

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

January 2017



THPO# 2010.52.609

1957 was an important year for the Seminole Tribe of Florida: the Tribe formed its own independent government, and became formally recognized by the United States of America as a tribal sovereign nation. This likely brought about a great many changes to life on reservation, including the more wide spread usage of modern medicine.

This month's artifacts are two serum vials manufactured in 1957 by the Kimble Glass Company in Baltimore, Maryland. The larger bottle likely held medicine such as insulin to help treat diabetes; while the smaller vial may have held a single dose vaccination. Only three vaccines were in common use at the time, and included Smallpox, DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis), and Polio. We may not know the vials' exact contents, but we can speculate it may have helped to keep someone healthy during these changing times. A happy and healthy new year to all of our readers!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

February 2017



THPO Collections 2016.5

Have you ever sewed by hand? Did the metal needle prick you? The Seminole ancestors didn't have access to metal needles, but what they used could be just as sharp! Before trade with Europeans, many tribes would modify animal bones into a sharp point to use for various tasks, such as sewing. Our artifact for February is such an instrument, known as a bone pin or awl.

This bone pin was collected in 1998 from the Big Cypress Reservation when workers were preparing for new water retention areas. It was found along with turtle shell, pottery, snake vertebrae, and mammal bone. What do you think it was used for? What does it say about the site or what the people may have been doing there? These are all things we consider when analyzing our artifact collection!



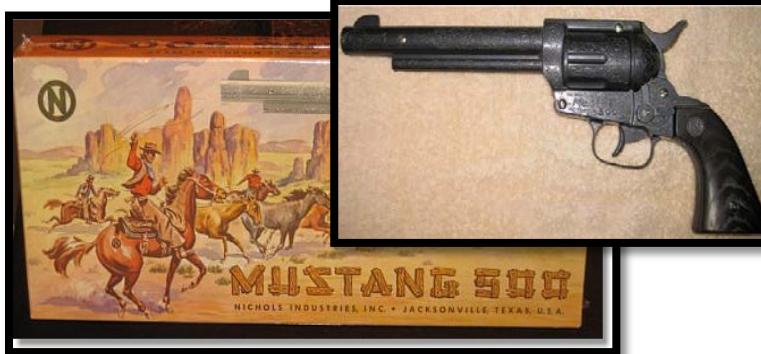
Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

March 2017

After World War II, toy cap guns became popular and one of the largest cap gun manufacturers was Nichols. The company was started in 1946 by two brothers out of Texas and they continued producing toy cap guns until 1965. This artifact of the month was discovered along Snake Road during an archaeological assessment survey. Generally, toy cap guns were given western sounding names such as "Silver Pony", "Mustang",

"Stallion", "Pinto", and "Cowhand" which were engraved near the trigger. The toy cap gun found on Snake Road, however, does not have a name, but the maker's mark (circled N) and Nichols appear on the toy gun. The toy cap gun could be an early unnamed model or a variation of another design. The closest "named" Nichols toy cap gun that has similar characteristics is the 1959 Mustang 500 toy cap gun. Some toy gun aficionados consider the Mustang 500 to be one of the most beautiful Nichols' Toy Cap Guns with its floral and scroll patterns. The THPO toy cap gun used strip or paper caps that rotated in the cylinder of the toy gun when the hammer was drawn back and the trigger pulled. The hammer would strike the cap producing a loud noise and smoke. The THPO toy cap gun could possibly be a Mustang model toy cap gun dating to the late-1950s.



Interesting Fact: Toy Cap Guns manufactured in the United States today are required to place a bright orange, red, or yellow tip over the muzzle of the toy cap gun, or to make the toy gun in bright colors. Lawmakers indicated that the toy guns must have these markings to not be mistaken for real guns.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

April 2017



THPO 2011.28.261
Hernando Projectile Point

April's Artifact of the Month is a limestone projectile point excavated in 2011 from a depth of 46-50cm at a dig on the Brighton Reservation. It is believed to be about 2000 years old, and would have been used as part of an arrow or spear. It also may have been used as the dart for an atlatl, an ancient spear-throwing device.

