

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

June 2022



Spurs have endured through centuries as important tools from the ancient Romans to modern cowboys. They were originally designed to help riders control the movement of a horse without the use of the reins. While the most recognizable part of the spur is the rowel, the tool actually consists of five different parts. The heel band and button allow for the spur to remain attached to the boot, while the chap guard and shank allow for the spur to fit with the contour of the boot and keep it from scraping. The rowel spins freely along the back of the spur. American rowels tend to be significantly larger than those used in Europe due to the bulky leather that is used for American saddles which causes the boots to sit further away from the body of the horse. The rowel is often mistaken for the making the well-known jingle sound heard when cowboys are walking in their boots. In fact, cowboys were actually known to attach “jingle-bobs” to the rowel (top left) so that when they walk, the bobs hit against the rowel creating the familiar sound ([Arizona Ghostriders](#)).



In 2015 (bottom left) and again in 2021 (below), the archaeology team found two different spurs in different stages of deterioration on the Brighton Reservation. Most people, when our historians tell them that the Seminole Tribe of Florida has a rich history with cattle and the cowboy life don't believe it. However, NPR's Jacki Lyden wrote a story in 2016 called "[South Florida Seminole Cowboys: Cattle Is 'In Our DNA'](#)" and we highly recommend you check it out!

