

Archaeology!

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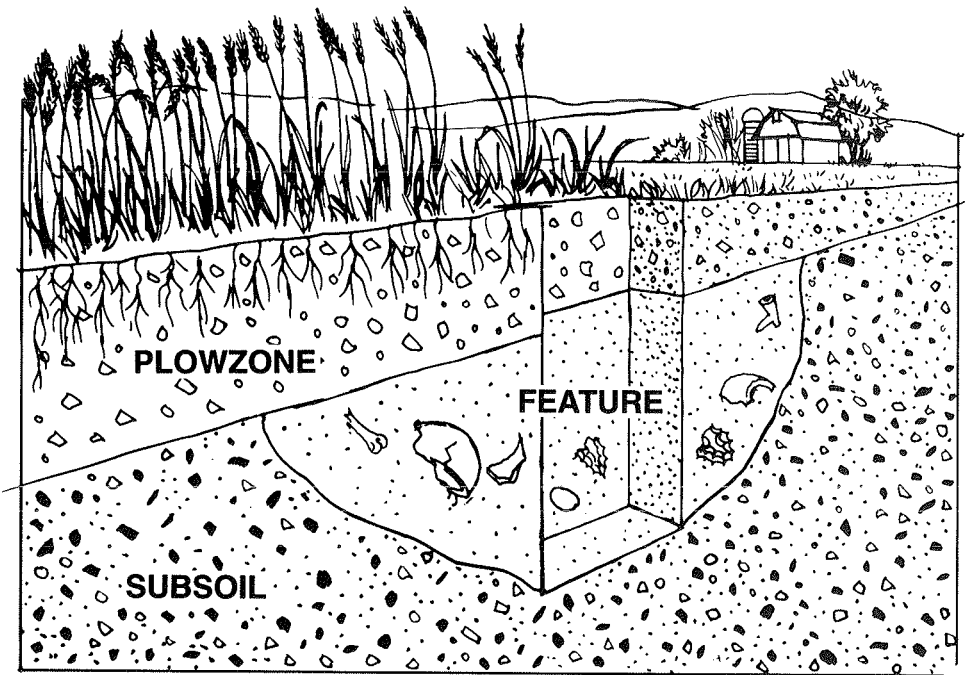
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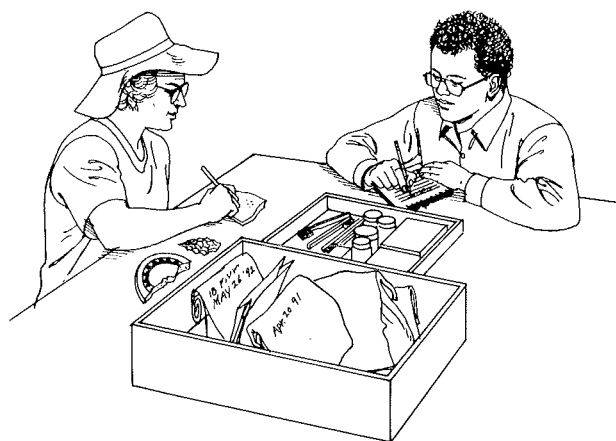
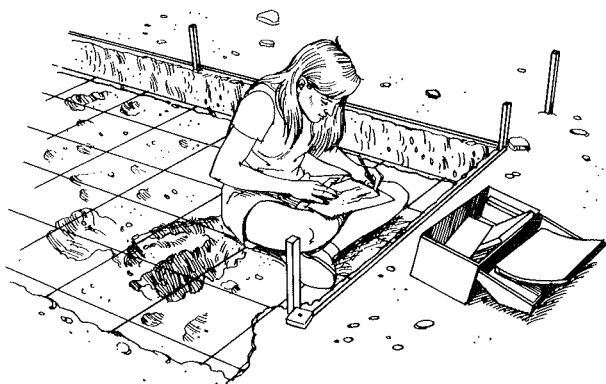


INTRODUCTION

People in the United States have been discovering, in the past several decades, that they possess a rich heritage in which they take pride. As a result, prehistoric and historic preservation projects and outdoor museums focusing on archaeological investigations have been springing up all over the country. Millions of people each year spend their vacations visiting historical sites, archaeological investigations and museums. There has been unprecedented popularity in multi-episodal historical television dramas, historical novels and movies. The enactment of Federal and State laws has been demonstrative of public interest in the nation's cultural heritage. In spite of attempts to withdraw funding for preservation and archaeology, the laws remain intact because the public has shown continuing support for saving and preserving our cultural resources.

Almost everyone is fascinated by archaeological excavations. Unfortunately, some of the information has focused on the discovery of exotic artifacts or on romanticized versions of the past. Limited information is available about what archaeologists do and how they collect the information which is later translated into educational and interpretive books, other publications, and television specials. Learning some facts about why archaeology is important may entice young readers into libraries to learn more. It is through an awareness of what archaeology is about and why it is important in understanding ourselves that we may care enough to save our non-renewable cultural resources that are disappearing quickly from our landscape. It is hoped that this book may serve as a starting point for this process.

Hettie L. Ballweber



LET'S GET STARTED!!

What Is Archaeology?

Archaeology is a science which carefully studies how people lived in the past by looking at the objects they left behind. An archaeologist is a person who has been specially trained and educated to study these objects. No, archaeologists are not treasure hunters, travelling to exotic places, collecting lost gold and buried treasures and getting rich from what they find. In fact, archaeologists do not keep what they find.

Amateur archaeologists are those people who are also very interested in archaeology, but have not received formal education in the subject. Some amateurs have made important contributions to archaeology and most archaeologists value their help.

Don't get an archaeologist or amateur archaeologist mixed up with people who just dig up artifacts to sell, display or keep. These people are not archaeologists. They sometimes are the treasure hunters you read about and they hunt for objects to make money. Many years ago it was a common pastime for people to collect objects but today, in some places like state and national parks, it is against the law to dig for artifacts. Archaeologists are actually interested in looking at the objects left by humans

because they are mostly interested in studying how people behaved in the past. As you can see, archaeologists collect **information**.

Do you know what an **anthropologist** is? Anthropologists also study human behavior, but they study living people. An anthropologist would come to your neighborhood and look at the way you lived with your family and neighbors. They would be able to talk to you and watch you as you go about your daily life. They would also look at everything you do including what objects you use, the way you dress, the things you do with your friends and the way you celebrate holidays. Anthropologists call all the things that describe a group of people its **culture**. Archaeologists cannot talk to the people they study because the people lived long ago. Therefore, an archaeologist is an anthropologist who studies the culture of a people who are no longer living.

If you think it would be very difficult to study people who are not around to tell us what they were doing, you are right!! Archaeologists are trained to look at objects to understand past cultures.

You may be asking, how does archaeology differ from **history**? Well, history is the written record that people left behind. When people wrote things down on paper or carved messages on objects that other people could read, they were leaving a written