Editor’s Note

Dear ICA Members,

We hope that this edition of The Current finds you well. Our issue this fall presents a few research highlights from ongoing coastal research from the US Southeast. Please consider submitting these or other types of content (e.g., research highlights, conference announcements, field school opportunities, etc.). As we continue to rebuild the newsletter, we need the membership to contribute your own research and collaborative opportunities with others. Again, we cannot thank Elizabeth Moore enough for her excellent job in soliciting contributions and editing the newsletter.

It’s never too early to let us know about a fieldschool to share, a public talk to advertise, or a special issue, edited volume, or other collaborative opportunity. This will be especially true leading up to the release of the Spring ’24 issue of The Current. While we’ve highlighted our sponsored symposium in this issue, we want to feature other relevant sessions in the lead up to New Orleans 2024. So please send us the details of your session. Also, take some time to consider if you would like to volunteer some of your time to help facilitate the interest group. You can reach out to either of your chairs from more info!

Thanks for your participation in the interest group and we hope you enjoy this issue of The Current,

Brandon T. Ritchison, Ph.D., RPA
& Carey Garland, Ph.D.
Co-Chairs

Elizabeth Moore, Ph.D., RPA
Editor
The Island and Coastal Archaeology Interest Group has one sponsored session at the upcoming meetings. Join your colleagues at this session!

**Underwater and Coastal Archaeology in Latin America**  
Organizers: Dolores Elkin and Christophe Delaere

**Abstract EN:**  
Since Margaret Leshikar-Denton and Pilar Luna Erreguerena released their edited volume "Underwater and Maritime Archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean" in 2008, the number of archaeological practices and research topics in the region has grown significantly over the past decades. We now have a prolific and balanced sample of case studies concerning Latin American underwater heritage. The spatial and temporal scope addressed by archaeology continually expands, ranging from the Mexican highlands to Patagonia, and from pre-Hispanic to historical periods. Material remains and underwater cultural landscapes, as well as coastal ones, are now fully incorporated into the study and interpretation of human societies. The underwater material evidence from pre-Hispanic societies in Latin America has become more plentiful, underscoring that the region had a long-standing tradition of practices and beliefs centered around the exploitation and management of aquatic environments. Today, the underwater and coastal landscapes, whether from maritime, lacustrine, or fluvial contexts, are among the primary and indispensable resources for many scientific disciplines, offering deeper insights into the dynamic interplay between humans and their environments over time.

**Abstract ES:**  
Desde que Margaret Leshikar-Denton y Pilar Luna Erreguerena publicaron su volumen editado "Underwater and Maritime Archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean" en 2008, el número de prácticas arqueológicas y temas de investigación en la región ha crecido significativamente en las últimas décadas. Ahora contamos con una colección prolífica y equilibrada de estudios de caso relacionados con el patrimonio subacuático de América Latina. El alcance espacial y temporal abordado por la arqueología se expande continuamente, desde las tierras altas de México hasta la Patagonia, y desde periodos prehispánicos hasta históricos. Los restos materiales y los paisajes culturales subacuáticos y costeros están ahora plenamente incorporados en el estudio e
interpretación de las sociedades humanas. La evidencia material subacuática de las sociedades prehispánicas en América Latina se ha vuelto más abundante, destacando que la región tuvo una larga tradición de prácticas y creencias centradas en la explotación y gestión de ambientes acuáticos. Hoy en día, los paisajes subacuáticos y costeros, ya sean de contextos marítimos, lacustres o fluviales, son uno de los principales e indispensables recursos para muchas disciplinas científicas, ofreciendo una comprensión más profunda de la interacción dinámica entre humanos y sus entornos a lo largo del tiempo.

The Southeast Archaeology Conference wants to hear from you!

In order to learn more about the needs of SEAC members and the greater archaeological community, the Heritage at Risk Task Force has created a survey on your experiences and needs in addressing climate change impacts to cultural resources. The survey includes 12 multiple choice questions plus demographic information.
Digging into daily life at Pocotaligo, an early 18th century capital town of the Yamasee in the South Carolina Lowcountry

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In the 17th and 18th century southeast US, the volatility of the Indian slave and fur trades contributed to the emergence of several powerful Native nations. This includes the Yamasee, a community of ancestrally diverse people who migrated to, and built a nation in, the Port Royal Sound of South Carolina at the turn of the 18th century. Over the next two decades, Yamasees played an outsized role in shaping the emergent political economy of the region while securing their new homeland through strategic alliance-building and the expansion of group membership (Bossy 2018).

