

As diverse information professionals, we often work with subject-experts outside of our ‘wheelhouse.’ Sometimes, this can lead us to struggles with ‘imposter syndrome.’ One of the best skills in combatting this particular anxiety, is to imagine yourself ‘undercover.’ So last year, as an archivist, I went ‘undercover’ to the world of archeologists. My name is Cara DeSimone, and I’m here to share what I have learned with all of you – because sharing knowledge is how we advance [hoarding knowledge holds us all back].



Introductions

- Myths & Stereotypes

Federal Archeology

- Overview & Legislation

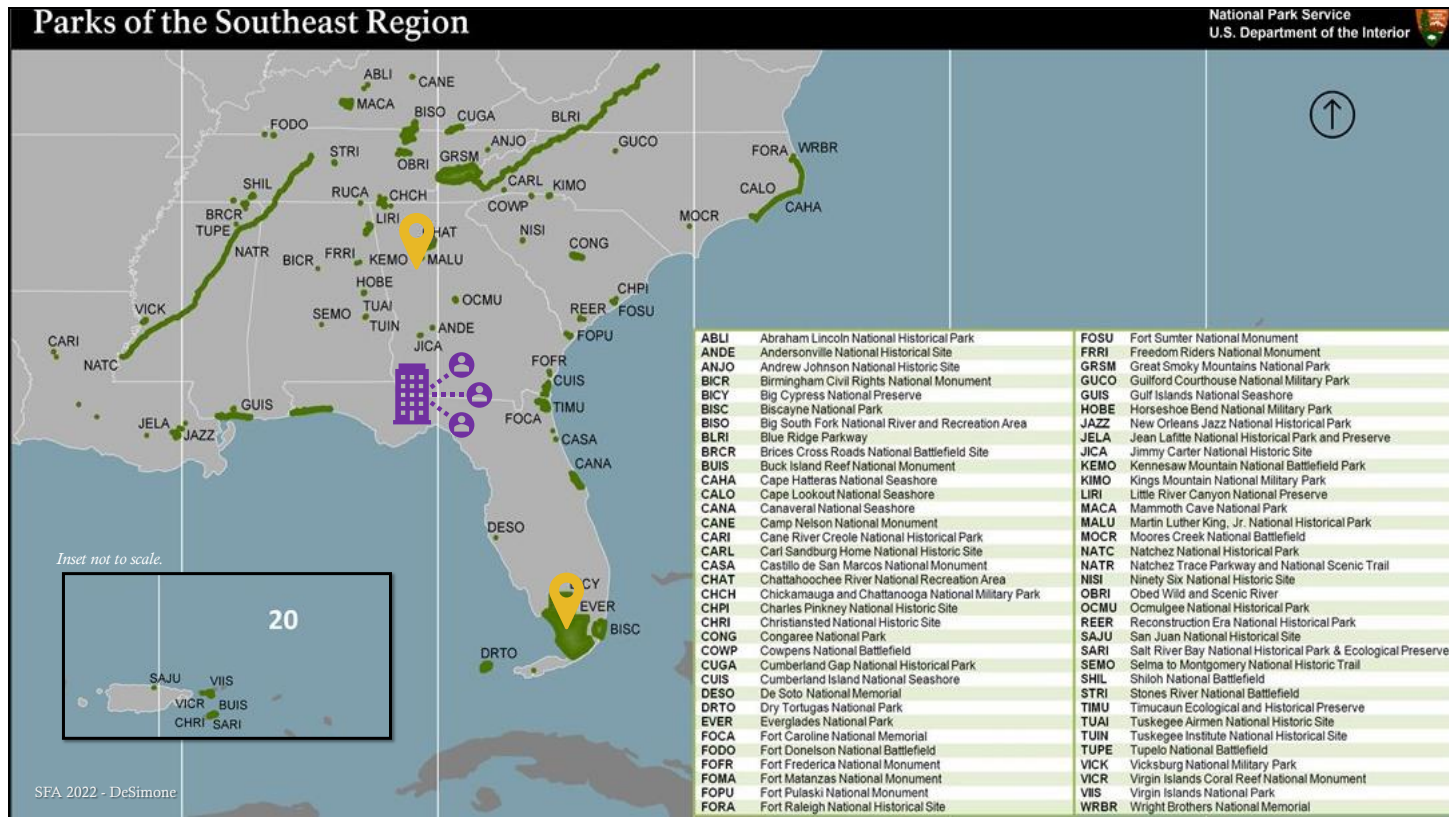
Experiential Learning

- AVAR @ SARA II

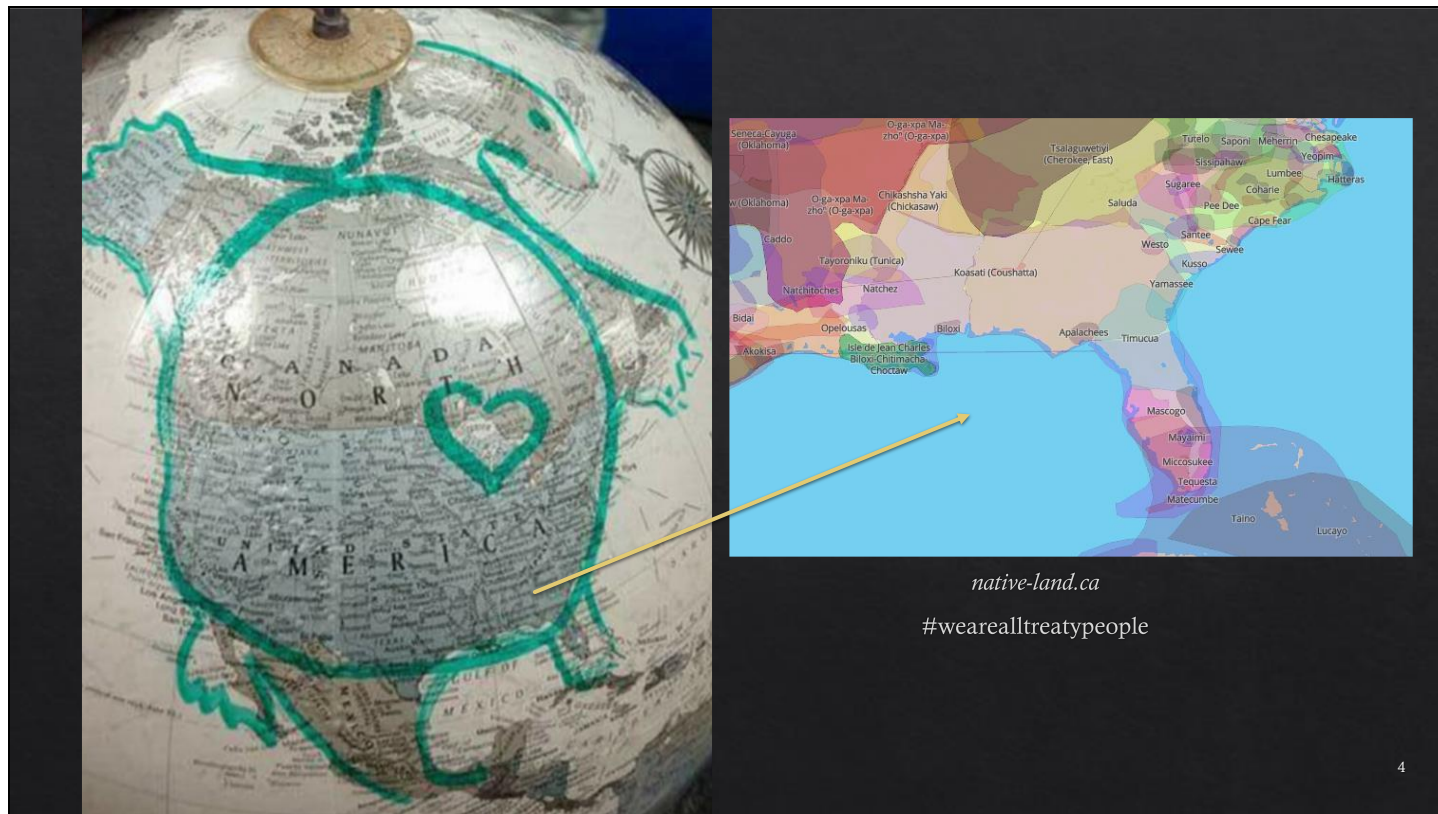
Thanks & Closing

- Resources & References

Here is a brief overview of our discussion today. First I'd like to do a little bit of mythbusting. Then, I'll explain a bit about federal archeology – what is it, why we do it, and how it relates to archives. After that, I will share my experiences from the field; and we'll close with some photos.



