

THE PECTOL/LEE COLLECTION, CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

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Recovered by local collectors in the early decades of this century, the archeological museum holdings of Capitol Reef National Park are mostly without provenience or other documentation. Nevertheless, they are a significant resource that may be useful to researchers studying the Fremont and later occupations. The complex story of the artifacts' history, their local, family, and Mormon religious significance, of NAGPRA compliance issues, and of the likely loss of the entire collection from public domain raises a number of issues pertinent to archeology, social history, and museum studies alike. Collection history and a small part of the collection are described here.

INTRODUCTION

Capitol Reef National Park, Morss's (1931) type locale for Fremont culture, holds a small but excellent and little-known collection of Fremont and Shoshonean artifacts. Most of these artifacts were collected before 1932 by residents of Wayne County, who left few known records of the locations or contexts of their finds.

The purpose of this article is not to provide thorough and detailed documentation of each artifact, a task better left to scholars with specific research questions in mind. Rather, its primary purpose is generally to acquaint archaeologists and museum professionals with Capitol Reef's holdings, and to trace the increasingly complex history of the beautiful but problematic collection. Secondly, this article is intended to illustrate the difficulties surrounding the scientific use of unprovenienced artifacts, while acknowledging the good intentions and generosity of those who have collected and donated such antiquities to the park. To this end, the history of Capitol Reef's archeological collection and brief descriptions of some of the artifacts are presented here.

HISTORY OF THE PECTOL/LEE COLLECTIONS

In 1932, the General Land Office (GLO) investigated reports that two Wayne County, Utah residents had amassed archeological collections worth over \$50,000 from sites on public lands, in violation of the Antiquities Act of 1906. The alleged violators were a well-respected Mormon bishop and soon-to-be state legislator, Ephraim Porter Pectol, and an enthusiastic artifact collector, Charles W. Lee, both of Torrey. GLO Geologist G. G. Frazier, sent to investigate the claims, found the collections on public display at a local business owned by Pectol (Figure 1), and in Lee's basement "museum." Frazier established through personal interviews with Pectol and Lee that some of their artifacts had, indeed, been removed from Federal lands in and around what was soon to become Capitol Reef National Monument. Frazier confiscated those items, which included eight baskets, two "jars" (ceramic pots), several pieces of deer hide, one grinding stone, and a jar of corn from the Lee collection; and three painted buffalo



Figure 1. Ephraim Pectol, wife Dorothy, and Della Hickman Chaffin (seated), in Pectol's artifact storage garage in Torrey, ca. 1940.

hide shields, one piece of tanned buffalo hide, a metate, a digging stick, and one "stone ball" from the Pectol collection (Frazier 1932).

Stating that the commercial value of the collections as a whole had been highly exaggerated, Frazier felt that crating and shipping the confiscated artifacts to the Smithsonian Institution was not worthwhile. Accordingly, he left the government's property in the possession of Pectol and Lee, upon their word that they would maintain the artifacts and collect no more from Federal lands. No charges were pressed against the two men, in part because of Frazier's evident respect for Pectol's civic-mindedness and cooperation (instrumental in the 1937 establishment of Capitol Reef National Monument, Pectol always intended to donate his collection to the monument's museum), but also because the geologist believed that public interest was better served by education than by punishment (Frazier 1932).

At some point before 1939, Pectol and Lee loaned their collections, including the government's artifacts, to the Temple Square Mission and Bureau of Information, which operated a museum for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in Salt Lake City. Now in poor health, Lee requested the return of his relics in 1941, hoping to raise money by selling them (Pectol 1941a). Although the church museum agreed to the return (Taylor 1941a), Lee died before transfer could be arranged. In a subsequent letter to the Temple Square Mission, Pectol (1941b) wrote that 1/3 of Lee's artifacts belonged to him (Pectol), evidently as collateral on a loan made to Lee.

The bishop offered to purchase the remainder of Lee's collection, and proposed to send for the relics.

