

# BUREAU OF HISTORIC SITES AND PROPERTIES

BULLETIN No. 2



DIVISION OF ARCHIVES,  
HISTORY, AND RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT



Florida  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Tallahassee, Florida  
1972

# EXCAVATIONS AT THE RICHARDSON SITE, ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA: AN EARLY 17TH CENTURY POTANO INDIAN VILLAGE (with notes on Potano culture change)

by  
Jerald T. Milanich

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The author is indebted to several individuals and institutions for aid rendered in the excavation of the Richardson site and the subsequent preparation of this report. The Richardson family of Evinston graciously gave the University of Florida permission to conduct the spring 1970 archaeological field school on their property. Curtiss E. Peterson of the Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Florida Department of State, identified the faunal remains from the site working under the direction of Elizabeth S. Wing, Florida State Museum. Richard A. Yarnell, University of North Carolina, identified the floral sample. Facilities of the Florida State Museum were used to photograph the artifacts. The collections from the site are stored at that museum.*

*William E. Sturtevant, Smithsonian Institution, and Charles H. Fairbanks, University of Florida, both reviewed this manuscript and offered helpful suggestions for its revision. Research on the Potano Indians and preparation of that portion of this paper were carried out while the author held a National Endowment for the Humanities post-doctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution.*

## INTRODUCTION

The settlement of northern Florida by the Spanish during the late 16th and early 17th centuries marked the beginning of rapid changes in the indigenous Indian cultures. Change, however, could not overcome the intensity of European contact, and by the early 18th century aboriginal populations and cultures were destroyed. In order to learn more about the process and rate of historic Indian culture change in Florida and to provide descriptive information on a specific historic aboriginal culture, the Potano Indians of north-central Florida were selected for archaeological study and interpretation.

During the period 1539 (date of DeSoto) to about 1750 peninsular Florida north of a line drawn across the state from Tampa Bay to Cape Canaveral was dominated by Indian speakers of the Timucuan language, including the Potano. Swanton (1952) has noted 14 separate Timucuan speaking tribes, all but two of which were in Florida. Generally, each tribe consisted of several related villages. Frequently the tribal name was derived from the name of the main village, as was the case with the Potano. Potano also referred to the Spanish province which corresponded to the region

of the Potano Indian territory.

The Potano were first encountered by the Spanish in the region of present day Alachua County during the 16th century. Previous research (Goggin 1953; Milanich 1971) has correlated the Potano with the prehistoric Alachua Tradition which entered north-central Florida from southeastern Georgia about A.D. 600 (Milanich 1969). Archaeological excavations and surveys have shown that the geographical region of the Alachua Tradition and that of the historic Potano were the same. This region extended from the Santa Fe River in the north, southward to Ocala, and from Lake Santa Fe westward to the present Alachua-Gilchrist County line. Since the Potano represent the historic Alachua Tradition population, Potano culture is frequently referred to below as "historic Alachua Tradition". The Potano period refers to the historic portion of the Alachua Tradition, A.D. 1600-1715.

Previous research at two Potano sites in Alachua County, the Fox Pond site and the Zetrouer site (Symes and Stephens 1965; Seaberg 1955), indicated that these Potano sites were single component Spanish-Indian villages. Surface collections from other Potano sites, dated by ceramic seriations, suggest a similar settlement

amount of food bone were recovered.

## SITE MATERIAL CULTURE

The most striking characteristic of the artifacts excavated at the Richardson site is their similarity in form (and probably function) to artifacts recovered from other Alachua Tradition sites dating 500 to 800 years earlier (e.g., Milanich 1971). Popularity of certain ceramic styles has increased or decreased within this period, but both the ceramic and lithic technology of the tradition have remained unaltered.

Descriptions presented below are ordered by provenience (Indian or Spanish) and physical composition (stone, bone, shell, etc.). Attempts to segregate artifact types (especially tools) according to use and intrasite location proved uninformative. Except for the distribution of Spanish and St. Johns artifacts and quantitative information, occurrence of artifacts within the site was random.