SEAC (the Center) is located in Tallahassee FL. Our archaeologists and other cultural resources staff travel throughout the Southeast region to support over 60 parks. During their travels, our staff generate a large volume of very diverse records. The yellow markers here represent our main Southeast Regional office in Atlanta, and the South Florida Collections Management Center to the south. SoFlo manages collections for most of our Florida parks, as well as our insular partners in the Caribbean (featured in the inset). NPS also operates Archeology Centers in the Midwest, Southwest, and Alaskan areas, with a Museum center supporting Archeology programs in the northeast.



Before we move further, I would like to offer my thanks to our hosts and the Meeting Committee planners. I also would like to acknowledge the complex relationship between the Department of the Interior and Native Americans. While we have made exponential progress of late, there is always room for improvement. A fundamental value of the NPS, and DOI, is stewardship of the natural and cultural resources entrusted to our care. The Center where I work is located just East of the Appalachicola river, which once marked the western bounds of Apalachee Tribal lands. Additionally, the great state of Florida is home to many other tribal cultures, both past and present, including the Timucua, the Calusa, the Seminole, the Miccosukee, and Muskogee Creek. It is both a duty and my personal honor to offer thanks and acknowledgement to the original stewards of Turtle Island through my work with the Park Service. Native-land.ca is a wonderful, interactive map that illustrates tribal territories, language groups, and treaties in geographic context – and is one of my favorite resources.



<https://www.davidhughes.org/this-is-not-my-beautiful-house/>

How did I get here?

- Wayne State SIS, 2018 – 2020
 - 2018 random initial conference with Stephen & AVAR
 - 2019 internship with FIT for The Radiation, Inc. Archives
 - 2020 projects postponed due to pandemic
- Southeast Archeology Center, 2020 – 2022
 - Contract, Archives Technician
 - LWOP to Volunteer with AVAR

5

Okay so the few Talking Heads fans in the room, thanks for laughing... sorry for the earworm. but I find myself asking – myself – this question, all. The. Time. So, here's the short version. Stephen, the CEO of AVAR, had posted in a online veteran's group calling for volunteers. We first spoke in 2018, and he got me thinking about the ways that archeology and archives might intersect – at this point I didn't even know SEAC existed! I wasn't able to make the 2019 dig season because I was knee deep in my masters studies. During my last semester, I applied and was selected for a contract position with SEAC as an Archives Technician. Since then, I have been studying archeology to 'catch up' to the materials.



During my time in the US Navy, I worked extensively with administrative and military records, as well as technical engineering documents. This is one factor of many that led to me pursuing a career in archives, and I could not be happier with the results. Apparently, there is a [comparatively] large community of veterans that work in archeology. I never would have considered archeology as a career, but it found me and I fell in love. Next let me debunk some common myths, before I get into some of the details.

PHOTOS: LUCASFILM, LTD.; EVERETT COLLECTION

MYTH #1



WRONG DOCTOR

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7

SME's are wonderful, but they do tend to get trapped in their own little boxes. As archivists, we must walk a fine line and gain trust to be accepted into their knowledge circles. To fully understand an archeological project, there's no better way than to – literally – get your hands dirty. Meet archeologists. They are neat folks! And while they are a little particular about their favorite hats, they hate being compared to Indiana Jones or Dr. Grant from Jurassic Park – that is actually paleontology, and those materials only comprise 8% of NPS holdings! Not all archeologists hold a doctorate degree, but they must hold a masters to be considered a Registered Professional Archivist, which is their equivalent to our ACA.

