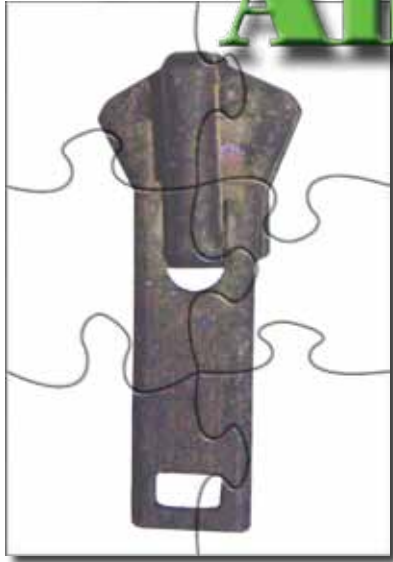


TIGHAR TRACKS

July 2008



Another Piece Of the Puzzle



ARTIFACT
2-8-S-3

Artifact 2-8-S-3 was found at the Seven Site on Nikumaroro on July 31, 2007 by Niku V team member Joshua Gillespie.

The artifact is a brass, size 06, Autolock slider and zipper pull manufactured by the Hookless Fastener Company of Meadville, PA under the trade name “Talon,” not earlier than 1933 and not later than 1937. It was intended for civilian use on a medium-weight garment such as a jacket or coveralls made in the United States.

BACKGROUND

What we call the “zipper” was first invented in 1851 and by the early years of the 20th century had evolved into a relatively trouble-free but not yet popular device sold under trade names such as “Clasp Locker,” “C-curity Fastener,” and “Hookless Fastener.” The Hookless Fastener Company of Meadville, PA was founded in 1913 and struggled along until 1923 when the firm landed a large contract with the Goodrich Rubber Company to provide closures for a new line of galoshes to be known as the “Zipper Boot.” For many years, the term “zipper” was the trademarked property of Goodrich and as late as 1937 the Hookless Fastener Company, by then

Talon, Inc., was carefully describing its products as “slide fasteners.”

With the name “Talon” appearing on both faces of the pull, identifying the manufacturer of the artifact was easy. The particular design – size 06, Autolock slider – was determined by former Talon sales executive Thomas L. Allyson by measuring the artifact and comparing it to company specifications and examples in his personal collection. Mr Allyson’s full report can be found on the TIGHAR website at http://www.tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/NikuV/Analysis_and_Reports/Zipper/Zipper.html.

DATING THE ARTIFACT

A not-earlier-than date was not difficult to establish. The Autolock feature prevented the zipper from creeping down (a major concern when replacing the button fly on men's trousers). It first appeared in 1933.

Establishing a not-later-than date was trickier. Mr. Allison wrote in his report, "The Artifact pull is of course rectangular; however, it is unique in that it is very neatly stamped with chamfered edges on both the top and bottom. I could not find another pull like this on any other sample. To me this would indicate that Slider was from an early vintage of this new Automatic Lock Design."

A more important clue in dating the artifact is the absence of markings stamped into the back side of the slider. When Talon started exporting zippers they began stamping the back of the sliders. Mr. Allison sent TIGHAR an 06 Autolock slider dating from 1938 that has "Made in U.S.A." stamped into the back. He concluded that, "Since there is no marking on the bottom of Artifact Slider,



The back of the Artifact 2-8-S-3 slider, above, carries no markings.

The back of the 1938 slider, right, is stamped "Made in U.S.A. TALON."



we would be inclined to believe that this Slider was made sometime before 1938."

Further research enabled us to pin down the not-later-than-date a bit closer. A gabardine jacket found on eBay by TIGHAR researcher Karen Hoy (#2610CE) has an 06 Autolock slider and pull exactly like those on Artifact 2-8-S-3, with one important difference. The letters "USA" (not "Made in U.S.A.") are stamped on the back. According to Mr. Allyson, product labeling at Talon never



Karen Hoy models the gabardine jacket during the April 2008 Earhart Project Advisor Council (EPAC) meeting at the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

got simpler but became more complex with the passage of time. The jacket zipper can, therefore, be placed chronologically between the 1938 slider and the artifact.



The back of the jacket slider is stamped "USA TALON."

2-8-S-3 beside Talon 06 Autolock zipper on gabardine jacket.



Fortunately, it is possible to date the jacket quite precisely due to its unique label.

