

Preserving History Through Archaeology



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GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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The Hunt for Mabila

Article featured on the [University of West Alabama Web site](#)

Generations of archaeologists have long sought the historical Holy Grail of the Battle of Mabila, the Alabama site where Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto defeated Chief Tuskaloosa and his Native American warriors in 1540. That centuries-long effort remains unfulfilled. However, a project directed by Dr. Ashley Dumas, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of West Alabama (UWA), has discovered something nearly as important: Chief Tuskaloosa's territorial province of Mabila. For two-plus years, Dumas and a team of archaeologists, volunteers, and UWA students have used GPS technology in Marengo County to document precise locations of pottery sherds, metal remnants, and other artifacts they have determined are from the mid-16th century. When

plotted on a map, the GPS coordinates have allowed them to pinpoint 141 distinct farmsteads (small Native American homes each less than an acre in size) that

comprised one of the communities under Chief Tuskaloosa's control.

The significance of what is called the Marengo Archeological Complex is two-fold, Dumas said. First, the discovery of small farms from that time period illustrates a societal decentralization from the Native American Mississippian culture that built its communities around sizeable earthen mounds such as those at the Moundville Archeological Park south of the city of Tusca-

loosa. At that site, Mississippian-era peoples built 29 mounds the 12th to 14th centuries "This type of settlement pattern is not common in the Southeast," Dumas

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Fragment of a 16th-century Spanish horseshoe

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GARS News

- **GARS SOCIAL:** Keep an eye on your email and the [GARS Facebook](#) page for in-depth details on upcoming GARS social events.
- **OFFICERS ELECTIONS:** It is that time of the year again—Officers Elections. If you are interested in serving in a leadership role in GARS, please let [Delana Gilmore](#) know.

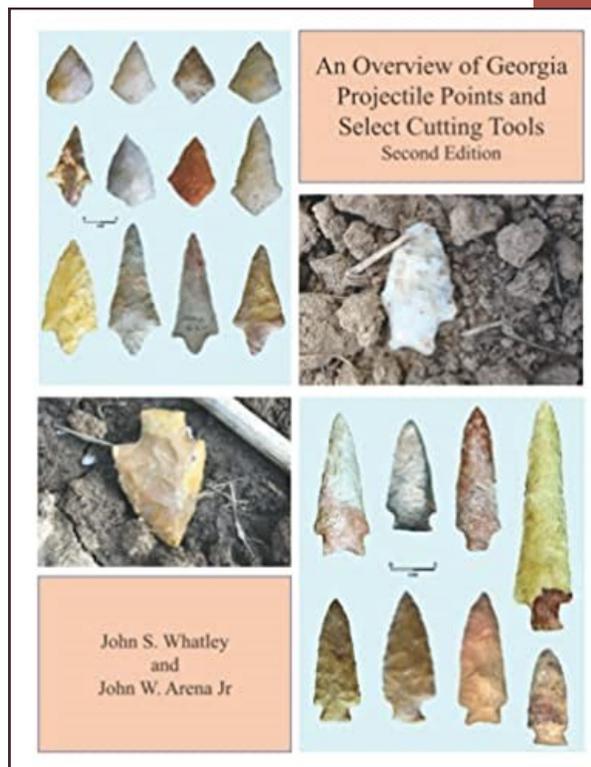
MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE:

If you would like to join or renew your GARS membership, please contact [Delana Gilmore](#); and for FDF membership please contact [Cindy Horsley](#).



More Diggin's

- **SGA VIRTUAL FALL MEETING:** For the fall annual meeting the Society for Georgia Archaeology (SGA) elected to do a virtual meeting. Video presentations were uploaded to the [SGA's YouTube channel](#) during the week of October 30. Topics include: New Views on Rock Feature Sites in North Georgia; Preliminary Results of Stone Tool Analysis from Rice Farm, Dawson, County, Georgia; Lithic Reduction at a Middle Woodland Site in Bartow County, Georgia; The Big Indian Creek Site in Houston County, Georgia; and Spatial Patterning within the Ring Midden at Kolomoki. The annual business meeting will be virtual as well and will occur on Saturday, November 6. SGA members will be sent a Zoom link with the login information.
- **GEORGIA PROJECTILE POINTS BOOK:** *An Overview of Georgia Projectile Points and Selected Cutting Tools Second Edition* is now available for sale on [Amazon](#). The book is written by John S. Whatley and John W. Arena, Jr. and describes and illustrates the many different projectile points commonly found in the state of Georgia. A copy of the new book is available for you to peruse in the Fort Daniel Archaeological Lab.
- **GWINNETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING:** The next Gwinnett Historical Society meeting will be on Monday, November 16 at the Historic Courthouse located in downtown Lawrenceville beginning at 6:30PM. Guest speaker will be Carole Townsend, who will be speaking about her book *Peachtree Corners, Georgia: The History of an Innovative and Remarkable City 1777-2020*.



Elisha Winn Fair

Every year Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) and Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) members participate in the annual Elisha Winn Fair in Dacula, which was held on October 2–3. This year many people noticed new additions and improvements to the Elisha Winn House campus. A new stage was christened by country music’s longest running band, the Skillet Lickers, and new paved sidewalks were interwoven throughout the campus.

SAVE THE DATE: Elisha Winn Fair will be on October 1–2, 2022.



