



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



Published by the Department of Public Affairs, City of St. Augustine, Florida

March 16 2010

FDOT, Lower Those leaves!!

This extreme makeover took five years rather than the five days of some home makeovers on the popular TV show, but the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is ready to lower those leaves and reopen "Dixie's Handsomest Span" tomorrow.

Isabella (Ingraham) Heard of Ponte Vedra, a 10-year-old riding on an elaborate lead float for the new bridge ribbon-cutting in 1927, and helping reconnect the ribbon when the span closed in 2006, will be cutting the ribbon once again in brief ceremonies at 10 a.m.

And FDOT's 1920s era truck, DOT One - the last vehicle to cross the bridge in 2006 - will lead a procession of vehicles representing ten decades of bridge service across the restored span. They'll follow the 27 Club, twenty-seven pedestrians drawn last fall from more than 750 entries to be first to walk across the bridge.

The Bridge of Lions will be closed to all traffic from 9 p.m. tonight through noon tomorrow for preparations and the ceremony.



Mooring removal continues

Even as our restored Bridge of Lions reopens, our city continues its program to organize mooring in the bay it crosses.

Removal of unused or unattended mooring balls in Matanzas Bay, along with ground tackle where possible, began Monday in the bay and will continue through the week.

Next week, removals will shift to Hospital Creek as our city prepares to begin a six to eight week mooring field installation July 5. Information at 904.825.1010.

Super symposium for maritime archaeology

Romanza begins at Villa Zorayda

Villa Zorayda on King Street has been the scene of gilded age parties, a club of social graces, repository for fine arts, a fashionable gambling casino, and a museum of antique collections.

Our community's arts and culture come together at this storied venue Friday, from 6 to 9 p.m., as *Romanza Begins at Zorayda* celebrates community-wide planning for an arts and culture festival.

The free event is limited to the first 250 [reservations](#) for this gathering of authors, musicians and artists, with music, appetizers, and silent auction.

Block out a solid three days on your calendar, starting tomorrow, for the 4th annual Northeast Florida Symposium on Maritime Archaeology, sponsored by Lighthouse Archaeology Maritime Program (LAMP), St. Augustine Lighthouse, Guana Tolomato Matanzas Research Reserve, Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), St. Augustine Historical Society, and St. Augustine Archaeological Association (SAAA).

The program includes some 22 speakers with a range of topics including 16th Century Iberian Sheathing Techniques, 1891 Explorations on the St. Johns River, The French Fleet of 1565, the Versaggi Family and Commercial Shrimping, Menorcans and the Sea, and Confederate Torpedo Boats.

All sessions will be at the Keeper's House on the Lighthouse grounds, and a wrap-up Saturday will be the Lighthouse Maritime Festival from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. the symposium and festival are free. Find the symposium schedule [here](#).

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

Container housing - idea whose time has come

When former Mayor and Commissioner George Gardner proposed several years ago converting cargo containers into living units for the homeless, it was an idea whose time had not come.

Within the past several weeks, it has.

Flagler College's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) met recently with Gardner, now vice president of the Homeless Coalition, to propose a container village they'd designed.

Gardner then got a call from [Green Home Store's](#) Bob Balch, asking for information to assist a builder who's contemplating a container home, and then an email and story in the Florida [Times Union](#) about a University of North Florida industrial construction class that's been converting a container.

When Gardner made the proposal, Jacksonville's [Crowley Maritime](#) donated one of its 40-foot containers, brought here with the help of the St. Johns Housing Partnership.

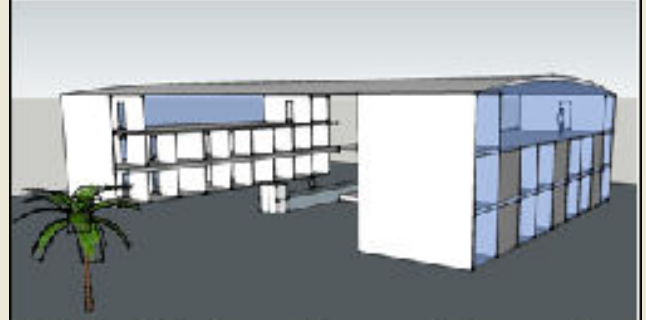
Bill Lazar, the partnership's director, said of the idea, "I'm thinking as well about families living today in unfit housing."

