

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

January 2015



1 cm

St. Johns Check Stamp Pottery
AD 1200 -1400
2011.12.436

Our artifact of the month is a pottery fragment that was recovered from a site on the Big Cypress Reservation. While the majority of pottery found in this area is quite plain, this particular artifact has a beautiful pattern on the surface. Known by archaeologists as St. Johns Check Stamp Pottery, the design consists of small squares with raised edges. The check design was imprinted onto the vessel's surface by using a carved wooden paddle. The pottery itself has a chalk like appearance which also helps us identify it as St. Johns. St. Johns Check Stamp Pottery first appeared along the northeastern part of Florida around AD 750 and made its way south of Lake Okeechobee around AD 1200-1400.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

February 2015



Seated Liberty Dime
1853
STOF THPO 1994.9.116

This silver alloy, 1853 “Seated Liberty” dime was found in 1994 at an archaeological site on the northern end of the Brighton Reservation. Fashioned by Christian Gobrecht, Chief Engraver of the United States Mint (1840-1844), his “Seated Liberty” design was so popular it was used not only on dimes but half-dimes, quarters, half dollar, silver dollars, and for a brief period, a twenty-cent coin. The arrows seen behind the date are present on dimes from 1853 and 1873, signifying the U.S. Mint’s changing of the coin’s weight. This particular dime was minted in Philadelphia; the only other mint at the time, located in New Orleans, stamped an “O” under the denomination amount. While there is a booming market in antique coinage, the amount of surface tarnish and the availability of this coin means that from a collector’s perspective, it does not carry a high monetary value. However, we believe that the true value in objects like this dime are the tiny windows they provide us into the past!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

March 2015



Our Collection staff works hard to identify and catalog thousands and thousands of artifacts every year. Some are easily identified and others take days of research, long looks under the microscope, or even cleaning treatments before an accurate identification can be made. A very small percentage of objects are misidentified, but by researching our collections, applying new technologies and consulting with field experts, we are able to update our catalog records with the most accurate information.

When deciding on this month's featured artifact, it was an easy decision to highlight this unique pendant. Originally, this object had been cataloged as a "*raccoon baculum bone pendant*". However, during research for our Artifact of the Month, it was discovered that the original identification was incorrect. The pendant was not made from bone, but from marine shell! A search through a few resources and a look under the microscope confirmed our new identification.

Recovered from an Archaic site on the Big Cypress Reservation, the pendant was carved from a large shell, most likely a Lightning Whelk, and measures 4.7 cm. It is broken at the hole and has been curved and rounded at the end. Small tool marks cover the surface of the pendant, leaving behind the evidence of someone's hard work to create this object. The pendant's correct material identification has made its story even more interesting and provides better insight into the site it came from.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

April 2015



1 cm

Lead Ingot
Ca. 1855-1875
THPO Catalog 1994.9.002

This month's artifact gives us an exciting view of historic Seminole camps from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pictured above is a cast lead ingot, manufactured by James M. McCullough Shot and Lead Company on Staten Island, New York. The ingot was manufactured sometime between 1855 and 1875, before the McCullough Shot and Lead Company went bankrupt after the demand for lead steeply declined following the end of the American Civil War.

This particular lead ingot was found during an archaeological survey of the Tom Smith Camp on the Brighton Reservation. Tom Smith was a great Medicine Man for the Seminole Tribe in the early 1900's, and his camp site has been used for centuries by prehistoric and modern Seminole peoples alike. This artifact was likely used by someone in the camp to make bullets for hunting. The left side of the ingot has been cut away, and several measuring marks can be seen along the back side of the bar. An intact ingot would be stretched out straight and measure nearly 28 centimeters long! The missing section of the ingot was likely cut off in small sections and cast into bullets. Oral history interviews with Tom Smith's granddaughter, Molly Jolly, have provided evidence that Tom Smith could often be found casting his own bullets. Perhaps Tom Smith himself handled this incredible artifact, and skillfully used it for hunting to provide for his family and friends.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

May 2015



Nottingham Stoneware
Ca. 1700-1810
STOF THPO 2010.9.1

This month's artifact, and just like our Department's Director, came from "across the pond" in England! Stoneware has been produced in Germany since the middle ages, though it did not appear in England until the mid-17th century. Nottingham Stoneware was intended as a middle-class commodity and a large number of utilitarian wares were manufactured and traded around the British Empire. Not to be confused with earthenware vessels, stoneware is fired in a kiln at temperatures over 2,200° Fahrenheit, which turns the vessel to "stone" and ensures no liquids may pass through the body without the need for additional glazes. Stoneware was especially popular in the form of drinking vessels, which is why the THPO's discovery of a Nottingham bowl is quite unusual, as it represent less than 10% of the stoneware produced during this period.