At this point, however, Lee's heirs produced a document placing the artifacts in the custody of a Loa attorney, S.E. Tanner, for proper disposition (Pectol 1941c). While the family, its lawyer, LDS museum staff, and Pectol attempted to resolve their various claims, the collection remained in storage at the church museum. With World War II looming, church officials were "anxious to be relieved of the responsibility of (the artifacts') possession, since apparently some of the descendants of Mr. Lee seem(ed) to think they have exceptional value" (Judd 1942), and since museum storage space was limited. Frustrated by continuing delays, Temple Square Mission President John Taylor made several pleas to expedite the transfer (Taylor 1941b, 1942a, 1942b, 1942c), finally threatening to sell the artifacts for nonpayment of storage fees (Taylor 1943). There is no documentary evidence that any artifacts were, in fact sold; neither were they transferred from possession of the church museum for several more years.

Following Pectol's death in 1947, Capitol Reef National Monument Custodian Charles Kelly was directed to reaffirm the government's interest in the seized artifacts, still in church museum storage (Smith 1948a; Nusbaum 1948). Now Kelly, widow Dorothy Pectol and her four daughters began working toward the bishop's goal of bringing his collection back to Wayne County (Smith 1948b). The Lee heirs having released claim to at least part of their collection to the Pectols, left several items on loan to the church museum. Otherwise, legal complications appeared resolved, and transfer of the artifacts to the park service was tentatively approved by all parties.

Sadly, Mrs. Pectol died in 1951 before the plan could be effected, and without finalizing transfer of ownership of the entire combined collection to the monument. Meanwhile, the National Park Service flailed to decide how and where the government artifacts would be stored (Kelly 1951; Tillotson 1951; Lee 1951; Patraw 1951; Smith 1951); and the church museum, left out of family and park service negotiations, evidently lost track of the issues (Smith 1952; Franke 1952a, 1952b).

Shortly thereafter, the church museum reversed its earlier position, requested that all or part of the collections be left for exhibit in Salt Lake City (Franke 1952a, 1952b), and, reasonably, demanded documentation of ownership before relinquishing any artifacts (Kelly 1953a, 1953b; Franke 1953a, 1953b; Nusbaum 1951). Internally, the National Park Service contemplated legal action to secure the government property held by the church (Kelly 1953a, 1953b; Franke 1953a).

Such action was unnecessary, as the church museum under pressure reluctantly agreed to release the seized artifacts, even while insisting that the artifacts would be better left in Salt Lake City (Evans 1953). This position was supported by one of the four Pectol daughters, who felt that certain sacred objects should remain on display under LDS auspices (Devona Pectol Hancock, personal communication). However, on November 30, 1953, Kelly met in Temple Square the heirs of Ephraim Pectol and Charles Lee, and with their consent took possession of the combined Pectol/Lee collection amounting to some 200 objects (Kelly 1953c; Franke 1953). Thus, Bishop Pectol's dream of placing his archeological collections at Capitol Reef finally reached fruition more than 20 years after the government first claimed interest in the matter.

Since that time, numerous items have been on permanent display at the park's Visitor Center. The remainder have been in storage, brought out for occasional viewing by Pectol family members, who consider the collection a family legacy with personal, historical, and religious significance. Family members began coming to terms with the implications of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) for the collection, painfully but graciously acknowledging that Bishop Pectol would wish to do the right thing with respect to the spiritual views of American Indian people. In principle, however, they still object to the possible loss of some of their collection.

The bulk of the joint collection is now in the temporary care of the National Park Service's Western Archeological and Conservation Center (WACC) in Tucson. Regrettable for all interested parties, research into the collection's history, begun as a prelude to NAGPRA-required tribal consultation, has failed to locate any formal documentation

of an actual gift of the Pectol-Lee collection to the National Park Service. Instead, several documents clearly refer to the transaction between the Pectol heirs and Charles Keely as a loan, revocable for any of a number of reasons.

