



HERALDLINK FULL STORY

THE TEQUESTA: A TIMELINE



10,000-6000 B.C.:

Florida is inhabited by an ancient people named "Paleo-Indians" by historians.

6000-3500 B.C.:

Cultures develop, including the first tools, pottery and carvings.

3500 B.C.-A.D.:

A distinct culture called Tequesta eventually establishes itself along the southeast coast of Florida. In the southwest, the Calusa evolve.

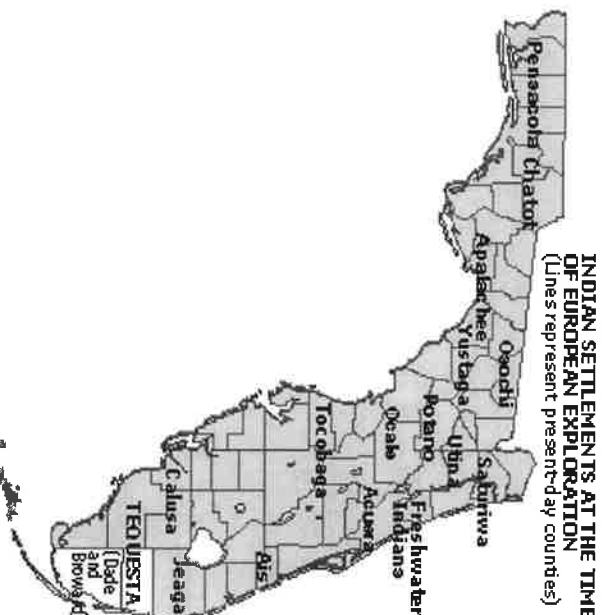
A.D.: Distinct structures, including burial mounds, begin to be built by Florida peoples. The Tequesta build a village at the mouth of the Miami River.

1500: Florida's native peoples are estimated at 25,000. Of those, about 1000 are Tequesta, living between Pompano Beach and the Florida Keys and Cape Sable. They live along the coast, near the mouths of rivers, fishing and killing whales and manatees, deer and turtles to eat.

1513: Juan Ponce de Leon encounters the Tequesta. He names the area around Biscayne Bay "Chequescha" after the tribe.

1567: Jesuit priests and soldiers arrive at the mouth of the Miami River and build a small fort and mission. It is abandoned in 1570 after the Tequesta react violently to the killing of a tribe member.

1600s-1700s: The native peoples of Florida are slowly decimated by diseases brought by the Spanish, by warfare among themselves and by slave-catchers. By the early 1700s, only a few Tequesta are



left.

1763: The Treaty of Paris gives Florida to England in exchange for Cuba. Eighty Indian families petition the Cuban government, and are taken by boat to Havana from Key West. This would be the end of the Tequesta in Florida.

1896: Builders of the Royal Palm Hotel on the north bank of the Miami River's mouth level a 15-foot high Tequesta burial mound and bury the bones found there.

1925: The town of El Portal establishes an archaeological park around one of the last Tequesta burial mounds in Miami-Dade County. Of the 20 burial mounds in Dade at the beginning of this century, only two other sites remain today, at Deering Estate and Biscayne National Park.

1929: Archaeologists discover 50 skeletal remains estimated at 3,000 years old in a Tequesta burial mound in Surfside. The bones are shipped to the Smithsonian Institution in 1934. Somehow they are lost.

1959: A Tequesta ceremonial site is found in the Parkland area of northwest Broward, with a large wooden crypt filled with remains. Most are taken to the Graves Museum in Dania.

1987: The oldest Tequesta artifacts found yet are discovered at a mound in Weston, proving the Tequesta were in the Everglades as far back as 3100 B.C.

1988: During the excavation for Joe Robbie Stadium (now Pro Player Stadium), archaeologists find artifacts showing that Tequesta used the site as a meeting place.

1989: Archaeologists find an entire skeleton of a Tequesta woman who died between 1,000 and 2,000 years ago on Pine Island Ridge in Broward.

1992: Snake Warrior Island in Miramar is sold to the state to be preserved as a historical site after a 500-to-1,000-year-old Tequesta bone is found there.

1995: A new bridge over the Miami River is opened at Brickell Avenue. Topping the bridge is a 17-foot sculpture of a Tequesta warrior. It overlooks the site of the ancient Tequesta village.

1998: An excavation at the mouth of the Miami River, below the bridge, finds a circle carved into stone.