In 1715, war erupted from the Yamasee capital town of Pocotaligo with the murdereding of Carolinian diplomats and quickly embroiled Southeastern Native communities in a several years conflict with the Carolina colony. The Yamasee War realigned geopolitical relationships in North America and signaled a shift from the Indian slave trade to the trans-Atlantic (Ramsey 2010). My research explores this critical twenty-year period (1695-1715) of Yamasee nation-building in the...
Port Royal Sound by focusing on daily life and the small-scale networks, relationships, and shared practices that connected diverse Yamasee households within and across six archaeologically located Yamasee towns.

This summer, I conducted a third and final season of dissertation fieldwork at Pocotaligo on the Mackay Point Plantation. Joined by over 30 volunteers, we conducted magnetic gradiometer survey and excavated in six areas across this large, 45-hectare town site with the goal of sampling domestic contexts. We identified three structures, two of which are households that likely constituted a residential unit. A nearby shell midden and several smudge pits provide additional insight into household activities along the marsh’s edge. From these contexts and the legacy collections of five other Yamasee sites, future analysis will focus on practices of household ceramic production, foodways, and architecture. These data are a snapshot into Yamasee daily life during a period of community and regional transformation; they also provide the basis for rightsholders and local stakeholders to build and share new understandings of the Yamasee that deviate from past narratives that overly emphasize the Indian slave trade and war.

Figure 2. Student Thea Bilich demonstrating the difference between sand and puddled clay on “Friends and Family Day.” (Photo courtesy Hannah Hoover)

Figure 3. Students Taylor Moore, Sebastian Hammond, Megan Wilson, and Thea Bilich excavating a unit along the marsh’s edge. (Photo courtesy Hannah Hoover)
A biscuit or a pancake – either way, a first for Jamestown archaeologists!

Leah Stricker
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While assessing and identifying corals in the Jamestown Rediscovery archaeological collection, Curator Leah Stricker came across something intriguing. Unlike the typically cobble-sized corals she had been finding, two extremely small fragments with characteristics unlike any of the previously identified corals appeared at the bottom of an artifact bag.

It is not unusual to find corals in archaeological contexts at the first permanent English settlement in North America. The colonists brought cobble-sized corals with them in the early 17th century as ballast, and picked up smaller fragments as “curios”: souvenirs of their travels. Coral was also valued in the 17th century for medicinal uses and as protective talismans. In a collection that includes over 4 million artifacts, there are at least 200 fragments of coral, most of which are identified as *Acropora palmata* (Elkhorn coral) or *Acropora cervicornis* (Staghorn coral).

The two tiny fragments that were found at the bottom of a large bag of cobble sized corals were most certainly not coral. Staff speculated that the fragments were part of a sand dollar or a starfish. Thanks to Dr. Rich Mooi, Curator of Echinoderms, Department of Invertebrate Zoology & Geology at the California Academy of Sciences, we can confirm that these small fragments are in fact two pieces of the test, or skeleton, of a sea biscuit (*Clypeaster* sp.).

These fragments were excavated from a context that dates them to ca. 1610-1617, more than likely toward the earlier end of that date range, based on their depth and associated artifacts in the ground. They had been discarded, perhaps unknowingly, into a feature that once served as a well for freshwater on Jamestown Island, but was filled with trash after the well no longer provided potable water or was otherwise unused.

The size of the fragments makes identification to genus or species level challenging. Although fossils are present in the local geological strata and are also recovered archaeologically at Jamestown, there is little evidence to suggest that sea biscuits have been recovered from nearby
Cenozoic deposits. Both Mooi and Stricker agree that the fragments do not appear to be fossilized, although without further analysis the possibility cannot be ruled out entirely.

Other materials in the Jamestown collection provide hints to the potential origin of these tiny sea biscuit fragments. Like corals, fossils, unusual shells, stones, or minerals, these sea biscuits could have been purchased or personally gathered by an Englishman to include in a “cabinet of curiosity”. Like our own pockets full of seashells after a beach vacation, or collections of knick-knacks cluttering our desks, 17th century individuals gathered interesting items as a way of representing their travels, their worldliness, and their wealth.

There are about 40 sea biscuit species known today. If these fragments are not fossilized, as we suspect, they are perhaps *C. subdepressus*, which is found in shallow waters around Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico, and in the Caribbean. This species is relatively large and flat, lending it the colloquial name “sea pancake”. If the fragments came from Florida or the Caribbean, they may have been exchanged through many hands before finally arriving at Jamestown, Virginia. It is unknown whether sea biscuits held significance for Indigenous people across the East Coast of North America, but these fragments may represent local cultural interaction that occurred prior to the arrival of the English in 1607. Or perhaps they highlight a new European intrusion into existing communities and trade networks.

