

Preserving History Through Archaeology



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GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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From the Vault: Steel Scissors

Some of my fondest memories growing up in east central Alabama are of visiting both my grandmothers during summer vacation. Luckily, they lived near each other; therefore, one week I would stay with my maternal grandmother and then the next week with my paternal grandmother. It was during these visits that I learned how to sew—especially how to quilt. I was the youngest person at the Marshall County (Alabama) Quilting Circle during the early 1980s. Both grandmothers taught me how to quilt, but my paternal grandmother made sure that I continued to quilt. My paternal grandmother kept on quilting until the day she passed away at the young age of 96. My paternal grandmother's 106th birthday would have been last month (February 26), and I still miss her.



Now you are wondering how does this story about my grandmothers relate to the artifacts at Fort Daniel? During the recent heavy rain showers, I visited the Fort Daniel Archaeology Lab to check to see if any water came into it (luckily it was dry!) and saw a pair

of scissors (*pictured left after conservation*). Since my paternal grandmother was already on my mind, this artifact reminded me of my childhood memories with my grandmothers prepping fabric for quilting squares.

The earliest known scissors emerged in the Middle East about 4,000 years ago. The

“spring scissor” type encompassed two bronze blades connected at the handles by a thin, flexible strip of curved bronze that served to hold the blades in

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alignment, to allow them to be squeezed together, and to pull them apart when released.¹ This type of scissors continued to be used in Europe until the 16th century. However, pivoted scissors of bronze or iron were invented by Romans around 100AD. This type of scissors was called *pivoted* because the blades swiveled or pivoted at a point between the tips and the handles. Pivoted scissors are the direct precursor to modern scissors.

Scissors were hand-forged and were made by hammering steel on indented surfaces to form the blades. The rings in the handles were made by punching a hole in the steel and enlarging it with the pointed end of the anvil. Pivoted scissors began to be manufactured in large quantities in 1761 when Robert Hinchliffe of Sheffield, England produced the first pair of modern-day scissors of hardened and polished cast steel. However, William Whiteley and Sons Ltd. in Sheffield was producing scissors by 1760, and the first trademark, 332, was granted in 1791.² The company is still producing scissors today, which makes them the oldest company in the West to do so.

A couple of years ago in the *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin* March 2022 issue (Vol. XI, Issue 3) Dr. Jim



D'Angelo wrote about the conservation and analysis of artifacts found in Unit 16 West located adjacent to the Southwest Blockhouse. The scissors (*pictured left* before conservation) were a part of the artifacts found in Unit 16. At first the artifact was a mystery and thought to be a two-tined fork. However, when the dirt and corrosion were removed, it became clear that the object was a pair of scissors—minus the finger loops. Looking at examples of iron scissors from early 19th century, it was determined that this particular pair of scissors were not contemporary to the Fort Daniel period, but the scissors were most likely from the late 19th century. This determination came about by looking at the possible design of the Fort Daniel scissors and other examples of

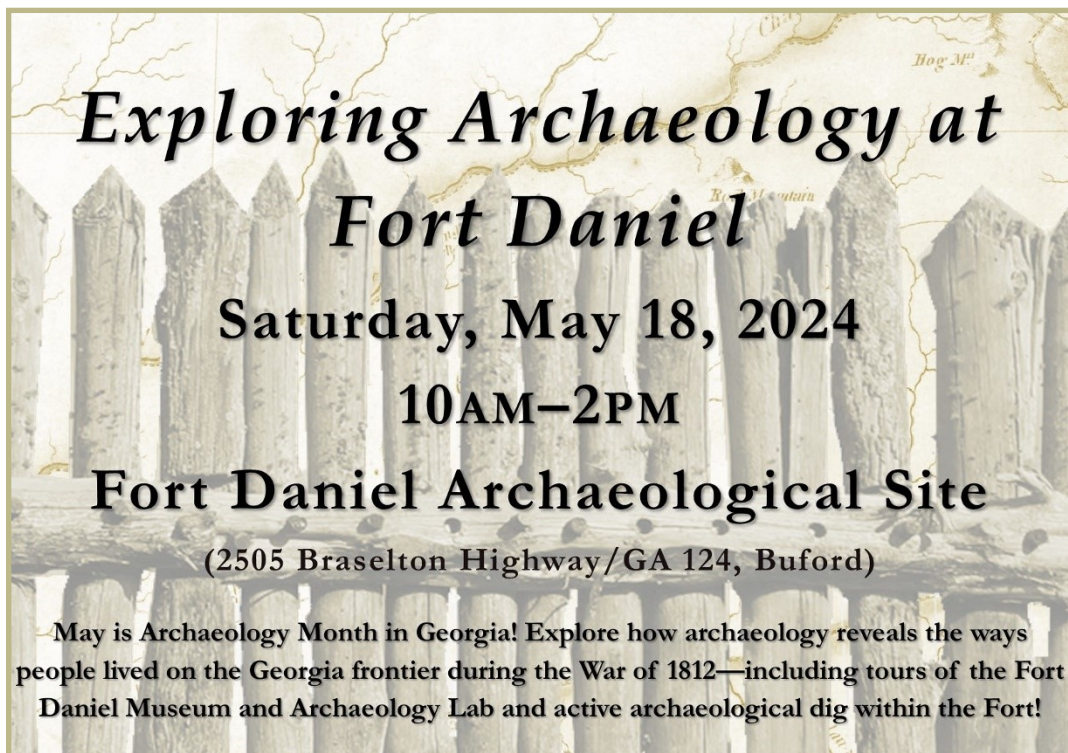
scissors from the 1800s and early to mid 1900s. Examples from several Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogues (1894-1927) show similar steel scissors whose dates line up well with the very broad date range of the steel nail that was found near the pair of scissors.³ The pair of scissors was found deep within the unit, and the reason why they were found deep in the soil is because of the reworking of the soil—particularly by plowing.

