

Learning From Landfills

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Introduction

When construction and building projects start digging on campus they often uncover artefacts and items that can be used in an archaeological context. The bottles can help identify a time range by their specific markings.



Terms

Bottle mark: symbols and numbers indicating manufacturer and time range



Background and History

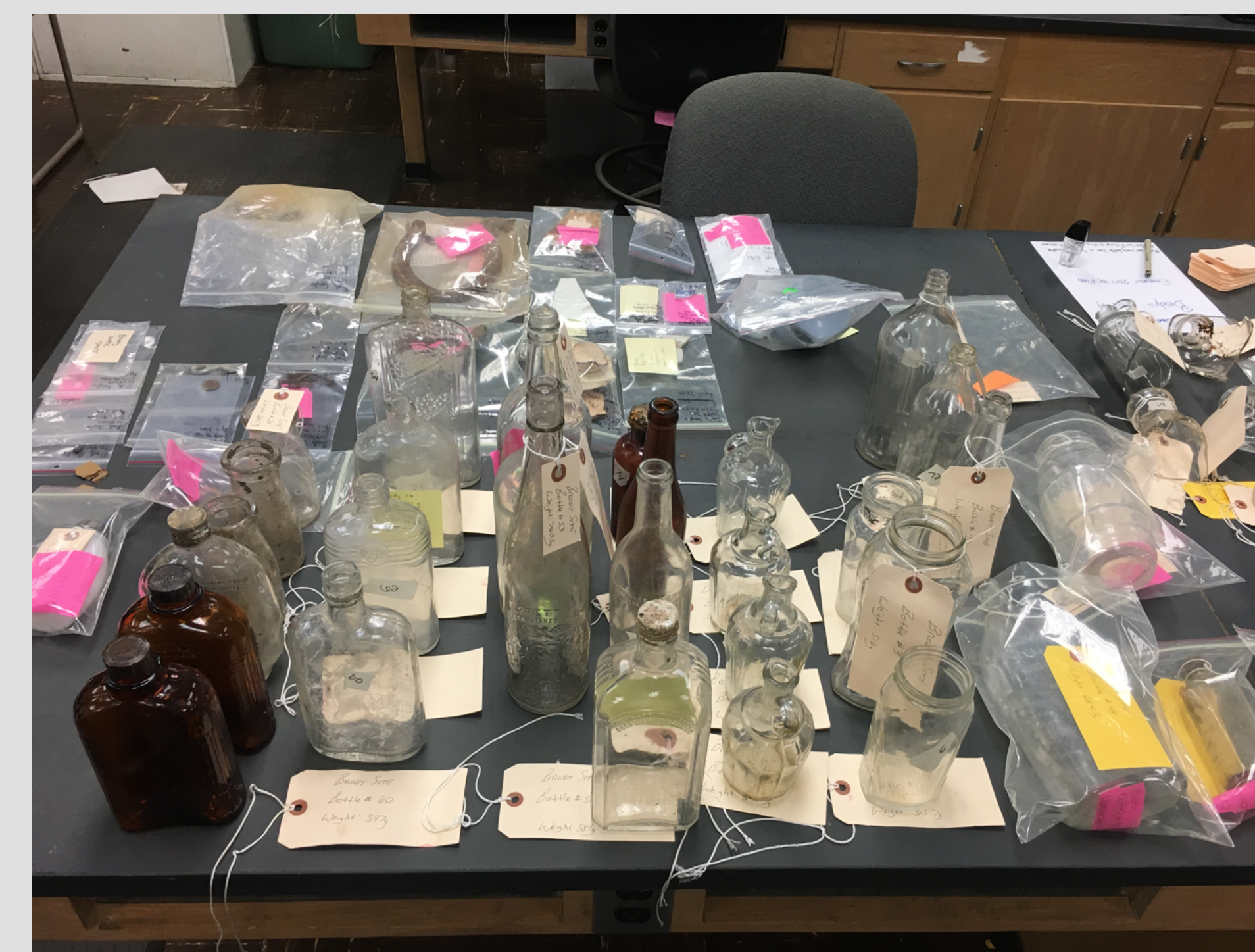
The location of Brody Hall started to be used by students and people living in 1907, near the time East Lansing formally adopted a charter. The landfill was used into the 1940s until the preparation for the construction of the dorm complex.



The university's Infrastructure Planning and Facilities department notifies the Campus Archaeology Program when construction or renovations will disturb the soil to allow an opportunity to determine if anything is likely to be beneath. Most of the bottles that we received were uncovered during recent renovation projects on the complex, such as the construction of the Emmons Amphitheater. The bottle marks and morphology can be used to determine a date range for each bottle. The collection was dated to be mainly from the 1930s, with less from the 1920s and 1940s.

Why Health and Wellness?

The behaviors and products associated with health habits are left behind through items discarded into landfills. The use of the landfill occurred as trash collection surfaces and sewage systems were becoming developed, allowing for more everyday items to be discarded into the same place.



We can also learn about more about behavior of the citizens and how much they upheld city bans. The city charter in 1907 set up the city as alcohol free, which was upheld at least on paper until it was changed in 1968. As we can see from the bottles they discarded into the landfill, students and residents of the city were still consuming alcohol during the ban well into the 1940s.

Artifacts

Dairy and food products such as milk, ketchup, and peanut butter were common, and could show the change in companies and packaging of common products. Products used for cleaning, such as ammonia and bleach were common health items. Cosmetic items such as make up containers and hair tonics were the least common, but had the most unique products.

