

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

June 2016



2011.6.12

The collection of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office contains a wide variety of artifacts that fall under its care. From a mammoth tooth to a delicate bone pin to a historic Coca-Cola bottle, the collections of the THPO span a large expanse of time that includes objects from prehistoric times up to 40 years ago. This artifact of the month is a 20mm shell casing belonging to a round for a M61A1 Vulcan 6-Barrel Gatling Cannon. This weapon is a common armament of US military aircraft. While conducting survey work for a potential home site on the Brighton Reservation in 2011, tribal archaeologists came across an Archaic Period temporary camp site (the Camo Site) and the remains of aircraft wreckage that occurred in 1976!

The plane wreckage rediscovered by tribal archaeologists was a result of a mid-air collision involving a Cessna 414 and a McDonnell-Douglas F-4E Phantom II jet fighter belonging to the US military. The collision occurred at 12,500 feet, when the F-4 Phantom crashed into the back of the Cessna 414. The Phantom was one of three planes headed to the Avon Park Airforce Range for training exercises. The Cessna 414 held Ruel Insurance Corporation employees and was headed to Tallahassee, Florida. Both planes crash-landed onto the Brighton Reservation. The collision was blamed on the inattentiveness of the pilot of the F-4 Phantom. Unfortunately, the collision resulted in 5 fatalities: the pilot of the F-4 Phantom and all passengers on board the Cessna 414.

The recovery of this spent ammunition casing in close proximity to an Archaic Period site gives us an extraordinary occurrence of two historic time periods coming together in one location. This is a common finding at many archaeological locations due to human tendency to revisit or occupy the same area over an extended period of time. The only difference here is that evidence fell right out of the sky!



Unused 20mm round