Throughout the “From the Vault” series different artifacts have been featured that tell the story of Fort Daniel before it was a fort, during the time it was fort, and after it was no longer a fort. The scissors are just one small part showing how the people who occupied the land that once was Fort Daniel lived. You never know it might be possible that a little girl who was making quilting squares used these scissors in the late 1800s in Gwinnett County, Georgia just like I did several years later in Marshall County, Alabama. ■ DMG

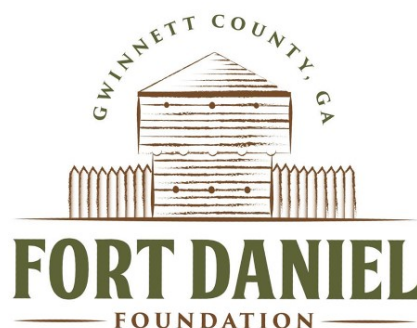
1. “History 101: Scissors.” Daily Kos. March 2024. <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/11/3/1341085/-History-101-Scissors>.
2. “History.” William Whiteley. March 2024. <https://web.archive.org/web/20141208155441/http://www.whiteley.co.uk/history.html>
3. “Fort Daniel Unit 16 West: Conservation and Analysis of Artifacts.” *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin*, March 2022 (Vol. XI, Issue 3).

More Diggin's

- **Archaeological Dig Opportunity:** Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) members have been given an opportunity to investigate on private property located in Snellville on Saturday, March 9. If you are interested in participating, please email [GARS](#) by Wednesday, March 6. More in-depth details will be emailed to those who are interested. (Since this is on private property, GARS would like to maintain the privacy of the property owner and the site.)
- **Battle of Horseshoe Bend 210th Anniversary:** Horseshoe Bend National Military Park will host the 210th Anniversary of the Battle of the Horseshoe on Friday, March 22 and Saturday, March 23. This free annual event recreates traditional Muscogee Creek life, frontier life in the year 1814, and emphasizes the importance of the battle in United States history through a variety of special demonstrations and interpretive programs. Friday evening's activities from 5–7PM will focus on the Muscogee Creek experience during the battle and its aftermath, and Muscogee Nation speakers will include Principal Chief David Hill, representatives from the Muscogee (Creek) National Council, and other leaders. Traditional Mvskoke hymn singers will follow the speakers. Saturday's activities take place from 9AM–4PM. Muscogee (Creek) Nation and National Park Service speakers begin at 10AM in front of the visitor center. Immediately following this will be a ceremonial wreath laying at the site. Throughout the Saturday, living history camps and children's activities are available. Experience traditional lifeways of the Muscogee Creek by visiting traditional hunting camps and observing demonstrations of cultural skills such as hide tanning, cooking, and finger weaving. Children will have the opportunity to participate in an indigenous stickball game. Experience the life of Andrew Jackson's frontier army through encampments and demonstrations. Watch Tennessee militia fire flintlock muskets. A camp depicting American women's lives on the frontier will provide wool dying demonstrations and teach visitors how to spin the wool. For more information visit [Horseshoe Bend's Web site](#).
- **GARS Meeting:** The next in-person GARS meeting will be on Sunday, April 28 at the Fort Daniel Archaeological Park (2505 Braselton Highway, Buford) beginning at 2PM. The guest speaker will be Fort Daniel Foundation Vice President Tyler Holman. More details are to follow!



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People Arrested for Secretly Digging in Florida Park

Excerpt from an article written by Mark Price featured on the [AL.com](https://www.al.com) on February 18, 2024.

Several years ago treasuring hunting shows became very popular and somewhat encouraged the increase of illegally digging on privately- and publicly-owned property. This is one reason why my husband and I live onsite at the Fort Daniel Archaeological Park—for security purposes. (Luckily, the only “illegal” digging that I have found at Fort Daniel has been from an armadillo, who visited the site last summer.) Still a recent article published on AL.com regarding illegal digging at the Withlacoochee State Forest in Florida hit a little bit too close to home.

Two relic hunters were recently arrested by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officers. These two people collected illegally over 200 artifacts from an archaeological site in the Withlacoochee



State Forest. The indigenous artifacts included pottery sherds and projectile points. An attentive FWC officer on patrol noticed evidence of someone trying to hide evidence of digging at “a known archaeological site” near the Lizzie Hart Sink. After two days of surveillance the two people were

caught in the process of digging two holes at the site. They have been charged with excavating, removing or attempting to remove, deface, destroy, or otherwise alter an archaeological site on land owned or controlled by the state of Florida.

When people dig, information about past cultures could be lost. That is why

archaeologist excavate units systematically in layers and record and map everything in each layer—making sure the history within the layers are documented and preserved. ■ **DMG and AL.com**

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To keep up with the latest digs and activities from GARS follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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