

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

January 2021

Welcome to 2021! As we are moving past the holiday season, a lot of us are thankful for the many thoughtful gifts we received from loved ones. Something you got under the tree this year just might look like our January Artifact of the month! Our artifact is part of a locking clasp, probably to a personal jewelry box. Heart shaped, it is slightly corroded but overall in great shape for being buried.



Since the decoration itself is only one sided and the lock is decorative, we can infer that it was attached to something as a clasp. Originally called jewelry caskets, jewelry boxes were only used by the very wealthy at one time. But, after the industrial Revolution, both jewelry boxes and jewelry itself became a lot more reasonable for the average person to own due to mass manufacture. Now, it would be difficult to find someone who either didn't own one, or didn't know someone with a jewelry box! Although we do not have a definitive date, this piece is most likely from one mass manufactured in the mid 20th century.

Here at the THPO, we use a number of different survey techniques while completing field work. Its not all just excavation! This little filigreed lock piece was found through metal detection, instead of test unit excavation or shovel testing. Our field team will sweep over an area with metal detectors in a grid pattern, in order to see if there is buried metal. Metal detection can be a useful remote sensing technique, and can be used to get a clearer picture of the overall context of a site when utilized with other survey techniques.



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February 2021

If you have been following along since our Quarantine series in 2020, you may remember a project we featured a few times looking at Hurricane Irma impacts. This project is in its analysis phase, and something we have been looking at is all types of glass erosion and weathering. When looking at a glass artifact, you sometimes have to look closely to see if it shows evidence of this deterioration. Water is one of the biggest threats to artifact preservation.

This historic bottle, when viewed straight on, seems to be relatively unscathed. But when hit just right with the light, iridescent weathering becomes apparent. This type of weathering happens when the artifact is exposed to water, and the surface of the glass begins to deteriorate in layers through chemical processes. These layers interfere with the transmission of light, making the surface appear iridescent. The lamination is known as a weathering crust. As the crust gets thicker, the artifact becomes more and more structurally unstable.

Iridescence like this is just one way weathering manifests on the surface of glass. You can also see enameled opaque weathering, pitting, cracking, and flaking. All of these affect the integrity of the artifact, although they are not as pretty as the weathering on this bottle!



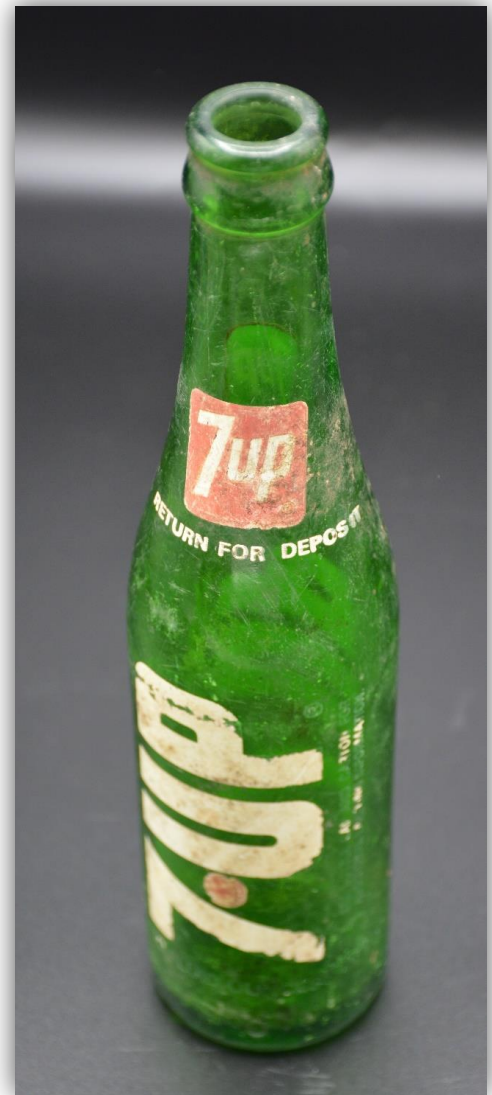
Artifact of the Month

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March 2021

This artifact of the month is a little different than most of the things we feature. Unlike what we have shown before, this bottle will not be accessioned into our collection! Part of what we do when artifacts come into the lab is determine if they are something that fits the criteria to keep. For things like trash (aluminum cans, tin foil, plastic, etc) this is easy. Bottles like this 7-up bottle that visually *seem* old are a little harder to determine. For things to be considered “historic” they need to fulfil the criteria of being 50 years old or older. If younger, they are modern and not kept.