Because the park cannot demonstrate ownership, attempted repatriation in light of the Pectol heirs' collective objections is inadvisable. Legal counsel advises the park to return the entire collection to the Pectol family to avoid the appearance of attempting to circumvent NAGPRA. Park staff have begun notifying both tribal authorities and Pectol family members of this decision, and plan to follow through as soon as deaccessioning can be accomplished.

OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Except for the three buffalo-hide shields, these artifacts have attracted little attention from professional archaeologists or other researchers. This situation is partly due to the absence of provenience and contextual information, but it is also attributable to a lack of professional awareness of the collection. Aside from a few early articles in LDS publications (e.g., McGavin 1947; Beckwith 1927), which presented the finds as corroborating Mormon doctrine, and brief mention in two professional publications (Morss 1954; Steward 1936), most of the Pectol/Lee collection has received no attention. Neither, evidently, was the transfer of the artifacts into the park's possession publicized in 1953. The following descriptive summary is intended to make researchers aware of artifacts that may have some bearing on their own work.

Buffalo-Hide Shields

Professional interest (e.g. Morss 1931; Malouf 1944; Aikens 1966; Berger and Libby 1968; Schaafsma 1971; Loendorf and Conner 1992, 1993) has focused almost exclusively on these elements of the collection. The three buffalo-hide shields, some of the few artifacts for which provenience is known, were recovered in 1925 by Pectol and his family from a shallow overhang near Sulphur Creek, near the monument (Beckwith 1927; Morss 1931). Wrapped in cedar bark and buried approximately 45 cm deep, the painted shields were well-preserved and nearly complete. The only artifacts in the cache, these were the pride of Pectol's collection: he later described the recovery of the shields as a spiritual experience, and considered them to be 3,000-year-old artifacts confirming contact between Utah and Egypt or "High Priest's vestments" (Beckwith 1927) rather than mere utilitarian shields.

Because of their large size (two are 76.2 cm in diameter, and one is 96.5 cm diameter), the painted shields appear to have been designed for pedestrian, rather than equestrian, use (Loendorf and Conner 1992, 1993). Roughly circular in shape, the heavy shields are painted with green, red, white and black designs on their outer surfaces (one is painted on its inner surface, as well) (Figure 2), and have attached armstraps. One has a 1.9 cm-long tear, possibly sustained in battle, mended with rawhide lacing. More detailed descriptions are provided by Loendorf and Conner (1993).

Researchers have long debated the age and cultural origin of the shields. Morss (1931), comparing the shield designs to those of modern Apache and to Utah rock art depicting such shields in association with horses, initially judged the artifacts to be of recent or historical manufacture. Wormington (1955) ascribed to them Fremont origins, based on shield depictions in Fremont rock art; and Aikens (1966), hypothesizing a Northwestern Plains origin for Fremont culture, concurred. Arguments intensified as radiocarbon dating yielded post-Fremont dates ranging between A.D. 1650 and 1750 (Grant 1967; Berger and Libby 1968; see Loendorf and Conner 1993 for a more detailed review of arguments).

Most recently, a leather strap sample submitted for AMS radiocarbon dating yielded dates of 364 ± 91 years B.P.; 459 ± 89 years B.P.; and 397 ± 83 years B.P. (Loendorf and Conner 1992, 1993). These dates place the



Figure 2. Pectol with shields, ca. 1940.

shields at approximately A.D. 1500, making them the oldest known leather shields in North America (Loendorf and Conner 1992:22). Now the foremost experts on the Pectol shields, Loendorf and Conner (1992) caution that the cultural configuration of the Colorado plateau at ca. A.D. 1500 is too poorly understood to allow the shields to be attributed to any particular cultural group. Consequently, this issue remains unresolved.

Two of the shields are currently displayed at the Capitol Reef Visitor Center; the third is stored at WACC.

