

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, if 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

Lincolnville. 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 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

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Thanks again for tuning in
until next time. 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.