

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC
PLACES/NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

WARNING

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS RESTRICTED INFORMATION AND IS
NOT TO BE SHARED.

THIS DOCUMENT IS SHARED AS A COURTESY COPY FOR
USE OF ITS RECIPIENT ONLY.

Property Name *_Clotilda*

State: Alabama

County: Baldwin

Reference Number: _SG 100007119_R_

Multiple Context (if applicable): N/A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Clotilda

Other names/site number: Target 05, 1BA704

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: N/A

City or town: Mobile State: AL County: Baldwin

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national X statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C X D

<u>Lee Anne Wofford</u> , Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer		<u>9/27/21</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>Alabama Historical Commission</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

John H. Ernst

11/8/2021

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION – WATER RELATED

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

LANDSCAPE/UNDERWATER

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Gulf Coast Schooner

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The substantially intact archaeological remains of the wooden-hulled, 120-ton, two-masted schooner *Clotilda* (1Ba704) rest in mud and shallow fresh water off the banks of the Mobile River. It is located in the exact spot where its voyage ended, in a landscape that has remained essentially unchanged from 1860, when the schooner was scuttled at the site following an illegal voyage to bring captive men, women and children from Africa for the purposes of enslavement. The intact lower hull, the interior of the hull, with intact bulkheads forming compartments, including that in which the captives were held and transported against their will in harsh, brutal conditions, survive. The wreck retains a high degree of structural and archaeological integrity, representing as much as two-thirds and perhaps more of its original structure. Archaeological remains including physical evidence, including DNA, likely survive in the sealed, anaerobic conditions inside the hull, which is filled with silt. It rests in its original setting and is the only known and identified American vessel engaged in the illegal slave trade of the 19th century. As of this time, it is the only archaeological example of an American slave trading vessel lost in the context of the transatlantic slave trade.

The exact location of *Clotilda* is restricted in order to protect the resource from looting.

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Narrative Description

LOCATION AND SETTING

The submerged wreck of the schooner *Clotilda* (Alabama Site Trinomial #1BA704) is recorded at an angle along the eastern bank of the east channel of the Mobile River in approximately six to twenty feet of water. The wreck is located in an area which curves around Twelvemile Island, an island approximately four miles upriver from downtown Mobile, Alabama. *Clotilda* has rested in this exact location since it was scuttled in July 1860, a date which marks the conclusion of an illegal voyage to bring captives from Africa to be enslaved.

The wreck is located in an area which was formerly part of a larger bayou that has been known since French colonial times as *Bayou Corne* (or *Bayou Canot*). At that time, the bayou encompassed a larger area than what is defined by the modern channel of the river. This area east of Twelvemile Island was all swamp, flooded by the Mobile River. in which modern Twelvemile Island serves as high ground in the surrounding swamp. During the period of significance (1855-1860), the section of the bayou where *Clotilda* is located was an undeveloped area of the Mobile River with no discernable riverbank. The location was first charted as part of a larger survey and charting of the river in 1888-1889 by the U.S. Coast Survey (**Figure 7.1**). Despite the charting, this section of the river was never dredged or developed as a channel for navigation. Instead, the location became a ship graveyard where vessels were moored as a refuge from storms, abandoned, or laid up to await a return to service, or for scrapping. Based on current historical research, *Clotilda* was the first vessel purposely abandoned and scuttled here.

At the time of the abandonment, the location of *Clotilda*'s scuttling was locally known to a select group of individuals with whom it was shared by the man who burned and scuttled the schooner, its captain, William Foster, and by the schooner's owner, Timothy Meaher. Both Foster and Meaher reminisced about *Clotilda* and the schooner's end in newspaper interviews decades after the scuttling. Meaher was not present at the transfer or at the scuttling and likely relayed what Foster had told him. Meaher stated in his interview that *Clotilda* was towed up the Spanish River by the steam tug *William Jones Jr.* to the junction of the Spanish and Mobile Rivers just below Twelvemile Island where the steamboat *Czar*, owned by Meaher, was waiting. After the transfer, "I burned her & sank her in 20 feet of water" (Foster 1890).

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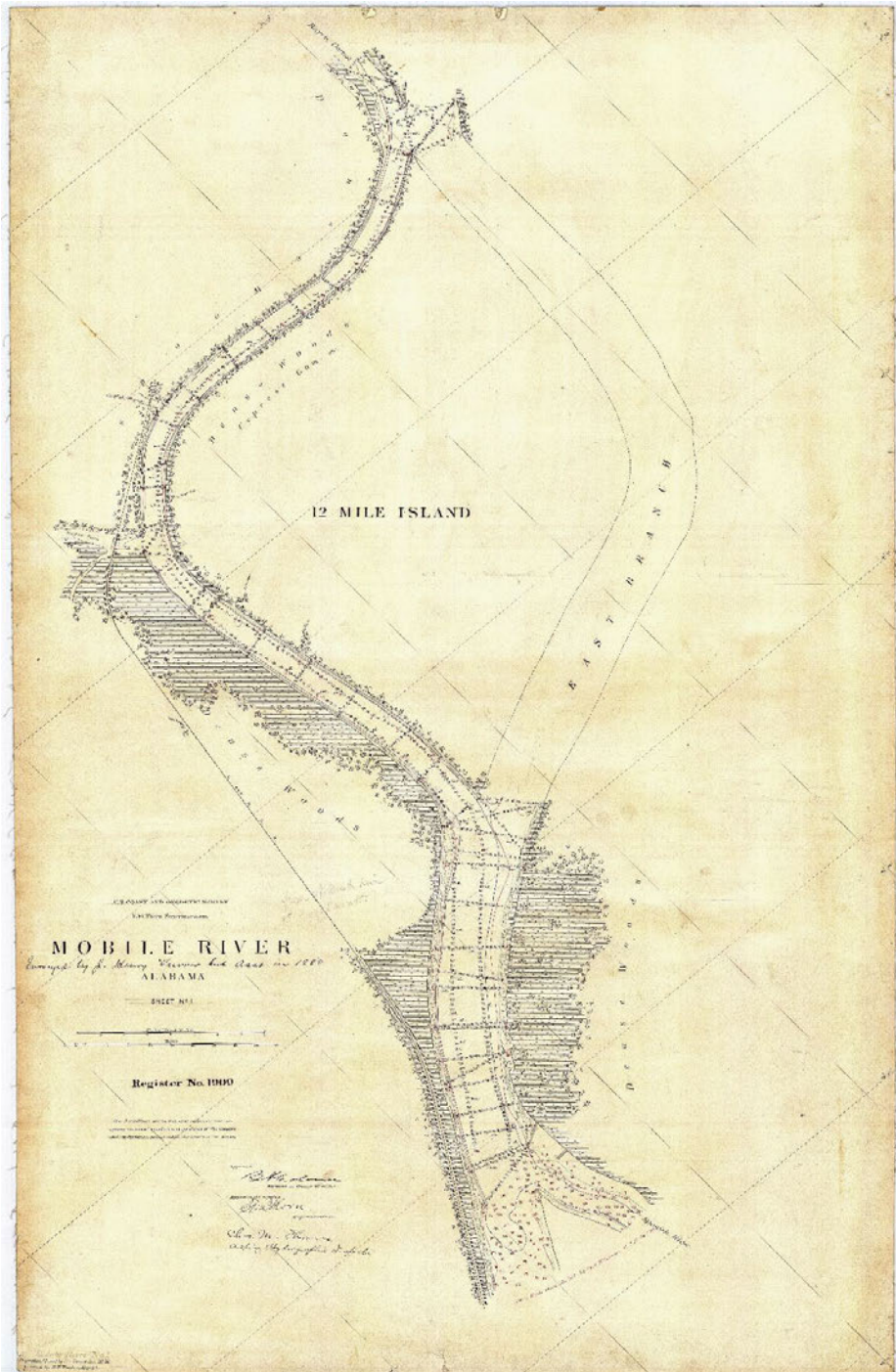


Figure 7.1: The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart of the Mobile River at “12 Mile Island,” 1888, showing the undefined banks of the “East Branch” where the wreck of *Clotilda* is located but not noted on this manuscript chart (Library of Congress, Map Division).

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In 1913, local Mobile-area historian Peter Hamilton wrote that “parts of the hull and the copper of the *Clotilda* are still in the mud of the bayou” (Hamilton 1913: 285). In 1914, Mobile author Emma Roche noted that the “hull still lies in the marsh at the mouth of Bayou Corne and may be seen at low tide,” and included a photograph of the supposed remains (Roche 1914:97) (**Figure 7.2**). Preliminary analysis by archaeologists suggests that Figure 7.2 may be *Clotilda*, based on a comparative analysis with the extant 1BA704 remains at low water. Despite this general knowledge of the location of the wreck, recent investigations and searches led by local historians and archaeologists working with, for, and under permit from the Alabama Historical Commission did not locate the wreck. That is because those surveys focused on the 20th-century perception of what constituted the “bayou” and how that was reflected on modern maps.

Eighteenth-century maps of the upper reaches of Mobile Bay and the rivers that drain into it, while less detailed than modern maps, depict a more flooded environment typical of an extensive bayou than was the case in the 20th century (**Figure 7.3**). That landscape was altered by human settlement and agricultural activity, mid-19th-century modifications such as submerged gabions to increase the volume and speed of the river’s flow to create deeper channels, and subsequent dredging of one section of the bayou to enhance and define a “western channel” of the Mobile River. This is a reminder that modern landscapes often reflect environmental and human-caused changes and cannot be construed to represent the landscape of the past.

Archaeological surveys in the last quarter of the 20th century did not take into account this modification of the landscape from a vast bayou into a human-controlled and dredged river and therefore worked north and west of Twelvemile Island. By 2018, these surveys accounted for most of the submerged waters other than in proximity to the wreck site as they had not included the former area of the “bayou” that lay to the east of Twelvemile Island, and only defined and charted as channel of the Mobile River in 1889. Historic records kept by the Maritime Administration when ships were laid up on this section of the “river” in 1947 refer to it as “Bayou Canot.” It was in this portion of the riverine landscape that *Clotilda* lay at the edge of the bank, occasionally visible at low water and yet its exact location known to the Meaher family and to others who had been told what the wreck was. It was in this area that comprehensive survey of the forgotten section of Bayou Canot identified 1BA704 as *Clotilda*.

By 1860, the landscape of the former bayou had evolved over the past century from its former open, flooded and less defined swamp. Contemporary maps depict a smaller bayou, and in that, the narrower band of water east of Twelvemile Island that in time would become a more formally named eastern channel of the Mobile River following the 1889 Coast Survey charting. That landscape, as depicted in the 1889 Coast Survey chart, is where William Foster chose to scuttle *Clotilda* just a mile from where *Czar* and *Clotilda* had met to take aboard the schooner’s captives.

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Figure 7.2: The wreck of *Clotilda*, c. 1912, hidden in plain sight and first published in Emma Langdon Roche's *Historical Sketches of the South* (1914). The arrows point to the exposed edge of the wreck's hull. (Mobile Public Library)



Figure 7.3: Mobile Bay and its upper waters and bayous, detail from Guillaume de L'Isle's *Carte de la Louisiane* (1718) based on late 17th and early 18th century French surveys. The area around Twelvemile Island is an open bayou with the "Branche Espagnole" or the Spanish River noted to the east of the bayou. (David Rumsey Collection)

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The landscape surrounding the wreck site remains much as it was in 1860; undeveloped, forested and the banks lined with canebrake, with the only modern intrusions being [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the occasional modern steel barge temporarily “parked” by the Harbormaster of the Mobile Port Commission in this “backwater” of the river (Figure 7.4). There is little perceptible change to the setting, and *Clotilda* rests in the same location, lying exactly as Foster wrote in 1890 that he had sunk his schooner thirty years earlier, “in twenty feet of water” (Foster 1890). This is the average depth of water off the port (left) side of the wreck as it angles from the bank into the channel.



Fig. 7.4. Archaeological survey of the *Clotilda* site, 2019; a maritime landscape essentially unchanged since 1860. (SEARCH, Inc. photograph by Daniel Fiore)

The eastern channel of the river, occasionally surveyed and charted by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey (now the Office of Coast Survey in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA), is depicted in multiple early 20th-century to early 21st-century navigation charts. Present on these charts is a series of symbols denoting shipwrecks. These symbols are depicted in the waterways as a single line bisected by a series of three perpendicular cross hatches. One of these shipwreck symbols marks the exact location of *Clotilda*. The symbol first appears on the 1958 navigation chart. Analysis indicates that the wreck of *Clotilda* and the symbol are in the same location (Figure 7.5 [REDACTED]).

