

Preserving History Through Archaeology



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GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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Researchers Say the Wreckage of Last Known Slave Ship to the US Mostly Intact

Excerpt from an article featured on [NPR Web Site](http://www.npr.org) on December 22, 2021.

Researchers studying the wreckage of the last US slave ship buried in mud on the Alabama coast since it was scuttled in 1860 have made the surprising discovery that most of the wooden schooner remains intact—including the pen that was used to imprison African captives during the brutal journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

While the upper portion of the two-masted Clotilda is gone, the section below deck where the captured Africans and stockpiles were held is still largely in one piece after being buried for decades in a section of river that hasn't been dredged, said maritime archaeologist James Delgado of the Florida-based SEARCH Inc.

At least two-thirds of the ship remains, and the existence of the unlit and unventilated slave pen (built during the voyage by the addition of a bulkhead where people were held as cargo below the main deck for

weeks) raises questions about whether food and water containers, chains, and even human DNA could remain in the hull.

The discovery enhances the research value of the Clotilda's remains and sets them apart from all other wrecks, Delgado said. The finding was confirmed in a report that was provided to The Associated Press and led to the site becoming part of the National Register of Historic Places in November.

"It's the most intact (slave ship) wreck ever discovered," he said. "It's because it's sitting in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta with fresh water and in mud that protected it that it's still there."

For Joycelyn Davis, a sixth-generation granddaughter of African captive Charlie Lewis and vice president of the Clotilda Descendants Association, the story of what happened more than 160 years ago is best told

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EDITOR:

Delana M. Gilmore, MA
Email: gwinnettarchaeology@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:

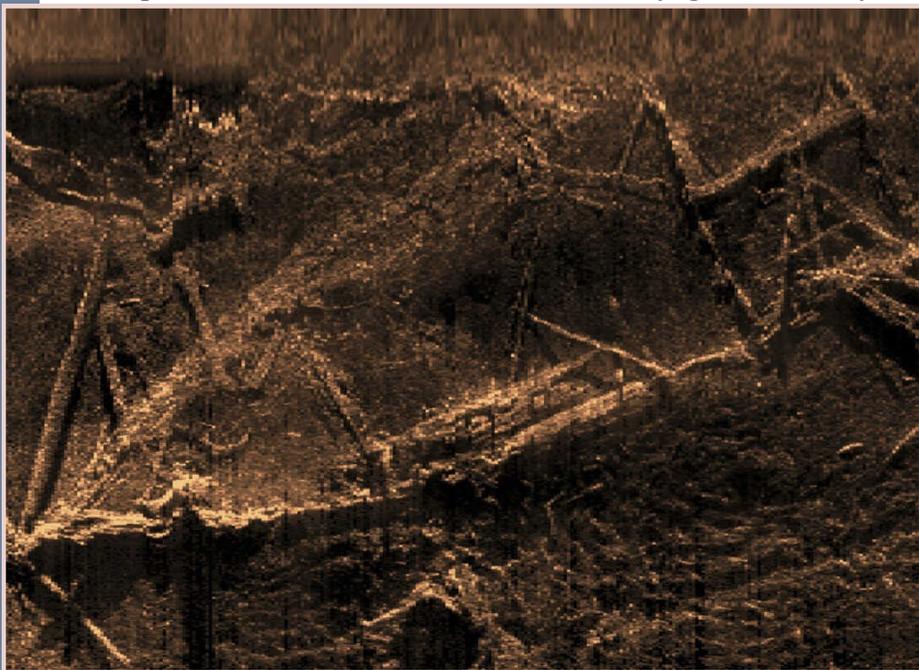
Jim D'Angelo, PhD RPA
Email: 4drdee@bellsouth.net

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through the people who were involved, not a sunken ship. However, she said she's excited to learn more about what has been discovered, adding: "I think it's going to be a surprise for us all."

The Clotilda was the last ship known to transport African captives to the American South for enslavement. Nearly 90 feet (27 meters) in length, it departed Mobile, Alabama, for an illegal trip to purchase people decades after Congress outlawed such trade in 1808.

The ship had been sent across the ocean on a voyage financed by a wealthy businessman whose descendants



remain prominent in Mobile. The Clotilda's captain transferred its human cargo off the ship once it arrived in Alabama and set fire to the vessel to hide evidence of the journey. However, most of the ship didn't catch fire and remained in the river.

Shown on navigational charts since the 1950s, the wreckage was publicly identified as that of Clotilda in 2019 and has been explored and researched since then, Delgado said.

The state has set aside \$1 million for preservation and research, and additional work planned at the site in early 2022 could show what's inside the hull, Delgado said. However, far more work is needed to determine whether the ship could ever be pulled out of the mud and put on display, as some have suggested.

This sonar image created by SEARCH Inc. and released by the Alabama Historical Commission shows the remains of the Clotilda, the last known U.S. ship involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

"Generally, raising is a very expensive proposition. My sense is that while it has survived, it is more fragile than people think," said Delgado. "A recovery could be a very delicate operation and also a very expensive and lengthy process."