Figurine in Cradleboard

Another unique artifact is a fired clay figurine with a long, pinched nose and slitted, applique eyes, carefully wrapped in cotton cloth and rabbit skin and tucked into a willow cradleboard. The figurine, approximately 17 cm long, has a prominent chin and no mouth, and its cheeks and mouth area are painted with two rows of short red and white, vertical stripes.

The cradleboard, approximately 42 cm long and 23 cm wide at its broadest point, is woven of willow, with a checkerboard pattern visible on the back. The "infant" is cradled in a funnel-shaped half-basket of willow bound with bark to the flat backboard. A woven, hide-covered visor curves across the top of the cradleboard to shade, protect, and partially conceal the figurine's face. A hide strap is attached for carrying the cradleboard. All components of the artifact are in remarkably good condition. It is reported and described in detail by Morss (1954) and by Steward (1936), who suggests that such figurines were toys or were carried by women for fertility purposes.

The original context of this object was unknown to park staff until recently, when a Pectol family member recounted during a public meeting his childhood recollections of the artifact (Keith Holt, personal communication). As a child of about eight years, Mr. Holt helped Charles Lee and son Glen Lee excavate the cradleboard from a Fremont grave site northwest of Torrey. The elder Lee, evidently to discourage them from digging unsupervised, told the boys that the figurine "god" would "get" them if they returned to the site. Holt recalls being terrified of the artifact and refusing to enter Lee's basement museum where the figurine was kept.

The cradleboard was loaned by Pectol and Lee to the LDS museum at Temple Square, where it remained for more than 30 years. (At the request of Lee's son Glen, the artifact remained at the church museum when the other objects were transferred to the National Park Service.) The cradleboard was turned over to the park by the Museum of Church History and Art in 1989, and is now stored at WACC. Although believed to be of Fremont origin, the cradleboard is not radiocarbon dated.

Given the complicated history of the collection and of this object in particular, it is not surprising that some questions have arisen regarding legal ownership of the cradleboard. Further research is underway to resolve that issued. If documentary and other evidence demonstrates that the artifact legally belongs to the park, it will be listed for repatriation as an unassociated funerary object under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. For that reason and other reasons, photographs of the cradleboard have been withdrawn from publication at this time.

Bone Fishhooks

A bundle of six bone fishhooks was part of the original Lee collection. Each v-shaped fishhook is made of a sharply pointed piece of bird bone, bound with plant (perhaps yucca) fiber to a 3.5-cm-long wooden stock or shank (Figure 3). Fiber cordage serves as the fishing line.

Again, these artifacts were part of the Lee collection, and were loaned to the LDS museum at the time of National Park Service acquisition. Once more, no written description of the circumstances surrounding the find have been found. These were left with the church museum at the time of collections transfer, and were returned to Capitol Reef in 1993.

Skin Robes

A set of skin hides or robes was also highly prized by Pectol, who saw in them corroboration of the Book of Mormon account of American Indian origins. The circumstances surrounding the hides is confusing, though, due to conflicting versions of their discovery.

McGavin (1947), purportedly quoting correspondence from Bishop Pectol, states that Pectol himself uncovered the set of tanned hides rolled in a bundle and buried approximately 10 feet from the grave of an infant. The site of this discovery was not reported, but is presumed to be in the Torrey area.

In describing the hides, the article (McGavin 1947:80) quotes Pectol,

Only one edge of what we call the robe was evened off by the knife. By the mark we call the left breast mark is a patch of splendid workmanship, indicating that this mark was wanted or it also would have been patched over. Placing this mark at the breast, and letting the skin fall as it naturally would, a mark appears in the proper place for the navel mark and very similar. Fold the skin about you and another mark like that of the knee comes to the proper place. Now from the left breast, passing the skin under the arm and then over the right shoulder, a perfect right breast mark appears at the right place. Four belts of equal length that would fasten this robe to the body were in the bundle. We liken these to the girdle. A skin tanned with the hair on we call the apron, and another smaller one we call the cap. The marks are in the robe.