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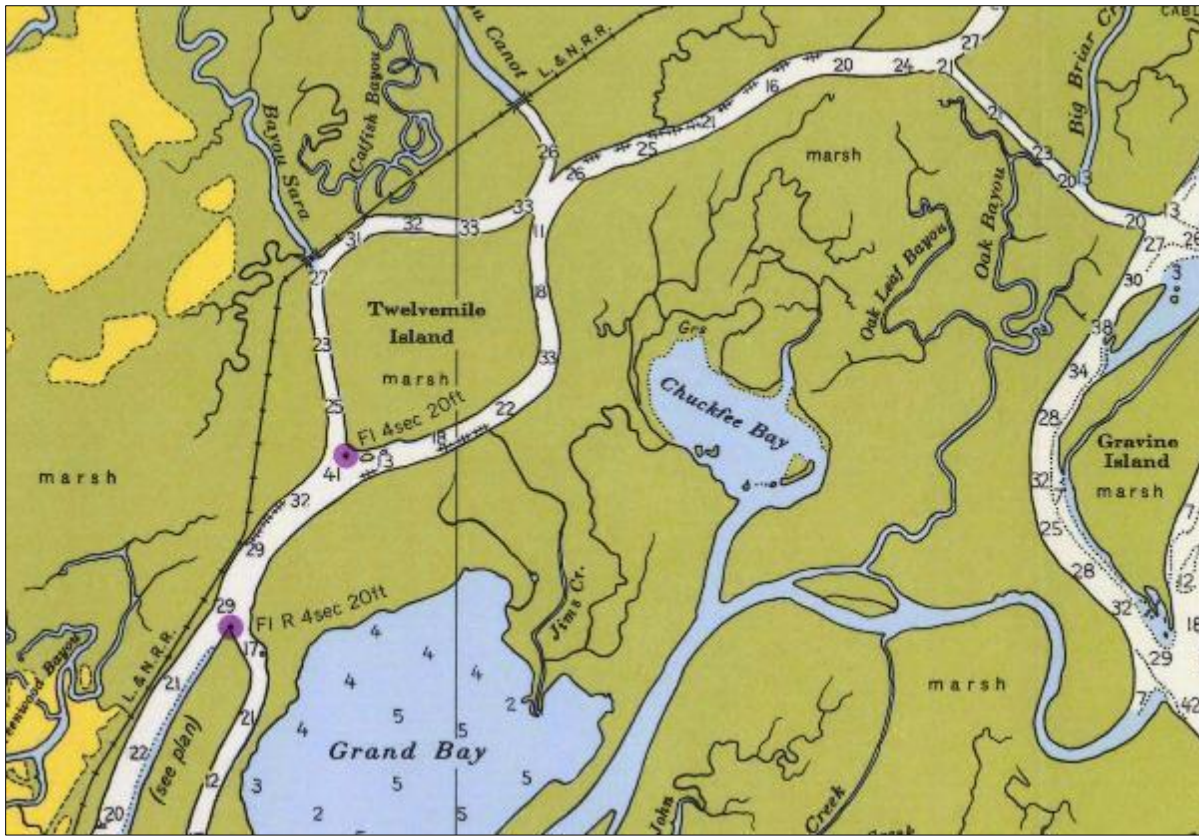
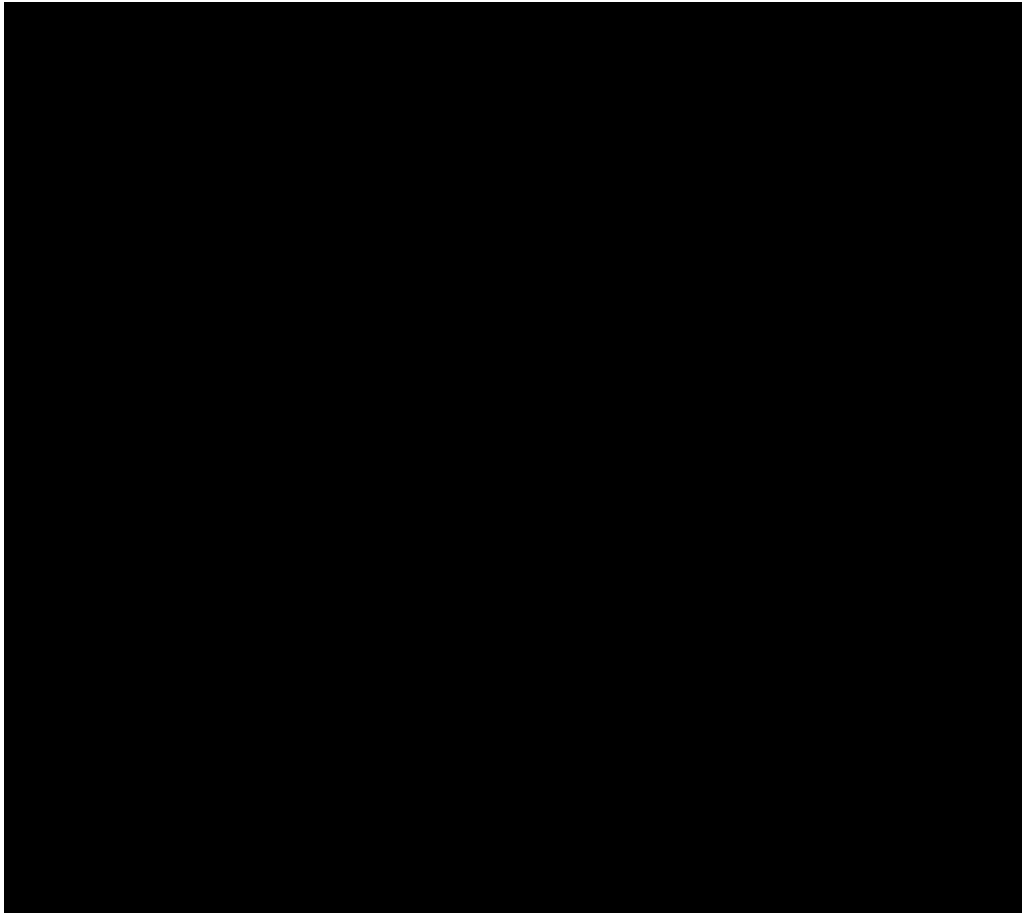


Fig. 7.5: Section of the 1958 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart of Mobile Bay showing a series of wrecks in the Mobile River around Twelvemile Island. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA Historical Charts Collection, 1266-5-1958)

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CLOTILDA AS DESIGNED, BUILT AND MODIFIED FOR A SLAVE TRADING VOYAGE

Basic aspects of *Clotilda*'s hull and rig are documented in the historic record. Descriptions of the vessel in period government documents of registry, records of enrollment, and ship's registers published by and on behalf of *Clotilda*'s insurance companies as well as in contemporary newspaper accounts of both the ship's construction and launch provide insight into the vessel itself. A significant primary source of material is Captain Foster's account of the slave-trading voyage of 1860, which details, amongst other things, modifications made to *Clotilda* in anticipation of the journey. William Foster, a shipbuilder and ship's captain who had immigrated to Alabama from his native Nova Scotia, had built *Clotilda* in 1855. Foster did not have a shipyard of his own, and so he built *Clotilda* at the shipyard owned by Timothy Meaher on Chickasabogue Creek. The shipyard was three miles north of downtown Mobile, and adjacent to Meaher's sawmill. Even though Foster built the schooner at Meaher's yard, the vessel was "the personal property of Foster and had been designed and built by him" (Roche 1914: 71-73). In 1860, Foster returned to Meaher's yard after selling *Clotilda* to Meaher to refit the schooner for the illegal slave trading voyage the two men were conspiring to undertake.

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Meaher's shipyard included hired and enslaved labor, a workforce which was likely employed by Foster in *Clotilda's* construction in 1855 as well as in the 1860 refit. In 1855, the *Mobile Daily Advertiser* noted that the just-launched *Clotilda* was being rigged and outfitted and that "She is light and commodious, draws thirty inches forward and forty-two inches aft... her model is of that graceful turn which confers assurance that she will prove a fast sailer" and that the "vessel in model and fastening does great credit to her builder, and afford another evidence of the capacity of our city for successful and economical shipbuilding" (*Mobile Daily Advertiser*, October 17, 1855:3).

This wording is significant and focuses on *Clotilda's* form as having been specifically designed to be a fast ship, an ideal characteristic for a vessel intended for offshore trade beyond local waters. This suggests that during the construction of the vessel, the owners were anticipating long open ocean voyages in the craft. An account of *Clotilda's* final voyage noted "she was built with a view to speed and was claimed by her builder to be the fastest vessel ever built in Gulf waters" (*Pittsburgh Daily Post*, April 15, 1894:1).

The only surviving certificate of enrollment and registry for *Clotilda*, filed with the U.S. Government at the time of its original registry in the Port of Mobile on November 19, 1855, records the vessel specifications as: an 86-foot length between perpendiculars (between the bow and sternposts), a maximum beam (width) of 23 feet and a depth of hold measuring 6 feet, 11 inches, and admeasurement of a registered gross tonnage of 120 81/95, which was a formula based estimate (for taxation) of the schooner's cargo capacity. The certificate also noted a single deck, two masts, rigged as a schooner, with a square stern, a billet head and no galleries (US Customs Service Coasting Licenses 1855: No. 24).

The terms and measurements used in the document offer a precise description of the form and outfit of *Clotilda*. The ship's lines, or body, were built with a full-formed, deep hull that was simple in decoration; the stern had a simple squared or straight transom, without galleries, which were enclosed spaces at the stern common on some larger wooden sailing ships of the first half of the 19th century; and the bow was ornamented only by a simple carved decorative timber cap, not a figurehead. The masts were rigged with gaffs and booms in a fore-and-aft configuration either with topsails or without topsails in what sailors called a "bald-headed" rig.

Based on these few details, what we can infer about *Clotilda's* appearance is a sleek, two-masted vessel with a simple, unornamented hull, built to sail fast, work hard and be handled efficiently by a small crew while carrying a large cargo. While no surviving illustration or photograph of *Clotilda* is known to exist, an 1860 photograph in the collections of the Library of Congress of a slightly smaller schooner underway in Havana Harbor, Cuba, is a close match to *Clotilda's* appearance for much of the schooner's five-year career (**Figure 7.6**).

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Figure 7.6: This 1860 view of a group of vessels in Havana Harbor shows schooners coming into port as well as moored to shore. The schooner in the foreground, a two-master, offers a close comparison to what *Clotilda* would have looked like coming into Havana harbor five years earlier. (Library of Congress, George N. Bernard, Photographer, Prints and Photographs Division, LOT 2809 [item] [P&P], ds 11131 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ds.11131, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017650350/>)

Additional details from the New York Marine Register, an annual published listing of vessels insured by New York underwriters, confirms *Clotilda*'s dimensions. This verifies that the schooner had been built to standards published by the underwriters and had undergone inspection that showed *Clotilda* had met those standards. The New York Marine Register entries for the schooner during the years spanning *Clotilda*'s career (1855-1859) also describe *Clotilda* as "full-modeled," with a laden (loaded) draft of 6.5 feet, which along with the dimensions of the hull's length, beam and the depth of the hold, indicates that *Clotilda* was not a typical shallow, flat-bottomed Gulf schooner built to sail in protected waters closer to shore, but was instead built to work on the open sea. The registers also indicate the schooner had a centerboard and was built of yellow pine and oak, and was fastened with galvanized iron (*American Lloyd's* 1859:306).

The capacity of the hold and *Clotilda*'s reputation as a fast sailer were factors in its selection for an illegal slave-trading voyage to and from the African coast. What may also be the case is that *Clotilda* was designed and built with the illegal slave trade in mind. Little modification was

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required for its final voyage transporting enslaved people other than to ensure the protection of the wooden hull from marine borers that would eat the hull on a prolonged ocean voyage, to add sail (and hence make the schooner faster), and to reconfigure the hold. Timothy Meaher added copper sheathing to the schooner's hull at his shipyard. Adding topsails, or re-rigging the schooner to a brigantine with a square, yard-rigged foremast, enhanced the two-masted *Clotilda's* existing fore and aft rig. This did not require rebuilding the hull. The crew re-rigged *Clotilda* as a brigantine, which was a vessel with a foremast rigged with a square sail on a yard replacing the lower gaff-rigged fore-sail (Foster 1890).

Re-rigging the vessel was a laborious but essentially simple task that could be handled by a ship's crew. Foster noted at the end of the voyage, that to help disguise *Clotilda's* transatlantic passage, the crew down-rigged the schooner off the Florida Keys in the Dry Tortugas and "disguised our vessel" by "taking down squaresail, yards, and fore topmast, appearing as a common coaster" by which the captain means removing the barkentine (square-rigged) topmast, yards and sails that had been installed for transatlantic open-ocean cruising. There was now nothing that would distinguish *Clotilda* from any other schooner working in coastal waters with their simple schooner rig (Foster 1890). Despite Emma Roche noting "the *Clotilde* [sic] was dismasted," (Roche 1914: 910), the work only removed rigging, spars and sails with no structural work to the hull.

The final modification made for the transatlantic transportation of enslaved people would be in the main hold to confine people. Lumber shipped out of Mobile and stacked on the deck of the schooner hid the goods shipped by Meaher to trade and also to feed the captives. It would then be used by the ship's carpenter to reconfigure the hold and also as the means to house and hold the enslaved people brought on board. Historian Sylviane Diouf claims that "The tier that covered the compromising goods was covered with lumber that hid it from casual inspection and would be used later on to build platforms and partitions: the Africans' 'beds' but the source of this information is not clear" (Diouf 2007:25). Other material evidence of onboard schooner-modifications for use as a slaver included "mammoth pots" for cooking, and wooden "water tanks" into which the barrels would empty. The vessel may have carried a cannon or multiple guns for protection (Diouf 2007:25).

SCUTTLING AND LATER IMPACTS TO THE WRECK

At the conclusion of the final voyage, once his crew had departed and the captives had been transferred to the steamboat *Czar* to commence the next leg of their voyage into enslavement, Foster took the vessel up into the bayou and scuttled *Clotilda*. He notes that "I burned her & sank her in 20 ft of water" (Foster 1890). As this process was likely done in haste, *Clotilda* itself was likely not stripped, especially of the incriminating evidence of the illegal slave trading voyage. This suggests that much of the cultural material present on the vessel at the time of scuttling remained in the wreck for at least a century, with the caveat that approximately a century after the scuttling, in the 1950s, the wreck was impacted by deliberate dynamiting. Local oral tradition indicates that at one time, the exposed portions of the wreck (visible at low water) were actually dynamited to remove some of the copper sheathing on the outer hull. The 1950s is the period in which the wreck of *Clotilda* is first noted on charts of the river (**Figure 7.5**) which may suggest the dynamiting attracted the attention of the Army Corps of Engineers or the Coast and Geodetic Survey, who then charted the wreck. There is also unsubstantiated oral tradition of

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removing iron from the hold. To date, surviving archaeological elements observed at the wreck site outside of the hull and in shallow water near the bank on the starboard (right) side include dislodged ship planks, a portion of the centerboard, a segment of cast iron bilge pump pipe, and one unique plank which exhibits tack marking on the wood, clear evidence of where a section of copper sheathing had been pulled off of the plank (Delgado et al. 2019: 70-71).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF *CLOTILDA*: AN OVERVIEW

1BA704 is the wreckage of a wooden-hulled sailing vessel of the mid-19th century, with a dislodged centerboard. The wreck rests at a twenty degree angle, inclined on its port (left) side. There is more of the port side which survives than the starboard side, which is missing above the level of the wooden supports for the main deck. Investigations undertaken in 2018-2020 have largely been non-intrusive documentation with limited excavation of the wreck’s interior. The bottom of the hold, keelson, and mast steps have not been reached through excavation and hence have not been observed. The structural integrity of the upper hull, however, indicates that they are in place and supporting the upper hull.

