

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: Thanks for tuning in.

You are listening to The

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

City of St Augustine. Last time, Dr Andrea White was

with us in The Break Room, City

Archaeologist. We didn't

finish our conversation. So, we

are going to jump back in

today. Andrea, welcome back to

The Break Room. We were talking

about Yallaha. ANDREA: Yallaha.

MELISSA: Yallaha. We talked about trash

finds at Scarlet O'Hara's.

Yeah. And you and I had pages

of notes about science and

carbon and all kind of stuff.

So, let's pick up with some of

that cool stuff that you do.

ANDREA: Yeah, let's talk about some

science. We love some science.

Yeah. So, maybe it was a year

ago when or little over a year

ago when we last, when we talked

for in 2022 about Archaeology

Month. And I think I highlighted

some of the work that the

archaeology program has been

doing on Cuna Street and we

wrapped that up a while back.

But of course, the archaeology

process is takes more than just

the field work. And so we had

actually grabbed some carbon, or

charcoal, if you will, to have

radiocarbon dated. And we went,

we had some really cool pits,

kind of nestled in between some

of the utility lines. We had at

least one small pit that was

filled with nothing but razor

clam. And razor clam is

something that is very hard to

harvest. It's not like an

oyster bed. They actually move

pretty quick in the ground, or  
in the water. So, it you have

to hand collect the the razor  
clam. And it was a pit with

nothing but razor clam, and then  
one welk, part of a welk shell.

That had actually been modified  
and smoothed into a cup.

So it was something. It was  
devoid of glass, iron, anything

that we think of sort of as  
something that was produced

after, you know, Spanish  
occupation here. So

sometime after 1565. It didn't  
have any evidence of that. So,

we had a pretty good hunch that  
this was something that

predated Spanish occupation.

But, the best way to confirm

that is to send samples off for  
radiocarbon dating. So we had

two different pits. We had the  
razor clam pit and then there

was another pit underneath that  
without any artifacts, but we

took radiocarbon samples from  
both of those pits. We got our

results back, and we were  
floored, which, this is when I'm

like, science is amazing. The  
razor clam pit was about a 1,030

years old. Yeah. MELISSA: No  
kidding. ANDREA: So we're talking

roughly around a1000 AD.  
So people were using and living

along the Bayfront that long  
ago. And this cooperates some of

the evidence we have found from  
other archaeological projects

along the Bayfront, including  
some radiocarbon dates we got

from Meehan's Irish Pub where we  
did some work. And those

radiocarbon dates came back  
around maybe 11 to 1260 AD. So,

it really shows us that there's  
a good length of time that

people are living and utilizing  
that Bayfront well before the

Spanish arrived. So that  
was really awesome. And we're

excited about that and it, I  
think is a great example of how

we do these different small  
projects. But we can start

stitching together a bigger

narrative, a bigger story when

we start linking all the  
information from different

projects. MELISSA: I think that's  
something that what people

don't realize, and probably the  
customer if you will, your

customer, is, I've got this  
project. I need to get my

grease trap in. You really have  
to come in and dig?! Do you

really have to do this? But  
when you discover stuff like

that you say, yes absolutely.  
I mean, what a cool... so you

know, for those of you that have  
to have Andrea come in and dig

in your backyard, you just never  
know what she's going to find.

ANDREA: and we think that, we think  
those customers... I know it's

archaeology is a time consuming  
process and there's a lot on

our plate right now, so we try  
to get everybody as quickly as

possible and make it as  
painless as possible. And we

really appreciate everyone's  
patience, because it is

contributing to the greater  
narrative of St Augustine.

But, wait there's more.  
Right? So there's that first  
razor clam pit was really cool, but  
the results from the pit

underneath it blew our minds. I  
think that when we got the

results, we had to look multiple  
times to make sure we were

reading it right. The pit below,

the radiocarbon dates came

back 4700 years ago.

That's 4, 700 years ago. MELISSA: How do

you even know that? I mean, not

you, obviously. That's why you

send it away. That's crazy. ANDREA: Yeah.

So that was shocking to us, and

so we're, who knows what we

might find in the future.

In terms of other dates, but

that one was very surprising to

us. MELISSA: And that was here on Cuna

Street. ANDREA: That was on Cuna

Street. Right. Between

Charlotte Street and Avenida

Menedez. So, kind of across the

street from the Fort almost.

So that was a

really cool one. We also sent a few other radio carbon dates

off for another project we worked on in 2020 in

Fullerwood. There's a site which we've nicknamed The Fish

Dead Fish Head site. MELISSA: Very scientific. Very

technical. Very technical. ANDREA: Yeah but that site it's mainly

shell and we're finding a lot of, we're not finding a lot of

pottery, so it isn't difficult....

It was difficult for us to

really pin a rough time frame on that. But what we were

finding was a lot of fish otoliths, which you find in the

fish head, is part of like a way

that they balance themselves,

help the fish to balance

themselves. And so it

looks this is a procurement

site, so people are coming

they're harvesting oyster

shells, clamshells, they're

fishing they're probably

chopping off the fish head, and

then carrying the rest of the

fish back to their camp. So

we're only finding the fish,

remains of the fish head, so to

speak. MELISSA: So the the early days of

a fish table like you see at

the Conch house, or out at the at

the boat ramp out in the

Lighthouse Park. ANDREA: That's right,

people in the past are very

similar to us in many many ways.

But those radio carbon dates

kind of came back as 2800 years

ago. So that was really

exciting too. So. MELISSA: Very cool. So you've got

radiocarbon. What else

is there? So, we've partnered

with the University of Idaho.