Nottingham Stoneware was taken out of production by the early 1800s, so we know that the pieces found here on Big Cypress were at least a few decades old before they arrived in South Florida and would have required a high level of care to remain intact on the trip inland. There are two likely scenarios: the stoneware belonged to a soldier in the U.S. army who was stationed at nearby Fort Shackelford and was lost in the destruction of the Fort in 1855, or it was traded to a Seminole family who lived in a nearby camp and was perhaps discarded after the bowl had broken. Which scenario do you think it was?



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

JUNE 2015



Our artifact of the month is an excellent example of tool making from long ago. This thick buttercup lucine (*Anodontia alba*) shell was made into a fishing net weight by knocking a hole close to the hinge so the cording could be threaded through. Net weights were attached to the bottom of fishing nets. It was found on the Big Cypress Reservation in close proximity to several other shell tools.



Fishing net with shell weights
(image from the Florida Public
Archaeology Network)

Learning how to make tools out of bone, wood, shell, or rock, was something everyone would have learned how to do in order to survive and prosper. And it would have no doubt taken time and patience to master. So how would you have made the hole in a shell net weight? Another shell tool! Using the whorl of a whelk shell and attaching it to a wooden handle, the tool-maker would strike the quahog shell at just the right point, creating the hole.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

JULY 2015



Underglazed transfer ware, teacup (partial)
Ca. 1950-1956
2014.10.21

1 cm

July's artifact of the month takes us back to the mid-1950s. Originally found in three separate pieces at a historic Seminole camp on the Brighton Reservation, this partial teacup likely made its way to Brighton via a Quaker Oats box.

In 1941, the Home Laughlin Dinnerware company created a new breakfast set for Quaker Oats in three different, one-color underglaze treatments. The third pattern created was called *Pastoral*, which is the green farm scene on our artifact of the month. Surprisingly, a piece of the breakfast set could be found inside each of the Quick Mother's Oats boxes! The consumer was then instructed to send in \$1.00 along with proof of purchase off to Sebring, Ohio in order to collect the additional pieces of the set.



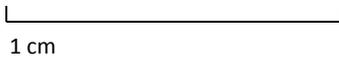
The three teacup fragments have been mended together using an archival glue called Paraloid B-72. By piecing these fragments back together, collection staff were able to identify the *Pastoral* design and uncover the surprising history of this teacup.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

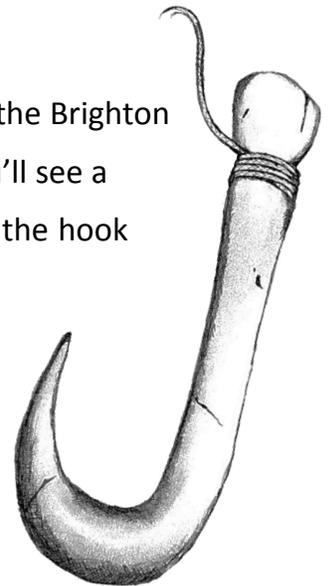
August 2015



Bone fish hook
Late Archaic Period
2013.14.188

The Florida Everglades provide many potential food sources for resourceful hunters. One of the more abundant food sources is fish and for those that called the Everglades home, survival was dependent on fishing. The fishing kit used by Seminole and other indigenous groups contained a few different types of fishhooks: the gorge or bone point, composite hooks made from multiple pieces of bone, v-shaped hooks and j-shaped hooks. The majority of these fish hooks were made from bone and shell. However, when the resource was available, stone was also used.

Our artifact of the month for August is a bone fishhook that was recovered from the Brighton Reservation in 2013. This j-shaped hook is missing its point. Look closely and you'll see a grooved area around the top of the shank that would have been used for hafting the hook with cordage. It is important to note that this type of hook would not have had a barbed point but a smooth point and is most likely made from a long bone of a white-tailed deer. Because the environment of the Everglades causes poor preservation of organic matter like bone and shell, the survival of our artifact makes it an extra rare and special find!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

September 2015



The archaeological record is made up of many varied and interesting things and this month we are highlighting one of our more curious objects. Our Artifact of the Month is a coprolite recovered from the Brighton Reservation.