Over the course of Florida's long history many different methods of creating projectile points rose and fell in popularity, creating dozens of distinguishable styles that archaeologists study to find when a certain style of point might have been made. This point in particular is known as a Hernando point due to the style frequently being found in Hernando County, and looking at the ages of previously-discovered Hernando points tells archaeologists that most Hernando points were crafted between 500BC and 200AD.

While stone tools are easy to regard as primitive creations from a simpler time, the extreme degree of skill, exertion, and craftsmanship required to craft them using ancient techniques challenges archaeologists even today. Finely-crafted points would have been the result of years of stone knapping experience, and the periodic changes in point style suggest that stone technology was constantly evolving.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

May 2017



THPO # 2011.10.59



This exciting find from the Brighton Reservation is an enameled metal teapot from the 1900s, with a unique pattern called marbled graniteware. Graniteware was patented in 1848 in New York, and became popular for its bright, joyful patterns. As you can see, this teapot has sustained some heavy damage from a lifetime of use out in the Everglades. The South Florida environment is so unfriendly to metals, that the THPO Tribal Archaeology section rarely finds metal objects in such good condition.

When exposed to hot, humid climates, metal alloys like iron or steel begin to break down and corrode. Enameled metals also have a thin layer of glass fused to the surface, which makes the object even more susceptible to cracking and corrosion. We take extra care to ensure this piece doesn't deteriorate any further by closely monitoring its environment, and checking regularly for new spots of rust. Hopefully this teapot will be preserved in our collection for many generations to come!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

June 2017



THPO 2014.9.72
Alligator Mandible



When showcasing the THPO's collections to visitors, we frequently highlight man-made objects that range in age from thousands of years old to just a few decades old. While these objects may be valuable and fascinating parts of our collection, by no means do they represent the majority of the objects that we hold. June's Artifact of the Month is an alligator mandible that is representative of the thousands of faunal bone fragments stored at the THPO. It is from the Hollywood Reservation and while it is difficult to determine its exact age, it is likely no more than a few hundred years old.

Alligators are an important fixture in Seminole history and tradition, as they historically provided both a food source and a hide that could be traded. In more recent history, Seminole techniques for hunting and capturing alligators—dubbed “alligator wrestling”—have captured the public’s imagination and helped to attract visitors to tribal lands.

Was this alligator in particular a participant in Seminole hunting tradition? It is unclear, but possible! With few stone tools found in South Florida due to the lack of rock in the area, archaeologists instead search for indirect evidence of human presence in the form of animal bones. While scattered bone fragments may come from natural animal activity, areas with burned bone, carved bone, or large concentrations of animal bone may provide evidence of human occupation and hunting. Unfortunately, situations with strong evidence suggesting what might have happened are not as common as archaeologists would like. In the absence of strong evidence, as is the case with this alligator mandible, archaeologists must become detectives and scrutinize what little evidence is available to draw their own conclusions.

