

# SHIP

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under water," said the reporter, Ben Raines of AL.com. Raines, an investigative reporter, is the son of Howell Raines, a former executive editor of The New York Times.

While the wreckage has not been officially identified as the Clotilda, Raines recently took a shipwright expert and a team of archaeologists to survey it. What's left of the boat — blackened beams and timber, threadless bolts and iron drifts — dates its construction to same period of the Clotilda, they said.

"The location is right, the construction seems to be right, from the proper time period, it appears to be burnt," Gregory D. Cook, one of the archaeologists who visited the site, told AL.com. "So I'd say very compelling, for sure."

The story of the Clotilda has held a significant spot in the history of slavery in the United States, which abolished it in 1865. It was also influential in the history of Alabama, where the slaves brought over on the Clotilda settled, creating what became known as Africatown in Mobile, after emancipation.

The saga, well-known locally, was introduced to a wider audience after it was featured in a November episode of "Finding Your Roots," a television series in which Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a Harvard professor, investigates the ancestry of his celebrity guests.

In that episode, Questlove, the drummer of the hip-hop group the Roots, which also serves as the house band for "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," found out more about his ancestors, who were smuggled to America aboard the Clotilda.

"All types of emotions are running through my head. I feel sad. I feel angered. I feel confused. I feel lucky," he said on the show.

Since Meaher boasted in a newspaper article in 1890 about his wicked scheme and the fate of the Clotilda, people have searched the waters, islands and shores off Mobile for signs of its remains. Raines wrote that he believed previous explorers looked near the site he found but never exactly there.

The investigation was sparked in September when Raines asked a friend for thoughts on what he should pursue next. The friend suggested he try to find the Clotilda. And so he did.

"What a tale — and such a wholly

American tale," Raines said Wednesday. "All the good, the bad, and the ugly that we could have produced, all wrapped up in one event."

Raines said in the article that he based his subsequent search on the 1890 newspaper article, the apparent notes by the reporter who wrote it and the journal of Clotilda's captain, William Foster. There were several major clues that guided Raines, who benefited from his experience as a nature guide in the area. The journal mentions that the slaves were transferred to another boat near 12 Mile Island, where Foster said the Clotilda was set on fire.

During high tide, water covers any sign of the wreckage. But Raines said he set out on a boat to find the wreckage during especially low tides brought on by a large weather system that swept the country this month and eventually produced large snowfall in some parts of the Northeast.

"I think finding the Clotilda would be a fitting capstone for both Mobile's slaving history and the war that finally ended the practice," Raines wrote in the article, adding, "It is easy, standing in the wintertime gloom of these Alabama swamps, to imagine that old ghosts haunt these bayous."

# Trump signals he might extend DACA deadline

BY JOHN T. BENNETT  
CO-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday said he would likely give Congress more time to pass legislation that would protect individuals brought to the United States illegally by their parents if lawmakers fail to act by his March 5 deadline.

His administration also intends to ask lawmakers to include \$25 billion for his proposed southern border wall in any immigration bill they send him, along with another \$5 billion for border security, Trump told a small group of reporters at the White House. Both allotments would then be placed in a "fund" that would be tapped for the border barrier project and enhancing border security, he added.

The president also appeared to endorse giving those now protected by the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program legal status.

"We're going to morph into it," the president said, signaling he favors a 10-12 year path to citizenship. But a senior administration official later indicated the legal status grant would happen "immediately, if they behave themselves."

Trump said he would not guarantee that he would extend the March 5 deadline, but said "I certainly have the right to that, if I want."

# NASSAR

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The first woman to speak publicly about the molestation she suffered at the hands Nassar was the last to give a victim-impact statement during the sentencing hearing Wednesday that sealed his fate.

Rachael Denhollander, who began seeing Nassar when she was a 15-year-old gymnast, was the first to allow her name to be used in interviews with the Indianapolis Star following its 2016 expose about sexual abuse at USA Gymnastics.

"The truth about what Larry has done must be realized to its fullest depth if

justice is to ever be served," she told the court.

"Larry meticulously groomed me for the purpose of exploiting me for his own sexual gain. He penetrated me. He groped me. He fondled me, and then he whispered questions about how it felt. He engaged in degrading and humiliating sex acts without my consent or permission. And Larry enjoyed it. Larry sought out and took pleasure in little girls and women being sexually injured and violated because he liked it.

"What was done to myself and these other women and little girls and the fact that our sexual violation was enjoyed by Larry matters. It demands justice, and the sentence

you impose today sends a message about how much these precious women and children are worth."

Aquilina praised the courage of Denhollander and all the girls and woman who stood up in court to tell their stories during seven days of victim-impact statements.

"Justice requires an action and a voice," Aquilina said, adding that those survivors were "168 buckets of water on your so-called match that got out of control."

"There has to be a massive investigation as to why there was inaction, why there was silence. Justice requires more than what I can do on this bench.

"Your decision to assault

was precise, calculated, manipulative, devious, despicable. ... You can't give them back their innocence, their youth. You can't give a father back his life, or one of your victims back her life when she took it. You can't return the daughter to the mother, the father to the daughter. ... It is my honor and privilege to sentence you, because, sir, you do not deserve to walk outside a prison ever again."

