

# Preserving History Through Archaeology



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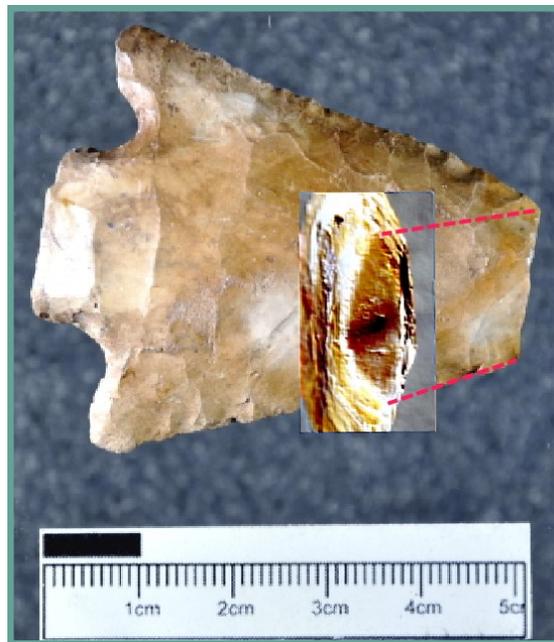
## GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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### The Fakeness of Artifacts

Long before “Fake News” became a thing (more like a fake thing) fake artifacts and looted artifacts with shaky pedigree or no provenience at all have been a real problem for archaeologists. Neil Brodie, senior research fellow in Endangered Archaeology at the University of Oxford, points out that at any given time there are at least 100,000 antiquities valued at \$10 million or more for sale on the internet and up to 80% of those items are either looted or fake.

Recently, I came across three of these “fake” artifacts while attempting to identify them. They came from one of our members who got them several years ago at a flea market—as it is typically the case, with no typing or provenience information. It is



impossible to fully and reliably identify a point without knowing where it came from. The basics of form, type of stem, notching, and so on are easy, but the place of origin matters because similar point forms exist for different places and even different time frames.

The point pictured left could be: a “Mehlville,” from eastern Missouri dating to Late Archaic; an “Eva,” from the western half of the Tennessee River Valley extending into northern Georgia and dating to the Early Archaic; or a “Smith,” primarily found in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri and dating to the Middle

Archaic. Without provenience, the projectile point/knife (ppk) is academically “pointless.” At best,

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# GARS/Fort Daniel News

- **Fort Daniel Annual Meeting: The Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) Annual Meeting will be on Sunday, January 19 at Fort Daniel beginning at 3PM.**
- **GARS Meeting:** There will NOT be a Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) meeting this month in lieu of the FDF Annual Meeting. The next GARS meeting will be on Tuesday, February 18. More details about this meeting will be announced soon.
- **New GARS Officers:** At a special-called meeting last month the new GARS officers were voted in for a new term. At little bit about the new officers:
  - ⇒ *Anne Dorland, President:* Anne works at New South Associates as an Archaeologist. She received a BA in Anthropology from Auburn University and a Masters in Education with a focus on Public Archaeology from the University of South Alabama. Anne specializes in archaeology education, and while at South Alabama developed an outreach program targeting third and fourth grade school students designed to impassion youth about local history and instill a sense of stewardship. Her research interests include experimental archaeology, lithic analysis, and the origins of agriculture in the Southeastern United States.
  - ⇒ *Jenna Pran, Vice President:* Jenna works at New South Associates as a Historian. She received a BA in Anthropology from Georgia State University and a MA in Archaeology from the University of Tulsa. Her experience includes archaeology of the Southeast and West Mexico as well as history of the South.
  - ⇒ *Delana Gilmore, Secretary/Treasurer:* Delana works at Atlanta History Center as a Historic Interpreter. She received a BA in English from Judson College (Alabama) and MA in Archaeology/Heritage from University of Leicester (United Kingdom). Her experience includes publication administration and public history and public archaeology programs.

## More Diggin's

- **MLK Jr. Day Celebration at Atlanta History Center** will be on **Monday, January 20**. Enjoy this special community day, which features inspiring performances, programs, and historical simulations that highlight contributions and stories of African Americans in Atlanta. Among this year's highlights is a performance of *Walking Through the Valley* written by Addae Moon, Atlanta History Center's Director of Museum Theatre. Set in 1963, a young activist is asked by the "powers that be" to alter the language in a speech he's written for what will become an historic event. He envisions a conversation with four iconic freedom fighters in an effort to decide whether a compromise will best serve the greater good. This is a FREE admission day. For information visit the [Atlanta History Center's Web site](#)
- **Gwinnett Historical Society** will be **meeting on Monday, January 27** at the **Historic Courthouse** in downtown Lawrenceville **beginning at 6:30PM**. Guest speaker will be Linda Russell, author of *Underwater Ghost Towns of North Georgia*. For more information visit the [GHS Web site](#).
- **Night @ the Museum at Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center (EHC)** will be on **Friday, January 31 beginning at 6PM**. Ever wonder what happens after hours at a museum? Visit EHC for a special night of fun and discover how their exhibits come to life after dark. Admission is \$5 (non-Gwinnett resident fee applies). For more information visit [Gwinnett County Web site](#).
- **History After Hours at the Atlanta History Center** will be on **Friday, January 31 beginning at 6:30PM**. Grab a bite and sip on a specialty cocktail while exploring *Any Great Change*, AHC's Women's Suffrage Exhibition, in the historic Swan House. Enjoy the main event, an exclusive performance of *Walking Through the Valley*. After a talkback with playwright Addae Moon and the actors, guests are invited back to the museum for whiskey and coffee. History After Hours attendees will have first access to our newest exhibition *Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow*. Tickets are \$20 for not-yet members, \$15 for members. For more information visit the [Atlanta History Center's Web site](#).