Whether these fragments are sea biscuits or pancakes is still to be determined, but these one-of-a-kind artifacts from the Jamestown Rediscovery collections tell a story much larger than their size would suggest.
Rescuing A Buried 19th Century Watercraft

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SEARCH
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As part of a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) archaeological monitoring project along King Street in historic St. Augustine, SEARCH, Inc. (SEARCH) identified a rare wooden sailing craft buried on what had once been the city’s waterfront. What followed was a systematic excavation that completely exposed the craft, pilings from the old waterfront, artifacts, and other items either thrown into the water or lost as people stepped on and off vessels tied at the original dock.

The boat was flat-bottomed and made of local soft wood, primarily pine. What survived was the bottom of the vessel, with some of the frames that reinforced the hull, the “trunk” with the remains of the centerboard and a curved “knee” that supported the bow. Two cut out “steps” indicated the position that the boat’s operator would have placed a single mast. Marine organisms had consumed the upper works before the vessel was filled over with sand, likely in the early twentieth century as the waterfront underwent another wave of development.

The vessel likely dates to the last quarter of the nineteenth century; 1869 and 1883 coins were found lying on it, and the pilings that pierced the hull are from a wharf that appears in an 1886...
photograph of the area. The craft is vernacular, likely locally built and similar in form to shallow draft, small craft engaged in local fishing and oyster harvesting. It also may have been used to transport goods to waterfront markets. Its simple form and construction indicates it was built by someone who knew how to build a boat, but who likely was not employed in a boat or shipbuilding yard. These type of craft were typically built by their owners.

Figure 7. Archaeologists Dr. Sam Turner, Dr. James Delgado, Greg Hendry, and Matt Mele from SEARCH, Inc., as well as Dr. Chuck Meide of LAMP, excavating the ship along its port (left) side. Palm log pilings driven into the wreck, possibly in the late 19th century, are visible alongside the team. (Photo courtesy Daniel Fiore (SEARCH, Inc.) & Florida Department of Transportation, District Two)

The postbellum era in the Southeastern Atlantic, especially the coast and waterways that stretched from Charleston to Jacksonville — including St. Augustine — were the home waters for a large number of craft just like this that worked the inshore tidal marshes, creeks, rivers, estuaries and sounds of the coast as well as ranging offshore. These fisheries were predominately worked by African Americans, some of whose families had worked the waters as enslaved fishers antebellum. Anthropologist Ben G. Blount of the University of Georgia, the leading scholar of such fishers and fisheries, has noted that African Americans “remained the major players in all respects in southeastern Atlantic coastal fishing...until more or less the end of the nineteenth century,” including “oystermen, who harvested oysters mostly during the winter months and in their own boats” (Blount 2000: 294-295).

Working with the FDOT construction team and volunteers from the St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP), SEARCH’s archaeologists carefully excavated the extremely fragile, water-soaked wooden craft, and systematically dismantled it after photogrammetrically documenting it in situ. The dismantled craft now rests in freshwater storage at LAMP’s St. Augustine facility as analysis continues.

1Erratum: Benjamin Blount resigned from the University of Georgia in 2004 following allegations of inappropriate behavior.
References

University of Illinois Southeastern and Midwestern Archaeology Lab’s 2023 Archaeology Field School

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During the Summer 2023 field season, students from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign performed multimethod surveying activities at two sites on Sapelo Island GA, USA: the Airstrip Field and Moses Hammock. Our activities were carried out for compliance and management purposes on behalf of the state of Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources.

In our work we investigated the changing nature of community organization along the Georgia Coast during the precolonial period as well as the incipient impacts of sea-level rise on coastal sites.

At Airstrip Field, students engaged in a variety of methods, including systematic shovel testing, soil probing, and magnetic gradiometry to identify and map a previously unknown cultural site and to located materials relating to the historic airfield’s infrastructure. All STs were positive for indigenous or historic materials and the magnetometer survey successfully identified strong magnetic signatures lining the airstrip, probably indicating lightbulb emplacements and their electrical wiring.
Moses Hammock is a small island connected to Sapelo via an artificial causeway and was targeted for archaeological testing due to previously documented erosional loss along its shoreline. Of the seventy-seven shovel tests excavated at Moses Hammock, 64 contained cultural materials including Indigenous ceramics and lithics, shell, and Historic Euro-American materials. A 1-x-4-m trench placed on the location of an anomaly identified in Ground Penetrating Radar survey. Subsequent excavation and probing revealed the anomaly to be a basal portion of an extensive sheet midden of oyster shell that extended over more than 30-m in diameter. This work will serve as a baseline to track ongoing impacts to the site due to sea level rise.
"This volume brings together a diverse range of specialists working in multiple areas of the Indian Ocean world, providing broad geographical coverage and comparisons across sites. Contributors use a historical archaeological approach, which bridges everyday life in the recent past with large-scale processes of globalization, to examine topics related to colonialism, labor, race, ethnicity, diaspora, human-environment relationships, and heritage."