The type of information gathered from coprolites varies greatly. The presence of pollen within a coprolite sample can be used to make generalizations about the environment at the time of its creation. Pollen also provides information on the diet of the source animal. Coprolite analysis can even go as far as providing information on disease and health through the presence of parasite remains found within the coprolite sample. Coprolites are also an important tool for determining human dietary patterns and food preparation practice.

The identity of whom or what produced our coprolite is unknown. Generally it is hard to identify the difference between human and animal coprolites; however, we do know that this coprolite was *not* produced by a carnivore. Coprolites produced by carnivores display a shiny outer coating that is a result of an intestinal lubricant generated to protect their intestinal wall.

Regardless of whether it was produced by a human or animal, this coprolite is a treasure chest of information that will paint a more complete picture of what was happening in the Everglades so long ago.

What is a COPROLITE?

The name is derived from the Greek words *kopros* meaning “dung” and *lithikos* meaning “stone”.

In very plain terms, it’s a fossilized poo. Although it might be shocking to think that archaeologists collect coprolites, a lot of valuable information can be revealed though analysis!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

October 2015



1 cm

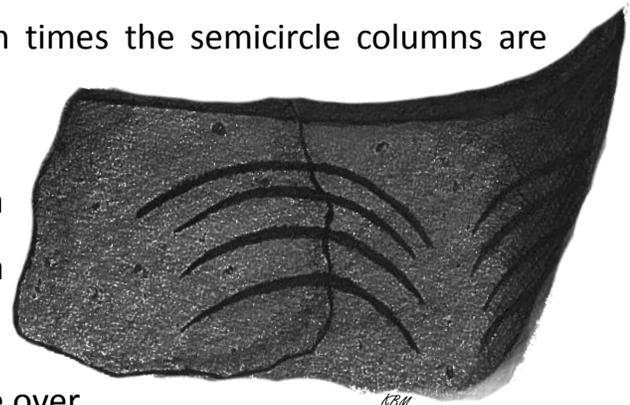
Opa Locka Incised pottery sherd

2011.12.116

AD 750 - 900

Our artifact of the month is a small piece of decorated, sand-tempered pottery known as Opa Locka Incised. Decoration for this type of pottery consists of downward-opening semicircles that are arranged in columns along the rim of the vessel. Sometimes these semicircles were created by thumbnail impressions. The number of semicircular incisions can vary and although not seen on our artifact, often times the semicircle columns are separated by vertical incised lines.

This type of pottery is what archaeologists refer to as a diagnostic object, which means that it is indicative of a particular time period and/or cultural group. Based on the design alone, we can date this piece of pottery to be over 1,000 years old! What an incredible amount of history found in such a small object.



Hypothetical drawing of what the original design looked like based on our artifact



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

November 2015



This small handmade, gold bead was found in 2001 at a historic site on the Big Cypress Reservation that was occupied during the 19th century. Beads have been an important and beautiful part of Seminole culture for hundreds of years and our artifact of the month is a shining example. During the 19th century, most necklaces were made from hundreds of glass trade beads. It is then easy to assume that this gold bead would have been a more unique and special addition to any necklace or piece of jewelry. Today, beadwork is still a valuable craft and has extended well beyond jewelry and can be seen decorating the surfaces of every day objects.

Many archaeological objects, especially certain metals, recovered from South Florida exhibit strong signs of deterioration, corrosion, or surface damage. However, gold is one of the most unreactive chemical elements and is quite resistant to attacks by acids. That means pure gold objects, such as our bead, require minimal work to stabilize and preserve for future generations to enjoy and learn from.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

December 2015



The THPO collection boasts a small historic bottle collection, with each bottle giving a unique peek into daily Seminole life. The green glass bottles, showcased in a modern light for December's artifact of the month, all date between 1940-1950. These bottles help connect us back to the era in which this Christmas moment was photographed.

Join us next year as we continue to highlight special artifacts from the collection. Until then, happy holidays and New Year from the THPO Collections staff!



ATTK 2009.34.2127 | Ca. 1940

Christmas at the Brighton Indian Day School

Photographer: William Bohmer