

## PUTTING PENSACOLA ON THE MAP!

### "Archaeotourism" in West Florida

In March 1995 the first annual "Pensacola Pride" awards were presented to local people and organizations who have "put Pensacola on the map," by gaining national recognition in their chosen professions. The local press gave the awards and featured the awardees' work in the local and regional media. Three recipients received premier awards: the well known U.S. Navy fighter jet demonstration team known as the "Blue Angels"; the local world champion welter weight boxer, Roy Jones, Jr.; and

archaeologist Dr. Judy Bense and the Archaeology Institute at the University of West Florida.

Strange company for an archaeologist? Not in Pensacola. Here, archaeology plays a leading role: mainstreamed, shared, put on exhibit, and studied by University academics and students. The "Pensacola Pride" award is only the most recent of several local, state, and national awards given to University of West Florida archaeologists, the University, and their sponsors. Such awards come in appreciation for "putting Pensacola on the map," and for highlighting the archaeological resources of this quiet southern coastal city of a quarter million people.



### Archaeology Comes to Pensacola

It all began in 1984 when the University decided to initiate an Anthropology program where there had been none. I arrived in Pensacola and quickly realized that the high quality archaeology I had studied academically was one of the best kept secrets around. In addition, the fact that it was unknown was directly leading to the destruction of the archaeological record right before my eyes!

Everywhere I looked, local archaeological deposits were under siege. Urban renewal was tearing up the historic colonial part of downtown; building construction along the bay front was threatening multiple sites; urban sprawl in subdivisions and strip centers was damaging interior prehistoric Indian sites; and massive construction at the U.S. Naval Air Station was impacting the densely concentrated sites on the peninsula. Responsible community leaders with the best of intentions had planned these projects, supported by both public and private funds. With little awareness of their rich heritage or their unknown and unrecognized resources, the community was rapidly destroying the unwritten record of all previous Pensacolans.

For a while I looked the other way. After all, I was new to town and a prehistoric archaeologist, unqualified to deal with historic period materials and documents. I was in the middle of starting a traditional career around the prehistoric Indian cultures that had left a rich record in sites still well preserved in the woods and swamps, away from the massive destruction of the urban areas. I was alone -- no staff, no funds, no graduate students -- and I had no clue about local politics or business.

### Call to Action

However, one Sunday afternoon that first year, as I looked out over the construction site of the new city hall and watched looting being treated as a respectable pastime for families and relic collectors alike, it simply became too much to bear. I realized that day that since I had come to live in Pensacola, it was my responsibility to find a way to stop the destruction of the archaeology in *my* town. Because of my professional training and position at the University, the archaeological sites here were, in a sense, under my care; it was *my watch*, and I would not have my legacy be that I was the only archaeologist in town, and I had let it all be destroyed.

### The Gulf Power Company

My first opportunity to champion public archaeology in the Pensacola area involved the electric utility for West Florida, the Gulf Power Company. In 1984 this company was planning to build a \$25 million corporate headquarters on the bay front of Pensacola. The proposed location was archaeologically sensitive, as it had been an African-American neighborhood for 150 years. It was in the vicinity of a colonial governor's villa, and a few prehistoric sherds had been recovered over the years. A check with the State determined that there was no archaeological compliance required for the project.

With a small delegation of concerned students and professionals, we approached the company with an unsolicited proposal to test the 11-acre parcel to determine whether there were significant archaeological deposits present. The testing was allowed, and we identified two

significant archaeological sites: a sealed, single Early Woodland village with scores of pits, and the undisturbed deposits of the entire African-American neighborhood.

We realized quickly that the scientific value of the sites was important, but not particularly so to the utility. We also knew that the company had been receiving negative publicity concerning the construction of its corporate headquarters due to its excessive cost, the relocation of poor African-American residents, and the lack of any direct improvement in service. So, we decided to develop a second proposal to the company, this time offering to use the company's archaeological resources for a positive public relations project focused on a major community outreach effort. The company would make a high profile educational contribution to the community, including an archaeology teaching unit for the public schools that would include a video documentary, a slide-tape documentary, replicated artifacts and a coloring book. An accessible public exhibit focusing on local Pensacola archaeology would be constructed for the lobby of the company building. We designed a logo for use on coffee cups, tee shirts, and power bill inserts, and we created a catchy project name, "Hawkshaw," after the name of the African-American neighborhood that would be virtually eliminated by the project.

The proposal was funded immediately by Gulf Power Company. As a result of the project, the company won a national Public Service Award from the Secretary of the Interior, as well as the top State public relations award. Archaeology gave the company what nothing else could: reams of positive newspaper coverage, TV spots, and editorials all over the Southeast. Through archaeology Gulf Power did something good for the community and for science, and the company was proud of the

extent of its commitment to community improvement. Today, Hawkshaw symbolizes the living past that would have been forgotten and destroyed if Gulf Power had not preserved the past as it built for the future.

### **Taking On the City Council**

In order to stop the destruction of sites in the city, we needed local political support for archaeological preservation, and for that we needed legislation to protect local archaeological sites. For the City Council, any vote comes down to voter/citizen support. We helped form a large and vocal political action committee, and when we sent a proposal to the City Council for an archaeological review procedure on city owned property, it was approved unanimously. Council Members enthusiastically endorsed a program that put them in the leadership role, with funding for compliance on a project-by-project basis. Since the review procedure approval, four major city compliance projects have located and preserved significant archaeological deposits, with consistent and positive media coverage. A survey of Pensacola has been completed, with its archaeological areas defined and documented.