COMPILED BY HERALD RESEARCH EDITOR ELISABETH DONOVAN

SOURCES: Herald files, Florida's First People, A History of Florida, The Indians of the Southeast United States.



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Getting in touch with HERALDlink

Follow the precedent

Here's how the discovery of a historically significant site was handled elsewhere in Florida. In the late '80s, a developer's bulldozers clawing through North

SAVE MIAMI CIRCLE Players must think of historical import, cooperation.

Florida's red-clay soil unearthed what turned out to be the site where explorer Hernando De Soto set up camp in about 1540. A foot thick, there were patterns of posts that made up Native American structures, beads, coins and other artifacts.

"The De Soto site is an archeological success story," says Dr. James Miller, state archeologist and chief of the Bureau of Archeological Research. He credits "a group of very committed people" — the developer, representatives from the Trust for Public Land, and public and private community leaders. The trust raised the money to buy the land from the developer, who modified the project. The state, eventually, bought the site.

where such relationships are stretched taut and may soon rupture.

The city and the county must find a solution together and stop trying to one-up each other; the so-far cooperative developer must *not* dig in his heels and deny time for research; and, though the White House has been beseeched, the *state* — including Gov. Jeb Bush — should try to determine what it can do rather than lamenting what it can't. Moving the circle should be only a last-ditch, worst-case solution.

The larger import of this unique discovery demands leaving it where it has been for centuries. Creativity and cooperation must guide the final decision. Miami will assure its place in history one way or the other.

Miller says: "I can't tell you how important it is for relations to be positive and to be maintained throughout a process such as this." Which brings us to the Miami Circle;

MIAMI HERALD
Feb. 11, 1999

CARL HIAASEN



TEQUESTA GRAVE A SAD MEMORY

New Age granola-heads have arrived in South Florida to ponder the so-called Miami Circle.

Some suspect the archaeological dig at the mouth of the Miami River reveals the husk of an ancient astronomical temple, clues to a lost global civilization.

Others see the 38-foot-wide limestone terrace as a former landing site of UFOs, which would certainly help to explain Miami politics, past and present.

However, the most likely origin of the circle is not so occult. Based on pottery remnants, diggers believe the structure probably was made by the Tequesta Indians, between 500 and 800 years ago.

You don't hear much about the Tequestas, but for a couple of thousand years they occupied southeast Florida, fairly peacefully, from what is now Boca Raton west through the Everglades and south to the Keys. This was long before the Europeans or even the Seminoles arrived.

The Tequestas loved the water, thriving on fish and turtle eggs and manatee steaks. On moonlit nights, tribal groups gathered at what we call Cape Florida to hold great feasts.

No one knows exactly how many Tequestas once lived here, but this much is certain: There were not enough of them. The Spanish showed up in the 1500s, bringing guns, alcohol and exotic diseases, and within two centuries the Tequestas were gone.

So it is proper to show reverence toward the meticulous stone configuration uncovered on the south bank of the Miami River. And it's depressing to think that a parking garage will soon rise on that site, flanked by two high-rises of fancy apartments and shops.

Mayor Joe Carollo wants to cut the Miami Circle out of the bedrock, like a huge piece of cake, and transport it to a safe place. That way, developer Michael Baumann can move ahead with his \$100 million towers, which will significantly elevate the city's anemic tax rolls.

Baumann, a Miami native, has been more accommodating than some developers might have been. Sure, it would be terrific if the circle was preserved intact, and nothing but a fence was ever built there.

It would also be terrific if somebody found a cure for cancer, plugged the hole in the ozone layer and talked Johnny Carson out of retirement.

But let's be realistic. This is waterfront real estate in downtown Miami. The Tequestas might have kept it pristine for 2,000 years, but for the past 200 it's been firmly in the mischievous grip of the white man.

Across the river from the archaeological dig is the former site of Henry Flagler's Royal Palm Hotel, which opened to much fanfare in 1897. But before the 450-room landmark could be finished, something had to be done about a Tequesta burial mound, seven stories high.

John Sewell, who cleared the land for Flagler, described in his memoirs the sensitive approach taken toward the sacred Indian entombment. First, his workers flattened it. Then the mound's soil was used for the hotel lawn, while the rocks and shells were packed into roadbed.

In all, more than 50 Tequesta skulls and skeletal segments were unearthed. Those that weren't given away as souvenirs were stashed in a tool shed. After the hotel was completed, Sewell had the bones collected and dumped in a "big hole in the ground, about 12 feet deep."

