

# About “*Clotilda*: The Exhibition”

## What is the *Clotilda*?

Under the cover of night in the summer of 1860, a ship carrying 110 Africans slipped into Mobile Bay. The *Clotilda*, the last known U.S. slave ship, made its illegal voyage 52 years after the international slave trade had been outlawed. In the ensuing years, the displaced Africans survived enslavement and then established a community as free Americans. But they also were able to maintain aspects of their African identities, creating the tight-knit, independent community in Mobile known as “Africatown.” More than 150 years later, in 2019, it was verified that the shipwreck of the *Clotilda* rested at the bottom of the Mobile River, providing a tangible link to the names and stories that have been passed down through generations of descendants.

## What is the main focus of the exhibition?

Though the exhibition will share the full story of the *Clotilda*, it is especially focused on the *people* - their individuality, their perseverance and the extraordinary community they established. The exhibition will introduce the world to 110 remarkable men, women and children, from their beginnings in West Africa, to their enslavement, to their building the community of Africatown.



## What will the exhibition be like?

These many stories will be shared through a combination of interpretive text panels, documents and artifacts. The exhibition will occupy about 2,500 square feet of rich, multi-sensory space, dense with compelling stories and images. Some pieces of the sunken ship scientifically verified to be the *Clotilda* have been recovered from the site of the wreck and will be on view in the exhibition, on loan from the Alabama Historical Commission.

The exhibition has been curated, developed and designed by the History Museum of Mobile, in conjunction with the local community and the wider descendant community, and in consultation with experts around the country.

Woven into the larger story, visitors can expect to see and hear many primary-source reports and stories of individuals: their histories, their families, their resilient spirit. Inside the exhibition, they can follow a step-by-step chronology from the story’s West African origins through the founding and development of Africatown. Toward the end of the exhibition, visitors will emerge into a space that looks toward the future of Africatown and invites visitors to respond to what they have seen.

### Who financed the exhibition?

The History Museum of Mobile is curating, constructing and funding the exhibition and will also operate Africatown Heritage House when it opens. The museum has received financial support from the following:

- Mobile County Commission
- Alabama Power Foundation
- Daniel Foundation of Alabama
- Alabama Historical Commission
- Crampton Trust
- Alabama State Council on the Arts



Rendering of the exhibition, which will include artifacts recovered from the sunken *Clotilda*.  
Credit: History Museum of Mobile

### When and how can the public see the exhibition?

It was announced on February 3, 2023 that Africatown Heritage House and *Clotilda: The Exhibition* will open to the public on Saturday, July 8. Called “The Landing” by the descendants of the *Clotilda*’s survivors, this date marks 163 years since their ancestors arrived on American soil, against their will. Events and activities in acknowledgment of the date’s significance are being planned by the Clotilda Descendants Association and other local entities.

Africatown Heritage House will be open from Tuesdays through Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The exhibition will have limited capacity, so tickets should be purchased in advance. Tickets will likely become available online in early summer.

### Where can people find more information?

Clotilda.com, which is operated by the History Museum of Mobile, will share the latest details about *Clotilda: The Exhibition* as they become available.