

Because of Florida's unique environment many items made from perishable substances have survived from antiquity. Florida is a wet and swampy place with calcium rich rivers. Many items made from wood, bone and antler have been found preserved or sometimes fossilized. These artifacts range from the time of European contact, to the Paleo People who hunted mammoth and other mega fauna. In Newnan's lake near present day Gainesville Florida, hundreds of dug out canoes have been found. Most of these canoes were discovered to be much older than suspected. After testing their age was determined to be from the Archaic period three thousand to five thousand years ago. Most of these were made from long leaf pine which makes sense because it will readily burn, making it much easier to burn out in the canoe manufacturing process. Long leaf is also full of sap that contains turpentine, which also helps preserve the wood. This and the fact that the canoes were buried in the muddy bottom of the lake with low oxygen levels, helped preserve the canoes for many centuries.

In Florida's rivers thousands of artifacts made from bone, shell and sometimes ivory have been found. This includes atlatl spurs and weights, bone fish hooks, harpoon points, forshaft pens, ornamental clothing and hair pins the list goes on and on.

At the Key Marco site near present day Naples Florida, a village site was flooded by a hurricane burying the site in mud. When the site was excavated in the late 1890s, over 1000 wood bone and fiber artifacts were found. This included some of the finest Native American Artwork ever discovered. The wooden carvings were painted with vivid paints that were also preserved. Unfortunately good conservation techniques were not well developed in 1896 and many of these items perished when exposed to the air. Photos and drawings were made to document what was found. The famous sitting panther and deer carvings housed at the Smithsonian came from the key Marco site.

The Windover site near present day Titusville Florida is an early Archaic burial site. The people who lived in the area some seven thousand years ago, buried their dead in small ponds by staking the bodies and grave goods down under water. Over thousands of years the site was covered in a thick layer of peat which holds very little oxygen which bacteria needs to grow. This lack of bacteria keeps items from rotting.

The windover site was so well preserved that even brain tissue was preserved for seven thousand years. Every day items such as clothing, children's toys, tools and weapons were also preserved on site. The clothing recovered was made from palm fiber and had more complex weaves than are used in clothing today.

In the country of the Dominican Republic on the Caribbean Island of Santo Domingo, there are many deep sink holes. The oxygen level at the bottom of these water filled sinks is almost zero. The Native Americans that lived on the island are thought to have thrown items into these sinks as sacrifices. During dives into these areas archeologists have discovered perfectly preserved grass and reed baskets. These baskets are believed to be 500 years old. In Florida baskets were made from Long leaf pine needles, grape vines, palmettos, reeds and many other materials.

At the Ochlockonee River Stone Age and Primitive Arts festival many of the bone, wood and antler carving along with shell tools and early weaving techniques can be seen being reproduced. The ancient finds that Florida and other locations have produced has given modern primitive artists insight on how many of these beautiful items have been produced.