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"This volume features a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to underwater and coastal archaeology in Latin America. Showcasing the efforts of 82 researchers working across the region, the case studies in this book point to a long tradition of practices and beliefs related to the exploitation and management of aquatic environments, displaying a wide chronological vision that recognizes the vast and rich precolonial heritage of these waters."

**University Press of Florida: Underwater and Coastal Archaeology in Latin America (upf.com)**

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"This volume is the first to address the ways maritime archaeologists have engaged citizen scientists, presenting examples of projects and organizations that have involved volunteers in the important work of gathering and processing data. With a special focus on program development and sustainability, these practical case studies provide reference points for archaeologists looking to design their own citizen science projects."

**University Press of Florida: Citizen Science in Maritime Archaeology (upf.com)**
“The Rochelongue site has yielded a remarkable assembly of mostly metallic objects from both local and foreign provenances. This allows for an investigation into the connectivity in the western Mediterranean through the lens of regional and long-distance maritime trade networks.”

International Series :: Rochelongue Shipwreck (barpublishing.com)

“The Toquaht Archaeological Project was led by the authors in cooperation with the Toquaht First Nation, one of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples of western Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The Nuu-chah-nulth formerly lived in large villages of plank-covered houses facing the sea, relying on a wide variety of fish species and marine mammals, including large whales.”

https://www.barpublishing.com/the-toquaht-archaeological-project.html

The infamous voyage of Clotilda in 1860 was the last known American slave trading venture to reach the nation’s shores. In Clotilda: The History and Archaeology of the Last Slave Ship, James Delgado and his fellow authors recount the saga of the ship and its captives, detail the exhaustive forensic and archaeological work to identify the vessel in a graveyard of 19th and 20th century vessels, and the larger maritime and social context of the wreck and its ties to Clotilda’s descendant community.

https://www.uapress.ua.edu/9780817321512/clotilda/
SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS: HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CURRENT

A variety of interest pieces and announcements are accepted for publication in the ICAIG newsletter. Generally, the deadline for submission for the Spring/Summer Issue is March 1st and for the Fall/Winter Issue, September 1st. Submissions and inquiries may be directed to The Current co-Editor, Elizabeth Moore (elizabeth.moore@dhr.virginia.gov). Contributions need not follow any specific format, with the exception of “Research Highlights” and “Recent Publications” (instructions below).

Instructions for Submitting Recent Publications
PLEASE NOTE: The editors will no longer be surveying literature for the Recent Publications section; Recent Publications will only contain those citations sent to us.
- Citations submitted for the “Recent Publications” section of the newsletter should follow the American Antiquity / Latin American Antiquity style guide.
- “In press” citations should be accompanied by a digital object identifier (DOI).
- Submit recent publications to elizabeth.moore@dhr.virginia.gov

Instructions for Preparing “Research Highlights” Descriptions
- Prepare a short description, written in the third person, that includes the purpose of the research, location, brief review of findings to date (if relevant), and other information of potential interest to the membership.
- Descriptions should be single spaced, using 12 pt, Times New Roman or Calibri font, and should be submitted as an MSWord file (.doc or .docx).
- Be sure to provide a title (project name or site name) and include the names and organization of the author(s)/principal investigator(s) submitting the description.
- Provide a valid email address for a single contact author/principle investigator.
- Proof read and spell check the research description, especially place names.
- **Word limit**: please keep the description to a maximum of about 250 words (i.e., abstract length).
- Only include literature citations if absolutely necessary. List these after the research description using the citation format for American Antiquity.
- **Images**: One or two (maximum) JPEG or TIFF format photos/images/illustrations may be included with the research description. Image resolution should be 600 dpi. Please note that photos may be cropped to fit to the page if images are too large or include significant “empty” space. To avoid this, please format images prior to submission to include only necessary content.
- Include a caption for any images submitted.
- If your images contain identifiable photographs of people, each person in the photo will need to sign a release form, which we will provide for you.

Submit descriptions and images as separate files to (Elizabeth.moore@dhr.virginia.gov). Submissions that do not meet the above guidelines will be returned to the author for revision, which may delay publication in The Current. Due to space constraints not all submitted pieces may be included in a given issue of The Current. If this is the case, your contribution will receive priority listing for the next issue. Do not hesitate to contact the editor if you have any questions. We look forward to receiving your contributions.

Past Issues of The Current are available on the Island & Coastal Interest Group’s Website.