

THE DISCOVERY OF ABORIGINAL
NETTING ROPE AND WOOD
IMPLEMENTS IN A MUD DEPOSIT
IN WESTERN FLORIDA

by C. D. Durnford

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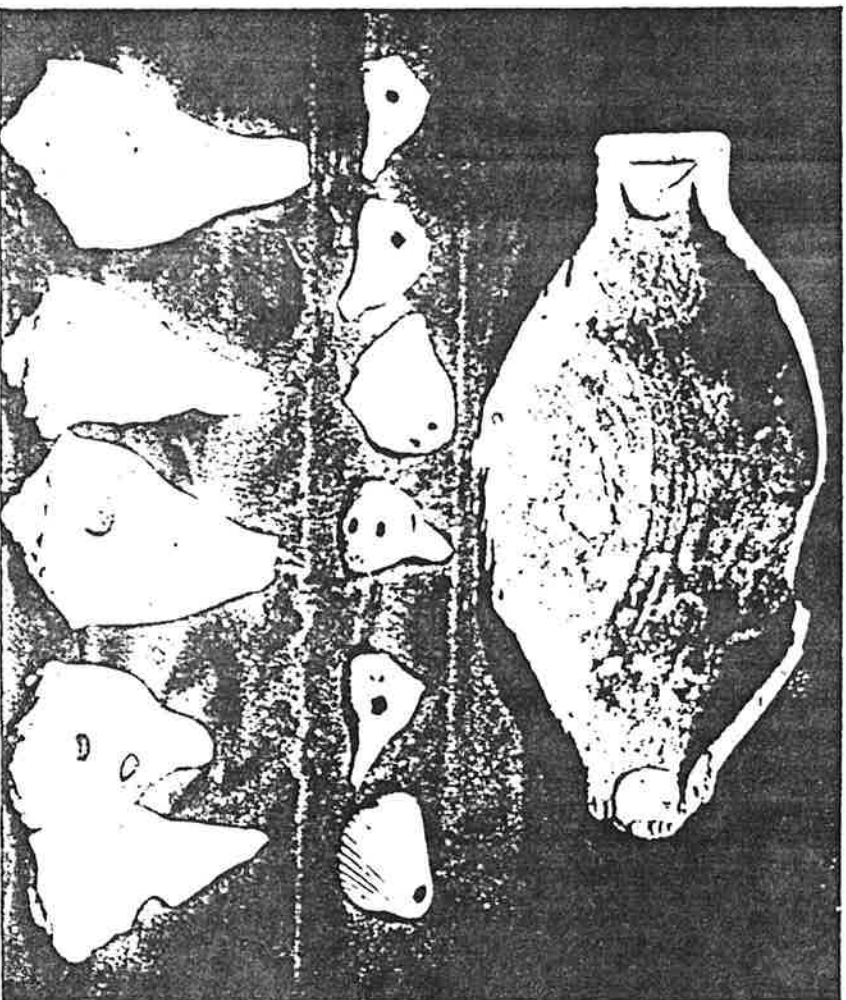


FIG. 1.

Aboriginal wooden trencher and perforated shells discovered by Lieutenant Colonel C. D. Burnford in a mud deposit near Marco, Southwestern Florida, in April, 1895.