### Spanish Ceramics and Metal Artifacts

Thirty-eight olive jar sherds, a fragment (under one half inch square) and two sherds of majolica, a sherd of Sevilla Ware, a sherd of redware, two beads, and a wrought iron spike constitute the evidence for Spanish contact at the Richardson site. Of the 38 olive jar sherds, eight have interior green glazing. The thicknesses of the 29 most intact of these sherds were measured with the following results: range: 6 mm. to 15 mm.; mean: 9.6 mm.; mode and median 10 mm. These figures suggest that the sherds are of Goggin's middle style olive jar type, ca. A.D. 1580 to 1780 (Goggin 1960: 23, 26-7).

The three pieces of majolica all were identified as Itchtucknee Blue on Blue (Pl. 2,g). The redware sherd, exhibiting a somewhat uncommon bright red paste, has a honey-colored

lead glaze on the exterior. Intrasite provenience of the iron spike within the site suggests aboriginal use (Pl. 2,c). The two glass beads, one a half of an Itchtucknee Blue Plain bead and the other a tear drop shaped bright blue bead, are common at historic Indian sites throughout Florida and are diagnostic only in documenting trade or gifts between the Spanish and the Potano (Pl. 2, e-f).

### Potano Shell Artifacts

Three artifacts of marine shell—2 pieces of *Busycon* shell lip and a *Busycon* columella ear plug—indicate trade with the coastal Indians, probably either the Safety Harbor or St. Johns Timucuan-speaking peoples (Pl. 2, d). Pottery from both of these cultures is present at the site. The ear plug and *Busycon* cup or dipper were known throughout the Southeast Indian tribes during the 17th century as well as previous to this time. Both are reported as having been present among the Florida west coast Ft. Walton and Safety Harbor cultures (Willey 1949: 513, 515).

### Potano Stone Artifacts

Analysis of the lithic material from the Richardson site indicates that heat treating of flint was practiced. Many of the stone artifacts have the red or brown coloring and waxy surface appearance of thermally prepared flint. Unless otherwise stated, all the artifacts described below are made of local Hawthorne Formation flint.

**PROJECTILE POINTS**—The 33 unbroken and 19 broken Pinellas points (Pl. 1, a-z) recovered follow well previous descriptions of the type (Bullen 1969: 12; Milanich 1971). Blanks for 11 points were also recovered (Pl. 1, aa-hh). These blanks indicate that the Potano flint knappers were able to strike blades off a prepared polyhedral core in such a manner that a small, triangular blade was produced. Subsequent pressure flaking was applied to the blade to shape the finished point. This construction sequence is shown in Figure 5.

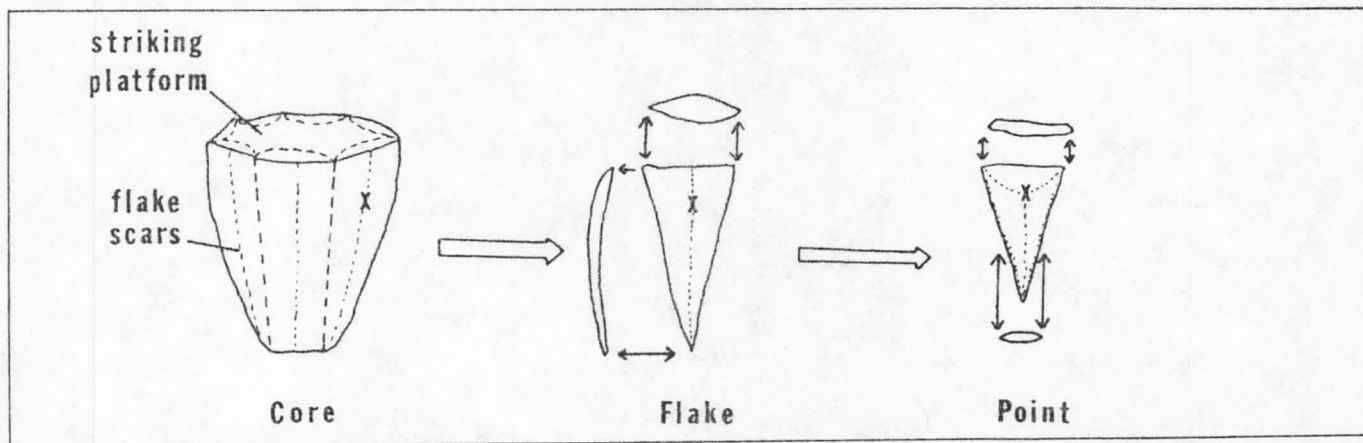


Figure 5. Manufacturing of Pinellas Points.