In early 2020, the full form and shape of the hull, and much of its interior compartments, were exposed by flooding that accompanied the extreme rains of the winter of 2019-2020 and as a result exposed more of the interior (**Figure 7.7**). The shape of the hull’s body is that of a full-formed vessel. The surviving depth of hold is approximately five feet and the beam is twenty-three feet. The hull is constructed in 19th-century to early 20th-century style with double-sawn wooden frames, with inner hull planking (known as “ceiling”) and outer hull planks. A thicker plank, or wale, was observed in sonar imagery along the turn of the bilge on the port side of the vessel and is characteristic of wooden shipbuilding of the era.

Although the stern could not be observed due to burial, the now three-quarters exposed length of the hull, with the beginning of the curve toward the stern, indicates that the overall hull length, through a logical projection of the hull form, working with established length to beam ratios and wooden shipbuilding practice, and following the beginning of the hull’s curve as it moves aft from midships on the port side, is approximately eighty-five to ninety feet long, consistent with the documented 86-foot length of *Clotilda*. By calculating the vessel’s cargo capacity or “tonnage” using the published U.S. government rules of admeasurement for customs and taxation purposes, the estimated tonnage conforms to that reported for *Clotilda* at 120 tons.

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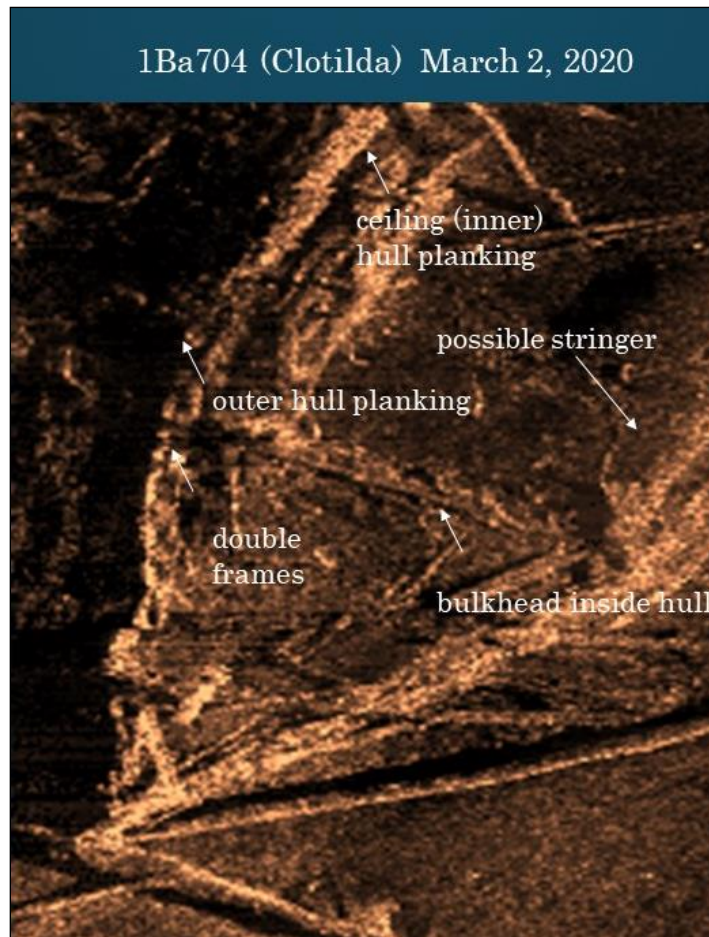


Figure 7.7. Construction features observed in the sonar scan of the forward area of *Clotilda* (1Ba704), March 2020. (SEARCH, Inc. for the Alabama Historical Commission)

Analysis of wood samples from the wreck indicates that the vessel was constructed in common Gulf Coast fashion with white oak used for the frames and southern yellow pine for the inner and outer hull planking and trenails. All recovered samples of metal ship fasteners were near-pure iron, based on XRF analysis. Planks observed on site that retained original form were cleanly cut and finely shaped, with trenails (with a split end widened at the outer end with a thin hardwood wedge) evenly spaced, which is consistent with a level of construction that evidences both skill and experience (**Figure 7.8**). The counter-sinking of the iron spike heads on the outer hull planks, and capping them with wooden trenails, is a shipbuilding practice that requires time and skill. The attachment of planking in a shipyard required careful shaping of the plank to conform to the sheer and curve of the hull's frames, and for each plank to fit, edge-on-edge with a slight gap to allow for caulking.

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Figure 7.8: Section of outer hull plank with a treenail (wooden fastener) at the 4ft., 6 in. line on the tape (R) and a wooden plug over a counter-sunk iron spike head at the 4 ft., 2 in. mark (L). (SEARCH, Inc. for the Alabama Historical Commission)

The counter-sinking of spike heads with a set punch is particularly time-consuming and fine detail work. This method, particularly in the mid-19th century, was a measure to “cover the fastening for the sake of appearance or as protection from water or weather” (Crothers 2000:74-75). The plugs observed, as previously noted, were set so that the wood grain in the plugs aligned with the grain in associated planks. That level of attention to detail is a hallmark signature of a craftsman of the time who took pride in his work. That might just be the signature of an accomplished shipbuilder such as William Foster.

A series of areas both inside and outside the wreck remain buried or are filled with sediment. Core sampling of sediment inside and outside of the wreck showed consistent layering of mud, and at a depth of two meters off the port side of the hull, tree branch twigs recovered and analyzed in a laboratory were dated to 2500 BP. All of this points to the high probability of organic survival inside *Clotilda*. This is demonstrated by the previously mentioned bulkheads inside the hull. The first, closest to the bow, defines the area known as the forecabin. The forecabin bulkhead is twenty-four feet, two inches from the tip of the bow. The forecabin is the area traditionally occupied by the crew, and where they bunked and ate. At the extreme forward area of the forecabin, closest to the bow, a small locker for ship’s gear and anchor cable was located. A narrow ladder from the deck provided the only access into the forecabin. This is an expected architectural feature common to wooden merchant vessels of the 19th century. If this area of *Clotilda* was excavated, among the features that could be expected would be the wooden bunks for the crew, the “mess table” where they ate, possibly a small wood-burning stove, and

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any personal or work items that would have been lost or left when the schooner was scuttled (Figure 7.9).

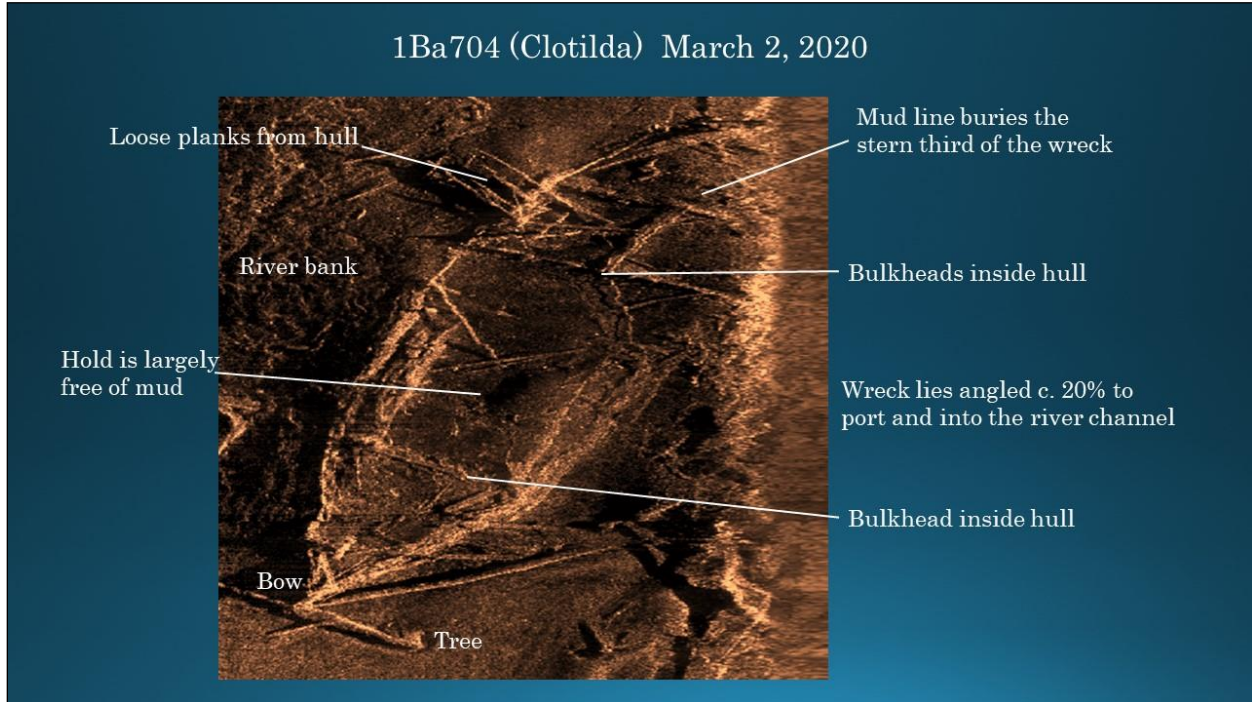


Figure 7.9. Oblique view of the forward area of *Clotilda* (1Ba704), showing the hull form from sonar data collected in March 2020 (SEARCH, Inc. for the Alabama Historical Commission).

Immediately aft (to the rear) of the forecastle bulkhead is the open space that was the schooner’s hold. This is where cargo was stowed on *Clotilda*’s voyages, and this is where the captives purchased from the King of Dahomey, Glele, who had captured them in raids during Dahomey’s wars with other kingdoms, and embarked in Africa, were confined and controlled by *Clotilda*’s captain, officers, and crew during the voyage from the port of Ouidah in present-day Benin to Mobile. It terminates in a second bulkhead located fifty feet, five inches from the bow. The twenty-six-foot, three-inch-long hold is smaller than what would typically be expected for a vessel of this size. As a general cargo-carrying schooner of its period and engaged in coastal Gulf trade, *Clotilda* would have had a large, open hold containing only the centerboard.

A hold is usually a larger, open space, especially when lumber is stowed and greater length is needed. The wooden bulkhead that subdivided the hold into a smaller space is not common for general carrying trade. Structural modifications for vessels engaged in the slave trade prior to the 19th-century American and subsequent British and Spanish laws making the trade illegal to those countries that are documented indicate low platforms which stowed chained captives lying on their backs for the voyage (Dow 1927: 98-123, 261-281; Rediker 2007: 9, 52-53, 61-65, 120, 332). The structure visible in *Clotilda*, combined with Captain Foster’s reference to bringing lumber to create a single platform in his hold, suggests to the archaeological team that this platform formed a flat surface for captives to lie or sit on in an otherwise rounded hold, not chained, but kept tightly packed in a space that did not include the entire space of the hold.

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Aft of the bulkhead that separates the hold from the forecabin, erosion has exposed an additional structure, which suggests that the hold had been subdivided into two separate spaces. This leads the archaeological team to hypothesize that the second bulkhead kept the provisions for the captives in an isolated and controlled space. That compartment also provided a physical barrier between the captives and the last bulkhead, which separated the hold from the aft cabin occupied by the captain and his officers. The two intermediate bulkheads, neither common for general trade schooners of the period, and unlike documented modifications to slave ships to house and confine captives, may be unique to *Clotilda*. The bulkheads dividing the hold would then be surviving physical archaeological evidence of the captain's and crew's actions to confine and control the captives particularly through the construction of these temporary spaces in the hold. Nineteenth-century accounts of the slave trade, publicly known then as well as in modern times, speak to resistance and efforts, some successful, where captives took control of the slave ship.

Excavation of the hold may provide more detail on how the hold was utilized. The space was small: it measures twenty-three feet in length, with sides that follow the curve of the hull from a width of some eighteen to twenty-three feet, and from the bottom of the hold to the deck was just under seven feet tall, and was unventilated and unlit. The means by which 110 people were held within this space is materially demonstrated by the surviving structure. *Clotilda's* archaeologically surviving hold is to date the only known surviving space that has essentially been sealed in an archaeological context within a few hours of the end of the slaving voyage and Captain Foster's hasty effort to quickly dispose of the masts and decks that rose above the water by setting fire to the hulk after scuttling it.

While the impact of the 1950s dynamiting and removal of some hull planks and copper sheathing from the outer hull, and the removal of some or all of the cast iron bilge pump and centerboard indicate disturbance of the hold, the sonar imagery suggests a substantially intact interior space survives in the 21st century because Captain Foster quickly sought to burn and sink it and did not systematically and progressively strip it and burn it piece by piece. The *Clotilda* site provides a unique and horrific archaeological opportunity to enter, and to be surrounded by the likely well-preserved forensic evidence of the slave hold and thereby gain access to that which took place there during the forty-five day voyage from Ouidah to Mobile.

The hull, based on visible remains and an approximation of the buried portions of the schooner, comprises approximately 75 to 80 percent of the original hull. What may survive buried in the mud and likely preserved through anaerobic conditions would be the remains of platforms, which would have provided one or more levels where the captives could be stowed. Also possibly present are the various barrels, casks, and bags used to stow provisions for the captives. For the slaving voyage, the captain and crew stowed 125 barrels of water in *Clotilda's* hold, and then stacked 25 casks of rice, 30 casks of beef, 40 pounds of pork, 23 barrels of sugar, 25 barrels of flour, four barrels of bread, four barrels of molasses, and 80 casks of rum on top. When the tiered platforms were built prior to loading the captives on the schooner, these provisions were stowed, as suggested, in the aft area of the hold. Evidence of these, as well as any restraints, are also possible archaeological evidence of the final voyage.

