



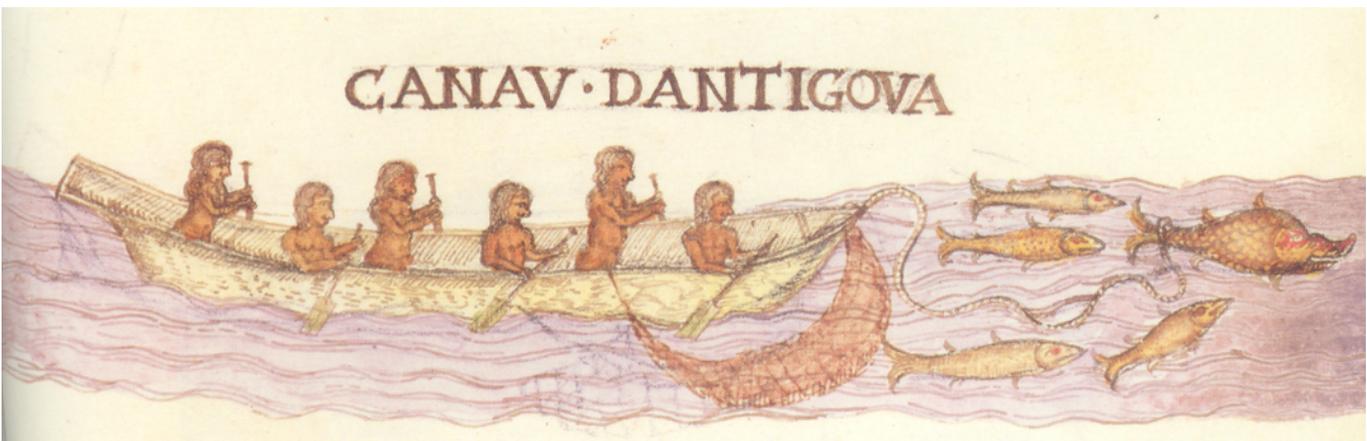
## Dugout Canoe, Prehistoric Period - 20th Century



Archaeologists from LAMP and the St. Johns County record a historic canoe at the Alligator Farm. This appears to be the same canoe seen in the banner image above, which was photographed in St. Augustine in the late 1800s.

The dugout canoe, or log boat, is one of the simplest and earliest forms of watercraft used by humans. Dugouts were the primary boat used throughout the Americas before the arrival of Europeans and played an essential role in Native American riverine trade networks spanning across the eastern half of the present U.S. The earliest archaeological examples of this type of watercraft in the New World come from DeLeon Springs, Florida, where two specimens have been dated to over 6,000 years ago. This type of vessel was hollowed out from a felled tree using a tedious process of burning with fire and scraping the charred wood away with shells. After the introduction of European iron tools, construction was rendered much easier and faster. The size of a dugout was limited by the dimensions of available trees; Columbus witnessed 100' long canoes with dozens of paddlers in the Caribbean. Dugouts were also common throughout West Africa and enslaved Africans brought canoe-building traditions with them from the coasts and river deltas of their stolen homeland. The combination of Indian, African and European boatbuilding skills resulted in an increasingly sophisticated dugout canoe. Metal tools were used to shape the outside of the log, flatten the bottom to decrease draft and weight and increase stability, and shape the bow and stern ends to increase seaworthiness. Planks could be added along the upper sides of the dugout to increase freeboard and breadth and the canoe could also be equipped with pole masts and leeboard in order to sail. Thus this native boat design was

much used throughout the colonial and territorial periods by a culturally diverse population. Spanish documents from 1602 mention locally-built small and medium-sized canoas owned by the government of St. Augustine, the latter used "as a sentinel off the bar." The term *periagua*, or *periager*, (from Spanish *piragua* derived from the Carib term for large canoe) came to be used by English colonists for large dugouts propelled by sail and oars which were often used as scout boats and during the attacks on St. Augustine from the Carolinas and Georgia in the 1700s. In St. Augustine, dugouts continued to be used for transport, work and racing through the 19th and into the 20th centuries, evidenced by a number of historic photographs and a surviving specimen (pictured above) once owned by the Alligator Farm and in 2009 transferred to LAMP for recording, conservation and eventual display.



Late 16th-century depiction of Native Americans fishing from a dugout canoe from the *Histoire Naturelle des Indes* (*Natural History of the Indies*). Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library.