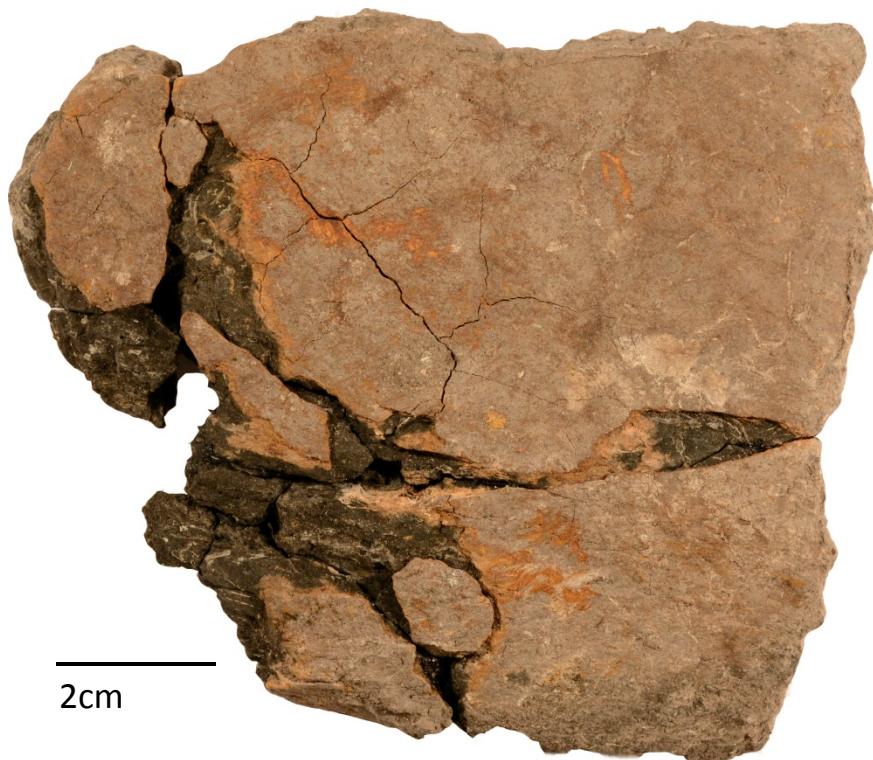


Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

July 2017

Thousands of years go, the inhabitants of Florida were amongst the first to manufacture ceramics to cook and store their food in North America. Ceramics like this fragment of Orange Series pottery from the Brighton Reservation, were hand formed with natural clay and tempered with organic fibers like Spanish moss or palmetto. Tempering is the process of adding an additional material type to the clay, so that the vessel is less vulnerable to cracking and breaks when it's subjected to high levels of heat during firing.



THPO #2007.33.159



Orange series pottery was often tempered with fibers like the Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) pictured above.



The July Artifact of the Month is one of the oldest man-made objects in our collection! It dates back between 1000-2000 B.C. Archaeologists can be fairly certain of its antiquity because of its distinctive fiber temper. If you look closely at the image, can you see it? As the manufacture of ceramics progressed, fiber tempers fell out of favor and were replaced by sand, shell, or other materials. We are lucky to have found such a significant amount of Seminole history in such a small fragment of pottery.

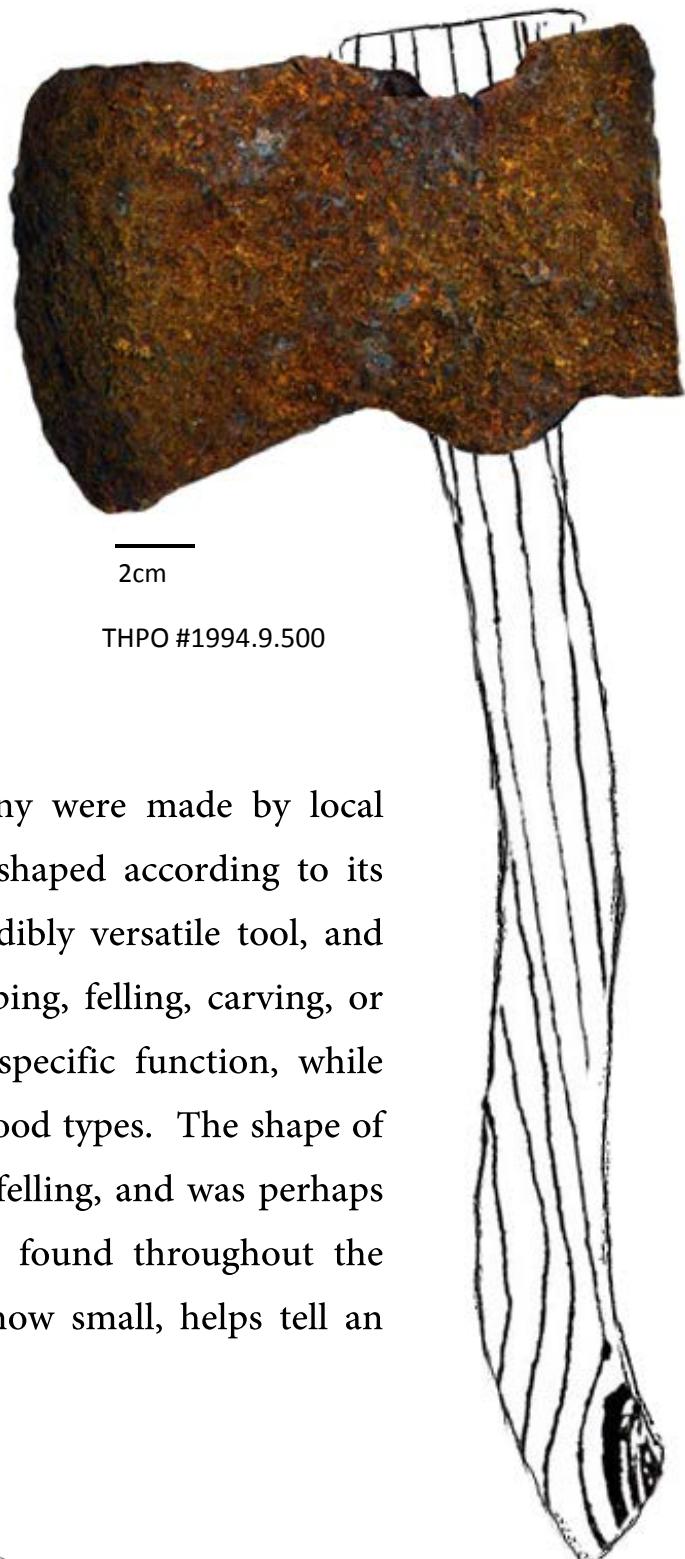
Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