There's a chemist out there who

loves to help archaeologists for

free, which is the right

price tag. And so, one

project we worked on was the

school number two. It was the

first black public school. It

was in Lincolnville. We

recovered a of bottles, and we

wanted to do some chemical

analysis. So, we sent some of

those analysis, bottles off for  
analysis from this chemist at

the University of Idaho and got  
back some really cool

information about that one of  
the bottles was probably some

kind of vaccine. They couldn't  
say what specific vaccine it

was, but around this time,  
smallpox and some other things

are becoming, inoculations  
are becoming common in public

schools. There was some  
evidence of glues that we were

finding, different glues,  
different paints, other things

involved in building  
maintenance that you wouldn't

normally think of. So, we're  
getting a lot of cool

information in this partnership

with University of Idaho from

that site. And then we're

working on another

contemporaneous site right now

actually that is a property the

Sisters of Saint Joseph owns,

which it's also in

Lincolnvile. It's on Martin

Luther King. It's St

Benedict the Moore. It was a

Catholic school that was also a

African American or black

Catholic school that was built

in 1898. And so we're hoping

that we'll find some

comparative material between

these two different black

public school. One's a black

public school and one is a

Catholic black school. So,  
we're hoping we'll get some

comparative material between  
us. Cuz they're

contemporaneous. So, that's  
exciting too. MELISSA: If you're just

now tuning in, you're listening  
to The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, Communications  
Director for the City of St

Augustine. We have back in The  
Break Room with us this week,

City Archaeologist Doctor Andrea  
White talking about your

radiocarbon and your chemical  
analysis. We've got a few

more, a few more minutes. What  
else is coming up? Or any other

recent projects to share with  
us? ANDREA: Yeah so we go, staying with

the science theme. We were able  
to purchase an RTK GPS. It's a

very high resolution GPS. So  
it's not like something in your

phone or in your car. It is  
something that gives us

millimeter accuracy, which takes  
a, it takes a a different type

of equipment to be able to give  
us that. Not just, you're

somewhere in this building. We  
want to, so what we use it for..

MELISSA: You're nearby. ANDREA: Yes. So what we  
actually are using it for in

combination with a total  
station, which is basically a

very fancy laser transit that  
we use for mapping. We're able

to pinpoint exactly where we're  
doing our excavations, which is

really important, because we  
need to be able to put that

information in GIS to know  
where we've excavated already

in the past. So, in case we go  
back to that property on a

different section, or you know,  
future archaeologist, or even

our future selves, need to go  
back to a location, we know

where we've excavated and where,  
what we found at that location.

MELISSA: It's not just kind of sort of  
near the backyard. By

that tree over there.  
Cuz that tree over there might  
not be there in 50 years. ANDREA: So

true. We have some maps that

we've looked at and they're, and  
they're all measured off of a

building. Well, that was from  
years ago. Is that building

still there today, or maybe it's  
had an addition? Maybe it's,

unfortunately, been torn down.

So, having really good accurate

information of where we've  
tested and where we've

investigated and where we found  
things in the past is really

important. So, we were super  
excited that we're able to

purchase that equipment. And do that type of

level of mapping. MELISSA: So, one other...  
We've got a few more minutes.

Can we come to your lab? How

does, how do we that? I know we,

we've done it in the past

in conjunction with City

Government Week. Can we

schedule stuff? I mean I say

we, meaning you and me. We could.

Yeah. Open. ANDREA: But for the general

public is where. MELISSA: Could the

general public call you? ANDREA: Yeah.

So we can be reached by phone.

We're often most of the time,

at least lately not in the lab.

So even though people stop by,

we're most of the time not

there. So but in the past,

we've opened up the lab for

some open houses to kind of

show everybody a behind the

scenes look of what we do, how

we do it, explain the archaeology process. And then I think we

had one scheduled going back to 2020. We had

one scheduled and unfortunately had to cancel that. But this

year, we're hoping to be able, as part of City Government Week

and International Archaeology Day, which is in October open up

the lab again and have tours back so. That's in the plans in

the work. Yes. Cuz we'd love to have people back to

explain what we do. It's always exciting. MELISSA: And to see it.

Literally lay your hands on it. Before we sign off, one other question, you mentioned that you're not always in the lab,

but you have volunteers. Tell  
me about your volunteers here

before we sign off. ANDREA: Oh, yes. We  
cannot do what we do without

our volunteers. We have about  
35 active volunteers who are

amazing and fantastic. They  
help in the field and in the

lab and doing all sorts of even  
clerical work. So, we're so

fortunate to have such a great  
support group to help us with

the process. MELISSA: Can people  
call you to sign up to

volunteer? How do you how does  
someone become a volunteer? ANDREA: We

do have some information on the  
City's website under [CityStAug.com/archaeology](http://CityStAug.com/archaeology) and  
people can look for

information. We normally ask

folks to fill out a volunteer

application form first to  
kind of see what they're

interested in doing. And then  
from there we offer some

training sessions if it's a  
good fit for things. I

know a lot of people want to  
dig because that's what most

people associate when it comes  
to archaeology. And normally we

start people out in lab so they  
have a better sense of what,

what does an artifact even look  
like. People are often very

surprised. As to things  
that are important and can

yield information. So, that's  
normally where we start folks.

But, we only have time to do  
those training sessions a

couple times a year. So, it  
sometimes it may take a while

if someone's interested. But  
yeah. MELISSA: Well thank you to the

volunteers. ANDREA: Yes. Thank you so  
much to them. They are

absolutely fantastic. MELISSA: Well,  
thank you. Again, ran out of

time. Always. Thanks for coming  
by and we'll we'll get you

back. ANDREA: It's such a pleasure  
anytime. Thanks. MELISSA: If you missed

part of this broadcast and  
want to go back and listen from

the beginning, you can find us  
on your favorite podcasting

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Thanks again for tuning in

until next time. ANNOUNCER: You've been

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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.