

Lesson Title: Introduction to the Archaeological Process

Author: Nancy Kapp, Howard County Public Schools, Howard County, Maryland

Grade: 4th

Class/Duration: 1 one-hour class period

VSC Standard and Indicator:

1. Standard: General Reading Processes, Indicator: General Reading Comprehension
2. Standard: Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes, Indicator: Explain Maryland's growth and development from 1750-1790 using primary and secondary sources

Objective: Students will examine the archaeological process and see the application of that knowledge to a Maryland site, Dowden's Ordinary.

Vocabulary:

Artifact: an object made and used by people in a specific place at a certain time.

Feature: change in soil color

Stratigraphy: the sequence of layers or deposits which have formed due to human occupation.

Materials:

- Power point presentation (computer and projector),
- Jigsaw lesson handouts (it is easier for the teacher to check groups visually if each topic is on a different color paper, but not necessary).

Teacher background: This lesson is done in preparation of the students' participation in either a simulated or real archaeological dig (depending on the teacher's resources). Information about the Dowden's Ordinary Site is on the attached Teacher Resource Sheet #1, The Dowden's Ordinary Site (information taken from "Integrating Archaeology into American History" presented at the Summer Seminar Series 2005, Montgomery College (Tara Tetrault and Mary Gallagher).

Lesson Development:

1. Begin the Powerpoint. Ask students to think about what they believe archaeology is. Allow a few minutes think time. Instruct the students to turn to a student beside him or her and discuss what they believe archaeology is. Have students share their definitions. Then present the information on the power point:
 - Archaeology is the study of remains of past human activity.
 - Archaeologists use these remains to reconstruct and interpret the past.
 - Archaeology is a subdivision of anthropology, the study of humankind.

2. Jigsaw lesson. Each student is assigned a home group and an expert group. The home group should have four students. Each student will go to a different expert group, “Background Research,” “Fieldwork,” “Laboratory Work and Analysis,” and “Interpretation.” In their expert group they will each be given roles – reader, summarizer, and question responder (three students should be given this role). All students read the text silently. After each person has read the text silently, one student will read the text out loud. The summarizer will restate what was said in the text in his or her own words. The reader will read each question and one of the three question responders will answer the question. Each responder must answer one of the three questions. The students will then return to their home groups. Each student will summarize what they have learned to their home group in this order – “Background Research,” “Fieldwork,” “Laboratory Work and Analysis” and “Interpretation.”
3. Share the remaining slides of the Powerpoint which show actual slides representing the archaeological process. Use the information in Teacher Resource Sheet #1 to enhance the slides. The slides are in the order of the archaeological process and show many of the tools used for excavation. This information will give them a clearer idea of what actually occurs during the fieldwork phase.
4. Debriefing. Have the students think-pair-share questions they still have about the archaeological process. Allow each pair to share their questions and record on chart paper. Keep this paper posted throughout the unit and check off as answers are found to the questions.

Assessment: Observation of jigsaw lesson and debriefing.

Extension: Independent research of a historical site in Maryland.

Teacher Resource Sheet #1: The Dowden's Ordinary Site

(Information taken from "Integrating Archaeology into American History" presented at the Summer Seminar Series 2005, Montgomery College
(Tara Tetrault and Mary Gallagher).

Structure:

Dowden's Ordinary was built of log construction and was one and one-half stories with gabled dormers and a shingled roof. Dowden's Ordinary had two fireplaces located on either end of the building and a separate kitchen for cooking called a **closeby**.

What are Inns and what functions do they serve:

Inns and taverns provided a place for people traveling between Frederick and Washington to stay for the night or to receive a hot meal. Taverns also provided the community with a place to socialize. Locals would frequent the Inn to receive the latest news from Washington or from the local community and they acted as a political and financial center for the community. Inn keepers, like Michael Dowden found themselves in the role of acting as judge where they could witness legal documents such as bills of sale and wills.

Only the wealthiest of landowners would have owned an Inn since they had to have financial backing to obtain tavern licenses. Strict rules governed the licensing of Inns by the State Assembly. The location, site, and the accommodations offered were established by the government. For example, the 1780 Act Regulating Taverns was one of several acts guiding Inns, so that an Ordinary located within the county seat had to guarantee six good feather beds with sufficient covering and 10 stables. Taverns in the rural area could offer three feather beds and stabling for six horses. These laws also governed the liquors served and the prices charged for food and drink.

Research on tavern licenses between 1750 and 1800 in Montgomery and Lower Frederick Counties reveals that many of these Inns were located 15 to 20 miles apart. These Inns ran along the Rockville pike (then known as the Frederick to Georgetown corridor) or other large crossroads like Darnstown Road (Route 28). Travelers could stop and stay the night at Inns in Rockville and in Clarksburg.

