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“Is this my Great Aunt?”: An Analysis of Human Skeletal Remains to Construct a Biological Profile

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“Is this my Great Aunt?”: An Analysis of Human Skeletal Remains to Construct a Biological Profile

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University of Montana



Our Main Goal:

This research focused on the process of creating a biological profile for an unknown historic skeleton brought to the University of Montana Forensic Anthropology Laboratory. This individual represents one of three historic skeletons found in unmarked graves in Beaverhead County, MT.

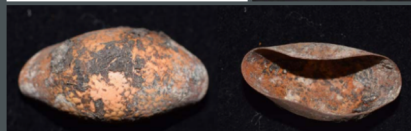
What is a biological profile?

A biological profile of adult human remains consists of sex, age-at-death, ancestry, stature, trauma and pathology.

This information is used in two ways:

1. To provide immediate supporting evidence for identification.
2. To provide a means of narrowing lists of potential individuals.

The most common methods to complete this process include analyzing the morphoscopic traits of the skeleton, particularly the cranium and pelvis, and using various measurements of the long bones (humerus, femur, etc.).



Biological Profile Assessment

- The evidence is most consistent with the remains representing a female individual
- 35 – 45 years of age at death
- Height between 4’9” and 5’5”
- Most likely of European ancestry with some Asian admixture
- No antemortem or perimortem trauma was found

Associated Artifacts

- This individual had a dental bridge for her maxillary incisors
- Two plastic hair combs that held on a wig worn by the individual
- Fragments of cotton textile, likely from a garment the individual was wearing
- Several coffin hardware elements
- Unidentifiable artifact that could likely be an eye cap from an autopsy or funeral practice

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Green for assigning us this awesome case, and thank you to the Montana State Crime Lab for allowing us to analyze the remains.