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Dig Reveals Story of America's Last Slave Ship -- and its Survivors

**By Ray Hoffman
August 9, 2010**

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From bits of brick, pieces of slate and shards of glass, Neil Norman is hoping to piece together the lost world of Africatown.



For the last several weeks, the anthropology professor from the College of William & Mary has excavated sites in Plateau, in north Mobile County, looking for remnants of the daily life of the Africans who arrived in Mobile in 1860 as captives on the slave ship Clotilda.

"This is one of the few projects of its kind in the country," said Norman, who was accompanied by a group of students helping with the dig.

His personal interest deepened after working in Benin, in west Africa, home to the slaves who were brought to Mobile on the Clotilda. . . .

The story of Africatown began when 110 African men, women and children were brought as captives from Dahomey, on the coast of west Africa, to Mobile in 1860. The trip was financed by Timothy Meaher, a Mobile shipyard owner in business with his brothers Burns and James Meaher.

Timothy Meaher had commissioned the voyage to buy the Africans, despite a federal ban on importing slaves. The Clotilda's arrival marked the last known instance of captured Africans being brought to the United States. [Read this full [Press Register article](#) online >>>].