



# THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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## Pros take center stage in festivities

It was a night for professional stage and screen actors Saturday as Chaz Mena held court as St. Augustine founder Pedro Menendez at our annual Noche de Gala at Lightner Museum, while half a mile away, Harry Burney emceed "*Lincolntown, The Way We Were,*" at Excelsior Cultural Center.

**Mena**, noted for his recurring role as a judge in TV's *Law and Order* series and Chautauqua performances of *A Chat with José Martí*, and **Burney**, creative consultant for the New York Public School System, the Brooklyn Library System, and Walt Disney World Entertainment, were each supported in their roles by the Florida Humanities Council.

They demonstrated professional polish in their roles here. Mena, first seen as an engaging Pedro Menendez in November's *First America: Colonial St. Augustine*, has since been studying the life of our founder. Burney, a Daytona resident, commuted to St. Augustine on a regular basis to weave his repertoire into a video of oral histories of Lincolntown.



Actors Burney and Mena



## Beauty in wastewater operation

Our city's waste water treatment plant may not be a dinner table topic, but to public works professionals, it's beautiful.

So much so, contractor [Aeration Industries International](#), Inc. of Minneapolis invited national and international sales representatives to the city to check out new aerator equipment, unique to the industry.

Some 60 professionals representing 20 international companies responded last week for three days of training sessions, award banquets and sightseeing.

The floating aeration system will extend the life of the current system, and the plant staff's ability "to remove portions of the old system and assemble the new system in place ... saved the city upward of six figures," Public Works Director Martha Graham said.



Floatation aerators at work

The overall plant operation won kudos as well - one visitor, Dave Levinson of David Industrial Sales in Akron, Ohio, commenting, "You can see that the guys here at this plant take pride in its cleanliness. There's no obsolete equipment around and the grounds, they're kept very nice."

## **Winter, bah!**

Look for a powerful sign of spring outside the Thompson Baker Agency on Cordova Street - a blossoming pear tree, which we're told blooms every year at this time - apparently oblivious to the machinations of Old Man Winter. But don't look for ingredients for your poached pear with spices recipe here. We're told the tree doesn't bear fruit.

The complete story is on our city [website](#).

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## ***Bikers welcome in Visitor Center facility***



**Hog Heaven - cycles high and dry**

The start of Bike Week last weekend was the first real test of our city's motorcycle parking in the Visitor Center parking facility - with some neighborly competition and some bugs to be worked out.

The competition came from the Police Benevolent Organization's St. Aug Fest at Francis Field - offering free parking, and the bugs were signage - only one of three exits is designed with a shortened gate for motorcycles.

The facility charges \$4 for all-day cycle parking (\$2 with a *ParkNow* card), and Visitor Center Manager Sharon Langford said better signage is being prepared to direct cyclists to the proper exit in a line of vehicles.

## ***Public art for community - youth lead the way***

It takes a village to raise a child - and a community to establish public art, like the recently completed mosaic wall at the entrance to the Calhoun Community Center.

The combined efforts of some 100 youth, under the guiding eyes of artists Wendy McDaniel and Corrie Borglund, created the mosaic tribute to youthful energy. They came from the after school programs at American Legion Post 194, Boys and Girls Club, Collier-Blocker-Puryear Park and Solomon Calhoun Center.

Groups supporting the three-month effort included county government, West Augustine CRA, and 450 Next (Young Professionals of St. Augustine), connected through the St. Johns Cultural Council.



**Community team works on mosaic**

## **Making the case for a caravel**

LAMP archaeology Director Sam Turner makes the case for building a 16th century caravel in and for St. Augustine in the current newsletter of the St. Augustine Archaeological Association. Sam is a member of the 450 Maritime Activities Committee which has had the project under study for two years.



First, "the antiquity of this port city makes it the oldest center of boat and ship building in North America," Sam writes. Then, "The skills and joinery techniques of what was for millennia the most complex form of human engineering in wood are in peril of being lost. ...These vanishing skills and joinery techniques are a unique part of our cultural heritage and worthy of study and preservation."

The committee envisions building the ship in public view, which "will go a long way to educating the general public about the crucial role these skills played in St. Augustine's past and its ever present connection with the sea."

The caravel was selected for both historic and economic reasons. Caravels sailed with Columbus, Ponce de Leon, and Menendez. The size (65 feet) is less costly to build, operate, and maintain. And there's education - during construction, at the dock, and as a training and goodwill ship.

Right now, the Maritime Activities Committee can use some financial help in organizing a fundraising campaign. Contributions can be made to the 450 Community Corps (a 501C3 non-profit) at 57 Fullerwood Drive, St. Augustine FL 32084.

## ***History's Highlights***

### **Tragedy on a cold morning, December 28, 1835**

*One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our commemorations, drawn from research by George Gardner*

Cold weather can at the least be uncomfortable. On the morning of December 28, 1835, it was tragic.

A column of 107 American soldiers under Major Francis L. Dadewas completing a 100-mile march from Fort Brooke, near Tampa, to Fort King at Ocala. Their greatcoats shielded them against the chill. But whether the delay this caused in getting to their cartridge boxes affected the outcome is doubtful.

Concealed along the edge of Wahoo Swamp, some 40 miles south of Fort King, 180 Seminoles lay in wait.

Halpatter Tustenuggee (Alligator, as the white man called him): "We had been preparing for this more than a year... Just as the day was breaking, we moved out of the swamp into the pine-barren. ...Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side..."

"About nine o'clock in the morning the command approached... So soon as all the soldiers were opposite... Micanopy fired the first rifle, the signal agreed upon, when every Indian arose and fired, which laid upon the ground, dead, more than half the white men. The cannon was discharged several times, but the men who loaded it were shot down as soon as the smoke cleared away..."

"As we were returning to the swamp supposing all were dead, an Indian came up and said the white men were building a fort of logs. Jumper and myself, with ten warriors, returned. As we approached, we saw six men behind two logs placed one above another, with the cannon a short distance off... We soon came near, as the balls went over us. They had guns, but no powder, we looked in the boxes afterwards and found they were empty."



(From the Dade Battlefield Society [website](#) )

Three survived Dade's Massacre. Ransome Clarke managed to reach Fort Brooke; another was caught and killed, and the third reached the fort but died shortly after of his wounds.

It would be the pramble to the Second Seminole War. Major Dade and his command are among 1,468 soldiers killed during that seven-year war, at rest beneath three coquina pyramids in the National Cemetery on Marine Street.

**The St. Augustine Report** is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at [gardner@aug.com](mailto:gardner@aug.com)

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