

# Mardi Gras Shipwreck Project Artifacts

**The Mardi Gras Shipwreck site contained a wide variety of material culture representing the products of several nations, including Great Britain, France, Mexico, and possibly the United States. Conservation of the artifacts has been ongoing since their recovery from the site, although some artifacts can be analyzed and interpreted at the present time. For ease of discussion, the artifacts have been grouped here largely based on material type.**

## Ceramic Artifacts

**Ceramics aboard the Mardi Gras Shipwreck consisted of fourteen complete vessels, six nearly complete vessels, and three shards.**

The majority of the ceramic assemblage consisted of undecorated creamware, but stoneware and pearlware were also present. Creamware was an industrial, mass-produced product intended for consumption by middle-class families. Such lighter-colored creamware generally dates from 1775 to 1820, particularly table and tea wares.



Three place settings were found, consisting of a plate, tea bowl, and saucer. The presence of three settings has led researchers to the conclusion that the vessel had at least three crew members aboard.

In addition to the three place settings, serving wares were found, such as a broken tureen, seen at right, a charger, bowl, two platters, a pitcher, teapot, caster, two jugs and a bottle.



## Glass Artifacts

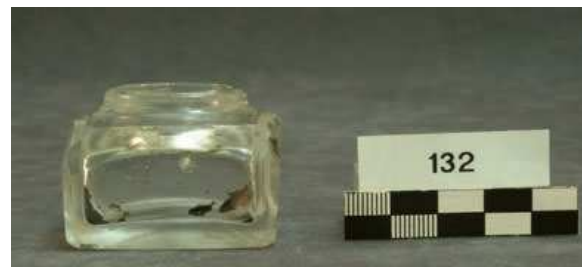
The glass assemblage of the Mardi Gras Shipwreck consisted of fourteen complete or nearly complete bottles, one pane of glass and a single inkwell.



A single inkwell is seen, on the left, as it arrives at the Conservation Research Laboratory at Texas A&M University. After conservation treatment, the final product is seen below.

The inkwell still contains traces of ink.

This inkpot was likely part of a set that would also have included a sandpot. Sand would have been dusted over the writing to reduce smudging. No remains of an accompanying sandpot have been recovered.





Three types of bottles were found at the Mardi Gras site. Thirteen bottles were intended to contain fluids, and were divided into two categories: wine bottles and beer bottles.

The wine bottles, seen at left, are characterized by sloping shoulders and were most likely cast using the dip-mold technique of bottle manufacturing.

Beer bottles of the Mardi Gras site are seen on the right. These bottles have a very different shoulder than the wine bottles above.

The short necks of these bottles indicate that they might have once contained beer or ale.

The unusual light blue patina seen in one bottle was possibly caused by corrosion products and was not originally intended by the manufacturer.



A single condiment bottle was found, bearing the word "London" on one panel.

The bottle was made in a two-part mold, based on the diagonal seam on the bottle's bottom. It is likely that this bottle may have held dry mustard.



## Organic Artifacts

Organic artifacts found at the Mardi Gras wreck site include personal items, such as a toothbrush and utensil handles, and rigging elements.

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Bone scales which would have been attached to forks and knives were found, though the utensils themselves do not survive.

These scales would have formed the handles of the knives or forks by being riveted to the tang of the utensil.



This small brush was likely used as a toothbrush.

Several animal hair bristles were recovered from the holes in the head of the brush, and the head was made of animal bone.

One of several rigging elements which were recovered, the sheaves of a double block are seen at right.

In addition, two pieces of parcelled rope were found which may have formed the strop of a similar block, and a yard, possibly a boom or gaff, was found at the site.



## Metal Artifacts

**Spoons, buttons, coins, the ship's stove, and anchor are included in the metal assemblage, which contains many of the largest and smallest items recorded on the site.**

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Complementing the creamware table settings were three pewter spoons. Forks and knives are also represented by bone handles, but the pewter spoons preserved better than other utensils.

The inscription on the pewter spoons indicates that they were manufactured in France, possibly by the Fabreguette family of pewter smiths.

This family operated in Bordeaux during the late eighteenth century.



As seen on the left, a cast-iron ship's stove was also found. The stove was rectangular in shape, measuring 19.3 inches by 26.8 inches, and stood 17.5 inches high.

The meals served and eaten from the creamware and utensils seen were most likely cooked on this stove.

Also found at the site were several small coins, including the two-reale coin seen at right. The coin contains approximately 6.766 grams of silver, and one side remains legible.

The inscription reads "HISPAN ET INC REX 2R F M." During the nineteenth century, Spanish coins were used throughout the Gulf of Mexico region.





The Mardi Gras wreck was armed with at least one cannon, which was recovered and can be seen in situ, at left, and as it begins conservation treatment, below.

In addition to the cannon, the Mardi Gras Shipwreck carried a box of mixed arms and edged weapons.

This box was not recovered from the site, but video images and still photography have provided some information about its contents. The box still holds a number of longarms, pistols, and edged weapons.



## Composite Artifacts

**Composite artifacts contain one or more of the previous categories, and include a watch face and bezel, coffee mill, telescope or spyglass, and a carpenter's plane.**

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The small mill seen on the right is one of several composite artifacts recovered from the site.

It is presumed to be a coffee grinder, based on its size and shape. Presumably, this mill postdates an age when coffee was an expensive luxury, but predates the prevalence of cast iron mills.





An enameled iron watch face and bezel were found, possibly belonging to a pocket watch.

The presence of two holes on the watch face indicate that the pocket watch was wound with a key.

A carpenter's plane was recovered, measuring 7.4 inches long and 2.8 inches high.

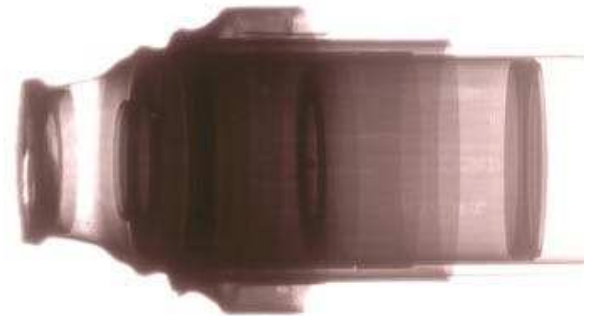
Other tools necessary for shipboard maintenance may have been carried in a tool kit stored in the ship's cabin.



In addition to the sandglasses previously seen, other navigational instruments included a spyglass and pieces of an octant.

The spyglass, seen at left and below, had a wooden sheath surrounding the eye-piece and eye-piece tube.

Through the use of x-ray technology, a maker's mark was identified, which indicated the maker, T. Harris & Son, the place of manufacture, London, and the Day and Night uses of the spyglass or telescope.



## Stone Artifacts

**Stone artifacts recovered from the Mardi Gras shipwreck included fifty nine gunflints, an essential component of flintlock firearms. A round stone recovered likely represents part of the ship's ballast.**

These pages were originally posted to the CRL website at the pages below. They were combined and converted to PDF in 2025.

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/ceramic.html>

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/glass.html>

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/organic.html>

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/metal.html>

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/composite.html>

<http://nautarch.tamu.edu/mardigras/artifact/stone.html>