

Historical Timeline



AT THE AFRICATOWN HERITAGE HOUSE

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| 1808 | International slave trade is outlawed by the United States. |
| Spring 1860 | Hundreds of African men, women and children from various towns and belonging to various ethnic groups are captured or kidnapped by the army of Dahomey. They are taken to the port city of Ouidah, in present-day Benin, where they are kept in barracoons (enclosures for captives). |
| March 1860 | The <i>Clotilda</i> sets sail from Mobile Bay, under the guise of delivering a cargo of lumber to the Danish Virgin Islands. It is captained by William Foster of Mobile. On the course of the voyage, the lumber is used to refit the <i>Clotilda</i> , transforming it into a slave ship. |
| May 1860 | The <i>Clotilda</i> arrives at the West African port of Ouidah, where Foster purchases 125 people for \$9,000. As the group is being transferred to the <i>Clotilda</i> , Foster is interrupted ... taking 110 people and setting sail. |
| July 8, 1860 | The <i>Clotilda</i> arrives near Mobile, at Twelve Mile Island, thus becoming the last known slave ship to bring people into the United States. The 110 are offloaded onto a riverboat, and Foster sets the <i>Clotilda</i> ablaze to cover up the crime that has just been committed. |
| Late July 1860 | The African shipmates are divided among Timothy Meaher, James Meaher, Burns Meaher, William Foster and Thomas Buford. Others are sold to slave dealers. |
| 1860-1865 | The 110 survivors are enslaved at sites around Alabama. |
| 1865 | At the conclusion of the Civil War, enslaved people in Southern states gain emancipation. |
| 1870s | A group of about 30 of the former <i>Clotilda</i> shipmates establishes Africatown by beginning to purchase tracts of land. After building their homes, they turn their attention toward creating a unified community with a church, school and local government. |

1914	Mobile author and illustrator Emma Langdon Roche interviews <i>Clotilda</i> survivors and their families, then details their stories in her book “Historic Sketches of the South.”
1927	Zora Neale Hurston, an American author and anthropologist, interviews Kossola (later known as Cudjo Lewis), and writes a book called “Barracoon: The Story of the Last ‘Black Cargo’” about his experiences. <i>(Note: The book remains unpublished for more than 90 years)</i>
1935	Kossola (Cudjo Lewis) dies in his 90s and for many years is thought to have been the last survivor of the Middle Passage and of the 110 who were on the <i>Clotilda</i> . <i>(Note: It is later determined that two survivors who made the journey as children - Redoshi, who died in 1937, and Matilda McCrear, who died in 1940 - outlived Kossola.)</i>
December 4, 2012	Africatown is put on the National Register of Historic Places.
May 22, 2019	The Alabama Historical Commission announces that the wreckage of the <i>Clotilda</i> has been positively identified at the bottom of the Mobile River.
March 2020	The Alabama Historical Commission, History Museum of Mobile, Mobile County Commission and City of Mobile announce a partnership to open “ <i>Clotilda: The Exhibition</i> ” in the soon-to-be-built Africatown Heritage House. Then plans are paused while the world manages the COVID-19 pandemic.
February 2021	Ground breaks on Africatown Heritage House.
January 22, 2022	A Netflix documentary called “Descendant” is released, sharing the story of Africatown with audiences around the world.
February 3, 2023	“The Memory Keeper” sculpture is unveiled in the garden at Africatown Heritage House.
July 8, 2023	“ <i>Clotilda: The Exhibition</i> ” opens at Africatown Heritage House, exactly 163 years after “The Landing,” the day the 110 arrived in the United States.