He then ordered his crew "to forget about this burial and whereabouts of same."

Sewell's secret pit has never been found, but the bones it holds conceivably could belong to those who carved that intriguing circle-like formation in the limestone, across the river.

And even if that is all that remains of them, it's still infinitely more impressive than a parking garage.

Curator from D.C. weighs in on Circle

But feds apparently powerless on issue

By **MARTIN MERZER**
Herald Senior Writer

An expert from the prestigious Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., joined the battle Monday to save the Miami Circle, urging South Florida's leaders to protect the 38-foot-diameter stone artifact — and the entire 2.2-acre site — for future generations.

"Someone has to do something," said Dr. William Sturtevant, curator of ethnology in the Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology. He visited the downtown archaeological dig last month. "It's a crying shame if there isn't time and money to do a thorough investigation.

"It's clearly a unique site. We're going to lose absolutely irreplaceable evidence of the aboriginal inhabitants of the area."

But he said the Smithsonian and the federal government do not appear to have power or authority in the matter.

"My guess is there's nothing we can do except to say how important it is," Sturtevant said, "and that the city or the county or the state just has to step in and stop the development."

At day's end, the fate of the mysterious circular formation seemed trapped in political and geographic feuds between Miami and Miami-Dade.

Last week, Miami Mayor Joe Carollo proposed that experts slice the formation out of the limestone bedrock and move it elsewhere, possibly to Fairchild Tropical Garden, in the city of Coral Gables.

Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas then said he favors using public funds — sources currently unknown — to buy the site from the developer.

On Monday, Miami City Commissioner Tomas Regalado complained that "once again, Miami-Dade County has seized the initiative on this issue." In a memo to City Manager Donald Warshaw, Regalado backed away from Carollo's plan.

"Please be advised that if satisfactory action is taken by Miami-Dade County, then I will vehemently oppose the transfer of the Circle to Fairchild Tropical Garden," Regalado wrote. "The fact remains that although the city has lacked initiative on this issue, the Circle must remain in the city of Miami."

Carollo responded sharply, suggesting that Regalado was motivated by their political rivalry. And he expressed skepticism over Penelas' plan, which could cost many millions of dollars.

"I'm waiting for Mayor Penelas to find the money at any moment now," Carollo said. "He's my hero."

"What I did was the only logical solution that I could see. If there are some out there who have access to a hidden treasure ... I

wish them all the luck in the world."

Miami-Dade archaeologists discovered the formation late last year in a construction site — on prime downtown real estate — on the south bank of the Miami River just east of the Brickell Avenue bridge.

Pottery shards and other evidence suggest that the site was used by Tequesta Indians more than 500 years ago, but archaeologists do not know who created the Circle or why. Carved into limestone bedrock, the formation could be thousands of years old.

During a City Commission meeting today, Carollo and the commissioners are expected to adopt a resolution urging the Legislature to pass a law that better protects future archaeological sites.

The resolution would have no bearing on the controversy enveloping the Miami Circle.

A towering residential and commercial complex is planned for the site by developer Michael Baumann, who recently received final building permits. Amid public pressure, Baumann agreed to delay construction until the end of the month and bear the cost of moving the Circle before construction begins.

But that plan is not favored by local archaeologists and many other experts who want to keep the carving in its historical context.

"We need to know more about it in order to figure out what it is," Sturtevant said. "We need to do more excavation and more careful excavation. It won't serve us very much to cut it out and move it somewhere else."

"The whole area has to be cleared. How do you know there isn't a whole other Circle there?"

Herald senior writer Martin Merzer can be reached by e-mail at mmerzer@herald.com

THE LITTLE LOBBYISTS FOR THE CIRCLE

Here are some letters sent by local school children concerned about the fate of the Miami Circle.

Dear Commissioning and Editors,
Please help the
Archaeologists get more time
and money to look for
ancient things ⁱⁿ Texas.
Sincerely,
Addison Smith
School of the Sacred Elements
grade 6-2

Dear Mr. Commissioner: Please
let me acknowledge the receipt
of the above copy. We have
forwarded the same to the
proper authorities for their
consideration.



