

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another
edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how
the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the
work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a
closer look at the different

City departments and provides
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Hello and thanks for tuning in.
You're listening to The

Break Room, I'm Melissa Wissel,
Communications Director for the

City of St Augustine. With
it being Archaeology Month as

as Women's History Month. We're
going to kick it off with City

Archaeologist Dr Andrea
White to fill us in on what

she's been digging up around
town. Couldn't resist that. ANDREA: I like it. MELISSA: Andrea,
welcome back to The Break Room.

ANDREA: Thank you so much for bringing
me back. MELISSA: So, I have to start

out by thanking you for coming.
You guys are always so busy and

I hate it because you always
come in here. You have great

things to tell, us but we only
get you in here once a year.

So, if we run out of time
today, we're going to have to

have you back. ANDREA: Of course, Yeah. MELISSA:
Because you got lots of cool

stuff going on. ANDREA: We always have cool stuff going on. MELISSA: Always

cool stuff. Always. So you start where you want to start.

What do you want to tell me first? ANDREA: Oh my gosh. I don't know

where to start. There's so many things. We probably in the

last year, since we last had our discussion, probably have done

about eighty projects. That's what we're averaging a year

which is pretty insane when you think about it. And so at any

point in time, we're around maybe 170 to 200 active

projects, which is a lot.

It kind of makes my head

explode slightly because we're not just doing the field work.

That's only a small component,
as I often say. It's sort of

like a, if we think back into
school and we had to do

research papers, right? We went
and maybe we went to the

library. Maybe we did some
research on the internet and

you kind of gathered data.

Well, that's what we do

when we go in the field. We're
just gathering data. That's

like, maybe 25% of the process.

Then, you gotta take all that

data. You gotta synthesize it
and then you have to like

produce your report to turn in
and get your grade. MELISSA: And tell us

what you found. ANDREA: Yeah, exactly.

MELISSA: What does it mean? ANDREA: It's a big

part of the archaeology. Just
digging it is not really giving

us the whole picture. So,
that's when I say, we have those,

that many active projects. It's
either in the field or at some

stage in the lab, going
through, washing, curating,

analyzing the artifacts,
synthesizing all the

information, doing historical
research, and basically tying

it all together to tell a
story. So, so we're

always doing that. MELISSA: What's your
big one right now? Is it the, is

it I want to call it the

Yahala. ANDREA: Yallaha. Yeah. It's

supposed to mean the Seminole word for
Orange is Yallaha. It so, the

Yallaha Plantation, local folks
might be familiar with it. It's

probably the oldest building
that's still standing in

Lincolnton. It's on Bridge
Street. It was in, sort of

disrepair for many years, and it
is now being rehabilitated,

which is fantastic. It's
going to be spruced up.

Actually, it's looking great
already. We started work. I

think the contractors, John
Valdez and Associates, have been

out there for over a year.

Some folks purchased it and are

renovating it. So, that is. MELISSA: And
this is for the listeners, this

is the one that's down towards

Riberia. Big

plantation-looking home. Blue.

ANDREA: Probably one of larger lots in

Lincolnvillle. MELISSA: And then it it

literally got, I want to say dug

out from, I mean, there was a lot

of overgrowth and trees. You

didn't know it was back there.

ANDREA: No, there was a great huge

stand of bamboo that was sort

of obfuscating it from.

From the street. So, a lot of

didn't really know it was even

there until that bamboo got

thinned out and now it's under

renovation. So, what's kind of

cool, is we knew that it was a

historic home. We knew that it

probably dated to the early

1800s and that it was part of a
much larger, at the time, the

northern part of Lincolnville
was under Orange Grove

cultivation. So, it's sort of
been known as a, well it's been

known as a plantation site. And
it was under cultivation,

oranges were being harvested
from the area. But over time, as

Lincolnville was slowly
subdivided and turned into the

neighborhood that we now know
as Lincolnville, the lot, lot

kept getting restricted to just
sort of the complex of the

house and some additional
buildings that were on there.

