

GLOSSARY OF **ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS**

- Anthropology** The study of humankind, with particular emphasis on its cultural and biological adaptations.
- Archaeology** The anthropological study of past lifeways, cultures, and cultural processes through the investigation of material remains left behind by humans.
- Artifacts** Any portable object made, used, and/or modified by humans. Common precontact artifacts found archaeologically include: spear points, arrowheads, knives, chipped or broken stone debris, ground stone axes, grinding stones, mortars and pestles, awls, adzes, gouges, pottery, clothing and ornamental pins, decorative items and ornaments, scraping tools, hammerstones, bone fishhooks, stone drills, and beads. Common historical artifacts include glass (window and container); iron and other metal items and tools; nails; bricks; European and American ceramics or china; metal utensils; clothing items such as buttons, buckles, and leather footwear; worked wood; horse equipage; gun parts; household items such as pins, scissors, and thimbles; furniture hardware; copper/brass and iron kettle fragments; beads and ornaments; farm equipment; etc.
- Associations** The relationships of artifacts and features at a site, based on provenience and context.
- Context** The position of an artifact in its soil matrix and horizontal and vertical location, and its relationship with other artifacts and features, related to the behavioral activities which placed it there.
- CRM** Cultural resource management. The protection, preservation, and recovery of information from archaeological sites, under federal and state laws.
- Culture** A system of shared, learned, symbolic human behavior for adaptation to our natural and social environment. Culture may be thought of as a system composed of interrelated parts or subsystems, where a change in one part affects or influences the other parts. Subsystems interrelated with culture include technology, communication (and language), demography, psychology, economics, sociocultural organization, beliefs and values, subsistence, settlement, environment, etc.
- Excavation** The systematic recovery of archaeological deposits through the removal and screening of soil.
- Features** Non-portable evidence of past human behavior, activity, and technology, found on or in the ground. Precontact features commonly include fire pits and hearths, burned earth and clay, trash and garbage pits, postholes, evidence of house floors or basins, storage pits, clusters of artifacts (e.g., chipped and broken stones, caches of projectile points, ceramics or pottery sherds), human and animal burials, clusters of animal bone, and earthworks (such as mounds and circular enclosures), petroglyphs and pictographs (respectively symbols carved or pecked into stone and painting or drawings on stone), and middens (cultural refuse buildup). Historical features include evidence of fires and fire pits, ash and charcoal lenses and stains, trash and garbage pits and dumps, middens, postholes, house foundations and other structural remains (e.g., wells, cisterns, fence lines, ditches, canals, landscapes, embankments, mill races, dams, old trails and roads), cemeteries, human burials, and clusters of historical artifacts.

Historical Archaeology	The study of past human lifeways, cultures, and cultural processes after written records occur for human groups. Historical Archaeology studies past humans through the use of written records and the investigation of their material culture.
Mitigation	The large-scale recovery, by excavation, of enough archaeological information from a site so that the entire range of materials present and information on past activities and behavior there may be retrieved. Termed Phase III in CRM investigations.
Precontact	Human activities, events, and occupations before written records. In North American, this primarily includes Native American precontact cultures.
Provenience	The horizontal and vertical location of an artifact at a site.
Seriation	The placement of artifacts into a relative chronology or time sequence, based upon similarity of characteristics, their frequency of occurrence, and their relative stratigraphic location.
Site	The presence or occurrence of one or more artifacts or features indicates an archaeological site. An archaeological site is an instance of past human behavior or activity, where humans conducted some activity and left evidence of it behind, on or in the ground. Some common site types include refuse heaps and/or dumps, old homesteads and farmsteads, artifact caches, villages and camps, cemeteries, family plots, burials, workshops (e.g., stone, metal, ceramic, etc. debris), quarries, garden and field plots, earthworks (mounds, embankments, dams, enclosures, fortifications, canals, etc.), old parks and cultural landscapes, old trails and transportation routes, mills, towns, mines and mining camps, and industrial and business sites.
Stratigraphy	Horizons, strata, or layers of soil deposited at a location, where the deepest strata were deposited the earliest, and the more recent layers deposited higher in the stratigraphic sequence.
Survey	The systematic recovery and recording of archaeological information such as site locations and artifacts by visually inspecting the surface of the ground. Termed Phase I in CRM investigations.
Test Excavations	Systematic excavation of a representative portion or percentage of a site to evaluate and determine its nature and extent, what information is present, whether there are intact or in situ deposits present, and the degree of disturbance to the site, often to determine whether it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Termed Phase II in CRM.

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