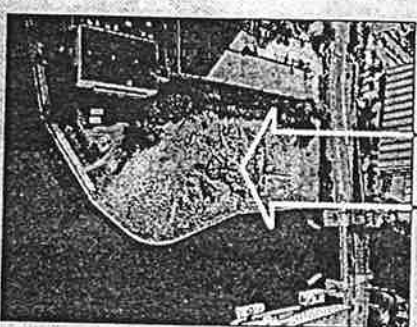
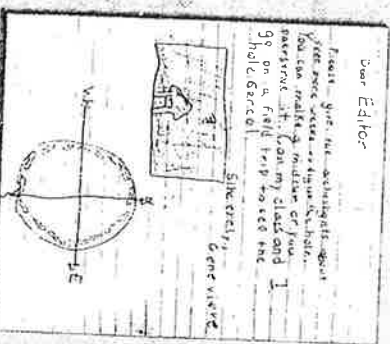
The site: The dig is underway at a prime downtown site at the mouth of the Miami River.

I wonder if the officials stated that the Indians did come from the far away states. I think race ships transported by some means the cattle may well be sent to the States in trucks. I think the head dig some more and then you find your solution.

Yours friend

Dear Editor -

Please give the following about
fifty acres with a village of 100.
You can make a million or two
reserving it. Can my island I
go on a field trip to see the
whole Grand



Brickell Point

L020999

Students who wrote letters will voice their opinions to commission

By MARTIN MERZER
Herald Senior Writer

Dear Mr. Commissioner: Please let the archaeologists have more time because maybe we can have a field trip there.

The drive to save the Miami Circle archaeological site began as a kid's campaign, and today 125 youthful members of the letter-writing brigade will board yellow school buses and appear before the Miami City Commission to sing, speak and plead their case.

men, the kids who — at least temporarily — blocked bulldozers will tote their lunch boxes on a field trip to the puzzling carving that has aroused worldwide attention.

"The kids are going to see that their voices can really make a difference," said B.J. Smith, a mother of three who sparked the student letter-writing campaign. "But what they really want is for that thing to stay there for every kid in South Florida who wants to take a field trip to see it."

Also on tap: Another candlelight vigil at the south side of the Brickell Avenue bridge at 5:30 p.m. today and renewed action by the 1,000-member Dade Heritage Trust, a historical preservation

group considering a petition drive and fund-raising campaign to protect the site.

"This is at the mouth of the Miami River and at the beginning of the civilization of this whole area," said Becky Roper Matkov, the trust's executive director. "It's tremendously important from a symbolic viewpoint."

As word of the discovery spread last month, children from several schools wrote letters to city, county, state and federal authorities, and to newspaper reporters and editors.

"I would like to know more about the dig," one student from Miami Shores Elementary wrote. "I have a question. Can you please give them a little more time? I would really appreciate it."

The campaign spread quickly to environmental and historical preservation groups. Many individuals spoke out. Smith said scores of local schools now want to join.

The student activists and their older colleagues want to preserve the artifact and, if possible, the entire parcel of land.

Anne Sterling, chief of staff for Miami Commissioner J.L. Plum-

mer, was among the first to be contacted by the children.

"The kids were great," Sterling said. "They kicked the whole thing off. They got the commissioner interested in staying on top of this situation."

So, at 9:30 a.m. today, eight children from Miami Shores Elementary and Miami County Day School are scheduled to serenade the commission with songs they wrote about the circle, and read personal pleas for its survival. More than 100 classmates will lend their support.

Then, they will visit the site, which most of them have not yet seen. Managers at the Sheraton Biscayne Bay Hotel, located just behind the dig, will host the students and provide a prime viewing location from the roof of the hotel's garage.

"It really started with these kids and their teachers," said Tony Davis, the Sheraton's controller. His daughter, Lindsey, 7, is a student at Miami Shores.

I didn't realize how big an interest the kids had in the dig. They're all talking about history and such. It's neat to see. I hope they succeed."

nesses now it may not only cost jobs, it may cause a backlash against the very goals it seeks to promote.

Smart employers — large and small — already know the value of fair leave policies. They've learned that in a free market the best employees work for the fairest and best employers. Any extension of the law now is not necessary and not wise.

This time, sex didn't sell

It was a nice try — and a credible legal argument. But cuckolded ex-Miami Commissioner Humberto Hernandez couldn't prove that his lawyer's love affair with his wife tainted the outcome of his trial.

Last week Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Roberto Pineiro wisely — and swiftly — denied a new trial for the disgraced "Humbertico." Instead, Hernandez stays in jail to serve the rest of his 364-day sentence for helping to cover up fraudulent balloting that sent the city into a tailspin.

Obviously, the illicit acts between his wife, Esther, and attorney José Quinon were not enough to change the facts of Hernandez's own illicit behavior.

c victory

-ASIDES
mission must
past in its
gainst
ination.

pragmatic and look to the future. New criteria, based primarily on economic thresholds, have replaced the set-asides in construction contracts. It's still too soon to know results.