August 2017

The August Artifact of the Month is an iron axe head that was discovered at Brown's Trading Post on the Big Cypress Reservation (a site listed on the [Tribal Register!](#)). Brown's was a central trading location for the Seminoles on Big Cypress, and was built by William "Bill" Brown in 1901. The Seminoles used the Trading Post to acquire items like sewing machines and ammunition, and to sell materials like animal hides and exotic feathers.

It's difficult to trace axe manufacture as many were made by local blacksmiths, however an axe head was often shaped according to its intended use. Axes were considered an incredibly versatile tool, and were used for many functions including chopping, felling, carving, or splitting. Some axes were shaped to suit a specific function, while others were created as an adaptation to local wood types. The shape of our axe head is consistent with those used for felling, and was perhaps used to cut down great oak or cypress trees found throughout the Everglades. Each unique object, no matter how small, helps tell an important part of the Seminole story!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

September 2017



September's Artifact of the Month features a case of mistaken identity. Just like "Swimmy" in the entitled children's book by Leo Lionni, this artifact went through its own "identity crisis." While completing research on a project, our collections staff took a closer look at two artifacts from the Brighton Reservation. Originally both labeled as pectoral spines and grouped together, one of the artifacts yielded a surprising discovery. This artifact displays some significant points to disprove its pectoral spine label; and by points we mean actual teeth! By way of a magnifying glass, the collection staff were able to properly see the tiny indentations along the mandible or lower jaw portion of a fish. After extensive team research the dentary has now been officially re-labeled *and* with an even more distinctive name!

The Alligator Gar (*Lepisosteus spatula*) is one of the largest freshwater fish and a great source of food. The gar groups its young together just like "Swimmy" grouped his friends together and showed us that teamwork is essential in overcoming any danger, or in this case, mistaken identity. As depicted above in the historical photograph (right) gar is still a staple among the Seminole Tribe because of their inherent relationship to water.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

October 2017



1860s Minie Ball
THPO 2016.246.MD 26

When you're searching for a needle in a haystack, how do you know when you've found it? The THPO Tribal Archaeology Section (TAS) recently set out to locate a Seminole occupation period on Egmont Key. Egmont Key is a small barrier island off the coast of Tampa that was used to intern Seminoles during the 3rd Seminole War in the 1850s. In order to locate where the Seminoles lived during their imprisonment, the TAS systematically surveyed promising areas of the island. While our field crew was unable to locate exactly what they were looking for, they were able to identify several diagnostic objects that helped guide them along their way. Archaeologists often use artifacts that are called "diagnostic" in order to determine exactly what time period they're working in.

The October Artifact of the Month is Minie Ball that was identified during this survey. Firearms have been in use for several hundred years, and the evolution of ammunition can help pin point when an artifact was made. This type of ammunition is specially designed to work with firearms manufactured after the 1850s. The three rings that wrap around the diameter of the ball were designed to increase the trajectory (or distance) of each round. An inventor by the name of Claude-Etienne Minié perfected the design, and "minie" balls became the ammunition of choice during the Civil War. From this one tiny artifact, our crew was able to determine that they had not identified a Seminole presence from the 1850s. The crew will have to expand their search to find this sought after area.