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unproven or replicated points can serve as examples of how ppks are made: the kind of tool stones that are used and what “stemmed,” “basil-notched stemmed,” “side notched,” “serrated,” etc. denote.

Though apparently well-made, point pictured on Page 1 (and the others that I observed) felt suspiciously light for its size and apparent material, chert. As I examined it more carefully, I noticed that the cross section of the broken distal end of this point showed that the material was not chert, but some other molded material (perhaps a resin) which had been coated with a thin layer of colors that very nicely simulated a mottled white and caramel chert—not unlike the cross section of an M&M candy. Therefore, this fake point had been made by use of a mold made from a real point and then colored to make it look like chert.

Another source of replicas and fake points is from knapping. There are some very good knappers who can replicate any kind of point on materials commonly associated with that point. Many archeologists do this as part of what is called “experimental archaeology” in order to better understand what the original makers were doing and what the debitage (debris) from the flaking process looks like. This process is replication and points produced are replicas. All done in name of research and quite legitimate.

When I lived and worked in the Great Basin, one of my crew members made points that only an expert had a chance of identifying as a replica. He made an obsidian Clovis point for me that could have fooled most archeologists. When added to my collection of real points and knives, this was used in my Archeology classes. However, if someone decided to sell one of these replicas as the real thing it is not longer a replica but a fake. If researchers are able to do this as a legitimate research pursuit so can others with larceny as their goal—and they do!

While fakes and looted artifacts have been a problem on the black market for a long time and the internet for a shorter time, the proliferation of social media and retail platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, eBay, Amazon, Instagram, etc.) have made it easy for looters to directly solicit buyers. Additionally, ISIS has systematically looted antiquities from museums and archaeological sites it has taken over—producing an vast stream of items sold directly over social media.

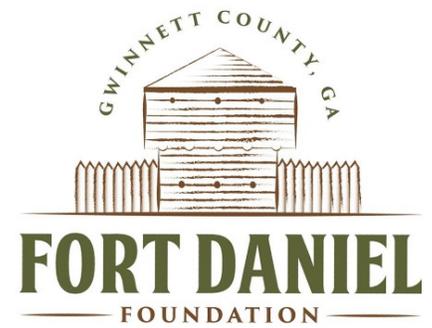
Georgi Kantchev at *The Wall Street Journal* reports that buying antiquities online is a risky proposition, because the majority of items for sale are either counterfeits or illegally looted from archeological sites. Colette Loll, founder of Art Fraud Insights (a company that investigates art fraud and runs prevention initiatives), tells Julia Halperin at Artnet News that the illegal sellers have become increasingly sophisticated—even offering works via Snapchat so the evidence of their looting automatically disappears.

Hobby Lobby billionaire Steve Green and his family amassed a private collection of about 40,000 Biblical artifacts and manuscripts. Much of the Greens’ collection is now at the Museum of the Bible. However, Hobby Lobby was found to have violated federal law when it purchased 5,500 objects from dealers in the United Arab Emirates and Israel in 2010. Those artifacts, originally from Iraq, were smuggled into the US. In a 2017 settlement with the Justice Department Hobby Lobby agreed to forfeit the objects and paid a \$3 million fine!

Among Hobby Lobby’s artifacts several fragments of manuscripts claimed to be from the Dead Sea Scrolls although their origin was not established. Kipp Davis of Trinity Western University examined the fragments scription quality, writing techniques, and manuscript state. He wrote in October 2017 that his studies confirm “the high probability” that at least seven fragments in the museum’s Dead Sea Scrolls collection were forgeries with “conclusions on the status of the remaining fragments are still forthcoming.”

This is why unproven artifacts, which can’t be authenticated, are *anathema* to archaeology. ■ **JJD**

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## 2020 Places in Peril Update: Fountain Hall

Excerpt from an article by Ernie Suggs featured on [AJC Web site](#) on December 27, 2019

It has been more than a decade since anybody has really walked through the now dusty and dark corridors of Fountain Hall, which opened with great fanfare in 1882 as a symbol of African-American educational promise. Few landmark buildings in Atlanta are as grand as Fountain Hall, and few are as neglected. Since Morris Brown lost its accreditation in 2002, the building (the focal point of the college founded by former slaves) has sat fallow and dying. The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation recently put Fountain Hall on its Places of Peril list. That situation is slowly changing.

Over a year ago the National Trust for Historic Preservation gave Morris Brown \$75,000 to develop a

strategy to restore Fountain Hall. Additionally, last month as part of a \$12 million National Park Service initiative to preserve institutions that have played a key role in telling the African-American story of equality, Morris Brown was awarded \$500,000. That



money will go toward the renovation of Fountain Hall, declared a National Historic Landmark in 1974 because of its significance to American education. Those initial steps would include fixing the roof to prevent water damage, installing a fire alarm system, and removing old carpets.

In its 177-page study, the National Park Service estimates that it will take at least \$1.4 million to get Fountain Hall to a safe structural level to begin long-term preservation, which would cost millions more—meaning that Morris Brown officials still have a lot of work to do. ■ AJC

### GARS OFFICERS

[www.thegars.org](http://www.thegars.org)

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Vice President: Jenna Tran  
Secretary/Treasurer: Delana Gilmore

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

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Secretary: Cindy Horsley  
Vice President: Leslie Perry  
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To stay up to date with the latest news from FDF follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).