

ALL POINTS BULLETIN



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...the past, through the....

Colorado Archaeological Society - Denver Chapter

"...in the future, as in the past, the gathering of information will depend to a great extent on cooperation between avocational and professional archaeologists." (H.M. Wormington, 1978)

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Ancient Tequesta Village in Downtown Miami, Fla by Rosalie Hewins

For the last 18 months the clock has been ticking over the future of an ancient American Indian site on the shores of Miami, Florida at 300 Biscayne Blvd Way. Preservationists say that the site is one of the most important Indian villages in the United States, and the largest Tequesta settlement ever found, particularly because it shows that Miami's history is older than people thought. The ancient Tequesta village, which has been well preserved, covers about half of a vacant two-acre city block on the north side of the Miami River, on what was the original shoreline of Biscayne Bay.

The site has been preserved for the past 80 years below a parking lot. Previously it was the site of the mid 19th century military Fort Dallas, used during the Seminole Indian wars; and then in 1897 Flagler built his Royal Palm Hotel on it, foundations of which are still visible.

Met Square is the fourth phase of MDM's huge Met Miami development, which occupies 4 adjacent city blocks. They plan to build residences, a 34 story hotel, shops and a movie theater. In October, 2013 just as the economy was rebounding, the developers hired archaeologists to review the site prior to construction. The city of Miami granted MDM zoning and development approval for the project, though not a final building permit, before the full scope of the archaeological finds were known or understood. Under the direction of Robert Carr, the executive director of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, his team has been carefully excavating the 2 acre site, removing topsoil down to the limestone. They found hundreds of postholes dug into the limestone in double rows of circles and straight lines (now marked with plastic tubes). At first it wasn't apparent what they were looking at, but then they

plotted the postholes on a graph and connected the dots. That is when they also saw the pattern of the two parallel lines, previously unseen in a Tequesta site. They were also able to go up to one of the surrounding high-rises and look on the site.



Overview of Tequesta site.

Photo Rosalie Hewins

This area was probably underwater at the time of its habitation, so it would have been raised up on wooden posts. Nine circles have so far been discovered measuring about 30 feet in diameter. These would have been thatched circular living structures. The parallel linear postholes may have been raised boardwalks connecting the dwellings. These structures are the first to be found in Florida and therefore there are no records of what they would have looked like.



*Double circular row of holes crossed by a trench.
photo Rosalie Hewins*

The Tequesta were a relatively small tribe, located in S. E. Florida in what is now Palm Beach and Dade Counties. They are thought to have existed for about 2000 years, and typically made their homes on rivers, streams and islands. In the worst of the mosquito season they would spend about 3 months on the barrier islands. The village called “Tequesta” was located on the Miami River at Biscayne Bay. They travelled in dug-out canoes, fishing up and down the coast and rivers. They were hunter gatherers living on fish, shellfish, seeds, berries, deer and palm dates, and occasionally an alligator. They had no corn or wheat, so they made their flour from the root of the Zania palm-like plant.

The Tequesta were less powerful than their neighbors, the Calusa, but they did have alliances through marriage and their chiefs were often related. The Tequesta chief lived in a large structure 40 x 25 feet.

Among the many interesting articles found in the karst holes at the Met Square site were fish and ray bones, mollusk shells, deer bones, berries, seeds, shark bones, turtle shells, fruit pits and the now extinct Caribbean monk seal. Thousands of Tequesta artifacts have been found including conch-shell blades for axes and chert arrowheads. These would have been obtained

through trade as there was nothing but limestone available in this area. Also piles of pottery shards were found as well as bone tools made into hair pins, awls and needles. Perforated shells used as weights for fishing nets were also found. Radiocarbon dating shows artifact dates of AD 650 – AD 1500.



Many historic artifacts have been uncovered from the Royal Palm Hotel. When the hotel was under construction, the workers gave or sold human skulls buried on the site to Girtman’s Grocery Store on Flagler St, where they were sold to tourists. The hotel was destroyed by a hurricane in 1926.

