnett, Charles Cox, Carey Cramer, Andy DeLorenzo, Joe Finnegan (Treasurer), Theresa Floyd (Secretary), Ray Hamel, Shorty Robbins, Dr. Graig Shaak, Karen Strandhagen (Vice Chair), Captain Gregory Streeter, Captain Michael Usina, Amy Marie Vo, and Andrea Westbrook.

Finally, a wholehearted thank-you to the entire staff of the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum. We have the greatest team imaginable to fulfill our mission of discovering, preserving, presenting, and keeping alive the story of our nation’s oldest port. It is an honor to work with such a dedicated and talented group of professionals.

Part I.

Introduction and Background Information



Introduction

Project Area and Environmental Overview

Regional Cultural and Maritime History of St. Augustine and the First Coast

Previous Maritime Archaeological Research

Previously Identified Maritime Archaeological Sites in the First Coast

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

America is a maritime nation, and no appreciation of American history is possible without understanding the story of America and the sea. This story began more than two centuries before the birth of our nation, on a stretch of Floridian coastline known today as Florida's First Coast. This expanse of white sandy beaches, navigable rivers, marine hammock, and estuarine wetlands was the first coast in the present-day United States to be successfully settled by the burgeoning influx of Europeans whose colonization would so shape the history of both New and Old Worlds. The waters off St. Augustine have been considered so historically significant that in 1968 the legislature designated them one of only four State of Florida Archaeological Reserves (Florida Division of Archives 1975; Singer 1998:342).

The First Coast Maritime Archaeology Project (FCMAP) was an comprehensive 2.5-year program of archaeological research and educational outreach focusing on the maritime heritage of Florida's First Coast, and particularly that of St. Augustine, the oldest port in the United States, and its immediate surrounding region. This project was carried out by the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP) in conjunction with its parent organization, the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum (SALH), after being awarded a Special Category Historic Preservation Grant (No. SC808) through the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, with assistance from the Florida Historical Commission.

Meaningful archaeological research was the core work of this project. Ambitious goals had been set by FCMAP research designers, including the completion of 90 days of site investigation and/or excavation, 60 days of remote sensing survey, 60 days of target testing, and between 1 and 5 days of site monitoring per month over the original two year grant period (subsequently extended to 2.5 years). Despite the many challenges inherit with implementing multiple archaeological projects in the marine environment, these goals were met or exceeded with the sole exception of target testing (68% of intended objective was accomplished). During the course of FCMAP, from 1 July 2007 through 31 December 2009, project staff completed 95 days of site investigation/excavation, 93 days of survey, 41 days of target testing, and 58 days of monitoring (an average of 2.4 days per month). Site investigations included the terrestrial excavation of a riverine farmstead and wharf complex dating to the 18th and 19th centuries, and both the non-intrusive survey and excavation of a variety of shipwrecks located in both inshore and offshore environments. Over the duration of the project, 824 individual dives were completed for a total of 669.5 hours of underwater time, without a single diving-related injury or accident.

In addition to diving and terrestrial site investigations, over 300 linear miles in more than 25 search areas were surveyed with side scan sonar, magnetometer, and sub-bottom profiler. Offshore survey activities resulted in 128 magnetic, 4 sidescan sonar, and 181 subbottom profiler anomalies. More targets were identified in a number of inland waterway surveys. Target testing led to the discovery of one shipwreck and several possible sites, and many more targets were identified which will be tested in future years. FCMAP activities lead to the reporting of four new sites and the updating of 12 site file forms.

FCMAP also funded a number of archival research trips to various archives across the U.S. and in London and Seville. This has resulted in a wealth of new documents related to the maritime history of the First Coast which are currently being organized and transcribed. Stored on the LAMP server are 5863 digital images (11.23 gigs) of British documents (Admiralty, Colonial Office, and Treasury records), 2171 images (12.31 gigs) of Spanish documents (most dating to the 16th century), and 1953

images (5.36 gigs) of 19th century U.S. documents (commerce, naval, and newspaper records). This represents as many as 19,974 pages, and much of the microfilm from Spain has not yet been digitized. Eventually all documents will be translated and made available to the public at LAMP's George R. Fischer Research Library.

The other fundamental aspect of this project was public archaeology. Whenever possible, members of the public were directly involved with FCMAP research. During the course of the project, 64 volunteers contributed 4231.59 hrs, in 2008 57 volunteers gave 4342.85 hrs, and in 2009 142 volunteers gave 5012.5 hrs, for a total of 179 volunteers contributing 13,586.94 hrs. Dozens of these volunteers were divers, who underwent a training program and worked side by side with project archaeologists. The project was particularly committed to fostering the education of the next generation of archaeologists, employing 11 graduate and undergraduate interns from 7 universities across Florida, the U.S., and abroad. Three summer Field Schools were taught to a total of 18 students, accredited through Plymouth State University in New Hampshire and Flinders University in South Australia. In addition to education at the college level, the project sponsored 4 semesters of an underwater archaeology class at Pedro Menéndez High School in St. Johns County. Project staff taught a total of 95 students on a several times a week, and 38 of these students participated in a scuba certification class with opportunities to dive on historic shipwreck sites. Several of these students went on to volunteer as divers and in the laboratory after they finished the class. At the elementary school level, project staff designed and produced two complete "Travelling Sea Chests" designed to be shipped from school to school in order to reach great numbers of students across the state. FCMAP archaeologists also initiated a heritage boatbuilding program, which attracted participants of all ages, but particularly retired adults. They built 5 traditional wooden craft during the course of the project period. The project also sponsored two Symposiums and an ongoing lecture series, for a total of 263 presentations and public events reaching an aggregate audience of 9,721. In addition, an extensive amount of information was disseminated to an even wider audience through the project webpage and blog. Eighty-seven individual blog updates were published, often with extensive text, photos, and video, to share with the world the latest project activities. Finally, project staff hosted a documentary film crew who visited during the 2009 diving season, and production is currently underway on a documentary titled "The Search for the *Jefferson Davis*," to be released in summer 2010.

This report is a comprehensive summary of all project activities, with a particular focus on archaeological and historical investigations. The first section of the report consists of introductory and background information, including overviews of the physical landscape, culture histories, and previous archaeological research of the project area. This is followed by a section summarizing the various remote sensing surveys conducted during the project, and the field testing of targets identified during survey. The third section summarizes the archaeological investigations of sites discovered during the course of the project, along with investigations and monitoring activities carried out on previously identified sites. The fourth section provides a methodological overview of the conservation of archaeological objects completed and still underway in the LAMP Conservation Laboratory, and provides all relevant project artifact catalogs. The fifth section focuses on the historical research carried out in various archival depositories in the USA and Europe, summarizing work completed and providing preliminary documentary analysis. This section also summarizes the ethnographic or oral history research into the 20th century shrimping and boatbuilding industries that were both unique and economically vital to the First Coast region. The sixth and final section summarizes the wide array of public outreach and educational activities and events enacted as part of project activities.