Year in Review

With the passing of 2015, wondering of what 2016 holds is exciting. Nevertheless, 2015 has been encouraging regarding what was discovered in the realm of archaeology in Gwinnett County and Georgia. The following are a few of the discoveries that were featured in the Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin (GAB) in 2015.

- Returning to the Atlanta Water Works in March 2015, a recording of the Civil War earthworks below the possible site of Fort Peachtree occurred. From that dig several Federal minie balls, one 63 cal. musket ball, and one leather frag with snap were found. One minie ball had teeth marks!
- During the continued archaeological investigations at the supposed site of Fort Peachtree, Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) members recovered a cleated donkey shoe in the same area where several Civil War artifacts were previously found. Its nails are a type that can be dated to both the 1812 and Civil War periods where donkeys were among the military haul animals.
- Gwinnett resident Dorsey Campbell sent a photo of an engraving with the date of Dec 1 178(4?) and possible petroglyphs on a boulder or bedrock outcrop to GARS. After GARS members went out to look at the engravings, Jim D’Angelo and Delana Gilmore went to the Georgia Archives to see if there was a land grant from that time period (though at the time of the date the land belonged to Native Americans) and found that there was a possible landowner who might have carved the date.
- During the Frontier Faire the hearth located in the Southwest blockhouse turned out to be something totally different—a possible cold cellar. Georgia State University (GSU) Professor Jeff Glover and his students have been working on this feature for a couple of years, and as the feature was expanded during GSU excavations at the 2015 Faire, a large spoon was recovered. (See picture on Page 6.)

Addition to these discoveries the Fort Daniel Archaeological Lab was completed. Now artifacts from Fort Daniel and other sites explored by GARS can be cleaned and studied. • DMG
The following article from The Atlanta Journal Constitution focuses on preservation of wildlife habitat and recreation; however, part of the preservation includes the Altama Plantation. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be taking a year to decide the future of Altama. Historical and archaeological studies are planned. Georgian historian Buddy Sullivan states that Altama deserves to be on the National Register of Historic Places.

Wealthy farmers owned Altama Plantation in the 1700s and 1800s. William DuPont, the chemical magnate, wintered and trained racehorses here during the early years of the 19th century. Atlanta entrepreneur and philanthropist Cator Woolford bought Altama in 1933. A year after Woolford’s death in 1945 the scion of the Sea Island Co. acquired the property and turned it into a hunting preserve for family and friends. The state of Georgia with much financial help from the Nature Conservancy, the federal government, and private donors bought the historic, biologically diverse 4,000-acre tract along a tributary to the Altamaha River. It will throw open the main gate, a stone’s throw from I-95, to the public any day now.

Miles of carriage roads and sandy trails wend past the old rice plantation’s canals and dikes—beckoning hikers, hunters, bikers, kayakers, and birders. Surrounded by resplendent live oaks, magnolias, and cypress trees, two stately old homes await restoration. A famed English Regency garden lies buried under decades of vegetation. The ruins of a circa 1820s sugar refinery stir the imagination.

Altama’s importance, though, is much more than simply a playground for enthusiasts of history and the outdoors. The plantation is one of the most significant final properties the state is stitching together to serve as a 120-mile-long wildlife corridor stretching from Florida through the Okefenokee Swamp to Fort Stewart. The mostly uninterrupted greenway will allow threatened or endangered species (such as the gopher tortoise, red cockaded woodpecker, and Eastern indigo snake) to wander almost unimpeded across the coastal marshes and timbered uplands in search of shelter and love. Plans call for large-scale restoration of the longleaf pine and wiregrass forests. “The corridor is one of the greatest unsung conservation success stories of the last 20 years,” said Jason Lee, a manager with the state’s Department of Natural Resources whose job, and passion, is to link together the corridor. “It is on par with any conservation development in the United States.”