The race against the clock is now about how to preserve the site at Met Square. MDM want to start construction. They already have leases in place. Preservationists want it preserved. Bob Carr, who is employed by MDM, has recommended that as much of the site as possible be preserved in situ. Preservationists say that MDM knew the site was inside a designated archaeological zone. Archaeologists have long suspected that there once was a Tequesta village underneath the parking lot, given that burial grounds and middens under a Whole Foods with parking garage and residential tower under construction, were found nearby in 2006. The burial grounds contained remains of about 500 people found in five solution holes (depressions in the bedrock) that were each about 15 feet in diameter. The Miccosukee and Seminole tribes were contacted and the remains were repatriated. Neither tribe is a direct descendant of the Tequesta but by the 17th century, after European contact, the Tequesta were wiped out by disease, slavery and war. Preservationists see the potential for a major exhibit around at least some of the archaeological site. Officials say it could earn a National

Landmark status and might even qualify as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

This whole dilemma echoes the battle to save the Miami Circle in 1998, located just across the Miami River. A set of postholes, 38 feet in diameter, set in a circle, were discovered by Bob Carr on the south bank of the river. Nothing like it had ever been seen. Archaeologists came to the conclusion that the circle marked the site of a Tequesta council house or ceremonial structure dating back as much as 2000 years ago. The circle was saved, turned into a park and buried to protect it, because the state of Florida lacked the money to exhibit it.

A settlement was reached in March, 2014, under which the developers agreed to preserve 2 of the major circles at Met Square, exhibit some of the artifacts, the hotel steps and a well. In addition, there will be a public plaza and museum to exhibit the site to the public. The NE circle will be the center of a gallery which will be operated by History Miami and open to the public. The other circle at the SW corner will be encased in tall glass panels, and will be viewed both from the sidewalk and inside where tenant spaces will be located. The latest plans can be seen at www.Miami.curbed.com/places/met-square. The Cree Nation want the entire site saved.

In late April a lawsuit was filed by Dr. Pestle, an archaeologist at the University of Miami, against the city, arguing that the settlement should be declared invalid because it was done in secret. He wants the developers to start from the beginning, with greater participation from Native Americans, the public and archaeologists.
References:

Building on the Past by Tristram Korten, Biscayne Times
Prehistoric Village found in downtown Miami by Andres Vignuzzi, Miami Herald
Miami's Past and Future Clash at a Building Site by Frances Robles, NY Times

SEPTEMBER DC/CAS GENERAL MEETING

Monday, September 8, 2014, 7 pm, Ricketson Auditorium, Denver Museum of Nature & Science
Speaker: Bill Hammond, Topic: Ken-Caryl Ranch Project

BLACKFOOT CAVE & WEST BIJOU

Survey: Sept. 13 - West Bijou survey, 8 am, Plains Conservation Center (Hampden & Picadilly)

Analysis: Sept. 16, 17 (5379 South Flanders Way)

Contact: Neil Hauser (hauserndigger@gmail.com)

PAAC CLASS SCHEDULE 2ND HALF, 2014 (Draft)

The following is the PAAC class schedule for the Second Half, 2014.

Alamosa	Basic Site Surveying Techniques Sept. 19-22
Avon	Archaeological Laboratory Techniques Nov. 15-16
Boulder	Archaeological Practice in Colorado Sept. 10, 17, 24, Oct. 1
Denver	Perishable Materials Oct. 16, 23, 30, Nov. 6, 13, 20, Dec. 4
Dolores	Archaeological Dating Methods Nov. 1-2
Durango	Historical Archaeology Oct. 24-26
Fountain	Prehistoric Lithics Description & Analysis Nov. 21-23
Pueblo	Colorado Archaeology Sept. 12-14

To register for the Denver/CAS class on Perishable Materials, contact: Anne Winslow (anne.winslow@state.co.us)

LECTURES

"Senenmut: Was the Man Behind the Door a Power Behind the Throne?", by Bonnie Sampson, Monday, September 15, 7 pm, Ricketson Auditorium, Denver Museum of Nature & Science
MEETING OF Egyptian Study Society

"Behind the Scenes: Creating Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya", by Barry Brukoff, Sunday, September 21, 2:30 pm, Denver Art Museum, Meeting of Alianza de las Artes Americanas

ARE YOU MOVING OR DO YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS CHANGE??? Please update your address for the APB with our Membership Chairperson.

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Denver Chapter/Colorado Archaeological Society

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____ Student (include copy of ID) \$16.00

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Contributions to these funds:

\$ ____ General

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