MYTH #2



WRONG ARCHIVES

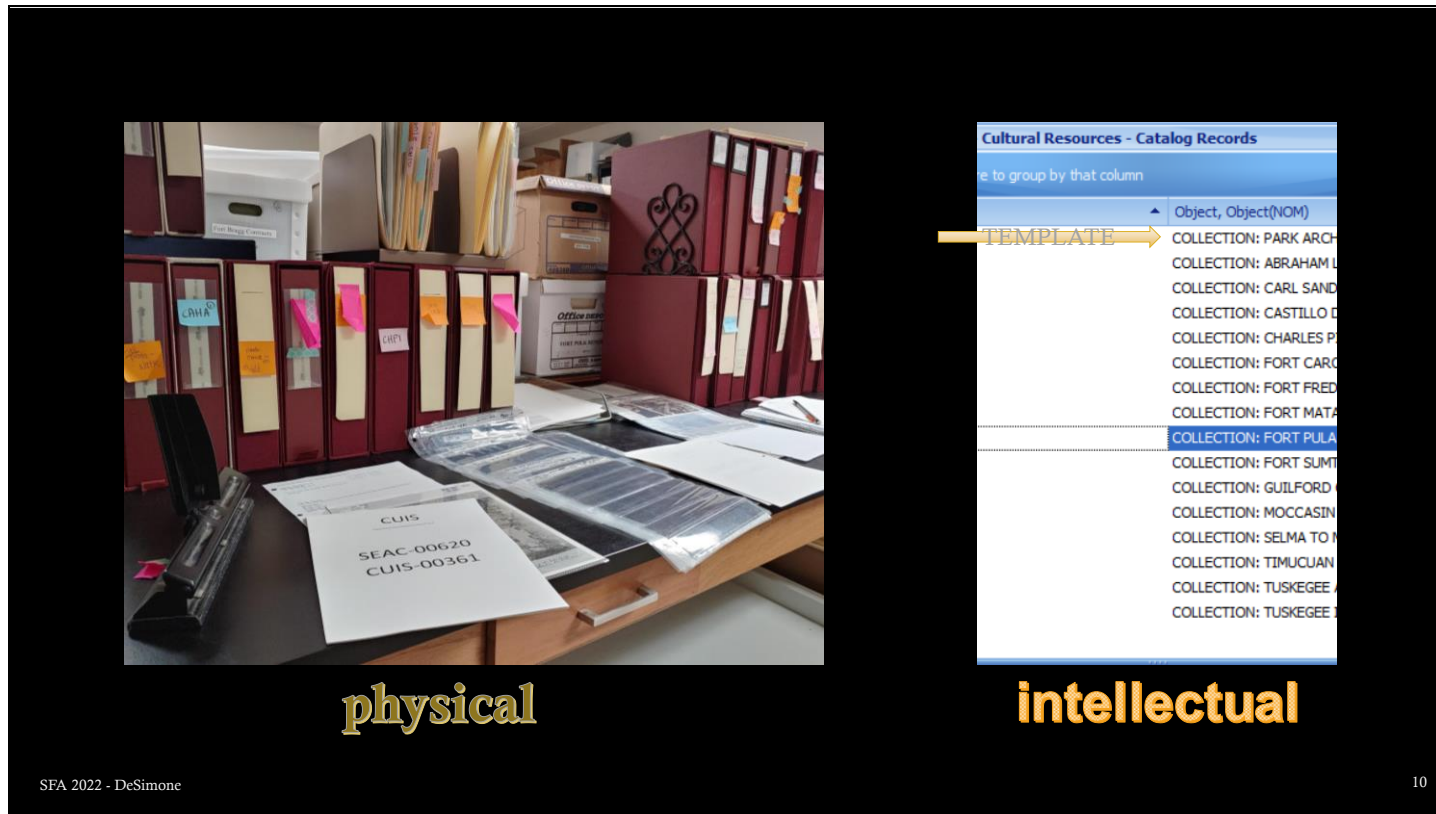
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8

It's important to remember that preconceived notions can flow both ways – and most field archeologists have little understanding of archives. They generate research, but after the paper is published, it's mostly 'out-of-sight, out of mind.'"



Archeologists think I work here, and that little filing elves take care of all the records. I know I'm kind of short, but Charlie... is definitely not an elf! That being said, I have been known to work some 'magic' behind the stacks.



physical

intellectual

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10

So what DO I do, NOT in the Chamber of Secrets?

Over the past two years, I have reorganized most of the Center's photographic materials – instead of strictly adhering to a format-based scheme that resulted in photos from specific parks and projects being spread throughout multiple locations, we have moved to a Park-based organization structure.

The format-based arrangement was a long-standing practice based in museum tradition of accountability. Everything – sometimes every individual slide – received an index number. This practice was unsustainable and over the decades caused a number of problems and inconsistencies to arise. Part of my job is to find and resolve these discrepancies. It's like a never-ending scavenger hunt! Here On the left, a standard look at my miles of piles and files, I was specifically working on the black and white negatives for Cumberland Island this day.