Egmont Key is currently listed as one of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation's top 11 most endangered sites. There is much more work left to be done to reveal the Seminole story on Egmont Key.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

November 2017



THPO 2014.13.226

What is that you say? I'm sorry I can't hear you well. Please speak up! November's artifact of the month draws attention to the ear, specifically what most people identify as the ear canal. The petrous bone allows for the facilitation of sound. It holds three tiny bones or ossicles that allow animals to hear a variety of decibels of sound, from the mosquito buzzing in the Everglades to the sound of an approaching predator.

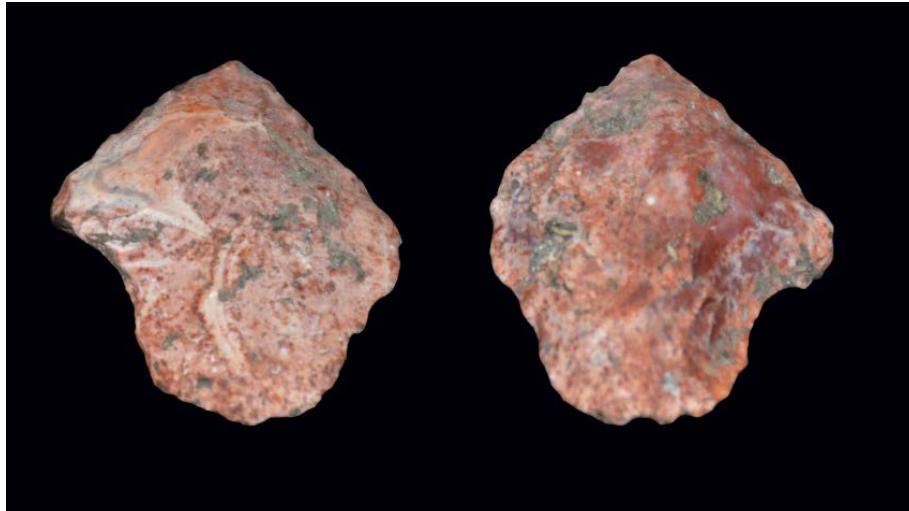
In 2014, during a field school conducted each year on the Brighton Reservation, a team of our archaeologists came across a strange piece of faunal bone. Upon further inspection, the Collections team realized that it is a petrous bone of a species commonly hunted *Odocoileus virginianus*, the white-tailed deer! Different from our own petrous bone, this one holds a moon-shaped groove. Even more interesting is that this petrous bone shows signs of infection. The roughened area shows signs of otitis, or an infection of the ear. Excellent at thwarting hunters, many think deer have superior hearing when in fact, they are just better at hearing sounds that do not belong in their natural habitat. Now while this deer more than likely did not die due to an ear infection, it certainly would have slowed down the deer's reaction time to the sound of predators, in the end affecting its ability to quickly escape from a predator.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

December 2017



THPO 2016.1.455

Found on the Brighton reservation, this artifact is an unfinished projectile point made of heat treated chert. Chert, and other cryptocrystalline silicates are sedimentary rocks that form as nodules within limestone or chalk. Fine grained and very easily fractured, chert is an ideal material for projectile points. Very small flakes can be taken off of a larger stone, making the manufacture of a sophisticated tool much easier to control. As we can see across the body of this artifact, small flakes have been taken off to form the shape of the point itself, as well as the partially formed “stem” that can be seen on a single side.

The application of heat to some materials allows for them to flake easier and more predictably, and increases workability. When heated, the structural integrity of the material itself is altered, making it more glass-like. But, it can be difficult to control. Overheating can cause the material to turn chalky, or have small potlids blow out from heat. Heat can change the color of the material as well, usually to a deep reddish or pink such as is seen here. In the case of this artifact, it was heat treated prior to the point production. Flakes as they appear on this piece are not dull, or singed looking. Most likely, a large core was heated and then reduced down to create this point.

Since this point is unfinished, it is difficult to make a determination of age or point type. This point most closely resembles a Westo point from the Bullen typology found in Alachua county (FMNH). Dating from the Woodland/Post-archaic period, this point type is generally found in north, north-west Florida. Clearly unfinished, it also might be an example of a crude practice point that was discarded.