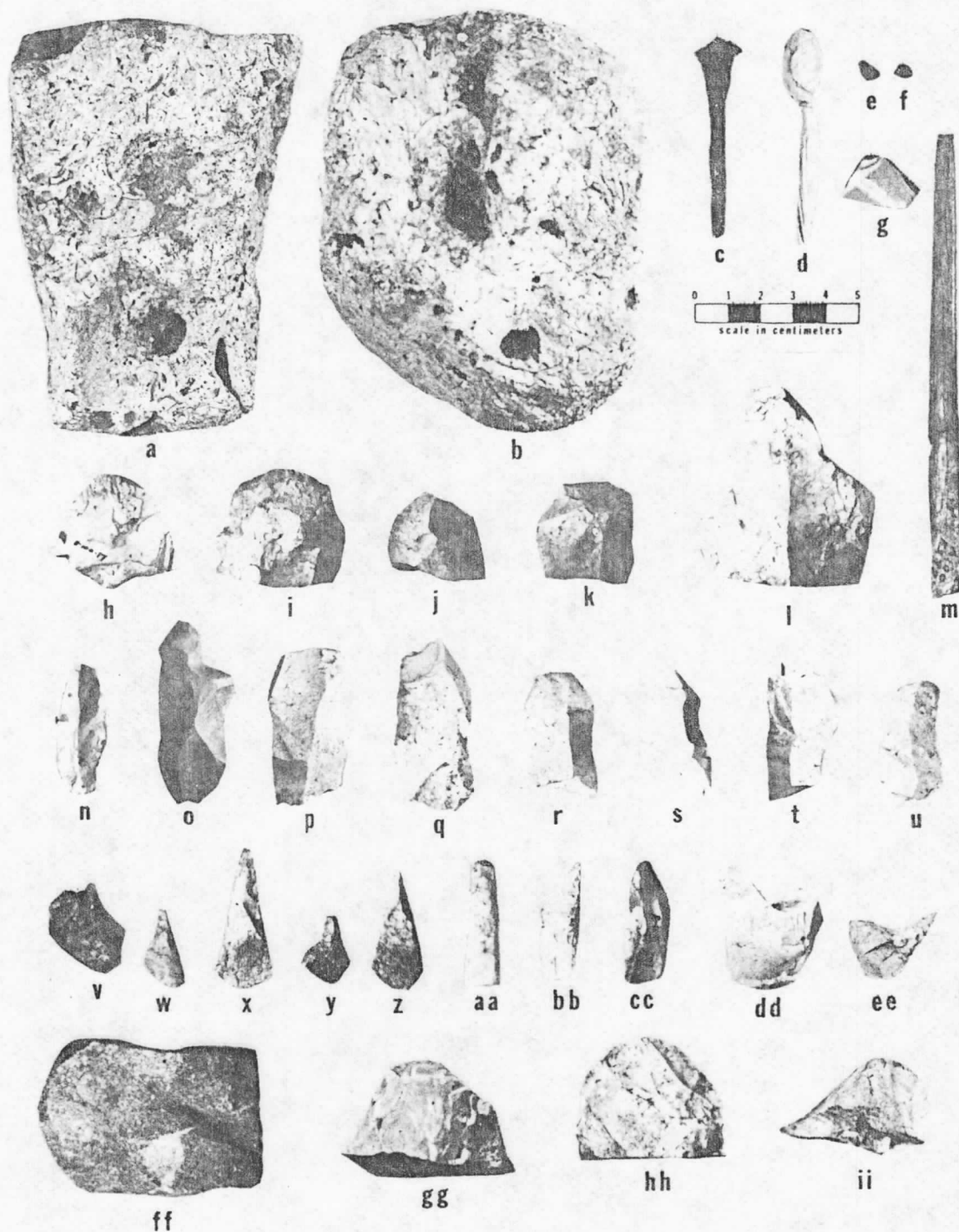


Plate 2. Richardson Site Artifacts.

a-b, limestone mortars or nutstones; c, wrought iron Spanish spike; d, *busycon* ear plug; e-f, glass beads; g, Itchtucknee Blue on Blue majolica; h-l, large blade tips; m, bone pin; n-u, utilized blades; v, graver; w-z, expanded base drills; aa-cc, linear drills; dd-ee, spokeshaves; ff, sandstone hone; gg-ii, broken chopper tips.