Nassar addressed the courtroom, apologizing to the girls and women he hurt over the years.

"Your words these past several days, your words, your words have had a significant emotional impact on myself and have shaken me to my core," he said.

# AUCTION

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the city of Anniston in 2000. The couple invested about \$850,000 in restoring the structure. In 2015, the city transferred ownership to the Cottons so that they could recoup some of their expenses and retire.

Efforts to reach the Cottons, who are related to Stephen Cotton, were unsuccessful Wednesday.

In a September post on

the site's Facebook account, Patsy Cotton said they were asking \$650,000 for the property.

"I would love to see someone take this valuable property that sits on half a city block overlooking Zinn Park and continue the venue," she wrote. "I had so much business I turned 50 percent away."

The building, which sits on nearly two and half acres at 130 West 15th Street, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in

1973. According to a release from Cotton Realty, the ground level of the kitchen has a 40-by-15-foot gathering area that adjoins the 40-by-20-foot dining hall with Queen Anne influences, ornate moldings and 17-foot ceilings. Upstairs rooms include three living areas, the current owner's residence and two smaller apartments, according to the release.

Anniston founders Samuel Noble and Alfred Tyler

built the Anniston Inn in 1885. The five-story hotel, with its adjacent four-story structure containing the kitchen, served visitors for decades.

An electrical fire burned the hotel to the ground in 1923. The remaining kitchen was soon donated to the city and the brick and horsehair-plaster building remained vacant for decades.

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# MDA

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operation and development in doubt.

The MDA has already taken some steps to dissolve, including working to transfer 1,000 acres of undeveloped property and 140 acres of commercial property to the city of Anniston. The Calhoun County Economic Development Council is also in final negotiations with the board to accept 260 acres of industrial property at McClellan.

Also, the MDA has cut all spending for travel and marketing this year.

Board member Freeman Fite said he'd prefer the board wait to dissolve until after attempts are made to create a land trust for the McClellan property.

"Let's make sure we do this right," Fite said of dissolving.

At the meeting, representatives from the Alabama Power Company

proposed that the MDA support their concept of a regional-type land trust. Tentatively named the Fort McClellan Outdoor Recreation Commission, this proposed organization would function similarly as the MDA, starting with members appointed by the city, county and state, and would develop fort property just for recreational use.

Once established, other counties or municipalities could join the organization and funnel land and money into it.

Also, the organization would be tax exempt and could accept tax dollars from multiple sources.

The Alabama Legislature would need to pass a bill to create the organization.

Tony Smoke, vice president for the eastern division of Alabama Power, who attended the meeting, said the MDA didn't need to hash out any details about the proposed plan, just show support for it.

"This is deciding what kind of car

you want to have, not how you're going to pay for it," Smoke said.

The board agreed to draft a resolution in support of the proposal that it will vote on in a later meeting. Fite said he would contact city and county officials today to garner support for the plan so that a draft bill could be introduced in the current legislative session.

"If we could get this into the 2018 session, that would go a long way toward us dissolving faster," said Pokey Brimer, board member.

Also at the end of the meeting, Mike James officially resigned from the board. James, 75, said he's worked for the board for years to develop McClellan, but had been considering resigning for the last seven or nine months.

"I don't think I have any more to give," James said.

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# DEATHS

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naunt that my wife was having," Ledbetter said. "Then in December of 2016 they went to Rock City and he proposed to her."

Heather Parker graduated from Piedmont High School in May, Ledbetter said, and immediately started college classes. She hoped to graduate as a registered nurse and in the meantime worked as a waitress at Huddle House.

"They were talking about getting married this summer, about finding a house. Setting up wedding plans," the chief said. "There was no doubt about it that they were made for each other. They were going to be together for the rest of their life and now they are, for eternity."

Parker lived with Roberts at Ledbetter's home, he said, and Rusty Parker often spent time at the chief's home too.

"He came to my house numerous times," the chief said. "He was just here a couple days before they died."

Ledbetter said Rusty Parker was quiet at first but said he, like Roberts, took an interest in the chief's work with the fire department.

"He'd come into the house and glance at me and just start grinning," the chief said. "He'd be amazed any time I told him about work."

On the day Roberts, Heather Parker and Rusty Parker died, they'd gone to Tony Parker's home on Chinch Creek Road in White Plains to bring him "things he needed," Ledbetter said.

"They'd been trying to help her daddy for the past two months," he said. "He was threatening different things. Even though there were a lot of problems in the family, they'd take him food and various stuff. They were trying to help some-

one that needed it, and then that thug done what he done."

Ledbetter said he found solace in the young victims' deaths in how they lived their lives helping others. Roberts regularly would offer rides to Parker's co-workers to keep them out of the rain or cold, the chief said. Roberts and his fiancée would often take

her brother to and from his basketball practices, games and school.

"I know where they're at today," the chief said. "I know exactly where they're at. I knew what their lifestyle was and their beliefs were. They will not have to endure this cruel world anymore."

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