Considering them from his Mormon paradigm, Pectol identified the hides as "The High Priest's Vestment" or Nephite burial clothes, and interpreted the patches as Masonic emblems (McGavin 1947). A photograph published by McGavin (1947) shows an individual modeling the garment. That photograph is not clear enough for reproduction here.

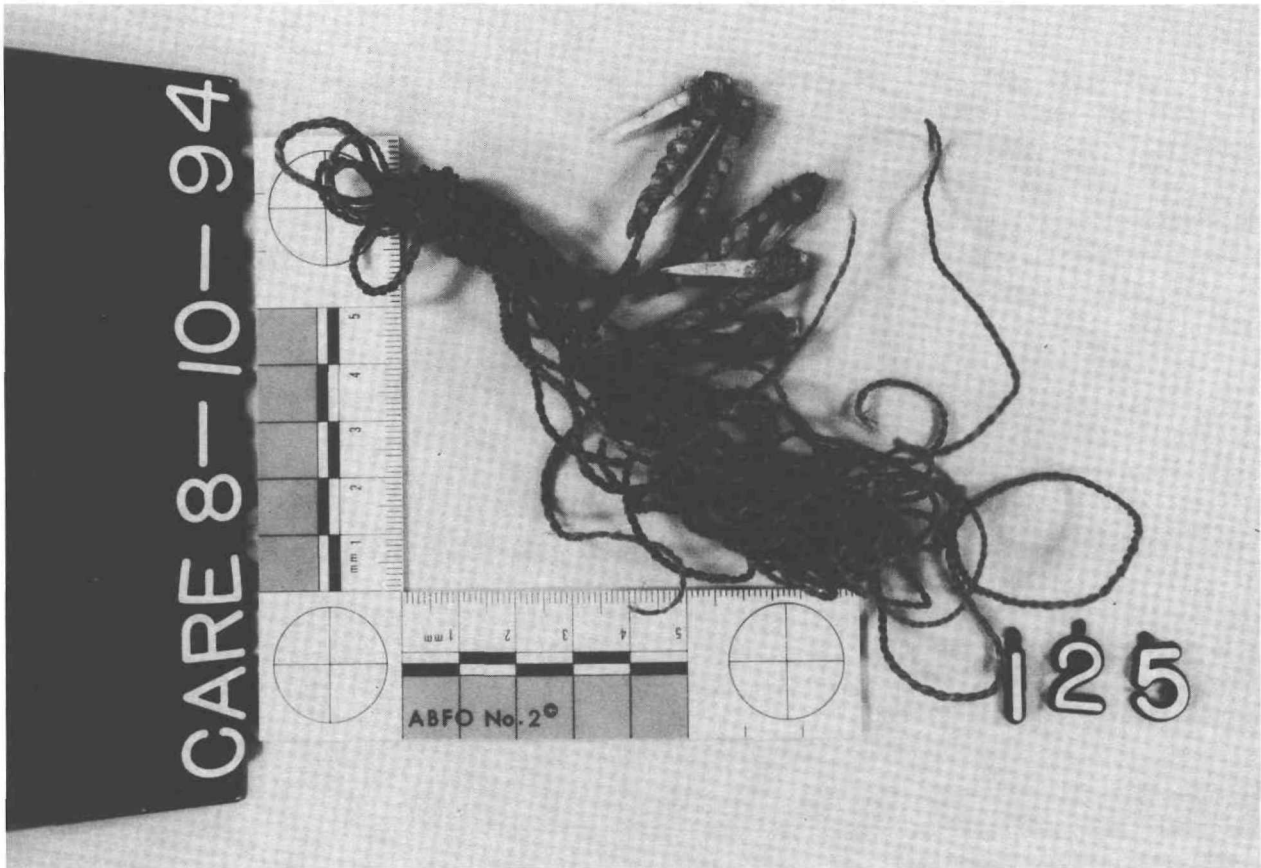


Figure 3. Fishhooks from the Charles Lee collection.

