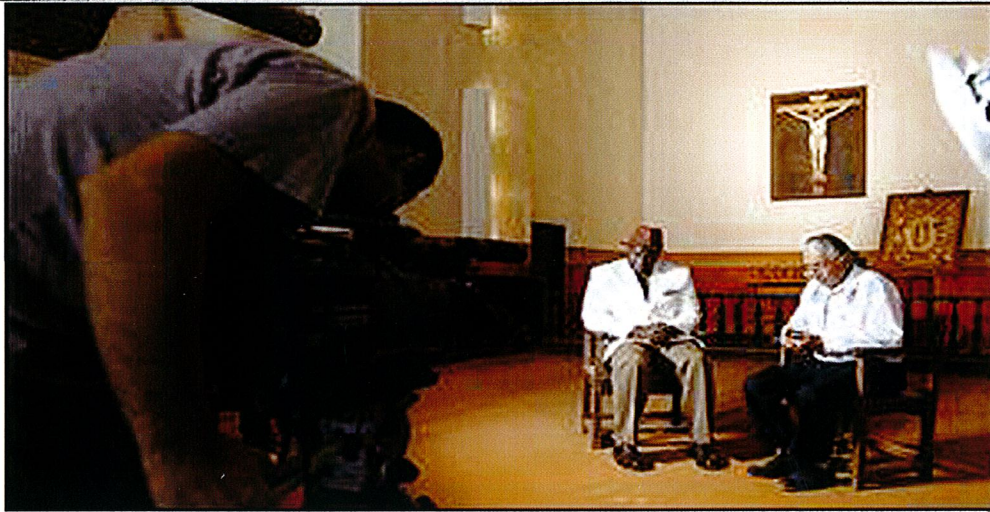


TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

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50 Cent



MARK WALLHEISER /Democrat

Tukufu Zuberi, left, host of PBS's "History Detective" and Gilmer Bennett, right, chief of the modern-day Apalachee tribe, prepare for the taping of the show inside the church at Mission San Luis.

TV SHOW FILMS
STORY OF
CRYSTAL
CROSS AT
MISSION
SAN LUIS / 1B



PBS picks up cross mystery

'History Detectives' features San Luis artifact

By Gerald Ensley
DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

If you tune in the PBS show "History Detectives" this summer and see them talking about the origins of a 300-year-old quartz crystal cross found in Tallahassee, here's the mystery answer: An Apalachee Indian made it.

But knowing the answer doesn't spoil the fun. It's a pretty significant cross that underlines the growing archaeological reputation of Tallahassee's Mission San Luis.



Bennett

"I believe the cross is not only important to our tribe but to Mission San Luis," Gilmer Bennett, chief of the modern-day Apalachee tribe, said Monday. "It's like anything of value: You want to know where it came from."

Bennett was the star Monday as "History Detectives" made its first visit to Tallahassee. The four-year-old PBS series is a

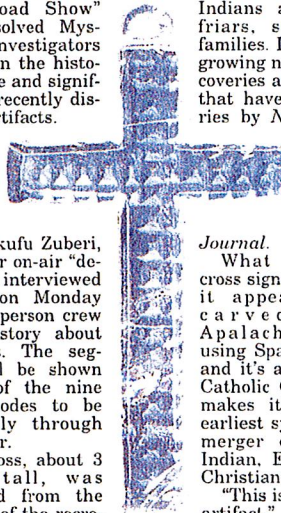
cross between "Antiques Road Show" and "Unsolved Mysteries." Investigators track down the history, folklore and significance of recently discovered artifacts.

University of Pennsylvania sociology professor Tukufu Zuberi, one of four on-air "detectives," interviewed Bennett on Monday as a four-person crew taped a story about the cross. The segment will be shown on one of the nine new episodes to be aired July through September.

The cross, about 3 inches tall, was unearthed from the dirt floor of the recreated 17th-century Catholic church at Mission San Luis. It was recovered as archaeologists exhumed 210 of the 800 bodies believed buried beneath the church floor from 1656 to 1704, when the mission

was home to Apalachee Indians and Spanish friars, soldiers and families. It's one of the growing number of discoveries at the mission that have elicited stories by *National Geographic*, the History Channel and *The Wall Street Journal*.

What makes the cross significant is that it appears it was carved by an Apalachee Indian using Spanish tools — and it's an icon of the Catholic Church. That makes it one of the earliest symbols of the merger of American Indian, European and Christian cultures. "This is a really rare artifact," said Bonnie McEwan, director of archaeology at Mission San Luis. "For Native Americans, quartz crystal held special properties. So, to have this sacred material fashioned into the most powerful symbol of



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Find out more about Mission San Luis at <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/archaeology/sanluis/>

European Christianity is really unique."

When the cross was discovered, archaeologists assumed it was a European-made artifact given to an Apalachee Indian. But in 1996, biophysicist Mike Davidson at the Florida State mag lab examined it under a high-powered microscope. He found marks made by European tools, such as a round metal file. But he also found indications of cruder tools used by the Apalachees, such as a hand-drilled hole in the top of the cross to loop a string through.

In a paper published in 1997, McEwan and Davidson concluded it was an Apalachee-made cross.

"Nobody had any idea that kind of (artifact) was out there," Davidson said. "It blindsided everyone."

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LUIS

From Page 1B

But it made sense, McEwan said.

The Apalachee were among the earliest — and most enthusiastic — American Indian converts to Christianity. In 1607, Apalachee chiefs went to St. Augustine to ask the Spanish to send them friars. In 1633, the Spanish sent the first friars. And in

1656, Mission San Luis was established.

In 1704, the British drove the Spanish and Apalachees from Mission San Luis. But the Apalachees went to Mobile and eventually to Louisiana — where they remained practicing Catholics. Today, the tribe has 150 members living near Libuse, La. In 1996, using parish records, the tribe discovered its connection to San Luis and established a relationship that includes annual visits by members of the tribe — and an enthusiasm for

WHEN TO WATCH

"History Detectives" airs weekly on PBS (Channel 11, cable 5). The schedule for the new season has not been determined, though it's expected to start in July.

every new nugget of their past.

"The cross has always been a symbol to our people, and our people have always lived by the cross," said Bennett, 74, the chief since 1953. "I'm sure whoever owned this cross was a

person of high standing in our tribe."

Even if there is no mystery to its origin, the history detectives said it was exactly the kind of story they like to tell.

"What people get out of our show is they get to see how everyday people are situated in history," Zuberi said. "I'm not concerned about the monetary value of this cross but rather what it's worth to Mr. Bennett. To him, it's priceless."

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