But 20-year-old set-

icism is a deep-seated prejudice in America and surfaces in surprising places.

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen accurately observed, "Thousands of people hate what they think the Catholic Church is; perhaps a hundred people hate what the Church is, in fact."

DON R. LIVINGSTONE
South Miami

'No one is above the law'

Edwin Pope's Feb. 2 column, *Everyone can claim success*, summarizing Super Bowl XXXIII refers to the arrest of Atlanta Falcons safety Eugene Robinson for soliciting sex.

Mr. Pope rhetorically asks whether curbing prostitution is the most practical deployment of law enforcement personnel. That question should be directed to the businesses and property owners along Biscayne Boulevard who have seen the their property value decline because of prostitution.

Maybe Mr. Pope is suggesting that the law be overlooked in the case of football stars. I commend the Miami Police Department for defending the principal that no one is above the law.

BARRY L. BROWN
Miami

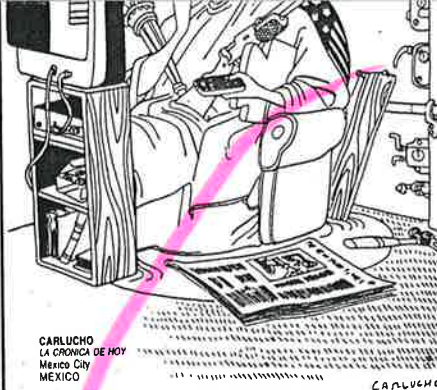
Apologize to country, too

Am I the only one who finds it disturbing that President Clinton can apologize to Monica Lewinsky for what she has been through? What about what this country has been through?

MELISSA SANTA-CRUZ
Miami

'Not associated with white supremacists'

In his Jan. 29 column, *Don't entrust racists with the key to America's door*, Max Castro suggests that I'm associated with the Council of Conservative Citizens. As a former U.S. attorney who has prosecuted white supremacists and racially motivated police violence, I find this charge offensive and



CARLUCHO
LA CRONICA DE HOY
Mexico City
MEXICO

CARLUCHO

Use funds for schools, crime prevention

Aaron Gordon's Feb. 2 Reader's Forum letter, *Use funds for school bus seat belts instead*, was great.

As a registered voter, I think that our representatives can spend their time and our money on more-productive representation. If only half of the time and money spent to investigate our President's sex life instead were spent on improving education and overcrowded schools and crime-prevention programs. Unfortunately many representatives are using their time and our money for something that will not improve this nation's future.

The impeachment process might have sent a message for better or worse to the President, future presidents and citizens, but this has gotten out of control. Move on and decide, but stop wasting time and my money.

MICHELE PADOVAN
Key Biscayne

should have nothing to do with the opportunities that they have in society or the status they hold under the law. I look forward to the day when our law and society are completely colorblind. I will continue working toward that goal as long as I'm in office.

REP. BOB BARR
7th District, Georgia

to working with the state to demonstrate that the Phase II goals can be achieved.

DAVID A. HOGAN
President,
Child Support Division
MAXIMUS
McLean, Va.

Don't move site

The Disneyfication of America has reached Miami with Miami Mayor Joe Carollo announcing plans to dig up the Miami Circle archaeological site and move it to a more suitable location such as the Coconut Grove Convention Center (Archaeological feature to be moved, Feb. 3).

Should this daunting feat of engineering be completed, the world could check out chunks of sacred land in between booths at the next gun and knife show. Our true founding fathers, the Tequesta Indians, constructed the 38-foot circle at the mouth of the Miami River for a reason. The city's proposal would preserve about as much as selling jars of the Everglades in the gift shop would.

OLIVER BERNSTEIN
Sierra Club
Ransom Everglades School
Miami

MIAMI HERALD 2/8/99

'Vote was partisan'

The Jan. 29 editorial *The real trial begins* states that "44 Democratic Senators voted for dismissal based on what they've heard and seen." This implies that their vote was not based on what the senators had heard or seen, but on their vindictive, partisan reason of humiliating the President.

It's evident that the Senate vote was partisan, but I don't recall when Webster's changed its definition of partisan to Republican. Let's not forget that the President is a Democrat.

MARIA GONZALEZ
Coral Gables

LETTERS GUIDE

The Herald values readers' letters. We receive far more than we can print, so we try to publish the