GARS and FDF members as reenactors performing frontier demonstrations



GARS and FDF members talking with visitors about the history of Fort Daniel

continued from Page 1

said. “We’re seeing, 150 years later, a completely new way of organizing society.” She described it as a “major upheaval” of Native American society and culture. Second, the ability to radiocarbon-date specific findings has allowed archaeologists to determine that de Soto’s expedition moved through Chief Tuskaloosa’s province and made contact there with Native Americans. When corroborated with the four written accounts of the Spaniard’s travels, the farmstead discoveries have provided archaeologists information they hope could lead to a more consequential discovery.

Along with more than 600 men and 200 horses, de Soto landed in 1539 near present-day Tampa, Florida, and eventually became the first European to explore deep into the American interior. Seeking gold and treasures, his expedition traveled north into what became Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Wanting to resupply his men via ships from Cuba, de Soto began a meandering route into Alabama the following year on his way to the Gulf Coast. De Soto’s party never arrived. As the Spaniards marched through Alabama, Chief Tuskaloosa rebuffed de Soto’s demand for slave laborers and women, and the Native American chief ambushed the explorers when they reached the fortified city of Mabila. The battle, though fierce, was a decisive Spanish victory. As many as 2,500 Native Americans were killed, but de Soto’s men paid a heavy price, losing caches of supplies. Dumas called it a “pyrrhic victory” for the demoralized Spanish, who then headed northwest. De Soto died in 1542, either in Louisiana or Arkansas, near the banks of the Mississippi River. His remaining men eventually reached Mexico City. “The Spaniards found out that with these scattered (Native American) chiefdoms, it wasn’t easy to conquer them,” Dumas said. “There wasn’t a ‘head of a snake’ like in Central and South America.”

In Marengo County, Dumas and her colleagues have thus far found 52 confirmed pieces of Spanish-made metal, such as horseshoe remnants (*pictured on Page 1*) and iron chisels repurposed from the metal bands that strengthened wooden barrels. Dr. Charles Cobb, professor of historical archaeology at the [Florida Museum of Natural History](#) who has extensive experience researching 16th-century Spanish metal remnants unearthed in Mississippi, was instrumental in the project’s recovering and identifying of the Marengo County metal artifacts, Dumas said.

Native American pottery fragments (*pictured left*) at the site have similarities to items found at Moundville and in southwest Alabama, Dumas said, which illustrates the heterogeneity of mid-16th century Native American



society. Likewise, the archeologists have used radio carbon-dating to determine the age of charred wood and items such as sunflower seeds, persimmon seeds, and corn found at the Marengo County sites. Interestingly, the farmsteads were “a colonization event” and “a short-lived phenomenon” that existed for only a few generations, Dumas said, for reasons largely unknown. One hypothesis, she said, is that the Native Americans were so shaken by their de Soto experience that they sought safety elsewhere.

The archeologists’ search for Mabila, though, isn’t finished. “Along this multiyear journey (the Spaniards) encountered hundreds of Native American groups,” Dumas said. “This was a major culture-contact event.” ■ UWA

13th Annual Frontier Faire

At this year's Frontier Faire approximately 300 people visited Fort Daniel on a beautiful fall day. The purpose of Fort Daniel as an educational park and archaeological site reached many that day and will continue to teach the next generation about history and archaeology. Thank you some much to the vendors, exhibitors, and the visitors who came out!

SAVE THE DATE: 14th Annual Frontier Faire will be on Saturday, October 15, 2022.



Visitors enjoying the beautiful weather

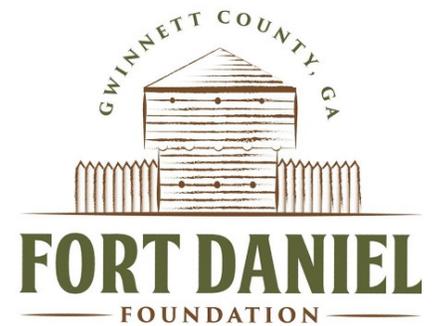


Public Archaeology at Fort Daniel



Exhibitors and reenactors telling the story of Fort Daniel, Gwinnett County, and Georgia

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Native American Heritage Month

November is Native American Heritage Month! The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native people. What started at the turn of the century as an effort to gain a day of recognition for the significant contributions the first Americans made to the establishment and growth of the US has resulted in a whole month being designated for that purpose.

The first American Indian Day in a state was declared on the second Saturday in May 1916 by the governor of New York. Several states celebrate the fourth Friday in September. In Illinois, for example, legislators enacted such a day in 1919. Presently, several states have designated Columbus Day as Native American or Indigenous Peoples Day, but it continues to be observed without any recognition as a national legal holiday. In 1990 President



George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 “National American Indian Heritage Month.” Similar proclamations, under variants on the name (including “Native American Heritage Month” and “National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage

Month”) have been issued each year since 1994. Recently, President Joe Biden issued a proclamation to create Indigenous People Day, which was observed on October 8, 2021.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic many events celebrating the heritage of Native people are still virtual. The National Museum of the American Indian has an online exhibition called [Why We Serve](#), honoring generations of Native Americans who

served in the US Armed Forces. Additionally, Georgia has a rich Native people history. Visit a state park or tour historic sites like [Etowah Indian Mounds](#), [New Echota](#), or [Chief Vann House](#). Before visiting, please check their Web site or call regarding COVID precautions. ■

GARS OFFICERS www.thegars.org

President: Anne Dorland
Vice President: Jenna Tran
Secretary/Treasurer: Delana Gilmore

To keep up with the latest digs and activities from GARS follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

FDF OFFICERS

President: Eli Stancel
Secretary: Cindy Horsley
Vice President: Leslie Perry
Treasurer: Betty Warbington

To stay up to date with the latest news from FDF follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).