Today's surviving archaeological evidence was once evidence of a capital crime in 1860, and so, as Diouf notes, Captain Foster burned *Clotilda* and sank it to destroy that evidence which would have included "the telling signs of a slaving voyage: the partitions, the platforms, the empty

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casks of food and water, the big pots, the tubs, the blood, the vomit, the spit, the mucus, the urine, and the feces that soiled the planks, the awful smell that always floated about slave ships” (Diouf 2007: 75). With the survival of much of the hull and the observation during the initial work on the wreck that the partitions and inner hull planking survive, the “evidence” likely also is forensic and survives in anaerobic conditions of burial beneath thick mud, and that may include DNA evidence that could indicate the presence of the captives on board *Clotilda* in a very profound way.

A third bulkhead, aft of midships, is sixty-three feet, five inches from the bow. Its placement, and the commencing of the curve of the hull as it runs aft to meet the buried stern, indicates that it is the bulkhead that would separate the aft cabin and lazarette from the hold. This third bulkhead is spanned and possibly attached by a large beam to the bulkhead forward of it. The space between the two bulkheads is twelve feet, nine inches. This space or compartment, as noted, may be where the provisions were stowed. Aft of it and completely buried is the gradually curving hull that terminates at the stern. This is the area where *Clotilda*’s “trunk cabin” was located. Located beneath the main deck, with a small trunk or covered ladder leading to the deck, this compartment was where the captain and his officers slept and ate their meals. Archaeological evidence in this area would not only demonstrate the physical differences between the compartments utilized by the crew “before the mast” and by the captives held as human cargo, but also might hold other evidence of the final voyage (**Figure 7.10**).

In summary, the previous archaeological investigations conducted between 2018 and 2020 not only determined that 1BA704 is *Clotilda*, but also documented that the wreck, with its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association and its powerful connections to National Register criteria A and D, is a unique and powerful site that represents the last known slave trading voyage to bring captives to the United States, an archaeological time capsule of national significance, and much more.

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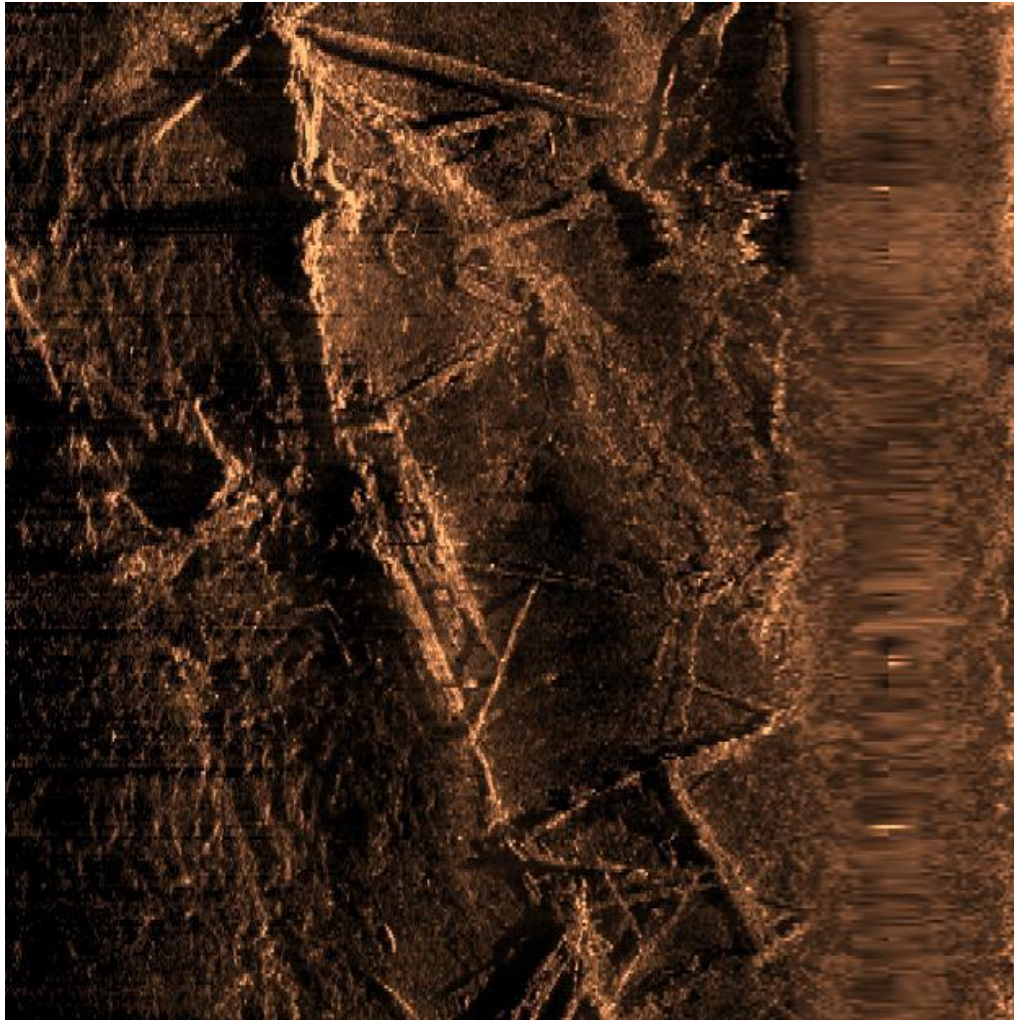


Figure 7.10: 2020 side-scan sonar image of the exposed hull of *Clotilda*. The bow is at the top of the image; the starboard side of the hull, in shallow water, is to the right, and the more intact port side in deeper water is to the left. The bulkheads that separate the forecastle from the main hold, and the partition or bulkhead that separates the hold into two compartments are also visible. (SEARCH, Inc. for the Alabama Historical Commission)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF *CLOTILDA*: A SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY

Archaeological investigations between 2018-2020 found that the hull, angled up to the bank and partially buried in sediment, is substantially intact with most and possibly all of the decking of the vessel missing, the masts and rigging missing or buried, and with some disarticulated timber and fittings resting on the bank in the shallows surrounding the extant shipwreck, as a result of the previously mentioned oral traditional accounts of blasting and salvage attempts of the mid-20th century. Key observations to date indicate several points relevant to an assessment of the vessel’s retention of key aspects of integrity. Each is outlined below.

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Clotilda **retains a high level of integrity of design** as the “full-modeled” hull, designed and built in 1855, has survived to a level above the original waterline (the location or “line” on the outer hull where, when fully loaded, *Clotilda*’s hull settled into the water) on at least the port (left) side, and survives to roughly the same level on the starboard (right) side with the exposed form of the bow intact. While not confirmed, the buried stern is also likely intact. Those features which defined *Clotilda* for regular trade and were factors in its selection as a slave ship – a commodious hold, a deep draft, and a hull hydro-dynamically designed to be a fast sailer – have survived. The bulkheads inside the hull for the crew’s quarters at the bow, and in the main hold, including the bulkheads that define the area in which the captives were held, have also survived.

Clotilda **retains a high level of integrity of workmanship**. The relative intactness of the hull and its entombment in the surrounding mud in near-fresh water has preserved not only the structure but the fine details of the work of the shipwrights; this includes carefully shaped timbers, hand-wrought and hand-driven iron fasteners, close and carefully fitted timbers, and the employment of wooden plugs that cover counter-set heads of iron spikes driven to fasten planking to the hull’s frames. The grain of the wood on the plugs is oriented to conform to and follow the grain of the planks to which they are fastened.

Clotilda **retains a high level of integrity of materials**. The substantial survival of the hull and its interior fittings and analysis of that structure has confirmed the presence of yellow pine and white oak, and near-pure iron fasteners as noted in the registry notations for *Clotilda*. When the vessel was scuttled and sank, it did so quickly. Because of this, the immediate post-scuttling impacts were essentially minimal. The wreck is a substantial entity representing *Clotilda* as it was built and maintained in its brief five-year career, and the burial of the hull in a dark, fast-moving river’s currents make it inaccessible other than through a complete removal of the hull, which did not happen. These factors suggest that much of the copper sheathing, especially on the lower hull, likely remains fastened to the planks. Based on archaeological assessment, the 20th-century blasting displaced some structural elements but did not destroy them, and with much of the hull buried in mud, the recovery of the copper appears to have been confined to a small and limited area of the wreck at its highest elevation above the river bed. The blasting did not, therefore, substantially affect the integrity of the wreck.

The wreck of *Clotilda* is substantially intact, resting exactly where it was when scuttled, burned, and sunk at the end of its illegal slave trading voyage in July 1860. As a near “time capsule” site, it has **a high level of integrity of association**. That scuttling, a necessary solution to the risk of arrest, seizure of the vessel by Federal officials, and the possibility of conviction of a capital offence, was a hastily conducted event. The vessel, now devoid of its crew and the captives, was run into the bank, possibly holed to commence its sinking, and then set on fire by the ship’s captain. At the time of this nomination, archaeological investigations have focused solely on understanding the basic characteristics of the wreck and determining its identity.

Based on the research and analysis conducted, SEARCH’s initial 2019 report concluded that the wreck designated as 1BA704 was likely *Clotilda*. At the conclusion of the fieldwork, there were no features or characteristics inconsistent with *Clotilda*. The wreckage has features consistent with *Clotilda*. The post-field work laboratory analysis was conducted simultaneously with a systematic and thorough regimen of supplementary archival research, as well as detailed statistical analysis of the documented registered dimensions, tonnage and ages of all schooners

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registered at Gulf ports between 1813 and 1893. This research and analysis augmented the understanding by adding new, previously overlooked insights into the schooner and its deposition into the archaeological record, as well as a greater view of its multiple contexts. The uncertainty regarding evidence of burning, and the composition of the fasteners, decreased.

Among the evidence that confidently identified 1BA704 as *Clotilda* was its location, its proximity to the known site of the transfer of the captives to the steamboat *Czar*, its dimensions, materials, evidence of destruction by fire, attributes of construction, and a systematic comparison of this wreck not only against the characteristics of *Clotilda* but also against the known, documented comparative population of more than a thousand registered and documented schooners home-ported in and operating from Gulf ports, including Mobile. The results of that analysis found 1BA704 to be a unique, atypical Gulf schooner, and *Clotilda* as the only possible identity for 1BA704. The results of these investigations were peer reviewed and concurred with by several scholars including maritime archaeologists, historians, cultural resource managers, and also through the concurrent review of the Alabama Historical Commission and the National Geographic Society, and the subsequent review of the University of South Alabama.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MARITIME HISTORY

ARCHAEOLOGY: HISTORIC

ETHNIC HERITAGE – BLACK

Period of Significance

1855-1860

Significant Dates

1855 (Launch)

July 1860 (Arrival in Mobile, AL)

July 9, 1860 (Scuttled)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Timothy Meaher

William Foster

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The schooner *Clotilda* (1BA704) is a substantially intact, submerged and partially buried shipwreck and archaeological site that is the last vessel known to have transported captives from Africa to the United States to enslave them. The story of this vessel and its destruction to avoid prosecution, the resistance and resilience of the people forcibly brought to America in it to be enslaved, and their post-Civil War forming of Africatown, itself a National Register historic district of national significance, became an important touchpoint in collective memory. The 19th- and 20th-century accounts of the surviving *Clotilda* captives in newspapers and magazines shared their story with a larger American audience. The ongoing survival of Africatown is a highly significant cultural touchstone with great meaning. As such, pinpointing the exact location of *Clotilda*, the initial *focus* of that involuntary voyage that in time led to the creation of this African American community, takes on additional significance.

The wreck of *Clotilda*, located in 2018-2019 as part of a thorough archaeological investigation and confidently identified, is of **national significance under National Register Criteria A and D** for its associations with the ethnogenesis of the African-American community, especially through the voyage forcibly merging a diverse ethnic community of African captives into a community of involuntary “shipmates.” That community, upon arrival in Mobile, was dispersed, but following the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, one group of thirty-two women and men from *Clotilda* formed their own new community and identity in Africatown, on land bought and leased from their former enslaver. There, with determination, resilience, and adhering to their beliefs and cultures, they forged a legacy that was passed on to their descendants. Africatown, a National Register historic district (NR#12000990) was listed on December 4, 2012. Among Africatown’s many culturally significant distinctions, the community members have a direct link to *Clotilda* and the illegal voyage. The connection between a specific vessel and a living community, Africatown, is rare and highly significant. *Clotilda*’s connections to and role in regional maritime trade and commerce, reflected through its form and construction, cargo and voyages, illustrate how integrally the maritime commerce of the region was linked to the use of enslaved labor in maritime trades, industries, and agriculture. *Clotilda*’s entire maritime career is a microcosm of the maritime history of the Gulf of Mexico and its many ports of trade, including Cuba.

The National Register period of significance begins with the ship’s construction in 1855 and ends with the deliberate scuttling of the vessel in 1860.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Clotilda's Final Voyage

The schooner *Clotilda* arrived off the Point of Pines in Mississippi Sound, just outside Mobile Bay, on July 6, 1860 at the end of a four-month, nine-day voyage (Foster 1890; Robertson 2008:63). The voyage commenced on February 27, when *Clotilda* cleared Mobile with the stated purpose of sailing to “St. Thomas or a Market” with a declared cargo of 41,000 board feet of lumber, eighteen barrels of whiskey, seventy-five barrels of flour, forty-six barrels of beef, and seventy-four barrels of bread. Instead of what he had declared, Captain William Foster planned an illegal voyage at the West African port of Ouidah, where *Clotilda* would forcibly embark enslaved persons purchased with money obtained from prominent Mobile businessman, ship builder Timothy Meaher (Roche 1914:71). Their intentions were a Federal crime, as American participation in the African slave trade had been declared illegal by the Congress of the United States in 1807. Slavery, however, remained legal in those states that wished to retain it, and the booming cotton economy of the United States depended on enslaved labor. Ouidah was the home of Badahou, or Glele, the King of Dahomey from 1858 to 1889 (Appiah and Gates 2005: 251).

Meaher had proposed the voyage to Ouidah to his fellow slave holders as a bet that, the law notwithstanding, he and his co-conspirators could get away with the crime. As local historian Emma Roche would later write, “the wager was taken and the stakes were large” (Roche 1914: 71). Several months after that bet, *Clotilda*, its hold packed with an unwilling human cargo, now came to anchor at an isolated spot, the journey almost complete. Foster (1890) later stated the crew stood at twelve, including himself.