When looking at a bottle like the one you see here, there are a couple of places you can look to determine a date. One thing you may notice is it has an Applied Color Label! ACLs in the United States always date after 1933, which gives us our first hint. Another hint on this label is the “return for deposit” line you can see under the 7up logo. This kind of language on the bottle itself wasn’t really used until the 1970s, pushing the date even more recent. Additionally, doing some research on the 7up logo itself dates it to a more modern incarnation of the soft drink’s branding. But how can we be sure? Something we haven’t touched on yet are makers marks! One of the easiest ways to date a glass bottle, makers marks and date codes can give us the exact year of production. Looking at the date code, this bottle dates to 1977, making it modern and not fitting the criteria to keep.



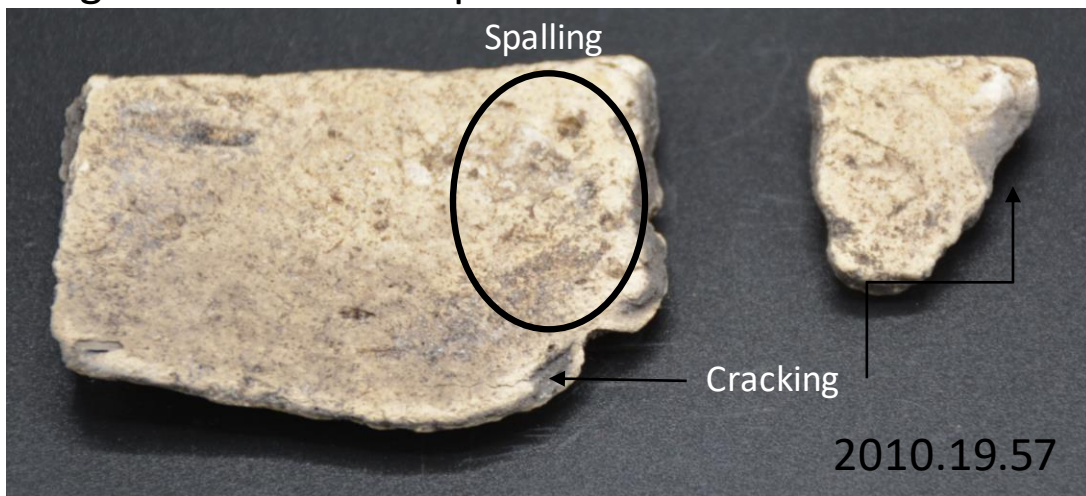
1977 date code

Artifact of the Month

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April 2021

One of the larger projects that the THPO has been working on this last year has been looking at the impact of Hurricane Irma on sites on the Brighton Reservation. We hope that the data collected in the course of this project will give needed insight into the impacts of major weather events on inland sites. Earlier this year, we highlighted a glass medicine vial and how it showed signs of iridescent weathering. One other area we are looking at is pottery, and how those artifacts may have been impacted by the hurricane. In the last few months, 241 pottery sherds were analyzed for evidence of weathering. These artifacts are from both the most recent field collection and a collection from 2010. We hope to be able to identify if the pottery sherds show evidence of rapid weathering. Our artifact for April is one of these sherds.



During the data collection phase we assessed fragmentation of the vessel, edge rounding, visual presence and degree of surface erosion, matching fragments, traces of burning, spalling, type of temper, and the type of sherd (Rim, Wall, Base). The rim sherds above show evidence of both spalling and cracking, with surface erosion. But, the edges are still defined and not well rounded, and the sherds themselves are stable and not structurally compromised. By looking at the two assemblages collected from these sites, we will hope to pick out patterns in the degree and severity of weathering and how it relates to the hurricane.

