

Realizing the Value of Archaeology: Beyond Single-Authors and Embracing Collaborations

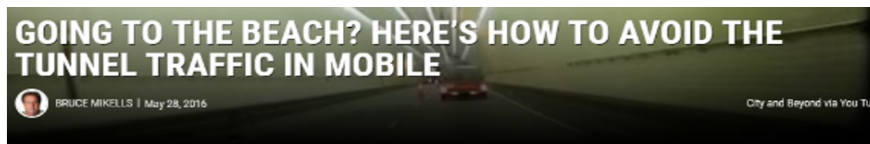
Philip Carr, Sarah Price, William Turner, Laura Wood, Raven Christopher, Sean Coughlin, Justin Stickler, Kern Jackson, Jada Jones, Ryan Morini, Deborah Gurt, David Messenger, Rachel Hines, Howard Cyr, Alex Beebe, Steven Schultze, Cassandra Bakotic, Erin Nelson, and Jayur Mehta

Introduction

The value of large, publicly-funded archaeological projects is obscure to most members of the general public and decision makers. The ongoing I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeological Project includes Phase III investigation of 15 archaeological sites spanning several thousand years in and around the City of Mobile, associated artifact analysis, oral history interviews, historic map georeferencing, archival research, and public outreach. The project seeks to advance archaeological method and theory, bring to bear new evidence and synthesize previous work to write a novel history of the region, enlighten and engage the public with our findings, and honor the People of Mobile Bay.



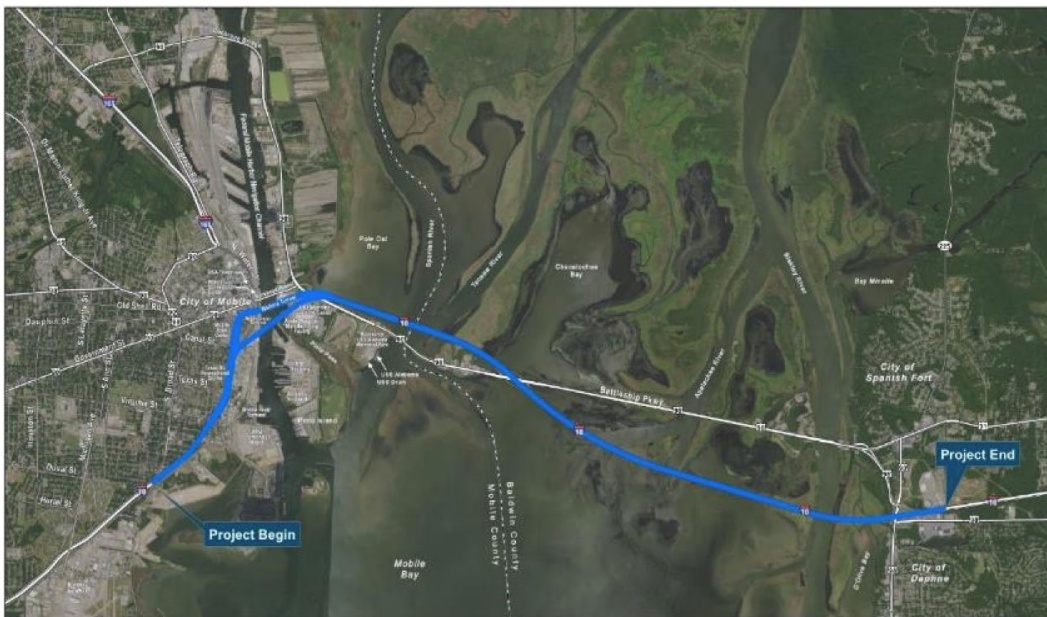
“Dominating Mobile’s skyline, the new 33-story First National Bank Building lends a metropolitan look. A freighter gliding down the Mobile River passes some of the 33 cargo berths on the 2 1/2 –mile-long waterfront. The ship churns above the Bankhead Tunnel, which carries automobile traffic between downtown Mobile and the eastern bay shore. This year construction begins on two additional river tubes to serve future Interstate Highway 10, the broad unpaved swath cutting through the city at the extreme right” (Graves 1968:368).



 [SHARE ON TWITTER](#)

 [SHARE ON FACEBOOK](#)

The highway mileage signs read **Pensacola is less than an hour away**. You're on I-10 and you've been in Alabama for about 15 minutes. You're excited because you just know in an hour or maybe less you'll have sand between your toes and the smell of coconut sunscreen in your nose. Then the traffic comes to a dead stop. Welcome to the mile or so just west of the entrance to the **George C. Wallace Tunnel** that goes under Mobile Bay.



The I-10 Mobile River Bridge Project begin and end locations

Answering the Skeptic’s Question:

- Human Ecology
- Anti-racism
- Tourism
- Development of a Long-Term Perspective
- The persistence of the many threads of cultural diversity found in the skein of human culture
- Wonder, Inspiration, Comfort
- “The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give orientation to the American People” (NHPA)

We, the people of the United States, grapple with the past - the recent past, such as January 6th 2021, more distant with The 1619 Project (Hannah-Jones), and more distant still such as illuminated by An Indigenous People's History of the United States (Dunbar-Ortiz). Today, Teaching History with Integrity, a primary initiative of the American Historical Association, demonstrates this critical juncture. By bringing archaeologists, historians, oral historians, public outreach professionals, and others into collaboration, we seek to overcome the limits of our disciplinary frames and data in order to create synergy for new explanations and understanding of the past.

The Value of Collaboration

The study of the human past through material remains potentially adds a great deal of value in the present and allows us to shape our future (Kelly 2016). The complexity of this task may result in simple technical reports of archaeological investigations that do not realize any of the values listed here. Knowledge, expertise, paradigmatic orientation and other factors influence which value(s) of archaeology an individual archaeologist chooses to seek and their expertise in attaining it. We recommend overcoming these limitations through collaborations with intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary researchers.



References Cited:

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne (2015) *An indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Beacon Press, Boston.

Graves, William (1968) *Mobile, Alabama's City in Motion*. National Geographic Magazine.

Hannah-Jones, Nikole (2022) *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. Random House, New York.

Kelly, Robert L. (2016) *The Fifth Beginning: What Six Million Years of Human History Can Tell Us About Our Future*. University of California Press, Oakland.

Acknowledgments:

The I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeological Project is funded by the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Federal Highways Administration. We would like to thank archaeologists with both agencies for their support of the project and this poster symposium. We also would like to thank the consulting Tribal Historic Preservation Officers who are coordinating with these agencies.