Despite this written account of the discovery, other documentary evidence and the recollection of Pectol's daughter, Devona Hancock of Salt Lake City, indicate that at least two of the robes were recovered by another local collector, Earl Behunin of Torrey. Mrs. Hancock believes that the entire bundle was found together, probably by Behunin, and she is at a loss to explain McGavin's claim that the bishop himself excavated the bundle (Devona Hancock, personal communication).

Behunin's role is confirmed by his son, Clyde, who remembers the hides from his childhood, and who was able to take the author directly to the site where they were discovered. Clyde Behunin recalls no grave, mention of a grave, or other artifacts associated with the find, and believes that his father alone excavated only the two large hides (Clyde Behunin, personal communication). If Behunin in fact found only two of the hides, then exactly how those became associated with Pectol's Nephite garment bundle remains uncertain.

Although Earl Behunin had repeatedly expressed interest in having his hides returned to him, his claims evidently were overlooked or forgotten by the time the transfer took place: no mention of Behunin claim to any artifacts appears in the transfer documentation. After the deaths of Pectol and Lee, these objects were absorbed into the combined collection and turned over to the park.

The largest piece is approximately 168 by 64 cm in size. One edge is trimmed by a knife, and it is patched in four places. A second hide, tanned with the hair remaining, measures approximately 97 by 99 cm. There is also a third, smaller piece (the "cap"), and four buckskin strips or belts approximately 10 cm wide and of varying



Figure 4. A buckskin moccasin from the Pectol collection.

lengths. All are flexible and in good condition, although the hair on two of the hides is brittle and loose.

The hides have not been radiocarbon dated, and their cultural origin and original use are not scientifically determined. The artifacts were on display at the LDS museum from 1939 to 1964, when they were delivered to Capitol Reef.

Buckskin Moccasins

A pair of heavily used and repaired buckskin (deer and possibly sheep) moccasins (Figure 4) were recovered by Pectol from an unknown provenience. The moccasins rise high over the ankle and forefoot, and the soles are stuffed with grass and juniper bark. The upper portion of one moccasin is stained with hematite; both shoes have leather ties. Possibly of Ute or Paiute manufacture, the moccasins are flexible, in good condition, and recent in appearance.

Stone-headed Club

A stone-headed club of unknown provenience is among the artifacts (Figure 5). The wooden handle is 12.5 inches long and exhibits desiccation cracks. The stone head, 3.75 inches in diameter, is diamond shaped in profile, somewhat like a child's spinning top. A hole is drilled through the head, and leather thongs are strung through that hole, out along grooves in the head, and through holes in the haft, thereby securing the head to the handle.

This artifact and several others (a wooden sword and maul-shaped grinders) may, in fact, have been collected by Pectol when he served as a missionary in New Zealand. It is reminiscent of similar stone-headed clubs reported from Polynesia (e.g., Buck 1964).

Miscellaneous Artifacts

The Pectol/Lee collection also includes a number of beautifully preserved baskets, pottery, a bone necklace, chipped and ground stone artifacts, a stick-and-fiber torch, a wood-stemmed clay pipe, assorted small figurines and figurine fragments, antler, horn, and bone artifacts, domesticated plants, a wooden flute, sandals, snares, and more (Figure 6). Unfortunately, space constraints prohibit detailed description of these enticing artifacts at this time.

CONCLUSIONS

The research potential of the Pectol/Lee collections is limited by an absence of spatial or contextual information. Nevertheless, dating of the artifacts, possible identification of their cultural affiliations, and comparisons to similar



Figure 5. Stone-headed club from the Pectol collection.

finds in other parts of the state will help broaden our understanding of Utah's prehistory. Likewise, a study of the collection's historic contexts (i.e., Pectol's religious interpretation of the artifacts, his motivations for collecting, and the church's interest in the collection) may provide an added dimension to local, state, and church social histories. Such research is now, of course, dependent on the permission and cooperation of the collection's private owners.



Figure 6. Ephraim Pectol with his collections, ca. 1940.

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