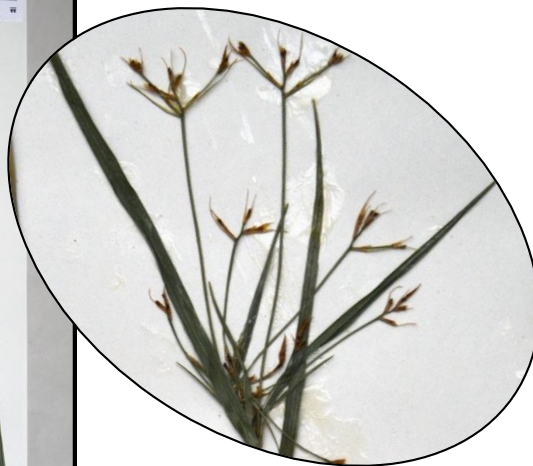


Artifact of the Month

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May 2021

Collaboration between departments and the community is one of the most important aspects of working successfully as a THPO. Sometimes this means working together to pull off priority projects, and sometimes smaller, more niche projects that may come through. Originally collected in 2018 by one of our sister departments, Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD), the preserved plant shown below is one sample of our newly added Herbarium Collection. Consisting of 126 samples, these plants were collected, pressed, and mounted on acid free museum quality paper by ERMD before making their way to the THPO. Provenience and ecosystem information was also collected with the samples, giving much needed context to the collection. After we received them, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Conservator Robin Croskery Howard digitally photographed them in detail. After this, an inventory was completed by the THPO Collections Assistant Deanna Butler, and now they are in the process of being accessioned into our collection. Multiple departments worked together to collect, preserve, and care for these plant specimens!



The plant featured here is narrowfruit horned beaksedge (*Rhynchospora inundata*) and is commonly found in marshes, cypress swamps, and ponds. Part of the sedge family, it can grow from 20 to 60 cm tall. In the detail shot to the left, you can see the beak shaped portion of the spikelets. The seeds are often eaten by ducks and other waterfowl.



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June 2021

After the Collections team catalogues all artifacts from a project, the paperwork for each catalog number gets entered in our digital database: PastPerfect Museum Software. This database holds detailed records about the entire archaeological collection and is a great resource if we need to find an artifact quickly. We can use multiple different search options within the database to find what we are looking for on the shelves in the vault.

Recently we were searching through Past Perfect and came across a listing for three sea turtle phalange fragments. This was very interesting as previously we had never before catalogued any sea turtle remains. We decided to take a look to see what they looked like. Are they similar or different to our phalanges? Do they look more like a gators? Are they small or large? Porous or smooth?

Unfortunately, when we pulled out the bag we saw the artifacts for what they actually were: bear phalanges and a metacarpal. While we were disappointed to not have sea turtle, bear phalanges are just, if not even more great of a find. Bear paws are very similar in structure to the human hand and a lot of hunters and farmers often mistake bear paws for human hands especially if the claws are cut off. The major difference lies with the rounding and indentation of the distal ends of the metacarpal, where as ours are more flat. So even those these artifacts are very fragmented, we can still make out the general structure of the phalanges. As it turns out, we don't have many bear artifacts in our collection either!



Artifact of the Month

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July 2021

Florida is home to incredible bird species, species that range from your common finch to large birds of prey such as owls and hawks, to water fowl such as ducks, and waterbirds such as herons and other swimmers. For this artifact of the month we are highlighting one of our major water swimming birds: The Anhinga.

Anhingas, also known as snakebirds or water turkeys spend the majority of their time swimming through lakes and ponds throughout Florida. You'll often see them sunning on the banks of these freshwater sources with their wings spread wide. This helps allow them to absorb the warm sunshine to offset their rate of heat loss while in the water. However, sometimes you'll find an Anhinga sunning itself on a street lamp or on the top of someone's home with its wings spread wide as if it's in flight. How does this bird accomplish this?