By 1844 passenger mail stops were added in Tennallytown, Middlebrook, and Hyattstown. Mail couriers made the twenty-two hour trip between Frederick and Rockville during the day and ran the turnpike to Washington during the evening. The Revolutionary War was followed by a depression causing financial depression among consumers. Shortage of cash made financial ventures like owning and operating a tavern a risky business.

Historic Context:

Michael Ashton Dowden built the inn in 1753 and petitioned the Frederick Courts for a license to operate an Inn in 1754. Dowden was open for business in the spring of 1754. it provided food and shelter for travelers and operated as a social center for the town. The local magistrate often held court in the Inns. Stagecoaches stopped twice a week at Dowden's, bringing mail and news from Washington or outlying communities.

General Braddock stayed at the inn while his troops camped on the adjacent hillside in Clarksburg from April 13 through April 15, 1755.

The British attempted to impose taxes on colonists and proprietors, like Michael Dowden. When Dowden and other merchants rebelled and refused to pay the tax, it resulted in a court action (eventually called the Repudiation Act of 1765).

In 1760 Michael Dowden deeded an adjacent parcel called Dowden's Luck to his son and daughter-in-law, John and Mary Dowden. Michael Dowden died shortly after and Hammer Hill and Dowden's Ordinary were passed on to his son, John Dowden.

John Dowden operated the hotel through the Revolutionary War. The depression following the Revolutionary War caused John Dowden to close the hotel and change it into a tavern. Dowden's Ordinary then turned into more of a gathering place and became a meeting place for groups, including the Sons of Liberty who convened there beginning in 1770.

Sometimes between 1770 and 1780, John Dowden sold the hotel and tavern to Basil Roberts. Basil Roberts changed Dowden's Ordinary to Robert's Tavern. Stage coaches that traveled through Clarksburg would stop and passengers would stay at Robert's Tavern.

By the early 1800's, Basil Roberts sold Robert's Tavern to Frederick Scholl. Scholl operated the tavern for years before passing it on to his son, Jacob Scholl. Jacob Scholl sold the Ordinary to Leonard D. Shaw. Shaw changed the name to "Shaw Hill." He built a blacksmith shop and converted the rooms in the tavern to apartments which he then rented to local farmers and workers. Shaw converted the tavern into living space by 1880 because by that time, farm laborers such as John Snowden, John porter, William Porter, and John Wims were living on the premises.

Records show that James Titus Bennett and his two sons lived at the Inn in 1906. Later, Jack Mason and Will Brown and his family also lived in Dowden's Ordinary and by 1910 Asa Hyatt Welsh operated the Dowden's Ordinary as a distiller and grocery shop.

In 1915 the Daughters of the American (DAR) placed a large boulder on the edge of the property next to Route 355, Frederick Road to mark the location of the Dowden's Ordinary in Clarksburg. This stone was placed on the property in May 1915 when the Inn was still standing. The dilapidated tavern was torn down in 1924.

The Archaeological Fieldwork performed at the Dowden's Ordinary:

Archaeologists completed a controlled surface collection or survey. A number of one by one test excavation units were completed at points across the site to find the foundation. In 200 a trench was placed across the site, hoping to find the foundation.

Surveys and excavations were performed by the Maryland National-Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) and Montgomery College (MC) with the assistance of the Archaeological Society of Maryland (ASM). Soil was screened in a ¼" mesh screen which is consistent with industry standards. Artifacts were bagged and inventoried and sent to the laboratory for processing.

Laboratory Processing:

The material culture excavated from the Dowden's Ordinary site includes a variety of food consumption and serving vessels and bottles, faunal remains, and fragments of buttons, hardware, and a coin. The objects range in date from 1740 creamware fragments to late dating porcelains and yellow wares. Some of the ceramics represent fragments of food serving bowls and other decorative refined wares. Bottle glass fragments indicate the presence of beer and wine bottles, as well as clear bottle fragments which may have been used to store liquor. The archaeologist retrieved one salt glazed stoneware fragment. Salt glazed stoneware was the first refined ceramic to be used among the early colonists in the New World, making this a very exciting find to have at Dowden's Ordinary. Archaeologists also found one trash pit which yielded a wide range of artifacts dating from the 1760's to the 1770's to date.

ARCHAEOLOGY

An Introduction

What is archaeology?

- Turn to the person sitting beside you and discuss what you believe archaeology is.
- Be prepared to share your ideas.

What is archaeology?

- Archaeology is the study of remains of past human activity.
- Archaeologists use these remains to reconstruct and interpret the past.
- Archaeology is a subdivision of anthropology, the study of humankind.

The Archaeological Process

- Background Research
- Fieldwork
- Laboratory Work and Analysis
- Interpretation

The Archaeological Process – a Jigsaw Lesson

- You will participate in two groups – a home group and an expert group.
- In your expert group you will learn about one aspect of the archaeological process – research, fieldwork, lab work and analysis, or interpretation.
- You will bring your information back to your home group and share what you have learned.

