



*“It’s not what you find. It’s
what you find out.”*

—David Hurst Thomas
Curator at the American Museum of Natural
History, Department of Anthropology.

field school every summer at a Virginia site. Contact Mike Barber (mike.barber@dhr.virginia.gov), State Archaeologist, at DHR for more information.

- Take part in state archaeology celebrations. October is Virginia Archaeology Month. See the Fauquier County Department of Community Development for Archaeology Month activities in and around Fauquier County.
- Visit an archaeology center, museum, or park.
- Join with others in advocating the conservation of archaeological sites and collections.

For More Information:

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources,
Division of Archaeology
www.dhr.virginia.gov/arch_DHR/archaeo_index.htm

The Council for Virginia Archaeologists
www.cova-inc.org

Society for American Archaeology, Resources for
Educators & Volunteer Fieldwork Opportunities
www.saa.org/publicftp/PUBLIC/resources/foredu.html

National Park Service Archaeology Program
www.nps.gov/archeology/index.htm

FAUQUIER COUNTY

**DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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Protecting Archeological Sites



FAUQUIER COUNTY

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

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To date, over 300 archaeological sites have been recorded in Fauquier County—prehistoric camp sites, cemeteries, house sites, churches, mills, taverns, tanneries, canals, mines and battlefields, with many others yet to be identified. Although not easily detected on the landscape, archaeological sites are important, irreplaceable resources that can reveal missing pieces of Fauquier County's past.

What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of the past through material remains. It is a subfield of Anthropology, the study of all human culture. From ten thousand-year-old projective points made by the earliest County occupants, to twentieth century building sites, archaeology analyzes the physical remnants of the past in pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of our history.

Why Study & Protect Archaeological Sites?

Archaeological study helps us comprehend not only where and when people lived, but also why and how they lived, examining the changes in human activity over time and seeking patterns to explain everything from how people first came to inhabit the Americas, to the origins of agriculture and complex societies. Unlike the discipline of



History, which relies primarily on written records and documents to interpret historic events, Archaeology allows us to delve far back into time before written languages existed. In addition, Archaeology can inform us about the lives of past individuals, families, and communities that might otherwise remain invisible without the benefit of written records (for example, tenant farmers, slaves, and immigrants).

Fragile Resources

Archaeological sites are under constant threat due in part to their fragility. Land development can cause physical disturbance or obliteration of sites. Looting destroys archaeological sites through careless, disruptive removal of soil layers and artifacts and robs the public of the information these sites could provide. Natural forces, such as erosion, also take their toll on archaeological sites.

Context Matters – Beware of Relic Hunting!

Context in archaeology refers to the relationship that artifacts have to each other and the situation in which they are found. Before removing an artifact from an archaeological site, an archaeologist will record the exact location and soil layer of its discovery. When an artifact is removed without recording its precise location, the context is lost and the artifact has little or no information value.

For example, in 1926 in New Mexico, a stone spear point was found lodged between the ribs of a species of bison that went extinct at the end of the last Ice Age. The location of the artifact settled an argument that had gone on for decades, establishing once and for all that

people had inhabited North America since the late Pleistocene Era. It was the context or association between the bison skeleton and the artifact that proved this.

It's More Than the Artifacts

Most people understand that data collected from archaeological sites relies in part on dating artifacts—the objects identified at a site that are manufactured by hand or machine. But data is also collected through the identification of features and ecological evidence. Features are immovable manufactured objects, such as building foundations, walls, trash pits, hearths, wells, and earthen forts or trenches. Ecological evidence provides information about a site's environment throughout history. Examples of ecological evidence or “ecofacts” can be discovered using soils, seeds, pollen, animal bone, shells, or charcoal.

How to Help

The public can help protect archaeological sites by becoming aware of archaeological resources around them and being good site stewards. Some property owners in Fauquier County have decided to protect archaeological sites on their land by placing preservation easements on their properties, which can protect a site in perpetuity. Here are a few other ways to become involved in archaeology:

- Join a national or state archaeological society. Many societies offer lectures and annual conferences at low or no cost.
- Volunteer to work on an archaeological project. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) usually hosts a