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GSURC Project Abstract

The Moeggenberg Collection: Making Sense of Unprovenienced Artifacts

Archaeology has a dark history steeped in collecting antiquities. The forerunners of modern archaeology were antiquarians, predominately European males with money, free time and an interest in material culture. Moreover, these antiquarians were acquiring these artifacts without any systematic approach to recording where these objects came from, known today as context. Context is critical to archaeological research, as it allows us to address the purpose of the artifact, when it was used, to whom it belonged, and its significance. The systematic recording of archaeological sites or deposits is the hallmark of modern archaeological practice. Yet, even today people still scour the landscape for artifacts that would look good on a mantel, with genuine interest in historical material, but without knowledge of proper archaeological method. This was the case for a former GSU alum Mr. Moeggenberg, who recently passed away leaving multiple boxes of artifacts behind. His wife donated these artifacts to the GSU Anthropology department in the Fall of 2014. The collection includes Native American artifacts, and whether or not he kept record of where and what they were, we do not have any records. My goal in this project is to attempt to source some of these artifacts temporally, geographically, and culturally through a comparative search of southeastern archaeological literature. While there will always be missing information from archaeological materials collected in a non-scientific manner, my research aims to fill in some of those missing gaps and provides much needed contextual information for this collection so that it can be used more appropriately by future GSU students and the interested public.

Keywords: Archaeology, Native American, Southeast, Pottery, Ceramic, Moeggenberg, Artifact, Antiquarian