Tidal Forces:
The Old Wave

An Exhibition of Pre-Columbian Pottery and Lithics
28 March—10 April 2011
Nelson Poynter Memorial Library
University of South Florida St. Petersburg
Notable Mound Sites in the Tampa Bay Region
(with County in Parentheses)

A: Bayboro Shell Mounds (Pinellas)
B: Bayshore Homes Site (Pinellas)
C: Big Bayou Mounds (Pinellas)
D: Cabbage Key and Pine Key (Pinellas)
E: Cat’s Point, near Maximo (Pinellas)
F: Indian Shores Beach Area (Pinellas)
G: Joe’s Creek (Pinellas)
H: Cockroach Mounds (Hillsborough)
I: Madira Bickel Mound, Terra Cela (Manatee)
J: Maximo Point (Pinellas)
K: Mound Park Area (Pinellas)
L: “New Publix” Site (Pinellas)
M: Pánfilo de Narváez Site (Pinellas)
N: Papy’s Bayou, Weedon Island (Pinellas)
O: Pinellas Point Mounds (Pinellas)
P: Philippe’s Hammock, Safety Harbor (Pinellas)
Q: Turtlecrawl Point, Bay Pines (Pinellas)
R: Weedon Island Preserve (Pinellas)
S: Yat Kitischee Site (Pinellas)
T: Location of USF St. Petersburg
Tidal Forces: The Old Wave

In conjunction with the 2011 conference of the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library invites you to enjoy an exhibition of Pre-Columbian pottery, lithics, and reproductions that captures more than 11,000 years of human history along the Florida peninsula.

Exhibition Design Team
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The cover image is from the Archives and Library at Heritage Village in Largo. The photograph shows the large mound that once sat near the USF St. Petersburg campus before its removal more than 60 years ago.

The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library

Our exquisite library anchors scholarship and research at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. The current library building opened in 1996. In addition to comprehensive monographic and scholarly collections, the Poynter Library supports distance education initiatives on campus, offers our students and faculty access to electronic resources available through the USF System, and includes a Special Collections and Archives reading room with excellent sources related to Floridiana and local history.
Aboriginal settlements along Old Tampa Bay served as important gathering and trading locations for native peoples before the arrival of Europeans. The large mound at Odet Philippe’s hammock became the site of Pinellas County’s first county-operated park. The Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History preserves remnants of the Pre-Columbian cultures that once gathered near Espiritu Santo Springs and other estuarine hammocks in the area.
Reproductions of a smiling face pot (left) and a punctated pot (above).
Located in downtown Bradenton, the South Florida Museum contains exhibits that examine the natural and cultural history of Florida from the Pleistocene Era to modern times. In addition to fossils, the museum includes outstanding displays of archaeological artifacts from Pre-Columbian and post-contact periods. Bowls, rim shards, and other pieces of pottery from indigenous cultures are preserved.
Dr. Leslie Weedon of Tampa acquired this tract of land. He protected the mounds on the undeveloped site with a plan to preserve their integrity. Weedon later met Eugene M. Elliott, an entrepreneur who came to St. Petersburg with big dreams. During the Florida Land Boom of the early 1920s, Elliott oversaw the financial operations of George S. Gandy’s enterprises when construction began on the Gandy Bridge, the first span across Tampa Bay. A year before the bridge opened to traffic in November 1924, Elliott had acquired large tracts from Weedon and established a land development company.

Hoping to capitalize on the location near St. Petersburg’s gateway, Elliott placed some bones, trinkets, and potsherds of foreign provenance near the existing mounds. He then contacted the Smithsonian Institution, expecting that the discovery of these fake relics by scientific authorities would encourage newcomers to buy land and build homes alongside the mounds.

J. Walter Fewkes, the Smithsonian’s bureau chief for American ethnology, arrived in St. Petersburg in November 1923. He conducted a number of surveys of the site. Fewkes actually allowed one of Elliott’s employees to take charge of the first cross-section dig of a large shell mound. Fewkes bypassed the items Elliott planted and soon discovered evidence of Late Woodland and Mississippian settlements at Weedon Island.
Before the end of the month, Elliott’s firm ran full-page advertisements inviting potential property owners to watch crews from the Smithsonian excavate pottery bits, stone tools, and human remains. In one promotion, he encouraged visitors to “go and examine the hills and pits dug on Weedon’s Island and scratch about in the debris cast aside by the Smithsonian men and recover for yourself pieces of pottery, stone, shell and bone.”

