

Historic archaeological artifact recovered from Patuxent River

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ST. LEONARD, MD -On March 25th, watermen from Solomons Island Heritage Tours and Patuxent River Seafood recovered an 18th-century Iberian Botija/Olive Oil Jar from the Patuxent River. This amazing find was pulled from the water by their oyster tongs and is in remarkably good condition.

The jar, standing almost two feet tall and shaped like a ribbed carrot, was heavily encrusted in oysters, barnacles and other marine life. Conservators at the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory (MAC Lab) have begun removing these encrustations and will continue to treat the object so that it can be made ready for study and display. While the MAC Lab's collections contain fragments of this ceramic type, it is very rare to find a complete vessel. The Spanish, Italians and Portuguese used this type of jar to transport olive oil to their colonies in Florida and further south. Recovering such an intact artifact in the waters of Southern Maryland is particularly interesting to archaeologists.

It is especially important to recognize the actions of waterman Simon Dean in turning over an artifact recovered in Maryland waters to the State's archaeologists. The academic value can now be shared with a broad range of communities, including researchers, international colleagues and the public. Just as it is important to conserve our natural and environmental resources, it is equally crucial to preserve our cultural heritage.

The Patuxent Botija will be available to view on public tours of the MAC Lab and at Discovering Archaeology Day on April 18 at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum.

Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum, a state museum of archaeology and home to the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory, is a program of the Maryland Historical Trust, a division of the Maryland Department of Planning. It is located on 560 scenic acres along the Patuxent River and the St. Leonard Creek in St. Leonard, Calvert County, Maryland. For more information, call 410-586-8501 or visit www.jefpat.org.

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