Dowden's Ordinary Site

Dowden's Ordinary is a site located in Clarksburg, Maryland, in Montgomery County.



Fieldwork – Excavating Dowden's Ordinary Site



Fieldwork – Excavating Dowden's Ordinary Site



Fieldwork – Recording Dowden's Ordinary Site

Recording the position of the rocks unearthed at the trash pit unit.



Laboratory Work and Analysis

Artifacts such as this piece of ceramic were uncovered at the site.



BACKGROUND RESEARCH

How does an archaeologist decide where to excavate? Though a site may be found quite accidentally, most often it is the result of research. It all starts with a question. For example:

1. What was the chronology (order) of historical events in an area or region?
2. What objects or artifacts* can be found to add to our knowledge about the history or culture of a region or time period?
3. How did people live or die in ancient societies?

Another reason an archaeologist may excavate a site is because they have been hired by a construction company. Construction applications are reviewed by government agencies before building projects can disturb the ground and possibly endanger archaeological and historic resources.

Archaeologists then begin preliminary research. This may include title research (finding out the sequence of who owned a piece of property and when), visiting a local historical society, the library, etc. Most archaeologists consult with a Geographic Information System specialist for the purpose of obtaining historic and current maps.

Once a site has been decided on, the archaeologist must obtain permission from appropriate government bodies.

*An artifact is an object made and used by people in a specific place at a certain time.

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Where could an archaeologist do research in order to find information about a particular site?
2. What kinds of questions do archaeologists want to answer?
3. Why would a construction company hire an archaeologist?

FIELDWORK

The site to be excavated is placed on a survey grid and trenches or units are laid out in positions which look the most promising based on the research. The trenches may vary in size from two square meters to ten meters square. Often a site which has not been excavated before will have its trenches scattered so as to have the best chance of finding the richest deposits.

Field work is done in a meticulous manner. The archaeologist measures out the trench or unit that will be excavated. He or she takes measurements using a level. All measurements and information from a unit are recorded on a data sheet. The fieldworkers gently remove layers of soil, looking for features* and artifacts**. As they find artifacts, they are placed in labeled bags. The bags are labeled with the unit number, the stratigraphic*** level, the names of the excavating team, and the date. The artifacts found in each trench or unit will then be taken to the lab for analysis.

*A feature is a change in soil color.

**An artifact is an object made and used by people in a specific place at a certain time.

***Stratigraphy is the sequence of layers or deposits which have formed due to human occupation. These layers may be floor surfaces, building fill, post holes or any number of occupational activities which leave their mark on the archaeological record. It is only through an understanding of the stratigraphy of a site that the archaeologist can work out which layers are earlier than others.

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Where is information from a unit or trench recorded?
2. Where are artifacts placed when they are located? Why?
3. What is stratigraphy and why is it important?

LABORATORY WORK AND ANALYSIS

A lot of work is carried out on the material retrieved from an excavation long after the field work has been completed. Artifacts* of ceramic, glass, stone and bone are carefully washed in plain water to remove loose dirt. These artifacts are then sorted by material. Some categories include ceramic, glass, building materials (nails, window glass, wood timber), organics (leather or cloth), bone, shell and seeds. Standard descriptions of all kinds of artifacts have been developed and given codes. A computer is used and the codes are entered as data. In this way statistical studies may be carried out and catalogues can be printed.

In the laboratory some archaeologists will concern themselves with pottery, another glass. Some will catalogue the animal bones and others will examine the metal objects. In the end, each has to rely on the others.

*An artifact is an object made and used by people in a specific place at a certain time.

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. What is the first thing that happens in the lab to an artifact?
2. What categories are artifacts sorted into?
3. What are artifacts catalogued?

INTERPRETATION

Archaeological investigation should only be undertaken by trained professionals. Many years of school and practical experience go into understanding the proper theory and method for excavating and interpreting sites.

After research, fieldwork, laboratory work, and analysis are completed, the archaeologist writes a report of what has happened at the site. This report includes the archaeologist's interpretation of the relevance of the site. Also included in the report is information about the artifacts found (date and place of manufacture if possible), including pictures and illustrations. An archaeological report generally contains large numbers of artifact drawings. This is to allow other archaeologists to examine the finds and make comparisons with their own site. No site is dug nor interpreted in isolation. At all times the archaeologist at one site is trying to fit their site into the general framework of history that has developed from work at other sites. Each site will be different and have its own local variations but what is important is how that site relates to others.

The product of archaeological research is the publication of site reports, histories, books and the presentation of lectures and exhibits so that the public may learn of the past.

If you think you have found archaeological remains, be certain to contact your local government or museum to find out the correct procedure for preserving the history around you!

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. What is included in an archaeologists report?
2. Why isn't a site dug in isolation?
3. What should you do if think you've find archaeological remains?