

Archaeologist shows proof of early explorers at DuBois Park



JAN DAVISSON, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site.

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JUPITER — Christian Davenport, the official archaeologist for Palm Beach County, is a staff of one.

And although he might not have a budget, he's a master at getting volunteers to donate time and talent to uncover some great facts about the DuBois Park location.

The county purchased the Kindt property, located within DuBois Park, in 2010 after the death of Susan DuBois Kindt.

It included the Pineapple House which was built by Harry DuBois in the late 1800s to house his pineapple crop before shipping it out. It was later updated by John DuBois and used as a rental.

The DuBois family history started when Harry Dubois, who worked with Capt. Carlin and the Jupiter Life Saving Station, married school teacher Susan Saunders and built her a home on top of the historical Indian mound in Dubois Park.



Their son John was born in 1899 in the new house. John later married Bessie Wilson, who arrived in Jupiter with her parents in 1914 from New Jersey. Bessie became a noted historian in Florida.

She and John would do presentations throughout the county showing numerous slides of historic sites and give the background history.* While John rented out boats and collected 25 cents entrance fee to DuBois Park, Bessie ran the seafood restaurant and baked pies for Camp Murphy (during World War II, it was located where Jonathan Dickenson State Park now stands.)

In between all of this, she managed to write historic booklets and raise her children, Doris known as Dodie (Thayer), Louise (deceased at early age), Susan (Kindt) and Harry.

This is just a brief synopsis of the location to give an understanding of the current site. According to Christian Davenport, 'the DuBois location is the crown jewel of Florida history sites.

It's the most studied site of over 300 historic digs throughout Florida.

As he tried to put it in prospective for the Kiwanian audience, "The great pyramids of Egypt are 4,000 years old. Artifacts dug up in DuBois date back over 3,000 years and several are thought to be as old as 6,000." This means that people were living at the Jupiter Inlet location before the pyramids were even built."

The country received a grant for renovating the Dubois home on the Indian shell mound in 2012; however, before they could start renovations, it first had to determine that nothing of historical importance would be destroyed.

"When trying to picture digging into the oyster mounds, think of a pile of Legos with super glue," said Davenport. The artifacts at the top of the mound were of higher status of people. He compared it with the lower mound people using Tupperware and the upper mound using china.

The artifacts included pieces of pottery, beads and more recent bone handled tooth brushes from the 18th and 19th century. "The most exciting find is a faceted chevron bead, proof that some very important people had visited or occupied the area in the earliest phase of the exploration of the new world," said Davenport. "This bead is on display at the Palm Beach County Historical Museum and well worth the trip to West Palm to see it. This year is the 500 year anniversary of Ponce de Leon's trip to Florida so lots of wonderful events are being planned."



Chevron beads were produced in Italy in the 14th century and used only by wealthy individuals for trade purposes. "Remember, all of Manhattan Island was purchased with beads," said Davenport. Another bead found is a blue bead dating back to the time Jonathan Dickenson and his party was shipwrecked in the area in 1496.

The famous Dickenson Journal is the first recorded history of the area. In addition to beads, a vast amount of pumice which comes from volcanoes was uncovered. It was traced to Mexico and most likely arrived from tides from the Gulf of Mexico. Another exciting find was pieces of jewelry made from Basalt, which is an igneous - volcanic rock from either Georgia or the Carolinas. It was carbon dated and established to be from 780 A.D.

There are two projects that need financing to establish dates of artifacts.

One is carbon dating. The other is a procedure to get the faunal (animal) remains analyzed by Dr. Arlene Fradkin at Florida Atlantic College. Dr. Fradkin is an expert in in this field. "It's amazing the time lines that can be discovered with this process," said Davenport. He is currently seeking donations to cover the \$5,000 necessary to make this happen. If you are interested in making a donation, call (561) 963-6732.

In addition to the Jupiter Inlet site, there are several other historical sites around the area including Suni Sands, the Jupiter Lighthouse and the off shore Spanish ship wreck that is so close it had to be surveyed by Dailey and Associates from land.

If you have an opportunity to see this presentation in the future, take advantage of it. We're living in an area that already traces back to 300 A.D. and with the work being done by Christian Davenport and his volunteers, it probably isn't too long before he uncovers proof of people living here B.C.

*Former Tequesta Mayor Dottie Campbell was instrumental in having a VCR series of vignettes produced of Bessie and John showing the slides and explaining the history. It was produced and donated to the Loxahatchee Historical Museum in the late 1980s.

Unfortunately, it's the only recorded voice of Bessie and John as they did their presentation and its whereabouts at the museum are unknown.

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