



**MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION, CITY OF MOBILE,
AND HISTORY MUSEUM OF MOBILE ANNOUNCE
CLOTILDA: THE EXHIBITION
TO BE IN NEW AFRICATOWN FACILITY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(MOBILE, ALA) March 10, 2020 – The **History Museum of Mobile**, together with the **Alabama Historical Commission (AHC)**, **Mobile County Commission**, and the **City of Mobile**, is pleased to announce *Clotilda: The Exhibition*. **Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, Mayor Sandy Stimpson**, and **City Council President Levon Manzie** have announced plans to construct a new, permanent facility, tentatively called the “Africatown Heritage House,” that will house the exhibition.

The Africatown Heritage House will be located on property owned by the City of Mobile, adjacent to the **Robert Hope Community Center** and **Mobile County Training School**. The facility, jointly funded by Mobile County Commission and the City of Mobile, is expected to be a 5,000 square foot building. The facility will be a permanent fixture in the Africatown community, and, in years and decades to come, will be functional for a variety of purposes. The facility is expected to be complete in late summer 2020.

In addition to telling the story of the last slave ship, *Clotilda: The Exhibition* will include over a dozen *Clotilda* artifacts, recovered from the shipwreck in the Mobile River and on loan from the Alabama Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office. Drawing on the archaeological reports released by the Alabama Historical Commission, *Clotilda: The Exhibition* tells the stories of the *Clotilda* and Africatown in the context of slavery and maritime shipping along the Gulf Coast. It includes the histories of the final journey of the *Clotilda*, the settlement and history of Africatown, and the discovery of the sunken schooner, all through a combination of interpretive text panels, documents, and artifacts.

The History Museum of Mobile will manage operations of the exhibition.

“This exhibition will be a central, physical location for locals and tourists alike to discover the details of this important history,” said **Meg McCrummen Fowler, director of the History Museum of Mobile**. “Our priority is ensuring that the citizens of Africatown get the full benefit of this exhibition. The History Museum of Mobile is honored to be offering our staff’s enormous experience with



archeology, anthropology, and public history. Ultimately, though, this exhibition is about Africatown telling Africatown's story."

The construction of the new facility to house the exhibit has been spearheaded by city and county governments. "It is so gratifying to see federal, state, and local governments and private industry come together to bring another major asset to the Africatown community," said **Commissioner Ludgood**.

"Collaborations like these ensure that we will be able to honor and preserve the memory and legacy of the *Clotilda* and her descendants for generations to come."

The exhibition is expected to draw wide interest. "The story of the *Clotilda* is one of the most important in our history, and now the citizens of Africatown, Mobile, the State, and beyond will be able to learn and explore that history through this exhibition," said **Mayor Stimpson**.

"This is an incredible opportunity to share this important story with the world while furthering our efforts to revitalize the Africatown community that already so reflects the resiliency exemplified by the *Clotilda*," added **Council President Manzie, who represents the area**. "I'm proud that we have been able to secure the funding for this facility which will not only be key to telling the story of the *Clotilda* and Africatown but it will also serve as a place for the community to gather for years to come."

Since July 2019, the History Museum of Mobile has been working with partners across the community and the state to create this landmark exhibition, which is expected to open before the end of 2020. "Through this exhibit and collaborative effort, everyone will have the opportunity to experience the moving story of the *Clotilda* and its survivors," said **Lisa Demetropoulos Jones, executive director of Alabama Historical Commission**. "This exhibit will bring the tragedy of slavery into focus while witnessing the triumph and resilience of the human spirit in overcoming a horrific crime."

To curate this exhibition, the History Museum of Mobile is drawing on the vast expertise of its staff, among whom there are professional historians, collection management specialists, exhibit designers, and curators trained in maritime archaeology, iron conservation, archaeological documentation, public history, and cultural and forensic anthropology.

"Proximity to the artifacts is a powerful experience," Fowler said. "They are tangible reminders of the horror and terror of a slave ship – and also of the resistant, resilient spirit of the survivors and descendants."

Dr. James Delgado, maritime archaeologist and Vice President of SEARCH Inc., who led the scientific investigation of the *Clotilda*, also consulted on the exhibition. "The past is represented not only by stories but by the physical evidence of events," said Delgado. "Those stories are revealed to the present by and through archaeology. The wreck of *Clotilda* and artifacts recovered speaks powerfully about the events of July 1860 and the ship's final voyage."

In May 2019, the Alabama Historical Commission announced the discovery of the shipwreck of the *Clotilda*, the last known slave ship to reach the United States, in the Mobile River. The Alabama Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, is charged with protecting, preserving, and interpreting Alabama's historic places and retains control of the remains of the ship as mandated by the Abandoned Shipwrecks Act and Alabama Underwater Cultural Resources Act.

The exhibition will be free to Mobile County residents, and admission from other visitors will be reinvested to support operations at the site.

HISTORY MUSEUM OF MOBILE: The History Museum of Mobile is where Mobile's story begins. Over 117,000 objects weave together the rich, diverse, and often turbulent histories of Mobile and the surrounding area, from the prehistoric past to the present. Located in the heart of downtown, the History Museum of Mobile operates three campuses: The primary exhibitions are located in the Old City Hall-Southern Market building at 111 South Royal Street; Colonial Fort Condé is at 150 South Royal Street; and the Phoenix Fire Museum is at 203 South Claiborne Street. For more information, please visit: www.historymuseumofmobile.com.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION: Located in historic downtown Montgomery at 468 S. Perry Street, the Alabama Historical Commission is the state historic preservation agency for Alabama. The agency was created by an act of the state legislature in 1966 with a mission to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic places. AHC works to accomplish its mission through two fields of endeavor: Preservation and promotion of state-owned historic sites as public attractions; and, statewide programs to assist people, groups, towns, and cities with local preservation activities. For a complete list of programs and properties owned and operated by the AHC, hours of operation, and admission fees please visit ahc.alabama.gov.

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