The purpose of the voyage, Captain Foster would relate in a late life reminiscence, had not originally been shared with the crew. As of 1820, with the passage of an amendment to an act protecting commerce and prohibiting piracy, participation in the transatlantic slave trade became a capital offense. At the time *Clotilda* arrived off Mobile, seventy-four individuals had previously been prosecuted by Federal authorities for conducting or participating in slaving voyages with the intention of violating of that law, but none had been executed while others, though guilty, had been cleared of charges by sympathetic juries (Thomas 1997:774). Nevertheless, it was a felony punishable by death. The crew, Foster would write, when they learned of the real nature of the voyage, mutinied and demanded more pay if they were to be involved in an illegal slaving voyage. Foster promised to pay them double their agreed-upon wages at the end of the voyage, although a later account suggests he may not have intended to do so, as his widow late in life related his belief that “promises were like pie-crust – made to be broken” (Roche 1914:85).

In his own reminiscence, written later in life (Foster 1890), he notes he paid his crew \$8,000, which was the earlier, agreed-upon wage. Now, at the end of the voyage in early July 1860, anchored off the Gulf Coast of Alabama, they once again mutinied and demanded their extra money. On board *Clotilda*, as Foster negotiated for the final time with his crew, were one hundred and nine people locked below deck. Foster had purchased them from the King Glele of Dahomey at Ouidah on the west coast of what is now Benin. Foster had brought “nine thousand dollars in gold and merchandise,” and upon landing in Ouidah, had told local officials he

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“wanted to buy a cargo of negroes, for which I agreed to pay one hundred dollars per head, for one hundred and twenty five” (Foster 1890). That led to direct negotiations with King Glele. Foster and Glele “went to the warehouse where they had in confinement four thousand captives in a state of nudity, from which they gave me liberty to select one hundred and twenty-five as mine, offering to brand them for me, from which I peremptorily forbid” (Foster 1890).

Although held at Ouidah, the captives had come into Glele’s possession from raids on and warfare against various other cultures in southwestern and central Nigeria, Benin, and, in one case, as historian Natalie Robertson’s research in West Africa has shown, “a Fon national from Dahomey itself” (Robertson 2008:6). War meant wealth, especially when captives were sold as “profitable commodities and exchanged for European goods on the Atlantic coast,” a practice that dated back centuries (Smallwood 2007: 27). Shaved, stripped, and taken offshore in long narrow canoes, men, women and children were loaded into the hold of *Clotilda* where lumber had been carried during the schooner’s five-year career. A later account, drawing on the reminiscences of *Clotilda* survivors, stated that the “hole” was “better than most slavers,” as it was “deep enough to permit men of lesser stature to stand erect” (Roche 1914:88). These were brutal, harsh conditions that the captives were forced to endure.

The size of the hold as a space in which 110 captives were forcibly imprisoned, meant tightly crowded conditions. One survivor, Baquaqua, later recalled that “day and night were the same to us, sleep being denied us from the confined position of our bodies, and we became desperate through suffering and fatigue” (as cited in Diouf 2007: 62). The captives were locked in the hold for thirteen days following *Clotilda*’s departure from Ouidah, and then, according to Cudjoe Lewis and other survivors, the enslaved were allowed to go out on deck, possibly in small groups, but the circumstances and conduct of that part of the voyage is not documented. This access to the deck was unlikely available to all 110 captives and at all hours, but nonetheless it was “contrary to what was the norm during the illegal slave trade” (Diouf 2007: 63). Diouf notes that two captives died on the voyage (Diouf 2007: 64) and Foster’s reminiscence states that one woman died on the passage (Foster 1890).

After a forty-five day voyage from Africa, Foster waited off Mobile to meet Meaher “and party” for the purpose of landing the captive Africans and paying the crew off. Paying the crew was paramount; Foster later noted that the “mates and crew did not want me to leave the vessel until they were paid for voyage and said they would kill me if I attempted to take the negroes ashore without their money” (Foster 1890). Foster had previously made arrangements with the mates and crew to take the vessel to Tampico, Mexico, clean it up and change the name, and then get clearance for New Orleans. However, as Foster later wrote, “the parties failing to meet me in time compelled me to go up to Mobile” (Foster 1890). Foster landed and hired a horse and buggy for the overland trip from his point of debarkation to the coastal city of Mobile. Once in Mobile, Foster and Meaher chartered the Mobile-registered tug *William H. Jones*, colloquially known locally as *Billy Jones*, commanded by Captain James W. Hollingsworth, to take them back to *Clotilda* and then to tow it into Mobile Bay.

Paying off his crew and sending them away on the steamboat *Texas*, then bound upriver for Montgomery, Foster and a crew of five men, hired in Mobile, stayed with *Clotilda* as the tug towed it along the coast in the darkness of night. Working into the bay, past the city and evading mandatory customs inspection, the captain entered the Spanish River, and followed it up to the junction of the Spanish and Mobile Rivers. Foster’s account states they “towed *Clotilda* into

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Mobile & up to 12 Mile Island & transferred the n**** on board the river steam boat the *Czar* & then I burned her & sank her in 20 feet of water, & then steamed 50 miles up the river & landed all the n***** on Dabneys Plantation” (Foster 1890). Emma Roche wrote a more dramatic account in 1914: “lights were smothered, and in the darkness quickly and quietly the *Clotilde*’s [sic] cargo... was transferred to the steamboat,” or, as Meaher related to his wife, “I put dem off de ship in de middle ob de night and put em on her steamboat to bring ‘em up de ribber” and then “the *Clotilde* [sic] was scuttled and fired, Captain Foster himself placed seven cords of light wood upon her” (Roche 1914: 96-97).

The steamer proceeded fifty miles upriver and landed the people in the canebrake (thicket of tall grass on the river bank) on the banks of the river off the plantation of Virginia-born planter John M. Dabney. Dabney was a friend of the Meahers and one of the bettors and conspirators. There was a regular steamboat landing at Dabney’s plantation, forty-nine miles up from the mouth of the river (Berney 1878:310). At Dabney’s plantation, the captives were apportioned to the various parties in on the deal, enslaved and separated from the companions they had formed a bond with through their common ordeal as “shipmates” who had “become a second family” on *Clotilda* (Diouf 2007:82). Many of the captives were separated and never reconnected as they were sent in different directions, some far away. The *Mobile Mercury* noted on July 23, 1860, for example that “some negroes who never learned to talk English went up the railroad the other day. There were twenty-five of them, apparently all of the pure, unadulterated African stock” (as cited in American Anti-Slavery Society 1861: 127). It was yet another heartbreaking time that would be recalled in later years by the survivors to interviewers late in life, and shared with family members.

In addition to the voyage violating the slave trade law, perjury on the official declaration when leaving port, and failing to report to Federal officials when reentering Mobile, the burning and sinking of *Clotilda* was barratry, the legal term for the crime of a captain deliberately wrecking or destroying his ship by any means. The slave trading crime was quickly discovered, however, and the news of the illegal importation of captives to be enslaved spread not only to government officials, but to the entire country via newspapers (Diouf 2007:77–79). On July 10, 1860, the [Nashville] *Tennessean* reported that “The Schooner *Clotilda* with 103 Africans arrived in Mobile Bay and a steamboat took the Negroes up the river” (The [Nashville] *Tennessean*, July 9, 1860:3). The event was nationally publicized, with stories in various newspapers, including the papers in Janesville, Wisconsin; Baltimore, Maryland; Wilmington, North Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Montgomery, Alabama, for example (*Janesville Daily Gazette*, July 14, 1860:3; *Montgomery Weekly Post*, July 18, 1860:1; the [Baltimore] *Daily Exchange*, July 11, 1860:1; the *Wilmington Daily Herald*, July 12, 1860:3). The incident became international news with a summary of the slave trade in *The [London] Morning Post* on October 5, 1860 that included an entry for *Clotilda*.

The news, both locally anecdotal and nationally published, spurred a search for *Clotilda* by the U.S. Government. The *Mobile Mercury* of July 28 questioned the search, claiming local “wags” were spreading false tales that had led to the U.S. Marshal’s actions:

The wags are certainly incorrigible. They have had the Federal authorities quizzed bad enough, in all conscience, rung hither and thither, looking for the *Clotilde* [sic] and her negroes. We have no idea that any vessel by the name of *Clotilde*

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[sic] ever did bring any Africans inside of Mobile Bay, and that such a one is a mere fabrication; and no Federal officers have been on the qui vive for ever so long a time, all without making any discovery. The wags ought to have been satisfied with the trouble and anxiety they have given our very clever US officers, and it was cruel in them to start so soon again a report of the landing of a cargo of Africans at Mullet Point, last Friday night. We'll be bound if the Marshal should fire up the cutter and go down there, he wouldn't see a track of anything landed there but mullets. What these wags will get by shouting wolf, will be, by and by, when the wolf does come, and they shout wolf, nobody will believe them (as cited in the [New Orleans] *Times-Picayune*, July 29, 1860:3).

While the initial search failed to find *Clotilda*, or the people *Clotilda* carried to Alabama against their will, the U.S. Government pursued legal action against Meaher, Foster, and planter John Dabney. The search was ultimately of little avail, as the tensions of the time quickly led to the outbreak of the Civil War, and with that, Alabama's secession from the Union. Only Foster was punished with the imposition of a \$1,000 fine for failing to meet with customs officials and return his documentation from the voyage. He never paid the fine. With that came the end of the legal case against the men, and pursuit of any others involved in the commission of the crime. Robertson (2008) provides an excellent summary of the legal cases (65-72).

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage (Black) Significance

The forced diaspora of Africans to the Americas, including what is now the United States, spanned four centuries with profound impact. The social, political, and economic fabric of American society was strongly influenced and molded by the diaspora and chattel slavery, with repercussions that powerfully continue in the 21st century, nearly two centuries after the end of institutional slavery in the United States. The voyage of *Clotilda*, physically and symbolically, is of exceptional national significance, not only because it was the last known slave ship, and "infamous," but because it represents continuity in the institution of global and American slavery. As a shipwreck with a high level of archaeological integrity, *Clotilda* has a unique place in the ongoing study of the slave trade and slavery. It offers yet more empirical archaeological evidence of how the slave trade worked in its last phase as an illegal activity within the parameters of a dominant social and economic system that tacitly or overtly accepted this type of illegal activity by participating in it, or by "looking the other way" as discussed earlier in this nomination and demonstrated by the reaction of Mobilians as the news of *Clotilda*'s voyage reached a national audience in 1860 with mocking denials in the local newspaper. At the same time, the "failed" effort to find the ship and its captives, followed by a half-hearted prosecution of the crime by local Federal officials with the responsibility of enforcing the law banning participation in the African slave trade also speak to an inherent acceptance if not complicity. "Looking the other way" was denying knowledge of the origin of recently arrived people bound into slavery on various plantations, or the "failure" to find where *Clotilda*'s wreck was located in 1860.

What has been recognized as far back as the late 19th century and what has carried forward are the survival of narratives and the passing on to later generations of what such a voyage was for the people captured and transported in *Clotilda*. The legacy of the *Clotilda* "shipmates," as they

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came to refer to themselves, is more than relaying the tale of their capture, sale and voyage. The *Clotilda* Descendants Association, first incorporated in Alabama in 1984, was chartered to “preserve and perpetuate the culture and heritage of the last Africans brought to America...[and to] enlighten society about their descendants and African history” with a goal, now that *Clotilda*’s wreck has been identified, “to bring all things *Clotilda* to light...things infamously, and literally done in the dark when that illegal ship set sail from Benin on the west coast of Africa with our terrified relatives crammed into overcrowded, filthy cargo holds. WE will forever tell their stories, uphold their legacy, build the ‘Africatown Museum and Performing Arts Center’ to honor them and others who helped shape the community...and press for accountability of the crime that *was Clotilda*” (<https://theclotildahistory.com>).

The final voyage of *Clotilda*, as the last slave ship to carry captives to the U.S., transported 110 people, at least one and perhaps as many as three of whom died during the passage. The social impact of *Clotilda* at the time of its voyage was such that the event made news throughout the United States and internationally in 1860. A series of subsequent newspaper and magazine articles in the 19th century referenced the voyage, but specifically focused on the stories of surviving members of the community formed by the captives carried to Alabama on *Clotilda*. Their accounts speak to the experiences of their capture, sale to Captain Foster, embarking on *Clotilda*, the voyage, and the evening disembarkation into the steamboat *Czar*.

They speak of fear, of the strangeness of the Americans who took possession of them, of the experience of boarding *Clotilda* and being locked in the hold, of sea-sickness, and of the death of at least two and possibly three of the captives at sea. They also relate how they were taken in groups on to the deck when *Clotilda* was well out to sea, and their amazement at seeing nothing surrounding them but the ocean, with no hope of escape. Those stories offer a rare, first-hand account of an individual made a captive, sold, forcibly transported on a transatlantic slave trade voyage, in this case on *Clotilda*, and then enslaved in the United States. In the United States, starting with late 19th- and early 20th-century accounts, and in the aftermath of the early 21st-century identification of *Clotilda*’s wreck, the story of *Clotilda*’s final voyage from Ouidah to Alabama is now better known than other 19th-century slave trade voyages, in large measure because of the testimony of some of the captives taken to America in it and the publication of those accounts. Less known is the fact that this voyage was the last known of tens of thousands. Less known is the communal silence that persisted into the 21st century of exactly where *Clotilda* lay in the river. Less known is the fact that Timothy Meaher, William Foster and the crew of *Clotilda* were never held accountable for their crime.