In 1925, another promotion by Elliott’s company promised to present visitors with pottery fragments from the mounds as a gift. Elliott’s plans to turn Weedon Island into a residential enclave ended as the Land Boom collapsed in 1926. Years later, he looked back on this period with a sense of regret—not because of the desecration of the mounds, but instead for the funds he paid to promote the development. He allegedly told a friend, “To think I spent all that money to plant those phony bones.”
The W.R. “Butch” Evans Collection

This collection of lithic, ceramic, and shell tools came entirely from surface discoveries rather than excavations. Artifacts were recovered from beaches, rivers, and sites near dredged locations at or alongside the waters of Florida’s west coast. The high probability of drowned late Pleistocene and early Holocene sites on the continental shelf of North America is a subject of increasing scientific interest among archaeologists. The bays along the Gulf Coast were, in former times, the headwaters of the Pleistocene drainage systems, as well as the location of prehistoric aboriginal settlements. It is certain that the rising sea level of the Holocene period inundated many of the earliest prehistoric Indian sites, providing for a distorted picture of early settlement patterns and systems.

The collection has been laid out for the interest of the general public, and particularly the pottery maker. In the representative samples included in this exhibit, there is no particular chronological order to the collection. We must remember that the materials destroyed by the rapid settlement and overpopulation of the Florida peninsula continues.

Lithics (Stone Tools)
Many people associate arrowheads with Indian stone tools, but lithics came in a variety of sizes and performed many functions. Some served as knives, while others may have provided protection as weapons. Some of the lithics on display probably date to the Archaic periods, more than four thousand years ago.
Pottery Fragments
The Evans Collection includes fragments from a variety of sites in the Tampa Bay region, from Crystal River in the north Suncoast to locations in Lee County, near present-day Fort Myers.

Shell Tools
Large whelks and smaller shells also served as tools for early residents of the peninsula. The shells on the right were found at or near the shoreline in the Maximo area of St. Petersburg, north of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.
Paleoindian
*(12,000 B.C.E. to 6000 B.C.E.)*

**Cultural Activities:** The earliest human settlers in Florida roamed between food and water sources, hunted big game, and foraged for small game and plants.

**Natural Surroundings:** At the end of the last Ice Age, the Gulf Coast was more than forty miles to the west of where it is today. Tampa Bay did not exist. The area possessed a drier climate, with sea levels as much as 100 feet lower along the continental shelf. See map below.

**Common Fauna:** In addition to deer, opossums, raccoons, and turtles, early Paleoindians would have encountered mammoths, mastodons, and tapirs.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** Many of the original coastal settlements along the Gulf of Mexico are presently submerged below 60 to 120 feet of water. As sea levels began to rise, Tampa Bay took shape and the Pinellas Peninsula became a distinct geological feature.

Florida’s landmass was twice its present size at the end of the last Ice Age. As the global climate warmed, sea levels rose to current levels and Florida assumed its distinctive shape.

Early Archaic
*(6000 B.C.E. to 5000 B.C.E.)*

**Cultural Activities:** Settled communities began to appear, with people adapting to the fisher-hunter lifestyle and incorporating a wider array of plant and animal foods. They employed a larger number of stone tools (lithics), including bifacial knives and scrapers, though most remained simple in composition.

**Natural Surroundings:** Coastal communities along the Gulf of Mexico moved eastward as the sea levels rose and the Florida peninsula shrunk. Oaks and hardwood forests covered much of the peninsula.

**Common Fauna:** Some larger species, such as the mastodon, disappeared from the landscape. Alligators, land and amphibious turtles, deer, opossums, squirrels, frogs, fish, panthers, and bobcats proliferated.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** Pinellas Point sites (in southern St. Petersburg, Pinellas County) and Culbreath Bayou (Hillsborough County).
Middle Archaic
(5000 B.C.E. to 2000 B.C.E.)

**Cultural Activities:** The population became more sedentary and used a greater variety of tools.

**Natural Surroundings:** Sea levels stabilized at or near the current shoreline. Tampa Bay, Boca Ciega Bay, and other estuaries took shape.

**Common Fauna:** Animal populations resembled those of the Early Archaic period.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** Mound Park and Bayboro sites along Booker Creek, and Salt Creek south of downtown St. Petersburg, near USF St. Petersburg.

The American mastodon (*Mammut americanum*) roamed Florida’s forests when the first humans came to the peninsula. They became extinct around 10,000 B.C. A molar fragment from an American mastodon appears in the right image, above. Measuring more than seven inches in length, this remnant of a mastodon tooth came from the Seminole Field site in central Pinellas County.

Late Archaic
(2000 B.C.E. to 1200 B.C.E.)

