

ST. AUGUSTINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



A CHAPTER OF THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May 2026

Upcoming Programs

Flagler College, Tiffany Room
7 pm

May 5, 2026
Chuck Meade
with his annual
update
from LAMP



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Everyone,

A wonderful time was had by all at our Archaeology Month visit to Fort Mose. Our visit was perfectly timed to experience a militia muster occurring prior to our official tour. The history of Fort Mose is an important piece of St. Augustine's story, and the new recreation of the fort is beautiful.



With summer right around the corner, we have just one more monthly meeting before our summer hiatus. I hope everyone can join us for LAMP Director Chuck Meide's presentation Tuesday, May 5th at 7pm. His talks are always fun and informative.

When we return in the fall, we are already planning some fun events and meetings celebrating SAAA's 40th anniversary. If you have a few extra hours a month, and are interested in getting involved, just email us and let us know. See, also, other volunteer opportunities on the next page.

A quick reminder that annual membership renewals were due in March and can be made in person at a monthly meeting, through our website, www.staugarch.org, or by mail. While you're on the website, donations to the Eugene Lyon Education Fund (ELEF) to support local archaeological education and research, and our Historical Marker Fund can also be made, and are greatly appreciated.

Thank you and have a wonderful summer,
Courtney Crum

Dues are Past Due

The SAAA Membership Year runs from March to March each year. The organization depends on dues from its members to sponsor the monthly lectures and to carry on its various other programs. Paying dues is easy. One can pay on SAAA's website staugarch.org by credit card, mail a check to PO Box 1301, St. Augustine, 32085, or pay in cash or check at the May meeting. -- **\$30 for a family**
\$20 for an individual
\$ 5 for students

SAAA Mission Statement

The St. Augustine Archaeological Association promotes the discovery, interpretation, and protection of cultural heritage in the greater St. Augustine area by engaging our community in archaeological research, volunteerism, and education.



Open Positions

Have you ever considered taking a more active role by volunteering with SAAA? The Management Team currently has several openings.

1. **Director-at-Large** to fill a vacated term on the Board of Directors until January 2027. Commitment about 2 hrs/month
2. A **Webmaster** is needed who will train alongside the current webmaster and will take over the SAAA web site in January 2027. No special knowledge needed. Commitment is about 4-6 hours training, then varies as to how much time wanting to maintain the web page. This might be a good opportunity for a student,
3. **Tours and Events Coordinator** to plan and arrange field trips and events such as the recent field trip to Fort Mose. Commitment is about 2-3 hours every other month, or more, depending on the desires of the person.

All positions would start as soon as possible. If you are interested, please email staugarch@gmail.com

SAAA Visits Fort Mose

On Saturday, March 7, several members of SAAA visited Fort Mose Historic State Park. Located about two miles north of the historic town of St. Augustine, this is the site where the Spanish governor of Florida, Manuel de Montiano, gave to former slaves the right to live as free men and women in a settlement of their own, the first in what is now the United States. These men and women, originally from Africa, escaped from British slaveholders in the Carolina Colony and walked south to Spanish St. Augustine, where the governor granted them asylum.

From 1986 to 1988, a team of specialists, the Fort Mose Research Team—led by Kathleen Deagan of the Florida Museum of Natural History, Jane Landers (then with University of Florida and subsequently with Vanderbilt University), and John Marron of the University of Florida—performed an archaeological and historical investigation at Fort Mose.

Fort Mose Historic State Park was founded after the initial excavations, and the site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994, recognized as a National Historic Landmark and subsequently designated a World Heritage Site. A key role in the promotion of the site was played by the Fort Mose Historical Society, founded in 1996, involving many leaders of the Black community in St. Augustine.

In January 2024, a groundbreaking ceremony was enacted for the construction of a replica of the 1738 fort on park grounds. This reconstructed blockhouse was opened to the public in 2025.

SAAA was fortunate to be visiting on the first Saturday of the month when the park presents its monthly re-enactment, complete with cannon and musket firing of both the Spanish black militia and also British soldiers.



Feature Article

From the Archives



(This article first appeared in the Feb 2001 issue of the SAAA Newsletter)

The Charlesfort Site, Parris Island, South Carolina

by Chester B. DePratter and Stanley South

Charlesfort, a small French outpost occupied from 1562 to 1563, was built near present-day Beaufort, SC by Jean Ribault and his men during a mission of exploration. Ribault had no plans to establish a settlement then, but he was so impressed by Port Royal Sound that he left behind a small garrison while he returned to France for reinforcements.

His return was delayed by the religious war then raging in France, and the small group of men left on Port Royal Sound ultimately grew tired of awaiting his return. They mutinied, killed their commander, built a boat, and sailed for France after having occupied Charlesfort for less than a year.

Stanley South began his search for Charlesfort in 1979. Why did it take him and Chester DePratter seventeen years to discover its location? First, the fort itself was rather simple, constructed as a temporary fortification to house 27 men. It was constructed by Ribault's crew in less than a month. Second, it was occupied for less than a year by only a small number of people, so that the number of features and amounts of garbage and other debris associated with it would, of course, be sparse.

Third, maps, artwork, and documentary sources provided ambiguous and contradictory information on the location of the fort. And finally, it had a later Spanish fort, part of the Spanish colonial settlement of Santa Elena, built on top of it. The debris and construction features associated with this Spanish fort (Fort San Felipe, occupied (1566 - 1570) obscured the remains of Charlesfort.

Stanley South found Fort San Felipe and excavated portions of it in 1979, 1982, 1983, and 1984. During those excavations, he found a ditch beneath the wall of the Spanish strong house within the fort, and he found that to be perplexing. He also noted in his report that there were occasional ceramic sherds that were not of the expected Spanish type, and he even suggested that some of those might be French. As it turned out, some of those sherds were indeed French. Additional stoneware sherds excavated by South and thought to be 18th century stoneware were, in fact, 16th century French stoneware.

DePratter joined South in the search for Charlesfort in 1989. After an involved and unsuccessful search along part of Parris Island's shoreline, the search was focused on the Santa Elena site. According to DePratter's analysis of relevant documents, the Santa Elena site was in the right place and South had already identified a limited number of possible French artifacts there.

Further analysis of South's previous excavations in Fort San Felipe and the materials he found led to the announcement of Charlesfort's discovery in 1996.

In spring, 1997, DePratter and South returned to Parris Island to further investigate the remains of Spanish Fort San Felipe and to see if they could identify the moat, buildings, and other remains of the French fort that lay buried beneath the Spanish fort.

Armed with a research design anchored in South's previous work on the site, they selectively reopened portions of previously excavated areas and opened new trenches and block units during a 10-week season in spring, 1997. During that field season, the large 15-foot-wide, 5-foot deep moat surrounding Fort San Felipe was re-examined to see if it might not be a French moat re-dug by the Spanish. That turned out to not be the case, but in those excavations, remains of the smaller French defensive ditch were uncovered.

This French ditch was approximately eight feet across and two feet deep. The ditch, which South found in 1983 beneath the Spanish strong house wall, we now know is part of this French defensive structure. Time did not allow exposure of the entire French defensive ditch, but portions of it were excavated. Within this ditch, DePratter and South found the remains of the French strong house build by Ribault in 1562. It measured at least 14 feet by 40 feet.



Additional excavation in Spring, 2000 uncovered more of the north side of the Charlesfort moat. The number of French artifacts so far identified from the Charlesfort/Fort San Felipe excavation is not large. Fewer than one hundred stoneware sherds and a handful of earthenware sherds have been assigned as French types. Identification

of additional materials awaits further research in the archaeological literature as well as continuing contact with European archaeologists.