Some of the *Clotilda* survivors, following their enslavement and emancipation, founded a community, Africatown, on land they purchased after the Civil War in Mobile, Alabama (Robertson 2008; Diouf 2007). One account of the final voyage on *Clotilda* and the establishment of Africatown, that of Cudjoe Lewis, a Yoruba captive, was the result of a series of interviews by anthropologist, ethnographer, and author Zora Neale Hurston, whose work as an African American writer who documented the African American experience and the struggles of the African American community achieved national and international recognition and acclaim posthumously. This included the posthumous publication of her book *Barracoon*, which draws on Hurston’s 1927 interviews with Cudjoe Lewis as part of the “the Last Black Cargo” (Hurston 2018). While Hurston plagiarized earlier interviews with Cudjoe Lewis, modern scholar Genevieve Sexton has noted that the “racist hand” of the original interviews, conducted with a

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white southern perspective, had been replaced by Hurston’s “empowering one” (Sexton 2003:190; also see Hemenway 1980: 96-99).

Another of *Clotilda*’s survivors, Redoshi, who was known in the U.S. as Sally Smith, had been captured and brought against her will to Alabama as a very young child with her mother and siblings on *Clotilda*. Redoshi shared her story in the *Montgomery Advertiser* in 1932 (*Montgomery Advertiser*, January 31, 1932:13). A review of the Works Progress Administration narratives of formerly enslaved persons from Alabama did not turn up any overt references to *Clotilda*. Others shared their stories orally, especially to family members whose descendants today comprise the Africatown community. Some later recounted their stories to Mobile historian Emma Langdon Roche (1878-1945), who published them in a book titled *Historical Sketches* (Roche 1914:98–100). Roche noted that only eight of *Clotilda*’s captives were still living: “five women, Abaché (Clara Turner), Monabee (Kitty Cooper), Shamber, Kanko (who married Jim Dennison), and Ooma; and three men, Poleete, Kazoola (Cudjoe Lewis), and Oluala (Orsey Kan)” (Roche 1914: 120). Roche’s book also included details told to her by Kazoola (Cudjoe Lewis).

They, as did their departed fellow survivors, passed their stories on to their respective families. *Clotilda* holds a place in the story of American slavery as a vessel whose illegal slave trading voyage brought together a community from various African cultures, with different languages and beliefs. This is a powerful testament to cultural continuity through and beyond the voyage in *Clotilda*. In the immediate aftermath of the voyage and the landing of the captives at Dabney’s Plantation, fifty miles from where *Clotilda* had tied up next to the riverboat *Czar* and transferred the captives into the steamer, the 107 or 109 survivors were distributed to various plantations; this was the last time many of those forcibly loaded on *Clotilda* at anchor off Ouidah would ever see each other.

One group of people, enslaved by the Meaher brothers, were taken to Meaher’s plantation and to his sawmill and shipyard near Mobile. At the end of the Civil War, now freed, they founded Africatown on property leased and later purchased from Timothy Meaher, and forged a new cultural identity based on their dreams of Africa in Alabama (Diouf 2007); ongoing oral history and archaeological research is adding to the story of this act of ethnogenesis. Archaeology in particular, both at Africatown and with *Clotilda*, adds to the process by which a community addresses what archaeologist Barbara Voss describes as “the changing contours of social difference,” cultural dialogue, and how the study of ethnogenesis proves insights into how “the politics of identities point to relationships of authority and coercion – the power to name oneself is, for example, quite different from the power to assign a name to others” (Voss 2008: 1).

While Voss focused on the ethnogenesis of a racially diverse group of “Spanish” and “Mexican” colonists of late 18th-century California into early 19th-century “Californios,” the theoretical construct of ethnogenesis in archaeological and cultural studies can be applied to the transition of a group of Africans, captured from different communities, groups and cultures, forcibly sold and embarked on *Clotilda*, and then landing in Alabama at the conclusion of a difficult, strange voyage to make their way in a strange new land and with a different social status than they had experienced in lives before. After emancipation, remaining in the United States, one group of “*Clotilda* shipmates,” as the group had come to call themselves, unable to return home,

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established a new community and retained their African identities and cultures but from afar, in a sense creating a new identity, i.e. an act of ethnogenesis.

The increased focus on African diaspora archaeology and the archaeology of ethnogenesis is evolving; earlier studies drew upon “an essentialist framework to identify *continuities* [original emphasis]” between West Africa and the United States, while “other questions on how diasporic communities lived in the present moment, perhaps built new relations, and looked to the future also warrant serious attention” (Cipolla 2017: 4-5).

Clotilda and the voyage that forged a bond among the captives taken to Alabama in the schooner has long been a focal point for the descendant community. As Natalie S. Robertson notes in her study of *Clotilda*, the *Clotilda* captives, and the founding of Africatown, the “*Clotilda* Africans had arrived in Alabama wearing nothing more than their filed teeth and cicatrices that identified them as Fon, Oyo-Yoruba (titled and non-titled), Attakar, Kaninkon, Jaba, Bache, Gwari and Chamba peoples” (Robertson 2008: 132). Their African identities and cultures were at odds, notes Robertson, with those of the African American people they encountered who were enslaved, and for some of whom “Africa became a refracted image in their minds, poisoned by the ideology of slavery that defined all things African as primitive” (Robertson 2008: 132).

This sense of otherness that in time formed the community manifested initially in a plan to raise money to hire a ship to return to Africa following the end of the Civil War, with some of the former *Clotilda* captives working for pay in Timothy Meaher’s sawmill; “although they attempted to pool their resources to pay their passage back to West Africa, they fell short of their financial goal” (Robertson 2008: 140). Forced to remain in Alabama, “where the acquisition of land would be tantamount to their continued survival,” the group of thirty-two *Clotilda* captives who had sought to return home asked Cudjoe Lewis to ask Meaher for land. Meaher instead required them “to pay rent for parcels that he allowed to carve out for themselves on his land,” and that was the origin of Africatown in 1868 (Robertson 2008: 140).

Saving money to purchase land starting in 1870, the *Clotilda* survivors successfully created a community that was “a safe permanent haven” that emerged “out of the exigencies of the *Clotilda* Africans’ transatlantic ordeal” (Robertson 2008: 143). The community was further united by the circumstances of their forced arrival as “with few exceptions, marriages were arranged between members of the *Clotilda* cargo,” and these marriages were defined as being between “shipmates” (Robertson 2008: 146). Not all shipmates married another shipmate, however, but the values and culture persevered (Robertson 2008: 148). Natalie S. Robertson notes:

In spite of it all, they established, and maintained, a respectable, viable community where they raised their own crops, developed strong families, and educated their children. They gave mutual aid to one another, and they loved, and protected, each other. Today, AfricaTown exists as a symbol of their resiliency that lives on in their descendants, who did not collapse under the weight of racial oppression. But, they survived on the strength, knowledge, and wisdom that they inherited from their West African forebears. That was, that is, and that must continue to be the African-American way, forever guided by the unconquerable spirit of our ancestors” (Robertson 2008: 190).

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The focus and the importance of this story therefore rests with the people carried on board the ship, their resilience and survival, and the ongoing saga of the families and the communities they have left as part of the fabric of Alabama, the U.S., and the world in the 21st century. In that context, the story of *Clotilda* and the people involved in its saga represent a local convergence of events that were both global and national in scope – the slave trade, both in Africa and transatlantic, the role of slavery in America, and the formation of the U.S., Alabama, and Mobile and especially of Africatown. *Clotilda* is the nexus of this story, as the vessel in which the primary act, accomplished through force, brought the people carried in it against their will to the United States.

It is also a nexus not only in terms of its final voyage and participation in the slave trade, often seen or described as a “final” act. Neither is *Clotilda* an “outlier” as a slave trading vessel. The schooner, in addition to the final voyage and suspected involvement in the slave trade, was not “innocent.” The complicity of the vessel and its owners in the crime of abetting the illegal slave trade began before and continued with the wager between Timothy Meaher and others to purchase, outfit and sail *Clotilda* to Africa. The discovery of the remains of the ship, and additional research, both archival and archaeological, have and will continue to add more to understanding and documenting how *Clotilda* was built and operated as part of and in support of an economic and social system that relied on chattel slavery and forced labor. Every voyage between 1855 and 1860 saw the schooner loaded and unloaded with enslaved labor, and loading products extracted, manufactured, or refined using forcibly stolen labor. Complicity in this crime was not relegated to the South alone. The trade and commerce of the South fed Northern and international coffers as well.

The two key conspirators who commanded the schooner and financed its final voyage were former Northerners who had relocated to antebellum Mobile. Their names were William Foster and Timothy Meaher. Both men relocated to take advantage of the regional and local economies, and both married Southern women and remained part of the community and its economy after the Civil War. Both men employed enslaved labor, and likely did so in *Clotilda*’s construction. *Clotilda* also ran down and killed an enslaved man on Mobile Bay in a maritime accident as it sailed into port on October 23, 1859 (Sledge 2015: 262). To simply identify *Clotilda*’s context regarding slavery by focusing on the final voyage is short-sighted. Instead, the economic, social, and political influences and consequences of slavery defined *Clotilda*’s entire career.

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Criterion A: Maritime History Significance: Slave Ships and the American Slave Trade

The schooner *Clotilda* is historically significant as the last known vessel to arrive in the United States with people bound for enslavement. This was the culmination of four centuries of increased involvement by Americans in the transatlantic slave trade, in which thousands of voyages brought millions of Africans into what is now the United States. This trade did not end with the passage of a law in 1807 making it illegal as of 1808 to bring people from African or other nations to be enslaved. *Clotilda*'s voyage of 1860, while one of many that year, is the last recorded voyage known to have successfully completed its intended, illegal activity when it landed 107 or 109 enslaved people on the banks of the Mobile River in July 1860.

As an archaeological site, the substantially intact wreck of *Clotilda* is **of exceptional national significance as the only American slave ship lost in the context of its slave-trading career whose remains have been located and positively identified**. The wreck sits exactly where that slave trading voyage ended on the banks of the Mobile River on a dark night in July 1860. It is at this time a unique archaeological resource tied to the story of American slavery. Work on other shipwrecks in foreign waters has identified them as slave wrecks. Excavation and analysis are underway with the wreck of the Portuguese slave ship *São José Paquete de Africa* lost in 1794 off Mozambique, which is the first vessel confirmed to have been carrying enslaved human cargo when it sank, and is the subject of ongoing work by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture's Slave Wrecks Project in collaboration with the National Park Service and George Washington University. That wreck is earlier than *Clotilda*, fragmented, and on a distant shore. An ongoing project to locate and positively identify the remains of the slave ship *Guerrero*, wrecked in the Florida Keys in 1827 while being chased by a British Royal Navy anti-slavery patrol schooner HMS *Nimble*, may yet reveal the fragmented remains of that American slave ship, but to date, it has yet to do so.

The Florida Keys also are the location of the slave ship, *Henrietta Marie*, which sank in 1700 while engaged in the slave trade but wrecked without a human cargo. While in U.S. waters, it predates the formation of the United States and is not an American slave ship. The wreck was discovered during treasure hunting activities and this has complicated its value to the archaeological community. Another wreck, discovered in foreign waters in 2008 and still under investigation, is the Spanish slave ship *Trovadore*, wrecked in 1841 in the East Caicos, but the vessel's remains as reported are scant, with a ballast mound, some timbers and metal fasteners but "test excavations...were inconclusive" with no material culture or other archaeological evidence to connect to the slave trade. The archaeological work, while laudable and community-based, has identified the vessel structure and through a process of elimination determined it is *Trovadore* (Sadler 2008: 218). As of 2021, *Clotilda* is the only archaeologically identified American vessel engaged in and lost at the end of its voyage to and from Africa as a slave ship. The high degree of archaeological integrity in all aspects identified as essential to National Register listing are present with *Clotilda*, and underscore its exceptional significance in regard to how this site meets the criteria for the National Register, as well as being of such an exceptional nature to merit consideration for National Historic Landmark status.

Clotilda's voyage was the end point of an involuntary and violent migration from Africa to the Americas of centuries' duration. Slavery has been globally practiced starting in antiquity, and

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the practice of human slavery by indigenous people in the Americas predated European colonization. Spanish colonies enslaved indigenous populations in the Caribbean and South, Central, and North America, as indigenous peoples practiced slavery at the same time. English colonists also engaged in what was known as the Indian slave trade. The first enslaved Africans arrived by ship with Spanish explorers and colonists such as the Ayllón colony in 1526, the Narváez expedition in 1528, the Soto expedition in 1539, and doubtless others. Spanish colonists introduced an increasing number of enslaved Africans to the Americas and the Caribbean in response to extensive mortality among the indigenous populations and a 1542 ban on the Indian slave trade by the Spanish Crown. The first enslaved Africans known to arrive in what is now the continental United States at permanent settlements arrived in the late 16th century at the Spanish colony of St. Augustine and the early 17th century in the English colony of Jamestown. Africans were forcibly brought to French Louisiana as slaves in the early 18th century.

Human chattel slavery expanded in the various colonies after the late 17th century and just prior to the American Revolution, with the British colonies containing an enslaved population of nearly four hundred thousand individuals. The United States, once free of British rule, continued slavery as part of the United States Constitution, which did not prohibit it, counted enslaved persons differently for the purposes of determining representation, and permitted the importation of slaves until 1808. While various states abolished slavery, it remained legal in the United States in the face of growing calls for abolition and political turmoil, and in time led to the outbreak of Civil War. Slavery also was at the core of the American economy. Cotton and other agriculture products, planted and harvested with enslaved labor, were key commodities of trade.

Trade between the Southern and Northern states built wealth in “non-slave” but slavery-supporting Northern states. The North was linked to the slave states as a singular American economy, and through trade to the global economy. This led many Northerners to publicly condemn slavery, while also quietly profiting from the institution with all of its evils. Banning the transatlantic slave trade starting in 1808 assuaged some consciences, but it resulted in the final phase of American slavery: an internal trade that broke apart families from Northern and border states and shipped them “down the river” to the factory plantations of the Deep South. It also introduced an illegal slave trade that saw American conspiring with Spanish (often Cuban) slavers to engage in illicit slave trading voyages to Africa and then transport captives to Cuba, or to quiet, out of the way landings on the southern and the Gulf coasts, including Spanish and Mexican ports in proximity to American Louisiana and Alabama such as Matanzas, Galveston, and the coast east of Pensacola, as well as near what would become Jacksonville, Florida. The illegal trade persisted to the outbreak of the Civil War, despite the establishment of British, Portuguese and American naval anti-slavery patrols to stop it by seizing vessels to free their captives and repatriate them to Africa. This final phase of American slavery and the slave trade was both desperate and brutal.