**Cultural Activities:** About 2000 B.C., indigenous populations began to make fiber-tempered pottery. Small villages took shape at or near shell mounds.

**Natural Surroundings:** The environment became increasingly moist. Pines outnumbered oaks as forests included a wider variety of species.

**Common Fauna:** Food sources were similar to Middle Archaic period, with coastal settlements becoming more reliant upon aquaculture as a source of food.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** Expansion of settlements along the Pinellas peninsula, as well as other areas of the Gulf Coast.
Early Woodland/Florida Transitional
(1200 B.C.E. to 500 B.C.E.)

Cultural Activities: Settled communities with more complex political systems and religious practices started to develop. New styles of pottery replaced fiber-tempered works. Sand and limestone pieces, along with soapstone pottery and ornamental decorations, became more common.

Natural Surroundings: Environmental changes continued from the Late Archaic period, as moist and humid conditions regularly blanketed the peninsula.

Common Fauna: Owls, sharks, barracuda, and other animals that still live in and along the waters of Florida appeared in greater numbers.

Tampa Bay Region Sites: Established sites along the Pinellas Pensinsula, such as Mound Park and Pinellas Point, continued to support settlement.

Middle Woodland/Manasota
(500 B.C.E. to 700 C.E.)

Cultural Activities: Settlements engaged in trade activities with other peoples who lived in what is now the present-day southeastern and midwestern United States. Burial ceremonies became more common and elaborate during this period. Indigenous populations created a wide variety of pottery, some tending to be thicker and more ornamental in style. Firing methods for pottery improved.

Natural Surroundings: While Middle Woodland populations in other parts of America generally focused on interior settlements, Manasota populations settled along saltwater marshes, freshwater lakes, and coastal hammocks.

Common Fauna: Bears, bobcats, Florida panthers, and a wider variety of species lived in west central Florida.

Tampa Bay Region Sites: Yat Kitischee (central Pinellas County, along Old Tampa Bay), Safford Mound (Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County), and various sites along the Manatee River in Bradenton.
Late Woodland/Weedon Island
(700 C.E. to 1000 C.E.)

**Cultural Activities:** Trade networks with other cultures multiplied. Burial mounds appeared in greater numbers, with mortuary pottery entombed within the shell and earthen middens. Settlers created painted pottery, effigy pots, as well as decorated pots with sophisticated designs; incised and punctated pottery became more common. Larger shell mounds, sometimes thirty feet in width, rose near areas with long-established settlements.

**Natural Surroundings:** Permanent settlements developed in some areas. Crop harvesting during seasonal cycles became more commonplace.

**Common Fauna:** Turkey, deer, and an abundance of seafood sustained the populations and allowed for population increase as humanity's footprint on the peninsula grew. Mosquitoes and other pests brought discomfort during the warm and humid summers.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** Weedon Island (Pinellas County), Bayshore Homes site (western St. Petersburg, Pinellas County), and Crystal River (Citrus County).

Mississippian/Safety Harbor
(1000 C.E. to 1500 C.E.)

**Cultural Activities:** Settlements exhibited an increasingly complex social order with chiefs, temple mounds, and a greater emphasis on ceremonial activities. Pottery traditions from the Weedon Island culture continued, although some pieces lacked the decorations and may have been more hastily made.

**Natural Surroundings:** Corns, beans, and squash arrived in the Florida Panhandle, where they became an important food source. Agricultural practices improved as settlers followed seasonal growing cycles when cultivating crops.

**Common Fauna:** A wide array of land animals and seafood sustained coastal and estuarine settlements.

**Tampa Bay Region Sites:** A variety of locations took shape throughout the region, including Safety Harbor (Pinellas County), Tierra Verde (Pinellas County), and the Garrison Channel area (Hillsborough County).
Acculturative/European Contact
(1500 C.E. to 1740 C.E.)

Cultural Activities: Undocumented contact between Europeans and Indians may have occurred shortly after Christopher Columbus’s arrival in 1492 and before Juan Ponce de Leon set foot upon Florida in 1513. After early contact, widespread disease, especially smallpox, decimated local tribes such as the Tocobaga and Ucita. Depopulation of native inhabitants occurred throughout the peninsula long before the Spanish established St. Augustine in 1565. Tribes such as the Calusa (of southwest Florida), the Tequesta (of southeast Florida and the Keys), the Jaega (of Palm Beach and Martin counties in southeast Florida), the Ais (of the Space Coast), the Panzacola (near Pensacola), and the Timucua (of central and northeastern Florida) generally disappeared by the early 1700s. Some remnants of the Apalachee culture in the Panhandle survived by moving west into present-day Louisiana.