Freed after the South lost the Civil War, some of the enslaved Africans who were transported to America on the Clotilda settled in a community they started called Africatown USA a few miles north of downtown Mobile.

A documentary about the now-impooverished community by Alabama-born filmmaker Margaret Brown titled "Descendant" will premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January, and descendants of the Clotilda captives are planning an annual gathering in February. Work is underway on a new museum that's meant to be a catalyst for tourism and new development in the area. ■ **NPR**

GARS/Fort Daniel News

- **MASK MANDATE:** According to an emergency order issued by Gwinnett County, **masks are required** to be worn by individuals entering indoor facilities owned or leased by Gwinnett County, which includes Fort Daniel Museum and Archaeology Lab. The local emergency order is effective from January 10 until January 26.
- **OFFICERS ELECTIONS:** It is that time of the year again—Officers Elections. Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) members were emailed last month with the proposed names of this upcoming year officers. Please email your vote to [Delana Gilmore](#) by Sunday, January 16. Introduction of the new officers will be mentioned in next month's *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin* (GAB).
- **FORT DANIEL FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING** will be held on Sunday, January 30 beginning at 2PM at the Fort Daniel Museum and Archaeology Lab. Officer and Board of Directors elections will be held at that time. Bring your checkbook for annual dues!
- **GARS MEETING:** The next in-person GARS meeting will be on Wednesday, February 23. Guest speaker will be Maureen Meyers from New South Associates. She will give a presentation entitled, "How the Westo Got to Augusta: Seventeenth-Century Native Incursions from the Northeast."

MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE:

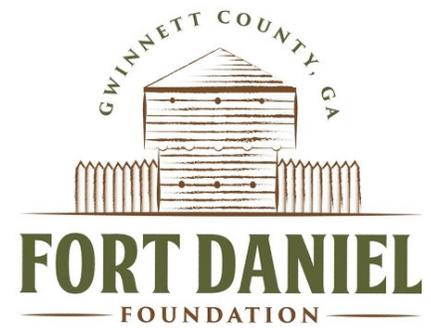
If you would like to join or renew your GARS membership, please contact [Delana Gilmore](#); and for FDF membership please contact [Cindy Horsley](#).



More Diggin's

- **HOMESCHOOL DAY at ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER:** Fight For Your Rights will be the featured themed for the January Homeschool Day at the Atlanta History Center on Thursday, January 20 from 10:30AM to 12:30PM. Students will explore the Civil Rights era and connect it to social movements throughout time. Space is limited and tickets are required. Pricing is \$8 for students and \$10 for adults and free for adult members. For more information visit the [Atlanta History Center Web site](#).
- **AUTHOR TALKS VIRTUAL EVENT:** Atlanta History Center will be hosting a virtual Author Talk on Wednesday, January 26 beginning at 7PM. The featured author will be Dr. Brian Jordan speaking about his latest book, *A Thousand May Fall: An Immigrant Regiment's Civil War*. The Civil War ended more than 150 years ago, yet our nation remains fiercely divided over its enduring legacies. In *A Thousand May Fall*, Pulitzer Prize finalist Jordan returns us to the war itself, bringing us closer than perhaps any prior historian to the chaos of battle and the trials of military life. Creating an intimate, absorbing chronicle from the ordinary soldier's perspective, he allows us to see the Civil War anew—and through unexpected eyes. For more information and to register visit the [Atlanta History Center Web site](#).

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“Adaptive Reuse” of Older Buildings

Excerpt from an article featured on [SaportaReport Web site](http://SaportaReport.com) on January 3, 2022

Adaptive reuse—the repurposing of older buildings for modern uses—is doing some successful adapting itself as the pandemic shakes up real estate. The urban trend is spreading into suburbs, remaking troubled malls and hotels, and the surge in industrial uses like delivery-oriented ghost kitchens.

“The pandemic is creating this forced adaptive reuse,” says Rainey Shane, an Atlanta-based vice president of the international real estate firm JLL who founded its Adaptive Reuse Unit. “It’s good for the planet. It’s good for the developer’s pocketbook. It’s good for the economy, because historic preservation groups have said that mix of old and new buildings has the greatest chance of economic success.”

Adaptive reuse has been around for several development waves in Atlanta—back to the 1990s conversions of factories like Cabbagetown’s cotton mill into loft apartments and condos. Today’s influential example is Ponce City



Market, the mixed-use remake of a don’t-build-’em-like-they-used-to Sears store and warehouse in the Old Fourth Ward that opened in 2014.

The pandemic has accelerated some changes, like the shift away from brick-and-mortar retail and toward working

from home, while creating others, like crushing the hospitality industry. That has made for a lot of “distressed” older properties on the market and uncertainty for landlords who might traditionally consider building new.

“I think that place-making is incredibly important to Atlanta and some of the Southeastern towns that I’ve been working in, and I don’t think developers give it enough emphasis,” said Shane. “Because honoring the history of a place—especially Atlanta, we’ve got a rich history—is important to people. And it shows when you’ve got a place like Ponce City Market that is so incredibly popular and it’s because the developer reused it in a way that honors its history.” ■ **SR**

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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](#).

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