So, kind of like the core of
where the buildings were. And

so, we were excited about doing
this plantation work. We had

not, and no one has done any
archaeology there. So, we were

very happy to be invited as
part of the building and

permitting process, since ground
disturbance was going to

happen. That's how we got
involved. So, we were going to

go out there and do a little
archaeology to kind of get us

better sense of what type of
deposits were there, what age

of things were, and because
it's a historic building, we

got to dig underneath the
building. And that historic

building actually is what
helped preserve an even earlier

occupation out there that dates
100 years prior. So, we're

dealing with the early
1700s. And at the

time, there was a Native
American mission, which we've

talked about sort of these
Native American mission

communities, or refugee mission
communities from the early

1700s that were
scattered throughout St

Augustine. There were six of
them that we know of that were

at least recorded within what
is today St Augustine City

limits. And this one was known

as Palica. So it was a group of
native people that had come
from a mission site, sort of up
toward the St Mary's River,
and they were Mocama people. So

they were Timucua speaking
people that were living on the
coast that were already at a
Spanish mission. They retreated

because the Spanish mission
system was under attack by the

British. So, they retreated to
St Augustine and established

this mission community.

Later on in the 1717, there

was an additional group of
Yamasee native people that came

from sort of the borders of
South Carolina, Georgia. Today,

what we know is South Carolina,
Georgia, and came and also were

part of this mission group. So,
we've been looking for this

mission for a long time. We
found a little bit of traces

from it in some of our early work
maybe two years ago, was sort of

the first archaeological
evidence we have found, because

a lot of it has been destroyed
through that plantation,

agricultural activity that came
100 years later. So

when it's plowed, we sort of
lose any information about

wells and building posts and
things that we can reconstruct

where that native community
might have been. So, what's

great is the historic house
actually helped cap and

preserve what was underneath
it. So when we started

digging underneath the
foundations, we were able to

document at least three very
large posts that were all in an

alignment. We found an earthen
compact floor and all of these

things we are sure date to this
Palica mission, which was very

exciting for us. We've never
found really good intact

evidence of structures.

MELISSA: Concrete dirt evidence.

ANDREA: Concrete dirt evidence. So, we
were super excited about that.

Unfortunately, we could not

sort of expand to sort of chase

out where this building might
have been, because some of it's

underneath the house. Some of
it goes into where there were

large trees, so we can't, the
tree's now on top of it. We

can't dig anymore. So, we at
least found some evidence. So,

we're pretty excited. Then, we
moved to the backyard where a

pool is going to be. And so we
spent all summer digging out

pretty much the equivalent of
what is a pool. Hand dug.

So, sort of handcrafted
archaeology where we found

additional post. We also found
well-construction pits that

date to the actual plantation
period, which is in the 1800s. So, we're finding a
lot of really great, what we

call multi-component sites. So,
it has multiple occupations out

there. And so we're still going
through doing a lot of lab

analysis, and so we still have a
lot more to learn, but it was a

pretty amazing, exciting
discovery there. Actually

got national attention about our
discovery. MELISSA: And it's not, and

you're out of there now. You're
not digging there anymore.

ANDREA: We're not there now. Moving on.

We would have

loved to have gone back. The
contractors and owners were

happy to have us come back and

do some more work. It would

have been great to maybe even
answer some of the questions

about the age of the structure
that's still there. We don't

know how old it is, because
there's not clear records.

There's not like a building
permit that you go went and

applied for. And even
if there was, those records

aren't necessarily in existence
anymore. So, we would have

loved to have gone back but we,
you know, had to move on to

other projects. That's, you
know, part of what we do as

part of our program is to only
look at those projects where we

know things are going to be
impacted and developed. And so,

certain parts of the property
were not going to be developed.

In fact, one of the really cool
outcomes I think of this

project is that the developer
changed their protocols and

instead of digging footers in the
ground, they're actually

forming them on the surface of
the ground. So, that won't have

what we would call ground
penetration. So, it's not

going to impact or dig and
destroy any archaeological

deposits. So, that's a great
outcome and that contractor is

still using those ideas and
plans on future projects. So,

it's kind of a cool outcome.

So, it's actually helping to

preserve what is there

archaeologically. So.

That's another fun outcome. MELISSA: So,

that's what got. If you're just

now tuning in, you're listening

to The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, Communications

Director. But the more exciting

part of the conversation is

having City Archaeologist

Dr Andrea White with us. It

is Archaeology Month. We have

just a few minutes left. So

we're going to talk a few

minutes, but I'm just going to

say now, we're going to continue

the conversation, have you back,

because it's always fun to

talk. ANDREA: Yeah. There's never
enough time to talk about my

favorite subject. MELISSA: So, since we
have just a little bit of time,

I want to ask you to share with
our listeners that fun story,

talking about digging under
structures. I think

it'll fill in this last three
or four minutes that we have

about this beloved place in
towns called Scarlett O'Hara's.

