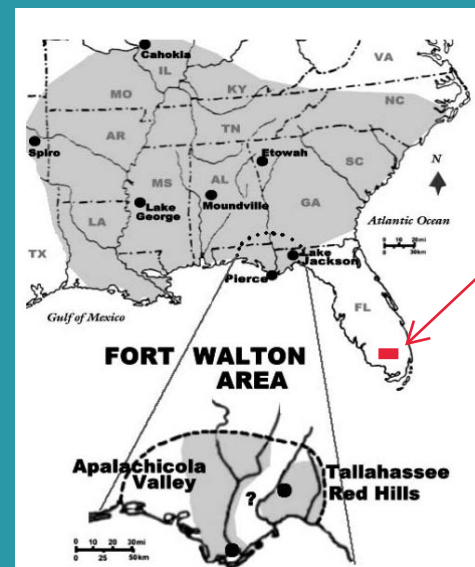


ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Sometimes looking at things with fresh eyes can provide a new perspective. July's artifact of the month is a perfect example of such an experience. This month, we are highlighting a pottery sherd from our collection that was found on the Big Cypress Reservation and was originally identified as Fort Walton ticked pottery. The Fort Walton culture falls under the broader Mississippian culture umbrella, and its presence extended from northwest Florida to south Alabama and southwest Georgia (Marrinan & White, 2007). Vessels within the Fort Walton ceramic tradition might have been plain or decorated using a range of techniques. Examples of these include incisions, indentations, stamps, cord and cob marks, and painted motifs (Scarry, 1985).

Decorations are an excellent diagnostic tool for identifying pottery; depending on the technique and style, decorations can inform us of when and where a vessel was made. Sometimes, however, we might misinterpret decorations, leading us to misidentify the kind of pottery a sherd belongs to; that is what happened in the case of this month's artifact.

Now, a year after it was first identified, we have gone back and taken a closer look at this sherd. Upon reexamining it, we have called into question its initial classification. There are a few reasons why we are now skeptical that this is Fort Walton ticked; from differences in decoration compared to other Fort Walton ticked pieces to the location where this artifact was found, which is well outside of the Fort Walton region (although finding artifacts outside of their region is not too uncommon of an occurrence), all the information we have about the artifact points to the improbability that it is Fort Walton ticked pottery. One might think we would feel frustrated about misidentifying the artifact, but this is not the case. Rather than seeing it as a step back, we see it as a step forward in the right direction. For now, while we can't say what type of pottery it is, we can say what it probably isn't, and that still brings us closer to correctly classifying this artifact.



The area highlighted in red is the location of the Big Cypress Reservation, where our artifact was found. If it was originally from Fort Walton, it could have ended up in Big Cypress through trade, migration, etc.

Marrinan & White (2007)

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com.

Works Cited

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