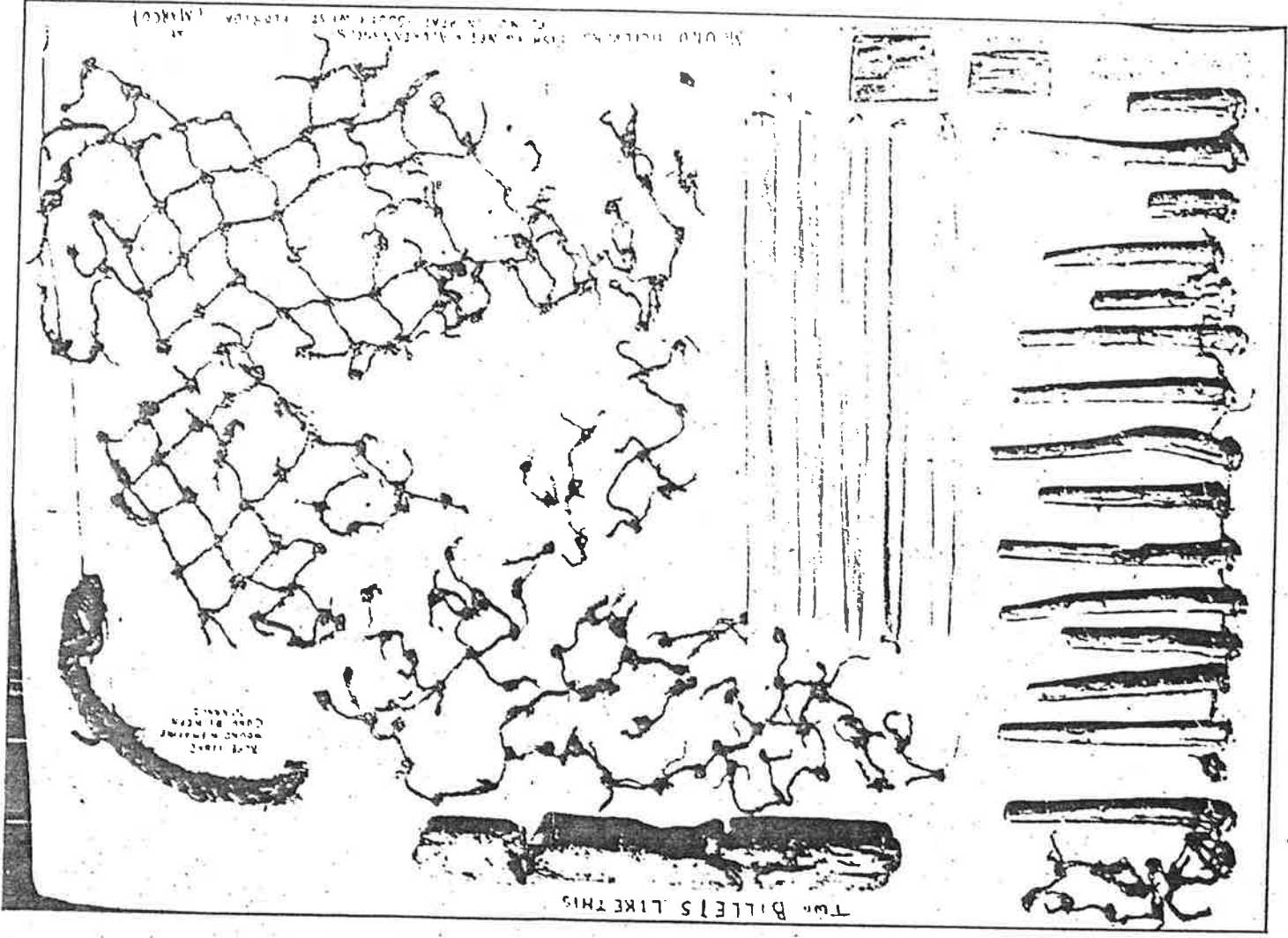


Fig. 12.

Aboriginal rope fish net and appearances discovered by Lieutenant Colonel C. D. Dunsford, in a mud deposit near Marco, Southwestern Florida, in April, 1895.

ANTHROPOLOGY.¹**The Discovery of Aboriginal Netting Rope and Wood Implements in a Mud Deposit in Western Florida.**—I was

in Florida, last April, tarpon fishing, and had been drawn down in the course of this pursuit to the neighborhood of the settlement of Marco—a few frame houses on the south-east coast, collected near the pass of the same name through the reef. This pass is an important one, as importance goes in this thinly-peopled region, it being a road to the safe shelter in Marco Bay, and also to the little wooden pier in Collier's Creek, leading from Mr. Collier's store and house. And Marco has clearly, for very many years, been thus important. A Spanish settlement was remembered by a friend of the "oldest inhabitant," and, from the more distant past, numerous kitchen middens, formed chiefly of shell-heaps, bring us heavy conch axes or clubs sharpened at the point and bored for handles, smaller conch and other shell implements, bits of black pottery, shell sinkers, and various ornaments, all presumably relics of the mysterious Mound-Builders. Hard cement-like floors of former huts or cottages are reported to be visible in the locality—Collier's is, in fact, built on Mound-Builders' debris, and the rows of these shell-heaps show the extent of their occupation of the place, both in time and numbers. Yet, wihal, there has been hitherto a complete absence of wooden articles or of any textile fabrics from the discovered remains.

Here and there shell-heaps form the banks of what are locally called "muck" tracts, former creeks or inlets, now filled with peat² mud, ill-smelling when first disturbed. The drier of these have been for years overgrown with trees and bushes, some of which trees are old and dead. This peat muck is valuable as a fertilizer, and it is this property that originally brought the special basin, that I shall describe later on, particularly under notice.

I had been looking with curious eyes at a somewhat similar formation in the neighborhood of Naples City, a Floridian watering place, of from ten to fifty inhabitants, according to the season of the year, where we had been staying at its comfortable little hotel. At Naples there is an ancient waterway now in various stages of peat muck and stagnant pool—an artificial canal, cut with the clearly deliberate purpose of forming a canoe or boat pass from the sea to the lagoon or bay.

¹The department is edited by Henry C. Mercer, University of Penna., Phila.