

Interstate 95 Archaeological Artifacts Showcased in Philadelphia

By Gene Blaum, Assistant Press Secretary, District 6

A successful four-month public exhibit of archaeological artifacts uncovered from neighborhoods near the Interstate 95/Girard Avenue Interchange concluded last month at the Independence Seaport Museum at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia.

The exhibit, "Digging the City: Archaeological Discoveries from the Philadelphia Waterfront," showcased approximately 100 individual objects recovered from ongoing archaeological investigations for the Interstate 95/Girard Avenue Interchange improvement project. The artifact display and associated historical images and interpretations were developed by the URS Corporation, PennDOT's historical and cultural resources consultant for the project.



Organized in a linear timeline, the exhibit, which ran from Sept. 20, 2012, to Feb. 3, 2013, provided an overview of the different historical periods represented by the project's archaeological discoveries, from the prehistoric era through the early 20th century. The display represented a unique opportunity to bring the history of the Philadelphia waterfront to a wide public audience, which included an opening night crowd of approximately 250 people.

Individual display cases contained samples of the many thousands of artifacts excavated from the project area and they were accompanied by specially designed mural paintings by Miriam Singer, an artist with the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, plus historic interpretive panels and a series of short films showing the excavation of key sites.

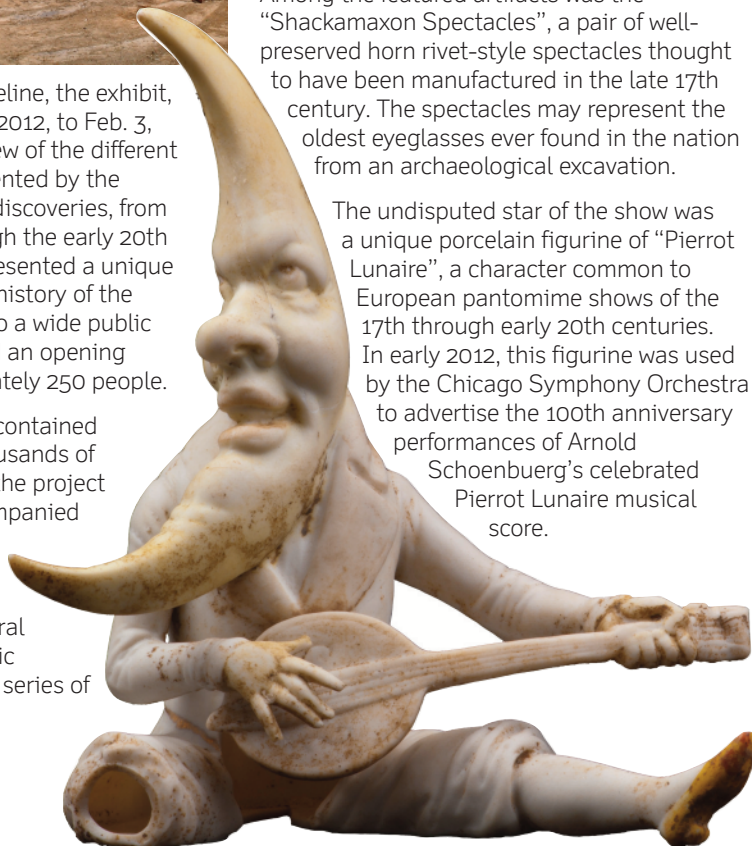
The exhibit was complemented by a series of monthly public programs, in which illustrated talks and question-and-answer sessions were held at the museum to provide additional information about specific archaeological sites and the discovery of individual artifacts.

The exhibit highlighted six undisturbed Native American sites discovered along the project corridor, the oldest of which dates back to about 2,500 B.C. It showcased various projectile points (arrowheads), other stone tools and pottery. Adding emphasis to the display were reproductions of traditional native clothing, provided by the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Bartlesville, Okla., as well as historic prints of the Treaty of Friendship of 1682 between the Lenni Lenape Indians and William Penn from the Penn Treaty Museum.

Also showcased were examples of domestic household artifacts used by families living along the waterfront in the 18th and 19th centuries, and a display of industrial artifacts manufactured at the Dyottville Glass Works site along the Delaware River in the Fishtown neighborhood, which dates back to the late 1700s.

Among the featured artifacts was the "Shackamaxon Spectacles", a pair of well-preserved horn rivet-style spectacles thought to have been manufactured in the late 17th century. The spectacles may represent the oldest eyeglasses ever found in the nation from an archaeological excavation.

The undisputed star of the show was a unique porcelain figurine of "Pierrot Lunaire", a character common to European pantomime shows of the 17th through early 20th centuries. In early 2012, this figurine was used by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to advertise the 100th anniversary performances of Arnold Schoenberg's celebrated Pierrot Lunaire musical score.



The archaeological exhibit received overwhelmingly positive reviews from attendees, and the Independence Seaport Museum has expressed interest in teaming up with PennDOT again in the future to create another Interstate 95 artifact exhibit.



Overview of the "Digging the City" archaeological exhibit.

Archaeological work is continuing along the Delaware River waterfront as District 6 advances its intricate plan to rebuild three miles of Interstate 95 from Race Street to just south of Allegheny Avenue and improve the interchange at Girard Avenue. Two contracts, worth nearly \$130 million, are currently in construction and three more are moving through the design phase.

This mostly elevated stretch of Interstate 95, which was built in the 1960s and moves nearly 160,000 vehicles day, is being rebuilt to restore the aging highway, eliminate lane drops and provide four continuous lanes in each direction.

The improvement plan includes replacing or rehabilitating 30 bridges; adding an auxiliary lane in each direction to connect entrance and exit ramps between the Interstate 676, Girard Avenue and Allegheny Avenue interchanges; reconfiguring the Girard Avenue Interchange to improve access, operation and safety; improving adjacent local streets; and making

ground-level enhancements identified by various Delaware River waterfront planning initiatives to reconnect communities to the waterfront, create new public spaces, and incorporate green infrastructure into the project design.

Bisque porcelain figurine of the character Pierrot Lunaire, or "Moonstruck Pierrot" (ca. 1875-1900).