The coracoid bone is found within the wing of bird preventing the wing muscles from crushing the chest of the bird when they contract while in flight. This bone could also help to stabilize the wings while they sit open for sunning. The Anhinga being the better flier out of all of Florida's waterbirds is often viewed "running on water" because of its intense wing flapping technique it uses to dry their wings. Without the coracoid bone, this would not be possible. It is not often that we come across intact bird bones, especially one so fragile as the coracoid. While strong and stable in a bird's body it has tendency to break once isolated. Take a look below!



THPO 2018.8.96

Artifact of the Month

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August 2021

When a lot of people visit Florida, one of the first things they notice (besides the weather) are the little tiny lizards roaming around practically everywhere. Often, the rustling we hear in the leaves and grass out in the field is due to these tiny lizards, skittering away as we approach. But sometimes, if we are closer to water, it's a much different creature that quickly dodges away in order to avoid our boots trampling through the woods.

Salamanders are not lizards but instead, amphibians and Florida is host to many of these species as well. Represented in our lab space by tiny vertebrae fragments, these amphibians make up a large portion of our collection and often found in shovel tests alongside snake vertebrae and turtle shell fragments. Usually the best we can do for an identification is to say that the vertebrae belongs to a salamander, but recently we've been able to narrow it down a bit further.

In Florida, we have two species of *Amphiuma*, the one-toed (*pholeter*) and the two-toed (*means*). The two-toed salamander is considered to be one of Florida's Giant salamanders and while it can grow to be 3 feet or more in length its hard to reconcile this fact when the vertebrae we see in the lab, are so small. What do you think? Would you rather see one of these or a tiny lizard running around?



THPO 2018.9.293

Artifact of the Month

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September 2021

Welcome to another edition of: "What animal does this belong to?"

Unfortunately, a good amount of the artifacts we assess often don't get identified. This is mostly due to fragmentation and sometimes even if we can identify a bone, we sometimes can't tell what animal it comes from. For example, we see A LOT of salamander vertebrae but are not always able to identify what species they come from (check out last month's AOM for more details). This is unfortunately the case for this month's artifact and we are asking if anyone has any ideas, feel free to let us know!

The below pictures are two pieces of a sacrum that fit together! These bones are a rare find (usually we don't ever get sacral pieces) and luckily the most recognizable sections were recovered: the base, sacral promontory, and one ala/wing section. Regrettably, we cannot identify which animal this sacrum comes from. We do know that it is mammalian and probably comes from a medium to small sized animal; somewhere between a coyote and a rabbit.

We would love to hear your answers!

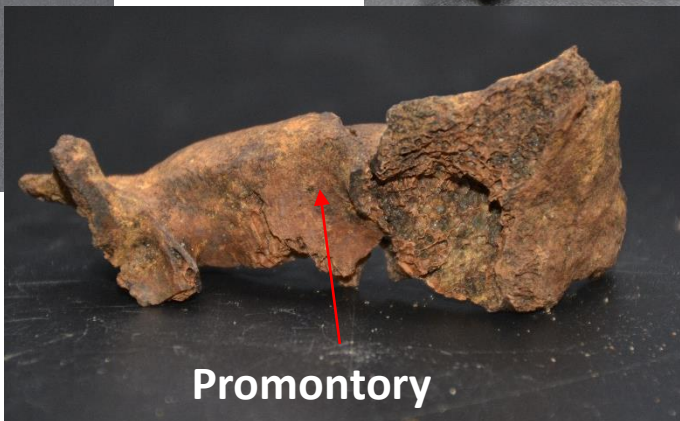
Base



THPO 2018.9.549



Ala/Wing



Promontory



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October 2021

The majority of the catalog sheets we fill out end with the word “fragment(s)” in the description section. Most of what the archaeology team collects is highly fragmented animal bone, ceramic, and sometimes even glass. While there is a small amount of fragmented bone that we find that can re-fit together, we often don’t have the time to do so. Instead we just tack on “refit” to the end of our description section sentence and move on to the next catalog number.

