

Preserving History Through Archaeology



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Myths and Legends of Georgia

We at Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) and Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) thought the readers would enjoy a revisit to some myths and legends here in Georgia (in which a couple have been featured in the *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin*).

Mayas in Georgia

According to some, 1,100 year old Mayan ruins have been discovered at Track Rock Gap, near Georgia’s tallest mountain. Investigators believe that 154 stone masonry walls are visible, used for creating agricultural terraces, as well as other stone structures. Some believe that the site could, in fact, be the lost city of Yupaha, which Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto failed to find on an expedition in 1540. Some theorize that the Maya people made the move



north around 800 AD, when the once flourishing population began to collapse. Mass immigration has been hard to prove and many archeologists have concluded that the Maya people simply died in masse.

Janie Loubser excavated a rock wall and a waist high-mound (*pictured left*) near the site (9UN367) and authored a report in 2010. In his report Loubser did not say who he thought erected the structures although he believed the Cherokee or an earlier tribe were likely the candidates. According to soil testing the

areas excavated were built somewhere between 800 and 1100. Loubser had to stop excavation at the rock pile because there was evidence it was a grave.

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Lost French Colony

Based on a letter written in 1660, Frenchman Edward Graves describes an area called Melilot as “one of the most remote colonies in North America.” The letter compliments a book published two years earlier by Rev. Charles De Rochefort (the letter’s addressee) and verifies Rochefort’s assertions that six survivors of a failed



French colony in Jacksonville, Florida, arrived in the Apalache Kingdom in 1566. After reviewing maps in Rochefort’s book and at the Library of Congress, some people believed that this lost French colony was built in Gwinnett County—specifically Little Mulberry Park.

Little Mulberry Park (*pictured left*) is a 980-acre park located in Auburn and Dacula. Among the grassy hills and steep tree-filled valleys stacked stones are scattered throughout the property. Arranged in neat piles, the stones have been the subject of debate for years. In a 1997 report commissioned by the county it was hypothesized that they were constructed by precontact Native people, and in other findings the stones were considered to be remnants of farmers clearing fields.

Lost Confederate Gold

The existence of caches of hidden or lost Confederate gold has been the source of numerous Georgia legends. The state was a center of gold mining, minting, and trading, and when Richmond, Virginia fell to Union forces at the end of the American Civil War, the bulk of the Confederate treasury was brought to Georgia but disappeared. The Federal Branch Mint in Dahlonega had approximately \$24,000 in gold and silver when it was taken over by the Confederate States of American in 1861. During the autumn of 1862 the mint turned \$40,000 in gold and silver from New Orleans into bars for shipment to Augusta.

The most famous lost Confederate gold legend takes its roots from the last days of the American Civil War. Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his entourage traveled by wagon from Danville, Virginia with \$327,022 in gold and silver coins along with jewelry down to Georgia. Most of the assets were given to soldiers as pay and travel expenses for their way home, and the Richmond bank reserves were placed in a bank vault in Washington, Georgia. However, a few days later those bank reserves were in the hands of Union soldiers. They camped near Chennault Crossroads for the evening but were attacked losing about \$250,000. Bank officials eventually recovered some \$111,000 of the stolen money. When Jefferson Davis was captured by members of the 4th Michigan Cavalry near Irwinville, the Confederate money was nowhere to be found.

Though it would seem that the robbers would have made off with the money, tales of Confederate gold buried in Wilkes County have persisted since the end of the American Civil War. Through the years, rumor has it that many gold coins have been found along the dirt roads near Chennault Plantation.

Though these tales are fascinating, research and archaeological investigations can expose the whole story behind these myths and legends of Georgia. ■

GARS/Fort Daniel News

- **GARS HAPPY HOUR:** Join Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) members at Normal Bar in Athens on Thursday, April 7 for Happy Hour from 4:30-6:30PM.
- **FORT DANIEL ARCHAEOLOGY LAB DAY:** Join GARS and Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) members on Saturday, April 9 from 1-4PM for a walk-through of the archaeology lab—from collecting, recording, processing, and curating of archaeological artifacts. Get a peek behind the scenes in what it takes to glean information from artifacts and maybe gain the skills needed to help process artifacts.
- **GARS MEETING:** The next in-person GARS meeting will be on held on Tuesday, April, 19 at Fort Daniel Archaeological Park Meeting Room beginning at 7PM. Guest speaker will be GARS Vice President, Katie Ahern from New South Associates. (See Page 4 for details.)
- **COLLEGE STUDENT OPEN HOUSE:** College students with interests in history and archaeology are invited to join members of FDF and GARS for an informal day of excavation and lab experience at Fort Daniel Archaeological Park on Saturday, April 23 from 10AM-3PM. More details will follow—keep an eye on the [Fort Daniel Foundation](#) (FDF) and [Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society](#) (GARS) Facebook pages.
- **NEW SOUTH ASSOCIATES ARCHAEOLOGY DAY:** In celebration of Archaeology Month New South Associates will host their annual Archaeology Day in-person on Saturday, May 7 from 10AM to 2PM. For more details visit [New South Associates Facebook page](#). GARS and FDF will be exhibitors.
- **FORT DANIEL OPEN HOUSE:** In celebration of Archaeology Month the “gates” at Fort Daniel Archaeological Park will be opened to the public 10AM to 2PM. Tours of the remains of the fort and museum will be given along with archaeological excavation. More details will follow—keep an eye on the [Fort Daniel Foundation](#) (FDF) and [Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society](#) (GARS) Facebook pages.



