

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

December 2025

Wood is one of the most valuable natural resources utilized by humans. From tools to furniture to shelter, humans have come to depend on this resource for a wide variety of uses. This age-old reliance on wood has thus made the material instantly recognizable to most. However, some forms of wood, particularly those that have undergone radical changes, might be harder to discern to the untrained eye.

At first, the object to the right (Figure 1) gave the THPO's Collections a little trouble. Initially, we thought it might be a fragment of a long bone from an animal, but it was too hard and slick. On closer inspection, we realized it was petrified wood. Petrified wood is the fossilized remains of ancient trees that have undergone a process known as silicification, where organic material is replaced by minerals, transforming the wood into stone ([EBSCO, n.d.](#)).

This was not something that was expected, considering that Florida is not known for it. In fact, we have no other petrified wood in THPO's collection. Often called silicified wood by archaeologists, it can be found in riverbeds, but those areas are not places that the THPO's Tribal Archaeology Section usually operates ([Manchester, n.d.](#)). So, what do we make of this fragment? Trade would be the obvious explanation for how it got to the location. Petrified wood was used by populations in North America to create tools such as arrowheads and scrapers (Figure 2). However, petrified wood for the purpose of tool production is rare to find in Florida.



THPO 2024.4.1693

Figure 1



www.texasbeyondhistory.net

Figure 2

Bluemle, J. P. (n.d.). North Dakota's Petrified Wood. Department of Mineral Resources, North Dakota.

<https://www.dmr.nd.gov/dmr/ndgs/petrified-wood>

EBSCO Information Services, Inc. (n.d.). Petrified Wood. EBSCO.

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/earth-and-atmospheric-sciences/petrified-wood>

Manchester, S. R. (n.d.). Collecting fossil plants in Florida. floridamuseum.ufl.edu.

<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/paleobotany/collecting-fossil-plants-florida/#:~:text=In%20Florida%2C%20particularly%20well%2Dpreserved,other%20kinds%20of%20fossil%20emains.>