ANDREA: Yeah, Scarlett O'Hara's is, has
been or was a you know, local

landmark for a long time, as a
bar and restaurant. And

recently, we were invited to
come and dig underneath part of

bar or the deck out that's, it's covered, but it was the floor

material was decking. So it wasn't like a concrete floor,

and there was a grease trap getting put in. I know we get

to deal with a lot of these lovely things that noone thinks

about. Stormwater retention, sewers, grease traps, all of

these things that are hidden, well hidden from your daily

lives, but our necessities. So, when the floor was taken up or

the decking, what was directly under a floor was an entire

layer of what would have been lost throughout the last

20, 30 years through the decking of the floor. So, it was

an essentially a, what we call
as archaeologists, emitted a

layer of trash, except it was
modern trash. It was probably

thousands of straws, both the
tiny drink straws, the large

plastic straws. There was oh
man, lots of, probably over \$20

worth of coins, modern coins,
right. So you know, our quarters

nickels, and we could date them,
fortunately. Ao we all knew that

they were from, you know, the
very late 90s early 2000s. There

was credit cards, driver's
license lost through the cracks.

Hotel keys, there were Mardi
Gras beads, lots of stuff that

deal with food service, so more

knives than anything, because

forks and spoons may not fit
through those tiny cracks. Cracker

wrappers. MELISSA: You did mention an
unmentionable...ANDREA: But the there

were some things we could say
are gendered, so there was not

only lost things of makeup,
which you know lip liners,

things like that, chapsticks.

There was also evidence of

bachelorette parties, which is a
fairly new phenomenon in our

culture, right. But it is still
sort of this right of passage

that has actually grown to a
very large commercial... MELISSA: Confetti, straws.

ANDREA: Yeah, it's a commercial
industry, but it is you know,

it's a still a new part of our
culture that is something that

women go out and celebrate, you
know. Right. Maybe the night or

maybe a couple weeks before the
wedding. So, there are things

that are associated with that.
Mardi Gras beads and maybe some

other things, that. MELISSA: And
interestingly, you, we

talked about this. You
collected some of it, but also

didn't. So, it's, it
will be a telling treasure 100

years from now if someone were
to go back. ANDREA: Yeah and so, some of

the, what's to me it's a, it's a
great example of what we look

for archaeologically in terms
of emitted a layer of trash.

And from all of those things
together, if we didn't know that

it was Scarlett O'Hara's, we
could clearly say hey, this must

have been a bar and a
restaurant from a very specific

time period, because from the
credit cards and the driver's

license and the coins we could
actually date things. We had

several items that actually had
Scarlett O'Hara emblem. So,

there was a token. There was a
Styrofoam cup. Styrofoam takes

a long time to break down in
the ground. So, we could have

even put a name to this, had we
had no other records, and we

just had the archaeology. We

still would have been able to

determine what time period
we're dealing with, and what

function this property was, and
when it was functioning as a

bar and a restaurant. So, I
think it's a really cool modern

example. Even
though it's it's modern trash

but, it's a great.. MELISSA: But it still
tells a story. ANDREA: It tells a

really cool story. So, So, we
get excited about these things

and 100 years from now, this is
what archaeologists are

going to be looking at. So,
kind of a cool thing. MELISSA: And with

that, we're out of time. ANDREA: Oh no.

We didn't even talk about the

science. We didn't even talk
about what you have coming up.

So, we are going to have you
back. And I'm going to

say thanks for stopping by and
wrap us up. ANDREA: Cool. Thank you. I

look forward to the next
conversation. MELISSA: Excellent. If you

missed part of this broadcast
and you want to go back and

listen from the beginning, you
can find us on your favorite

podcasting app. Check it out at
CityStAugRadio.com. We

have a list there of all of the
podcasting platforms and links

to our past episodes including
this one. We want to keep you

informed about what's happening
in and around the City and most

importantly that you hear it
hear from the people doing it

and making it happen every day.

Follow us on all of our social

media platforms @CityStAug and you can also find the

Archaeology Department on
Facebook. Andrea remind me.

CityStAug Archaeology? ANDREA: I
believe so. That's also the

handle for our Instagram.

MELISSA: Instagram and Facebook, so check

out the Archaeology Department
on Facebook and Instagram, as

well. Until next time, thanks
for tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've been

listening to The Break Room, a
weekly program addressing

projects and programs offered
by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's
Communications Director,

Melissa Wissel, has in-depth
conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet
the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by
Communication Specialist for the City of St. Augustine,
Cindy Walker. See you at this

time next week for another
edition of The Break Room.