The label in the jacket reads, "H and C Ranchwear California Styled New York Los Angeles." In 1897 Samuel Christenfeld began making English-style riding breeches in Brooklyn, NY. In 1906 he formed a partnership with M. Halpern to become Halpern & Christenfeld, shortened to "H and C." In the early 1930s the popularity of Hollywood Westerns gave rise to a



The gabardine jacket label.



Standard label.

demand for Western fashions and, in 1936, Halpern and Christenfeld decided to cash in on the craze and opened a store in Los Angeles. As part of their marketing, they changed the brand name to “H Bar C” to evoke a more cowboy image. Only a very few labels were produced that listed the Los Angeles store but still carried the old “H and C” name.

The Talon zipper with the “USA” stamp predates the 1938 zipper but is on a garment that post-dates the 1936 opening of the Los Angeles store. It, therefore, appears to date from 1936 or 1937. Artifact 2-8-S-3, with no marking on the back, is apparently older.

ORIGIN

How could a circa 1935 Talon 06 autolock zipper end up at the Seven Site on Nikumaroro? Logically, it was part of some item, probably a garment, that was otherwise biodegradable. It predates zippers manufactured for export so it’s not likely that it was on anything belonging to the British-sponsored colonists or administrators. The artifact is not like Talon zippers that were used by the military, so it’s not likely that it came from any of the Coast Guard personnel who were on the island during WWII. That makes the prime suspect the castaway whose remains were found in 1940. An abundance of other evidence points to the castaway being Amelia Earhart.

So how do we test the hypothesis that Artifact 2-8-S-3 came from some item belonging to either Amelia Earhart or Fred Noonan? The first logical step is to look for zippers in photos taken during the world flight. Earhart wore slacks that closed with zippers on the hips and we initially thought we might have a hip zipper, but Mr. Allyson wrote, “The size 06 zipper is considered to be a medium to heavy duty product. ... for the navigator it



TIGHAR collection.

This photo of Earhart was taken in 1936. The leather jacket appears to be the same one she wore during the world flight. The zipper pull is clearly bell-shaped.



This photo was taken when Earhart was in Darwin, Australia. Although the resolution is poor, the zipper pull on Earhart’s jacket appears to be rectangular. TIGHAR collection.

could have been in a jacket or heavy duty trouser.” Indeed, the example we have of the Talon 06 Autolock zipper is on a jacket. Amelia, of course, had a leather jacket with her on the world flight and Talon records show that the company provided zippers to a manufacturer of leather flying jackets as early as 1929. Photos taken prior to Earhart’s first world flight attempt clearly show her jacket to have a bell-shaped pull. Photos taken during the second world flight attempt, although of poorer quality, seem to show a smaller rectangular-shaped pull. Maybe the zipper broke and was replaced. Forensic imaging may be able to pull out more detail.



In this photo taken in Bandoeng, Java, Noonan's trousers do not appear to be "heavy duty" but he did have a jacket with him.

Artifact 2-8-S-3 joins a growing list of artifacts recovered from the Seven Site that appear to be associated with personal effects of the castaway whose remains were discovered in 1940. As in all archaeology, the more we can learn about these objects, the more they tell us about the person or persons they belonged to and the more complete the puzzle picture becomes.



Also, Amelia had a set of zipper-front cloth coveralls she wore when working around the plane. This photo was taken in Natal, Brazil. Forensic imaging revealed this zipper to be tear-drop shaped.



CRYSTAL BALL

If you haven't already heard, *Amelia*, a major Hollywood biopic about Amelia Earhart starring two-time Academy Award winner Hilary Swank in the title role and Richard Gere as her husband/promoter George Palmer Putnam, is now shooting and is scheduled for release in the fall of 2009. TIGHAR has no association with the film, but knowing that it's coming is like having a crystal ball.

In the weeks and months surrounding the film's debut, promotion for *Amelia* will make Earhart a hot topic. Unlike previous productions, the movie will focus on Earhart's early career and love life. It will, reportedly, not offer a solution to the mystery of her disappearance. As you've read in *TIGHAR Tracks* and on the TIGHAR website, the artifacts and materials collected during last summer's Niku V expedition are proving to be far more important and compelling than, frankly, we ever expected. Just how strong a case we'll be able to make by the time the film comes out remains to be seen, but it's nice that Hollywood will be spending a few million dollars warming up the audience.



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