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](#).



Maya Watchtowers

(GARS Meeting Presentation Preview)

In 2018 and 2019, Katie Ahern (pictured right) had the chance to excavate an ancient Maya watchtower located in the jungles of northern Guatemala. The following description details some of the highlights of her upcoming presentation on Tuesday, April 19. Focus is placed on a watchtower, which is known as the Atalaya (watchtower in Spanish).



Watchtowers or lookout points are defensive structures used by the ancient Maya that were positioned in strategic locations to provide information to nearby centers regarding the observation of the surrounding landscape. Information from these watchtowers was likely signaled to other sites through the use of mirrors, fire, and smoke and was utilized to protect centers by providing insight into the direction of attack by enemy warriors or raids. Watchtowers generally refer to small sites that contained no more than a couple of platforms and often lacked walls surrounding the entire complex.

The Atalaya (pictured below left) is a pyramid located on the highest hill in the region. This pyramid received the name *Atalaya* because its summit provides an excellent vantage point where an individual can view almost all of the sites in the specific region. Additionally, the Atalaya was positioned in a naturally defensive location, as the hilltop was only accessible along its western side. The remaining three sides were not traversable due to steep slopes. This watchtower was part of a hilltop architectural complex that contained



a southern pyramid, a plaza, a masonry structure, and a northern platform. There was also a wall discovered on the western edge of the complex and a potential quarry located to the southwest of the plaza.

Excavation on the Atalaya occurred during the Holmul

Archaeological Project's 2018 and 2019 field seasons. A total of ten excavations were conducted on this complex and revealed several phases of architecture, a destroyed altar, and a ritual cache containing the remains of a child's skull. Together, this information demonstrated that the Atalaya served a critical role in protecting a nearby Maya city from enemies. This presentation will go into these discoveries in greater detail, while also exploring the larger threats of warfare within the region. ■

Defending the Frontier

Fort Daniel Open House

Saturday, May 14, 2022

10AM–2PM

Fort Daniel Historic Site

(2505 Braselton Highway/GA 124, Buford)

May is Archaeology Month in Georgia! Explore how archaeology reveals the ways people lived on the frontier during the War of 1812—including tours of the Fort Daniel Museum, Archaeology Lab, active archaeological digs, and living history tours of the fort. Don't forget to check us out on Facebook and Instagram for the latest information regarding Fort Daniel!

14th Annual Frontier Faire

Saturday, October 15

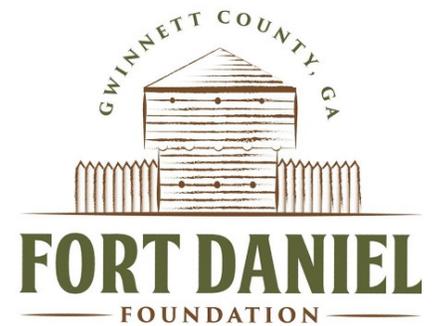
10AM–4PM

Fort Daniel Historic Site

(2505 Braselton Highway/GA 124, Buford)



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“Jewel” Hotel to Join Groundswell of Investment in Atlanta

Excerpt from an article written by Josh Green featured on the [Urbanize](#) Web site on March 14, 2022

A boutique hotel is set to replace a troubled office project on Pryor Street and join a groundswell of South Downtown private investment stretching from Underground Atlanta to the doorstep of Castleberry Hill. Mississippi-based The Thrash Group recently paid \$16 million for a six-story office building from the 1950s that overlooks the Fulton County Courthouse at 166 Pryor Street SW.

According to officials with Berkadia Hotels & Hospitality, which closed the deal with Atlanta-based seller Access Point Financial, the developer plans to complete a stalled renovation and open the former office property as Origin Hotel Atlanta, the next location of a growing lifestyle brand. Origin operates other boutique hotels in Denver, Austin, Lexington, and Raleigh. Atlanta’s Origin Hotel will have 124 rooms (from

standard king rooms to suites), a restaurant, bar, and space for meetings and events, according to Berkadia officials.

The building stands where Pryor and Mitchell streets meet—roughly two blocks east of developer Newport’s



revival of downtown’s historic Hotel Row, which won’t include hotel uses. CIM Group, however, is moving forward with a high-rise hotel with 291 rooms in the nearby Gulch, as part of the massive Centennial Yards project. Berkadia officials noted as a selling point the Pryor Street property is “highly accessible to public transit.”

Berkadia managing director Kyle Stevenson called the property’s sale “a complicated transaction” involving an uncompleted office building that will become “a spectacular boutique hotel” and “a jewel for the downtown Atlanta hotel market,” according to an announcement on Friday. ■ **UA**

GARS OFFICERS
www.thegars.org

President: Anne Dorland
Vice President: Katie Ahern
Secretary/Treasurer: Delana Gilmore

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

FDF OFFICERS
www.fortdaniel.com

President: Eli Stancel
Secretary: Cindy Horsley
Vice President: Tyler Holman
Treasurer: Betty Warbington

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