The high-canopied forests, rejuvenated by frequent burnings, soared majestically when the King of England granted William Hopeton 2,000 acres along the southern bank of the Altamaha River in 1763. Hopeton, a wealthy grower in South Carolina, established a rice plantation along the tidal flats. Two Scottish immigrants bought the property 40 years later—adding Sea Island cotton and hundreds of slaves to the operation that shipped crops to England via the bustling port of Darien a few miles downriver.

James Hamilton Couper, a son, transformed the plantation into something of an agricultural and engineering marvel with canals and dikes to control the water’s flow and a rail system to transport crops to the river. Couper visited Holland and learned the importance of tidal floodgates. He added sugar cane fields and a

A tidal pool on Altama Plantation
refinery. In addition, Couper led the survey team for the Georgia-Florida border and designed Christ Church in Savannah. A noted scientist, Couper recorded the first Eastern indigo snake, otherwise known as *Drymarchon couperi*. “He was probably one of the most accomplished or skilled agriculturalists of his day. He was very innovative and resourceful,” said Buddy Sullivan, a coastal Georgia historian. “And Altama is one of the most historic plantation properties along the Middle Georgia coast.”

The Civil War and slavery’s demise killed Altama. The fields rotted; the canals collapsed; and the homes, barns, and sugar shack succumbed to the heat and the swamp. A short-lived effort by a Shaker colony to grow rice and raise cattle foundered by 1902. A succession of wealthy businessmen bought the property and refashioned it to their fancies.

DuPont built a house modeled on the original plantation home and cleared a field to train horses. Woolford, whose credit check business became Equifax, added the “Play House” and swimming pool. The Sea Island Co.’s Jones family built cabins for its members; the horse track was turned into an airfield. A private equity firm bought Altama out of the Sea Island bankruptcy in 2010—intending to develop homes and shops while timbering the land until the economy turned. It sold the plantation to the Nature Conservancy last year for $7.8 million and kept 1,500 acres along I-95 for future development.

Georgia (via a mix of state bonds and a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) paid $3.5 million and now owns the property. The US Marine Corps, keen to protect a flyway from the Atlantic Ocean to a nearby bombing range, added $2.5 million for a restricted easement that prohibits development. The Nature Conservancy and two private foundations covered the rest.

Altama Plantation is the crossroads for two environmentally critical corridors: the north-south greenway and the lower Altamaha River watershed. Altama protects five miles of riverfront property. The Nature Conservancy and the state are working to secure another huge chunk of the corridor—the Sansavilla Tract, a 20,000-acre timber farm and wetlands a few miles upriver from Altama. Forty miles of the Altamaha from Little St. Simons to Jesup (on both sides of the river) will be protected once Sansavilla is added to the mix in 2016.

“The Altamaha is probably the most diverse river system in North America. We refer to it as the ‘Amazon of North America’ in terms of its sheer biodiversity,” said Jared Teutsch, the conservation director for the Nature Conservancy in Georgia. “The larger the parcel, the better from a scientific standpoint.”

Lee, the state conservationist, is rightly proud that Altama’s grandeur will no longer be threatened. “Putting together this diversity of habitat along the entire corridor—including some cypress trees that are 2,000 years old—is just a phenomenal achievement,” he said. “And it’s all public land.”

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**GARS Monthly Meeting**

Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society will not be meeting this month in lieu of Fort Daniel Foundation’s (FDF) Annual Meeting (*see Page 6*). Members of GARS are invited to attend the FDF’s Annual Meeting on Thursday, January 14 beginning at 7pm. The next GARS meeting will be on Tuesday, February 16. Remember: GARS meetings will now be held on the third Tuesday of each month (except in March).
Volunteer Day at the Fort Daniel Archaeology Lab will be on Saturday, January 9 and 23 beginning at 10AM.

Fort Daniel Foundation Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 14 at Fort Daniel Archaeological Lab and Meeting Room beginning at 7PM. See Page 6 for more information.