Natural Surroundings: Introduction of non-native plants of European, Asian, and African origin by Spanish, French, and English colonists occurred. Examples of new plants included citrus (especially oranges, grapefruit, and pomelos), bananas, sugar cane, and wheat.

Common Fauna: Introduction of non-native animals of European, Asian, and African origin by Spanish, French, and English colonists occurred. Examples included cattle, pigs, and sheep. The Spanish also introduced horses to the Americas; species of horses in the Americas had become extinct nearly 10,000 years ago, so indigenous populations had no conception of horses, cattle, sheep, or pigs in their cosmology until first contact.

Tampa Bay Region Sites: Pánfilo de Narváez site (Pinellas County) offered the first documented contact site in the Tampa Bay region.

French Huguenots came to Spanish Florida in the early 1560s. Jacques le Moyne, one member of this party, created images of the Indians they encountered in northeastern Florida at Fort Caroline, near present-day Jacksonville.
Seminole and Miccosukee
(1740 C.E. to present)

Cultural Activities: Originally members of the Creek nation, the Seminoles migrated to Florida by the early 1700s due to pressures from Anglo colonists who came into their ancestral lands of present-day Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. By the early 1800s, they gained a separate cultural identity from their Creek ancestors to the north; some even intermarried with Europeans or with Africans who had escaped from slavery. From the nineteenth century forward, technological innovations reshaped the peninsula and altered the environment. Seminole and Miccosukee reservations in central Florida, near the Everglades, and Oklahoma are legacies of the attempts to remove these people from Florida during the three Seminole wars between 1815 and 1858.

Natural Surroundings: Drainage projects, widespread agricultural activities including farming and animal husbandry, and urbanization beginning in the late 1800s led to settlement patterns that transformed Florida and marginalized many indigenous cultures. Shell mounds and other aboriginal sites were desecrated with great frequency before 1900. Few sites remain, and those that do have suffered extensive damage.

Common Fauna: Cattle, pigs, horses, and chickens eclipsed deer, alligators, and other animals now considered to be intruders in the communities that encroached upon preserves. Black bears, brown bears, bobcats, and Florida panthers face the prospect of extinction as the human population approaches nineteen-million residents.

Tampa Bay Region Sites: Battle sites, such as Fort Brooke (near downtown Tampa, Hillsborough County), Seminole war camps, and active Seminole and Miccosukee reservations.
A Shameful Legacy that Time Will Never Heal

The story of the first Floridians does not end with the arrival of Juan Ponce de Leon along the shoreline of Florida’s east coast in 1513. For nearly 500 years, newcomers and visitors to Florida have searched mounds for pottery, bones, and lost treasures.

The Pinellas Peninsula had fewer than 1,000 permanent residents before the Civil War. With the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway in 1888, the population grew. Tired of navigating muddy roads, the handful of settlers in the village of St. Petersburg demolished more than a half-dozen mounds in the area near the present-day USF St. Petersburg campus to construct shell roads. During your visit to our campus, you rode upon the remnants of many aboriginal mounds that are now entombed under bricks and asphalt.

By 1900, only one large mound remained in St. Petersburg. Fifty years later, plans to expand a hospital then-named “Mound Park Hospital” led to that mound’s demise. Pre-Columbian sites throughout the Tampa Bay region now have homes, swimming pools, parking lots, and shopping centers atop them. Little evidence of the first Floridians remains.

Only through the careful preservation of the remaining pieces of pottery and other materials will we be able to preserve this long and important chapter of Florida’s history for future generations.
Tourists and locals frequently gathered pieces of pottery as souvenirs. As late as the 1950s, real estate developers regularly bulldozed or destroyed mounds that stood in the way of future subdivisions.

Newspaper articles similar to this appeared throughout the early twentieth century.

If the Indians who were the first settlers of the land along Big bayou should come back for a visit now they would be astounded by what they saw. They would find a big steam dredge working in Big bayou and would also see the shells they gathered and piled up as a tribute to their gods being used to make roads for the white man to drive over in automobiles.

Land that was once the home of the Indian and was the site of St. Petersburg prior to the railroad building into this port, is being converted into an attractive place for homes and when the work that was begun yesterday is completed St. Petersburg will have another suburb that will be a beautiful addition to the Sunshine City. The shells that the Indians gathered will be used for road building. On the property are two large shell mounds, each as large as the famous shell mound in the city. Very few persons knew that these mounds existed but there is enough shell in the two mounds to build all the roads in the new subdivision.

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Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History
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For additional information about Special Collections and Archives at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, please contact:

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