The heavy gauge steel containers can withstand 250 mile an hour winds, and there are plenty available. Of some 700,000 units shipped into Jacksonville, about a third remain - statistics repeated throughout America's major shipping ports.

A Jacksonville firm, which asked not to be identified, was converting the units into 20-bed dormitories back then, shipping them to disaster areas as temporary housing.

The containers cost \$40,000 to build, and with more imports than exports in the U.S., importers find it cheaper to just build new units. Cost for a used container in a glutted market: \$2,500. The Jacksonville company's converted units were sold for \$8,400.

Flagler's SIFE plans a "cardboard colony" in April to show the hardships of homelessness, then plans to begin work on converting the Crowley container, hoping to inspire support to build a container complex of multiple living units.



UNF students work on container and (below) Flagler's SIFE complex design

Foot Soldiers Monument - from clay to bronze

Molds from the clay model of a St. Augustine Foot Soldiers Monument are moving to the bronze casting stage, with completion of the sculpture expected later this summer.



Clay model of Foot Soldiers Monument

The sculpture features four figures - a white college student, older black man and woman, and black teenage girl - representing some of the diversity of support during the Civil Rights Movement here that helped lead to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The figures are set against a relief background of our Plaza de la Constitución, where the monument will be set in the southeast corner - overlooking the former Woolworth building where sit-ins occurred.

The citizen *St. Augustine Foot Soldiers Remembrance Project* has raised more than \$70,000 for the monument, and continues fundraising to complete site work and for a maintenance fund.

Contributions can be made to the St. Augustine Foot Soldiers Remembrance Project, Box 164, St. Augustine FL 32085.

History's Highlights

The curious case of a Masonic symbol

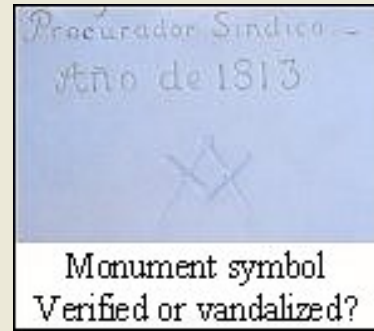
One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our commemorations, drawn from research by George Gardner

With Dan Brown's bestselling books - and movies, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons*, focused on Masonic legend, and the monument to the Spanish Constitution of 1812 in our Plaza de la Constitución a centerpiece for our upcoming commemorations, comes the question of how the Masonic symbol got on the monument.

William Dewhurst's *History of St. Augustine*, written in 1885, includes the fairly well known tale of our Constitution Monument, for which the Plaza de la Constitución is named - that such monuments were ordered erected in 1812 to honor Spain's new constitution, that a change of power brought an order to remove the monuments, and that St. Augustine residents refused, and hid tablets identifying the obelisk. But Dewhurst continues:

"Immediately under the date there is cut in the marble tablet the Masonic emblem of the square and compass. The reader can readily believe that the City Council of St. Augustine in 1813 were all too good Catholics to be responsible for this symbol of Masonry. The history of that piece of vandalism is said to be as follows: Soon after the close of the war of the Rebellion, the 'young bloods' amused themselves by endeavoring to create an alarm in the mind of the United States commandant, and ... this square and compass was one night cut upon the tablet of the Spanish monument."

But the symbol is too precise to have been hastily scraped on in the dark of night. Today's historians tell another tale. Historian Dr. Cecile-Marie Sastre, wife of former Heritage Department Director Bill Adams, notes, "Masons were instrumental in the movement for constitutional government in the British colonies, Spain and Spanish America. It is not surprising, therefore, to see a Masonic symbol on a tablet celebrating the Spanish constitution."



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

Email Marketing by