Film Screening and Discussion with George Wingard, Discovering Dave: Spirit Captured in Clay at Atlanta History Center will be on Thursday, January 21 beginning at 7:30PM. The documentary revolves around the story of the Edgefield, South Carolina, slave potter named David Drake. David, who used his skills as a craftsman, created beautiful pottery, which included jars and pitchers, during the turbulent 1800s. He was one of the first African American slaves to sign many of his works. His story is a testament to his willingness to be heard and to leave his mark for ages to come. For more information please visit the Atlanta History Center’s Web site.

Gwinnett Historical Society will be meeting on Monday, January 25 at the Historic Courthouse in downtown Lawrenceville beginning at 7PM. The guest speaker will be Dr. Michael Gagnon, who will be speaking on Indian Removal with a focus on role in Gwinnett. For more information visit the Gwinnett Historical Society’s Web site.

MEMBERSHIP FEES:
If you would like to join or renew your GARS membership, please contact John Hopkins; and for FDF membership please contact Betty Warbington.

Wood Family Cabin

Walking the trail through the Swan Woods at the Atlanta History Center, you will come upon a log cabin that has witnessed the growth of Atlanta from the very beginning. Originally located about one mile to the south of the Chattahoochee River and approximately two miles from the site of the Native American settlement of Standing Peachtree, the Wood Family Cabin is a remarkable example of a log structure constructed during the time that North Georgia was the frontier.

The cabin was the home of Elias and Jane Wood and dates to the early 1800s. The Woods’ descendants, Dr. and Mrs. Carl Hartrampf Jr., donated the cabin to Atlanta History Center in 2014. In 1996 the Hartrampfs discovered the cabin structure, which had been added on and even hidden within another home structure making the cabin unrecognizable.

The Wood Family Cabin gives Atlanta History Center an opportunity to expand its programming more deeply into Native American study through the cabin’s association with both Creek Indians and Cherokees, who held title to the land directly across the river from the cabin until the late 1830s when they were removed from North Georgia on the Trail of Tears. ■ DMG
On December 19 Jim D’Angelo drove up to David Coffey’s site in Flowery Branch (located off of Hog Mountain Road!) to examine the Jackson Cabin logs, which were donated to Fort Daniel Foundation by the Gwinnett Historical Society. The logs were transferred from the Elisha Winn property by Coffey Bros. Logging Company to their site. The logs were been sorted and laid out to dry.

A great deal of rot and insect (termites and carpenter ants) had occurred during the years the logs had been piled at the Winn site. Of those that could be moved, most were partially to mostly unusable. (See the pictures above).

Coffey, who has experience not only in logging but in salvaging and rebuilding log structures, believes there is enough usable material to construct a three-sided, 10-foot square building. Two of David’s projects might serve as the basis for the design and construction of our proposed Blacksmith building; one of them is pictured right.

A full report on the status of these logs and estimated costs for a building similar to that pictured is before the Officers, Directors, and Fort Reconstruction Feasibility Study Committee. ■
The Annual Meeting for the Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) will be held on Thursday, January 14 at the Fort Daniel Archaeological Lab and Meeting Room beginning at 7pm. The guest speaker will be Nancy S. Livengood. She will be speaking about her work as an object conservator. Nancy has been working on the large spoon (pictured right) found in the Southwest blockhouse “cold cellar” during the 2015 Frontier Faire and will present the finished product along with her presentation.

Though also an artist and teacher, her conservation work includes conservation of objects in private collections; assessment and treatment of a range of materials including canvas, ceramic, metal, paper, and wood; and conservation of archaeological artifacts in museum collections including assessment, treatment, and monitoring of a range of materials including ceramic, copper alloy, iron, pewter, wood, and bone.

Nancy earned a Master of Science in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums as well as a Master of Art in the Principles of Conservation from the University College London, Institute of Archaeology. Her Bachelor of Art in Fine Art is from Mercer. Her studio is located in Atlanta, and you can learn more about Nancy’s wide-ranging arts background and professional experience on her Web site.

Jim and Natasha D’Angelo along with other FDF members will be having supper with Nancy at a local restaurant (which will be announced later). If you would like to join them, please email Jim by January 13.