However, sometimes the archaeology team comes across pieces of bone that have been re-shaped to form something else, and sometimes, all of those pieces are recovered. Similar to our AOM from February 2017, this month’s artifact is also a bone pin. Without access to metal, Seminole ancestors would modify animal bones into sharp points for various uses. This one, however, came to us in pieces and due to its special use and modification we took the time to put it back together, as you can see below. More often than not these bone pins are fashioned out of deer metapodials due to their rigidity and already prominent groove that runs down the center of the bone. Using a bonding agent called Paraloid® B-72 we will be putting these pieces back together as part of its overall treatment plan.



THPO 2017.15.629

Artifact of the Month

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November 2021

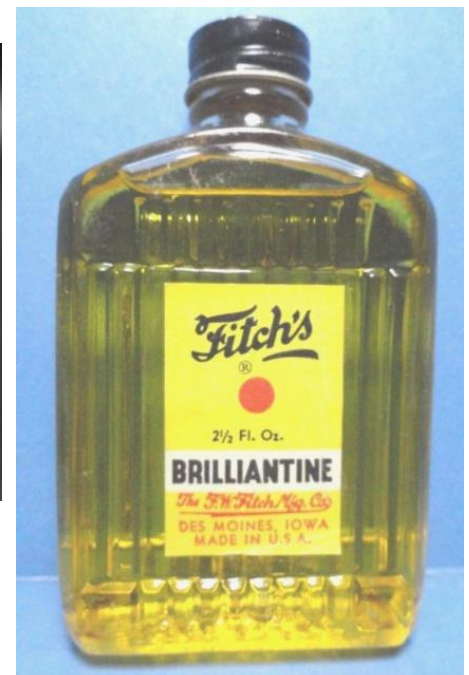
Originally introduced in 1900 by French perfumer Édouard Pinaud, at the Exposition Universelle, *Brilliantine* or brilliant, is a hair grooming product made for softening men's hair including men's beards and moustaches. This product was sold in the United States by companies that adopted the product into a pomade form, rather than the liquid.

The FW Fitch Manufacturing company out of Des Moines, Iowa, however, kept the liquid form and the name *Brilliantine* on their bottles but embossed the name "Fitch's" at the bottom of the bottle along with adding a label. The bottle came in 2.5 or 3 ounce sizes and the product was very popular. So popular in fact that for the Canadian adaptation of the movie *Grease*, the title was changed to *Brilliantine*.

The bottle we have in our collection unfortunately does not have the original label or cap which also designated the bottle as part of the Fitch company but does sport the embossed bottom. F.W. Fitch sold the company in 1949 after declining sales after World War II and now the building is owned by a brewery. The patent for the *Brilliantine* dates back to 1926 and was renewed again in 1946. On the left and middle is the bottle we collected in 2021 and on the right is how the would have looked originally.



THPO 2017.15.1616



Artifact of the Month

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December 2021

Towards the end of 2020 during our Quarantine Edition, we highlighted an Alachua projectile point made from an orangey-brown chert. This find was very exciting and it represents one of the larger projectile points we house in the collection. Well it seems our archaeology team has done it again! While this month's artifact is also an Alachua projectile point, it's made out of limestone rather than chert. The limestone gives the point a different texture, making it more porous and coarse than the chert as well as more fragile. And even though limestone is harder to work with, you can find it everywhere in Florida.

The entirety of Florida sits on a bed of limestone while chert is generally harder to find. Also, according to a report by the USDA, Alachua county has limestone that sits incredibly close to the surface of the ground, so you can only imagine what it was like during the Middle Archaic and Transitional periods (when the Alachua point type dates back to). Those periods have a date range of 5000–500BCE.

This point measures 2.0 inches in length which is a full half an inch less than the last Alachua Point. Take a peek below at the differences between the two points! On the left is our new find made from limestone and the right is made from chert.



PO 2017.15.655