The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 liberated enslaved people in areas of the Confederacy during the Civil War, but slavery as a legal action in the United States was not abolished until the passage and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. In that time span, as many as twelve and a half million Africans, enslaved against their will, were transported to the Americas. As estimated by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Ship Database, up to three times the number of Africans came to the Americas than Europeans before 1820. The 19th century was a

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time when European immigration rapidly expanded in response to economic and political upheaval in the various countries following the Napoleonic Wars. The African slave trade “was the largest transoceanic migration of a people until that day” (Eltis 2010a). The statistics of the slave trade voyages, as presented in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Ship Database, are substantial. The database lists 34,948 voyages out of an estimated 40,380 to 41,190 voyages and what could be as many as 15.4 million enslaved people transported to the Americas (Eltis 2010b). The scale and the horror were countenanced for centuries because the slave trade was key to establishing the global economy that grew between the 16th and 19th centuries. “The slave ship was a linchpin of a rapidly growing Atlantic system of capital and labor. It linked workers free, unfree, and everywhere in between, in capitalists and noncapitalist societies on several continents” (Rediker 2007: 348).

Archaeologists studying not only the wrecks of slave ships – a more recent and essential aspect of an evolving discipline, maritime archaeology – also have examined a number of sites inextricably linked to the slave trade, both in African slave factories, but also in plantations and other industries. As well, a larger view has examined entities, such as the colonial city of Port Royal, Jamaica, as artifacts of and archaeological data that speak to a trade that was “a web of ponderous magnitude and dazzling complexity” and only in “recent years, revision of its highly biased and compromised history has...begun the process of unraveling its tangled threads” (Johnson 2000: 1). The transatlantic slave trade “was a cornerstone upon which commerce and prosperity was built as the nations of Western Europe explored and subsequently exploited the ‘New World.’ Servile and enslaved labor were the engines that drove production first in colonial mining and later in agricultural industries in an era that saw trade expand to an increasingly complex global network” (Johnson 2000:1-2).

The scale of the trade into the present-day United States was large from its founding. This trade grew in the 19th century as the American economy became increasingly linked to “King Cotton” and the demand for enslaved labor to feed the international textile market. This demand for additional labor caused the slave trade to continue long after the Federal law prohibiting American involvement in the transatlantic slave trade went into effect in 1808. The vast number of voyages, of captives transported and of death represented by statistics does not necessarily convey the collective and individual suffering endured on these voyages, nor the consequences of enslavement. It was, with each voyage, a descent “into hell,” with horrific conditions on the slave ships resulting in the deaths of as many as 1.8 million of the captives held on ships, while what awaited the survivors of these voyages was “the bloody maw of a killing plantation system, which they would in turn resist in all ways imaginable” (Rediker 2007: 5). Beyond statistics, what emerges is an abhorrent story of humanity subjected to and suffering from an economic system that in its varied aspects exploited people as a commodity with all of the brutality and indifference and that relied on racism to deny its fundamental inhumanity.

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Criterion A: Maritime History Significance: *Clotilda* as Part of a Slavery-Based Economic System

As previously noted, *Clotilda* was built and operated as part of and in support of an economic and social system that relied on enslavement. In addition to the vessel’s construction most likely with the use of enslaved labor and loading and discharging cargo with enslaved labor, the basic factor in complicity is that those cargoes in large measure were the product of enslaved labor. Every port that *Clotilda* was engaged in trade with had maritime connections that included contact with Cuba. Cuba was a known destination of ships engaged in the illegal slave trade as the epicenter of illegal slave trading in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. During the years *Clotilda* was active in trading in the region, approximately one hundred and twenty-nine expeditions arrived in Cuba with an estimated 96,598 captives, a trade largely sponsored by U.S. investors (Murray 1971: 147, 148). *Clotilda*’s other ports of call, New Orleans, the Gulf coast of Florida, Louisiana and Texas, and Tampico, Mexico, were ports in the Gulf where the internal slave trade of the United States was consistently shipping people; this provided “cover” for the illegal slave trade.

Those ports included enslaved African Americans who were regularly sent South by slave traders who purchased people from states in the North and Upper South and either marched them, chained together in a “coffle” or “drove” (the terms of the time) for a several-week forced march through the South, or shipped them “by water” to the South. One account that occurred in 1835, cited by anti-slavery crusader Ethan Andrews in 1836, described how people were held in “a prison, or slave pen...until a cargo is completed. They are then carried on board the vessel, usually at night, and immediately sail for New Orleans” (Andrews 1836: 80).

Amongst the larger port cities participating in the illegal and legal importation of enslaved people, New Orleans was a common destination for regular voyages of slave-carrying brigs “of the first class, built expressly for this trade” (Andrews 1836: 142). After the law banning American participation in the transatlantic slave trade went into effect in 1808, a “reservation was made in favor of the coast wide trade of the nation itself”. This “reservation” allowed vessels of forty tons burthen or more to transport enslaved people “from any port in the United States to any port or place within the jurisdiction of the same” without limits on how people could be carried, nor any provisions for safety, health or comfort (Spears 1900: 173).

Of all the port cities in the American South, New Orleans was the most common destination for the coastal or internal slave trade ships. The river city was a convenient port for subsequent transshipment of people up the Mississippi to the many cotton plantations along its banks as well as the neighboring sugar plantations in the Louisiana bayous. New Orleans by the mid-19th century was also engaged in the illegal slave trade, and for decades captives from Africa, transshipped from Cuba to Tampico, the Brazos, to Galveston, and other ports, as well as isolated spots on the bayou, had been offloaded and marched by slave traders into New Orleans and sold as “runaways” with no questions asked by government officials because “slaves being in demand, public support supported the transaction... the Government officials got fat fees, and planters got the slaves at market prices” (Spears 1900: 130).

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At the same time, it was stated that “persons in New Orleans were connected with slave traders in Cuba, and at certain seasons of the year they would go up the Mississippi River and meet slave ships off the coast. They would relieve these of their cargoes, return to the main stream of the river, drop down the flat boats and dispose of the negroes to those who wanted them” (Collins 1904: 17). In 1830, the New Orleans *Mercantile Advertiser* noted that “New Orleans is the complete mart for the slave trade – and the Mississippi is becoming a common highway for the traffic” (as quoted in Collins 1904: 46-47). That trade continued through the 1850s up to the advent of the Civil War. The demand for enslaved labor was high, and the price charged for people was also high.

This was explicitly noted by Alabama State Senator William Yancey, who in 1858 averred during debates to reopen the slave trade to the United States that he “did not want to be compelled to go to Virginia to buy slaves for 1500\$ each when he could get them in Cuba for 600\$ each or upon the coast of Guinea for one sixth of that sum” (Johnson 2013: 401). This, coupled with “the fact that the Southern people were becoming more and more favorable to the reopening of the African slave trade, thus making it easier to practice smuggling successfully” led to scholars asserting even a century ago that “we have no reason to doubt the truth of these accounts of this illicit trade” (Collins 1904: 19).

Historian Emma Roche noted in her 1914 recounting of the story of *Clotilda*’s final voyage, “it is certain that this was only one of the voyages made under auspices of the Meahers and Captain Foster. Of these there are still rumors among the older people” (Roche 1914: 71-72). Roche inferred that *Clotilda* had been selected, as a vessel already in the slave trade, “to make the voyage to the slave coast... because of her fleetness” (Roche 1914: 72). Roche’s implication finds potential resonance in the examination of *Clotilda*’s various ports of call, with Captain Foster’s familiarity with Tampico as a place where he could go following the 1860 voyage to clean, refit, and rename *Clotilda* with no questions asked. In a voyage that ended in January 1857, *Clotilda* arrived from Brazos de Santiago in New Orleans with an unlisted cargo for ship agents “Goldenbow & Lesparre,” who were known actors in the illegal slave trade.

While the archival record may be silent, awaiting further research, what is suspected is that Emma Roche, citing local rumor, was correct, and *Clotilda*’s involvement in the American institution of slavery may have been more than serving as an instrument in a slave-based economy, but also a clandestine role that ended dramatically in 1860 on the eve of the Civil War. What this archaeological site and its historical connections demonstrate is that *Clotilda* occupies an important place in the ongoing study of the slave trade and slavery, and it offers yet more empirical evidence of how the slave trade was conducted at the end of American involvement in that trade.

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Criterion D: Archaeology (Historic/Maritime/Ethnic Heritage) Significance

The wreck of *Clotilda* exists today as a shipwreck site and a component of a larger maritime cultural landscape of vessel abandonment and loss in the Mobile area. The vessel remains are one of a handful of slave ships located throughout the world which are accessible for archaeological study. To date (2021), *Clotilda* is the only American slave ship located, identified, and with a high degree of archaeological integrity, available to study not only as a vessel modified for use as a slave ship, but deliberately scuttled at the end of its slave trading voyage. This suggests that direct physical evidence, both artifactual and forensic, is encapsulated in probable anaerobic conditions in thick mud. In this, *Clotilda* is also an archaeological site and an artifact with specific and powerful ties to the archaeology of the African diaspora and the community members of Africatown. ***Clotilda* is of exceptional national significance as an archaeological site.**

To date, previous investigations have focused on minimal intrusion and the question of defining the extent and condition of the wreck, and its identity. The research questions initially formulated in 2018 were particularistic and tightly focused. Key questions in regard to the dimensions, shape and form of the hull, construction characteristics, the age of the wreck, and the site formation processes were paramount, as was determining if there were features specific to use of the vessel, if it was *Clotilda*, as a slave ship. Within this context, and the previous research design for assessing 1BA704, a series of questions for ongoing archaeological work on *Clotilda* follows, while noting that because of the unique nature of this vessel’s ties to a living community of descendants, the archaeology of *Clotilda* should be a community endeavor and be tied to an overall archaeology that links *Clotilda* and its captives to Africatown and the larger descendant community, especially if DNA survives inside the wreck.

Clotilda Specific Research Questions:

1. ***Clotilda*’s remains and history support the suggestion that the illegal slave trade had evolved in its last years to effectively use any vessel that was fast and could accommodate a human cargo of sufficient size to be profitable given that the ban on the trade had made the transportation and sale of African captives more lucrative on a per person basis.**
 - A) What aspects of *Clotilda* made it well-suited for selection for a slave-trading voyage? Was it, as believed, its speed and its greater cargo capacity?
2. ***Clotilda*’s remains indicate the survival of the partitions that were essential to the command and control of the captives.**
 - A) What is the nature of the two partitions? What was their purpose?
 - B) Were they accessible below deck or only from above deck?
 - C) Are remains of platforms or partitions used to confine and accommodate a large group of people evident?
 - D) Is there evidence of segregation of the group by gender or other factors?
 - E) Are instruments or evidence of restraint present?

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- F) Are artifacts that speak to providing food and water for a large, confined group of people located within the remains?
- G) Does the material record support a hypothesis of rotation of the captives to the deck on a regular basis?
- 3. The level of preservation suggests that more than vessel structure and equipment might rest inside the hull.**
- A) What, if any, material culture is inside the vessel? If any, what is its nature and cultural context? Are there surviving goods from the manifest of cargo outbound from Mobile that were intended for possible trade in Africa in addition to purchasing people with gold?
- B) Is there forensic evidence in the form of human DNA?
- C) Are there DNA or other organic traces of humans and human activities such as food and waste disposal in the lower hold or specifically in the bilge?
- D) Can the DNA be sequenced to answer questions about the captives, or can any DNA be tied to living descendants?
- 4. The scuttling of *Clotilda* has been variously described as both “opening sea cocks” to flood it as well as fire.**
- A) What does the material record indicate in regard to the scuttling process? Was this a deliberate attempt to remove all traces of *Clotilda*, or to hide the wreck in plain sight with no obvious and direct evidence of its final voyage?
- 5. At its most basic level, the substantial physical, archaeological remains of *Clotilda* offer a unique opportunity to assess a slave ship in three dimensions.**
- A) Archaeologists can potentially draw inferences from the survival of the slave ship as a physical space that in and by itself speaks to the conditions and the experience of being held captive and transported on a slave ship that to date no other site can as no other slave ships lost during or at the immediate end of the commission of their crime have been found or excavated. The first archaeologists to enter the hold of *Clotilda* will be the first humans to fully enter that space since the captives embarked against their will at Ouidah were taken out of the hold and off *Clotilda* to board the steamboat *Czar* on a dark July night in 1860.

Ultimately, the wreck site with its substantial structural preservation of the much of the hull, evidence of what appear to be modifications made specifically for its use in the slave trade, and continued research potential will allow for other research questions to be formulated that will make significant contributions to our understanding of the transatlantic slave trade and of the experiences of the many thousands of people who endured captivity in slave ships and enslavement in the United States. The exceptional and unique nature of this shipwreck as an archaeological site, with such a high degree of structural and archaeological integrity, and its ability to address an event and a voyage which while well-known, is not fully documented, support its listing under both Criteria A and D. Its investigators are confident that it warrants consideration for designation as a future National Historical Landmark.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: SEARCH, Inc.

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.25

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:

Clotilda (1BA704)
Name of Property

Baldwin, AL
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

[REDACTED]

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundaries of *Clotilda* encompass the footprint of its articulated remains surrounding the center point of the vessel to capture disarticulated remains and artifacts that are separated from the main structure. Surveys conducted by SEARCH and Alabama Historical Commission have revealed the extent of the centralized structure, as well as scattered shipwreck debris surrounding the location of the wreck.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: James Delgado, Kyle Lent, Michael Brennan
organization: SEARCH, Inc.
street & number: 700 N 9th Ave.
city or town: Pensacola state: FL zip code: 32501
e-mail: james.delgado@searchinc.com
telephone: (904) 379-8338
date: June 21, 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Clotilda (1BA704)
 Name of Property

Baldwin, AL
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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: *Clotilda (1BA704)*
 City or Vicinity: Mobile vicinity
 County: Baldwin State: AL

Photo #1 (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_0001)
 Site overview, facing south. Baldwin County Shoreline (left), Mobile River (center).