### **The Colonial Trail**

Pensacola was a colonial town, one of the handful of settlements in the United States that has been continuously occupied since the 1600s. In the fall of 1994, the Pensacola Colonial Archaeological Trail was opened in the historic part of downtown. The trail is a series of outdoor and indoor public exhibits of some remnants of Pensacola's colonial town that existed from 1750 to 1821, a town that lies just beneath our streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and buildings. In an outside walking tour, people can see the actual archaeological remains of their old town: wells, foundations

of buildings, cooking ovens, and fort walls. The outdoor archaeological features are all well marked with signs and there are free brochures to take along the trail. People visit the museum and view larger exhibits of the items used in their town over two centuries ago.

"Archaeotourism" is bringing new people from the beaches to places downtown, where they eat, make purchases, and often stay the night. A new maritime museum and exhibit are being designed to display the items from the spectacular 16th century galleon shipwreck currently under excavation in Pensacola Bay, as well as more recent material from our long maritime history.

The Trail is a high profile, public oriented project that includes various elements for the public, from volunteer opportunities to school field trips. A full time public interpreter and public relations staff member prepares a weekly newsletter, takes groups on tours of dig sites, and even occasionally helps with excavations. The project is so popular with the press that it made international news and was highlighted on the "Science and Technology" program of Cable News Network.

### Archaeology Steering Committee

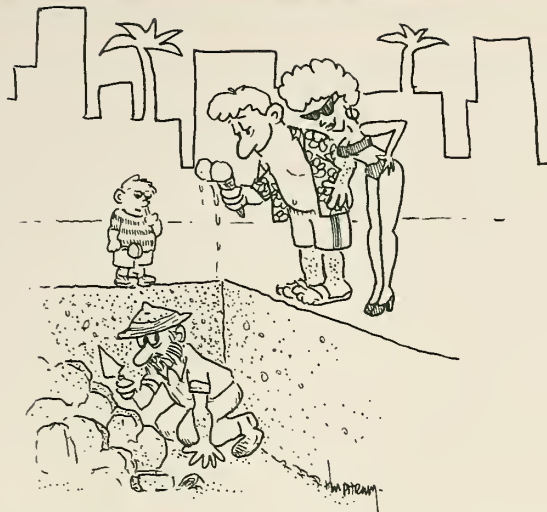
Pensacola now has an Archaeology Steering Committee, headed by a bank executive, made up of business men and women and community leaders interested in incorporating archaeology into the economic growth and development of the area. While the committee is advised by local archaeologists, historic preservationists, and the University President, it independently generates archaeological development ideas and ways to fund their implementation. The committee members know that the public likes history and

archaeology; they believe that physical and significant resources that lie in their area, if properly identified, studied and interpreted, will draw tourists and their money. It is a "clean" resource to develop. The concept of "archaeotourism" generated the ideas for the archaeological trail, archaeology museums, and sponsorship of public archaeology projects and products. This committee is even finding a way to increase the archaeology at the University, with more faculty and student support through political support in the state legislature. After all, the University is the "home" of archaeology in this community, and a necessary part of the development of the archaeology here.

### Funding Support

In the Fall of 1993, Dr. Margaret J. Smith, a retired Pensacola aeronautical engineer and statistician passed away. She left her entire estate -- almost half a million dollars -- to the archaeology program at the University of West Florida. A few years earlier, the recently retired Dr. Smith had walked into my office and asked how she could become involved in archaeology. Not only did she take almost all of our courses to become educated in the subject, she brought our entire archaeology staff and students into the modern age of PC computer assisted drawing (CAD) and data analysis. Under her tutelage, we moved to a new level of work quality. With her gift, she continues to help us as we build, grow and develop archaeology at the University.

At the same time another guardian angel, a retired business couple, Hal and Pat Marcus, gave \$100,000 to an endowment for the Historical Archaeology graduate program at the University of West Florida. They selected archaeology because the field trains professionals who will develop Pensacola's archaeological resources that will, in turn, be



economically beneficial to the community. The program had no steady graduate student support and our donors knew that their gift would attract good students competing for graduate assistantships.

### Pensacola Today

Today, there is a large archaeology support group, an advisory archaeology steering committee, an archaeological ordinance in the city, and a civic commitment to an archaeology integrated into the growth and development of Pensacola. In Pensacola, archaeology is viewed as an economic resource, not an economic obstacle. We communicate to the public in many ways a very simple message: **archaeology is here and it is good.** We have used the media's natural interest in archaeological finds, the public's natural curiosity about archaeology, and the good sites which are in our midst. The principle and assumption underlying all our efforts can be summed up in a single phrase: valuable resources will be protected by the public and their representatives. In Florida, our natural resources such as beaches and recreational waterways are protected and our cultural resources such as roads are well kept. These are expensive activities, but, because these resources are important economically, residents are willing to maintain them.

Archaeological sites have been demonstrated to be economically important in many places such as Jamestown, St. Augustine, the Southwest and Europe. Why not Pensacola?

The community is well on its way to understanding the benefits of the archaeological resources that lie in their midst. While there is a long way to go, and sites are still being destroyed, the damage is much less, and more and more people want to protect them. There still are only a few archaeologists here, three to be exact, and we will never, personally, be able to take care of all the sites. But the residents can and will, if given proper incentives.

Pensacola is not an unusual town, archaeologically. Each town in the country has something special about it and there are archaeological sites in and around each of them. Look around your area and ask if there are ways to stem the destruction going on in your own back yard. It will make you and your community feel good. After all, our communities' resources belong to us; **it is our watch.**

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