Name of Photographer: Daniel Fiore
 Date of Photographs December 14, 2018

Photo #2 (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_0002)
 Wooden plank with treenail and plug, artifact overview. Materials redeposited on site.

Name of Photographer: James Delgado
 Date of Photographs December 12, 2018

Photo #3 (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_0003)
 Side Scan Sonar Acoustic Imagery Thumbnail of *Clotilda (1BA704)*.

Name of Photographer: N/A
 Date of Photographs March 2020

Photo #4 (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_0004)
 Acoustic Imagery of *Clotilda (1BA704)*, with identifiable features labeled.

Name of Photographer: N/A
 Date of Photographs March 2020

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

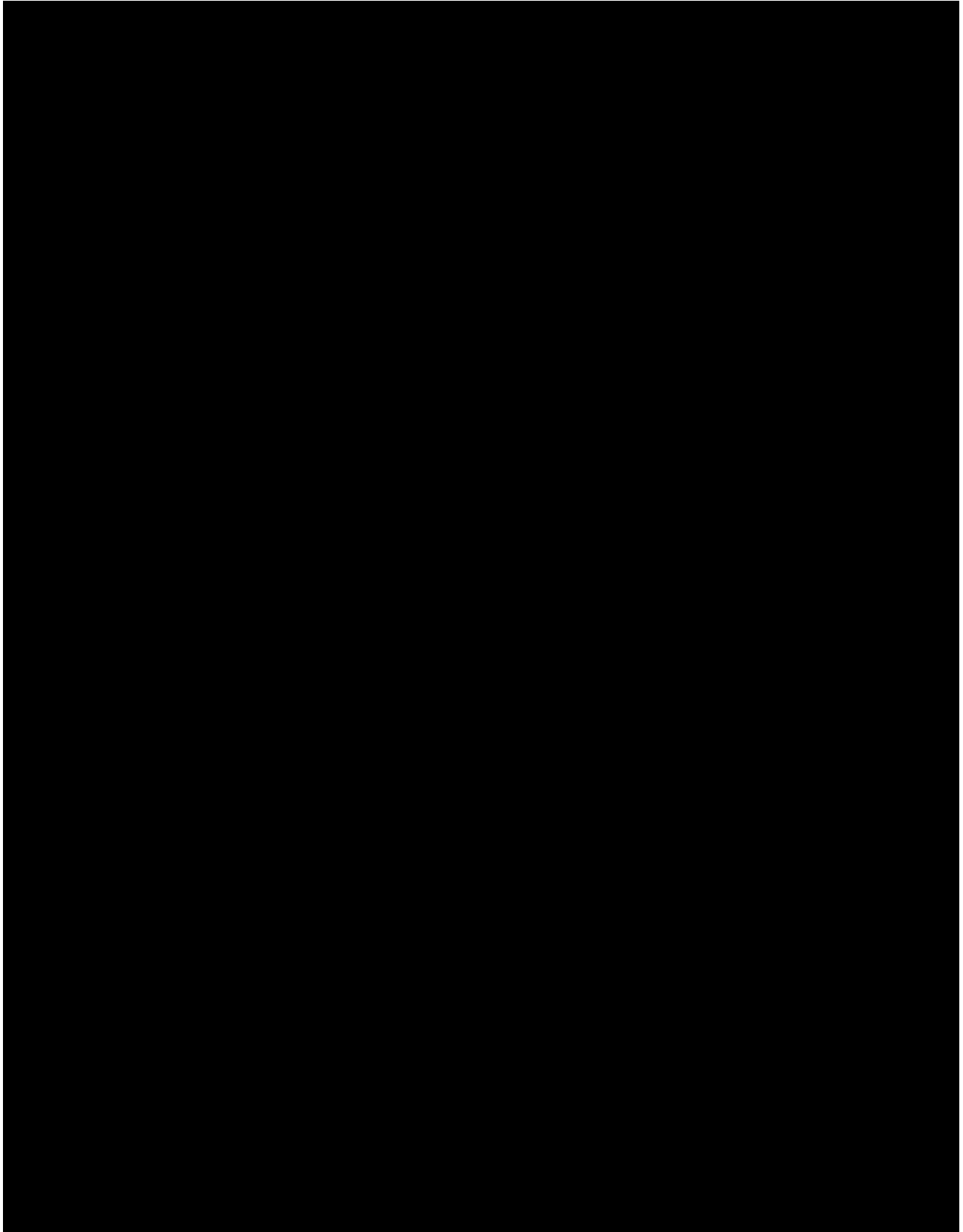
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900 OMB Control No. 1024-0018

Clotilda (1BA704)
Name of Property

Baldwin, AL
County and State

Location Map – NOT FOR PUBLICATION (Datum: WGS84)

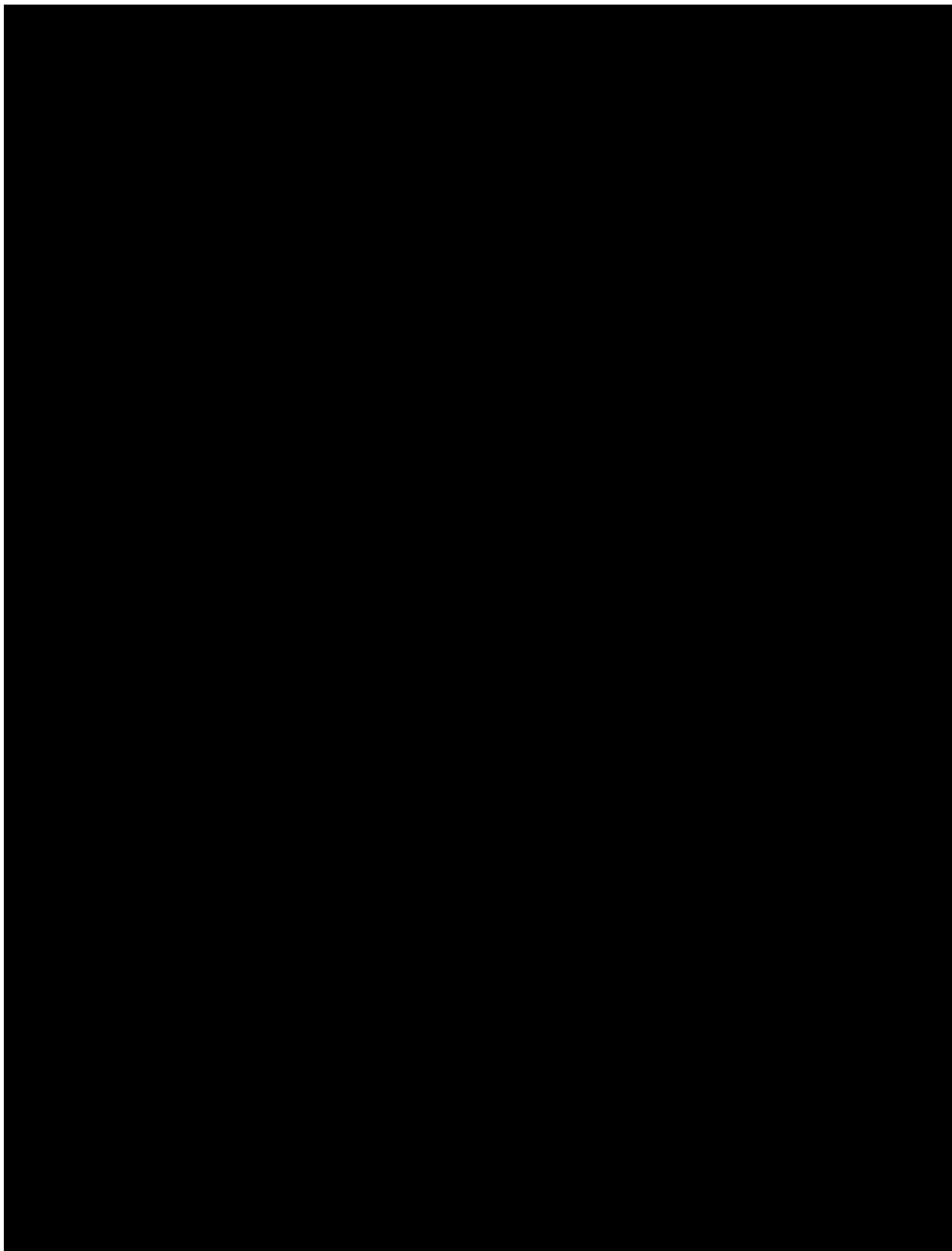


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Clotilda (1BA704)
Name of Property

Baldwin, AL
County and State

Boundary Map – NOT FOR PUBLICATION



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 9/27/2021 Date of Pending List: 10/13/2021 Date of 16th Day: 10/28/2021 Date of 45th Day: 11/12/2021 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 11/8/2021 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

The archeological remains of the wooden-hulled, two-masted Gulf Coast schooner *Clotilda* (1BA704) are recommended for listed in the National Register under significance criteria A (Ethnic Heritage: Black and Maritime History) and D (Archeology/Historic – Nonaboriginal). Having just offloaded the surviving numbers of the 110 illegally transported humans purchased on the west coast of what is now Benin and intended for sale and enforced labor in Alabama, the vessel's captain and builder (William Foster) scuttled and burned *Clotilda*. He engaged in this act of barratry to avoid seizure and examination of the vessel by Federal officials—a risk that carried possible conviction of a capital offence if features such as the partitions, platforms, empty casks of food and water, and evidence of blood and other bodily fluids resulting from the just-concluded four month and nine day slaving voyage were observed. *Clotilda's* period of significance, 1855-1860, spans the vessel's launch date and destruction, respectively.

Among the many attributes justifying the site's national significance are its status as:

- an archeological time capsule, resting at a twenty-degree angle on its port (left) side in the location where it was burned on July 9, 1860, and which—despite charting as part of an 1888-1889 survey—never saw subsequent dredging or channelization for navigation purposes,
- the only archeologically recovered example of an American slave trading vessel lost in the context of the transatlantic slave trade and whose remains have been located and positively identified,
- the last known slave trading voyage that brought captives to the U.S.,

- an extant example of a schooner that may well have been expressly refitted for use in the illegal slave trade,
- a shipwreck that retains remarkable structural integrity—retaining perhaps two-thirds of the vessel’s original structure, including its lower hull, the interior of the hull (including intact bulkheads and the dimensions of the interior compartments they separated),
- a site retaining remarkable physical evidence, which has been documented using predominantly non-invasive means such as sonar mapping and x-ray fluorescence on recovered samples of metal ship fasteners to identify their composition and which also contains the potential presence of DNA evidence from the humans held captive in its hold (as suggested by core sampling of sediments inside and outside the wreck),
- the embodiment of an illegal activity within the context of a dominant society and prevailing economic system “. . .that tacitly or overtly accepted this type of illegal activity by participating in it, or by ‘looking the other way’. . .” (Section 8, p. 30) and
- additional significance when understood in tandem with the remarkable story of the post-Civil War founding of Africatown (itself a nationally significant historic district listed in the National Register on 12/4/2012) by some of the very individuals who had been forcibly held captive aboard *Clotilda*. The ongoing research undertaken by community members and leadership of groups such as the *Clotilda* Descendants Association, will go far in generating a broader context for understanding *Clotilda*’s history and ongoing legacy.

Clotilda retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. At the time of abandonment, *Clotilda*’s location was known by Captain Foster and the vessel’s owner, Timothy Meaher. The schooner’s intentional destruction and the fate of the enslaved people forcibly transported in its hold were the subject of tremendous public interest and were reported widely in the national and international press and a series of subsequent histories, participants’ and survivors’ reminiscences, and other publications. The National Register documentation does a very fine job of summarizing the historiography of the event, the cartographic history of the area where the destroyed vessel came to rest, briefly references the unsubstantiated oral tradition of attempts to salvage copper sheathing from the vessel’s outer hull in the 1950s, carefully explains why previous efforts by archeologists to locate the vessel likely proved unsuccessful, and forges the important connection between this nationally significant archeological site and the National Register district at Africatown established after the Civil War by several *Clotilda* survivors and other former enslaved persons.

Extensive fieldwork (including mapping, core sampling, x-ray fluorescence of sample metal artifacts to identify their composition), historical research, and post-fieldwork statistical analysis of the documented descriptions, dimensions, and other attributes of all schooners registered at Gulf ports between 1813 and 1893 convincingly confirmed the identity of 1BA704 as *Clotilda*.

A number of sample research questions are outlined in the nomination in Section 8, pp. 40-41. Of particular note is the nomination’s authors’ acknowledgment that “. . . the archaeology of *Clotilda* should be a community endeavor and be tied to an overall archaeology that links *Clotilda* and its captives to Africatown and the larger descendant community, especially if DNA survives inside the wreck” (Section 8, p. 40).

Recommendation/
Criteria

The archeological remains of *Clotilda*, the last known schooner to have illegally transported enslaved Africans to the United States are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and D in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, Maritime History, and Archeology/Historic-Nonaboriginal. The site is nationally significant, with a period of significance of 1855-1860.

Reviewer Julie Ernstein

Discipline Archeologist

Telephone (202)354-2217

Date 11/8/2021

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

468 South Perry Street
P.O. Box 300900
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900
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Lisa D. Jones
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

September 27, 2021

Ms. Joy Beasley
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Accompanying the electronic submission of this letter, please find the nomination form and supporting documentation to be considered for listing the following Alabama resource in the National Register of Historic Places:

Clotilda [location restricted]
Mobile vicinity, Baldwin County, Alabama

In accordance with the instructions for electronic submissions, two files are being submitted with this letter. One file (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_form.pdf) contains the signed nomination, photo log, and maps. The second file (AL_Baldwin County_Clotilda_photos.pdf) contains the four (4) photographs that accompany the nomination.

The Alabama Historical Commission received letters of support for this nomination from Mayor William S. Stimpson of Mobile, Alabama, and from the Mobile Historic Development Commission.

Your consideration of this National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Anne Wofford".

Lee Anne Wofford
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LAW/edc