On the right, we have the beauty of good metadata – when you are able to standardize something enough to replicate it as a template, you have succeeded. While homebound due to pandemic restrictions, I worked on compiling records to help with intellectual control and organization of our materials. Each collection listed here has made it through the entire processing... process. This was something I only began to tackle after my field time with AVAR, because I couldn't quite contextualize the big picture. AVAR helped me understand how to organize and describe the materials we

have in a way that will best support our researchers' requests. But you're all familiar with archives and records, so let's explore federal archeology a bit! For one, what does that even mean?

Slide 11



Or, as I have often asked in the office, what is this giant pile of dirt??

Why would the government care about dirt? In some cases, because they are legally obligated to. In other cases, it may be because we want to learn or discover something new about historic events, past cultures, or ongoing environmental changes.

Definitions

“a scientific practice which uncovers the ways people lived in the past through the places and artifacts they left behind.”

“The Past has Layers,” NPS, 2022

Archeological Resources Protection Act,
1979 & 1988

“any material remains of past human life or activities that are of archeological interest and [are] at least 100 years old.”

“archeology with federal involvement in any form, including permits, licenses, funding, or work on federal land.”

Bennie Keel, Chief of Inter-agency
Archeological Services, 1980

12

These definitions have been very helpful to me. First, NPS describes archeology as “a scientific practice which uncovers the ways people lived in the past, through the places and artifacts they left behind.” Collectively, we call these places and artifacts ‘archeological resources.’

ARPA – which is one of the major laws we work with – defines archeological resources as “any material remains of past human life or activities that are of archeological interest and [are] at least 100 years old.” Yes, even something as recent as 1922 could be considered archeological!

Federal Archeology, then, includes pretty much any archeological project with which there is some connection to the federal government.

What's in a word?

*"Provenience most frequently refers to the **in situ location at the time of archaeological discovery** ("the provenience of an artifact"), while *provenance* is customarily used by historians, museums, and commercial entities to refer to chain of custody, ideally from the time of origin to the current location in museums or private collections."*

en.wiktionary.org/wiki/provenience [italics added, bold original]

ArchEO	ArchIV
provenience	provenance
in situ	original order

SFA 2022 - DeSimone 13

One of the foundational concepts of archeology is that of provenience. This is very similar to the archival concept of provenance. Additionally, archeology's term 'in situ' can be loosely compared to our idea of 'original order.' A crucial element of archeology is the 'context' of a site, whether it has been previously disturbed or not. The saying goes, "You can only dig a site once," and so archeologists are trained [and often highly skilled!] at documenting the stages and findings of their investigation. This is good for me, because they generate a LOT of materials to archive... but let's just say archeologists have different information needs in the field versus in the office.

Common Examples of Federal Archaeology

- Compliance
 - Section 106/110
 - Mission Support (document & preserve)
 - Interagency Support
- Research
 - Field Schools (CESU projects)
 - Park or Volunteer initiated projects
- Investigation
 - Illegal activities
 - Disaster recovery and (re-)assessment



the majority of archeological projects fall under one of three common categories. It is of course possible for any given project to fall under multiple categories, or even change categories based on findings. Research may be what most people imagine when it comes to archeology – it certainly was for me - but the majority of our projects actually support federal compliance efforts.

Left: Monitoring and Testing for Reconstruction of Building IV at the Vieux Carre at Rue Decatur, New Orleans, JELA (Folklife Center)



Right: Damage assessment and salvage efforts after Hurricane Matthew, 2017, TIMU



As you can imagine, these are very different scenarios, and as such, require different reporting and recording. Examples of special records for these projects: Construction in the city of NO required documented memorandums of agreement, while hurricane response often includes tree-fall-maps and logs.

JELA-F to be new central HQ for the dispersed park lands c.1997-1998 PI John Cornelison [SEAC-1355] – section 106, required MOU with City of NO/State LA.

TIMU – Historic Cedar Root Ball #1 damage/salvage to Hurricane Matthew c.2017 [SEAC-2859]

*standard [non-legal] disclaimer



Of course, as we all know, if you have questions, please consult counsel. I am not a lawyer, and make no claims to be an authority on the ins and outs of the law; however, I do know enough to share the basics with you.

US Legislation* Regarding Archaeology



- Antiquities Act of 1906
- Historic Sites Act of 1935
- National Historic Preservation Act (**NHPA**) of 1966
 - Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation
- Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960
- Archeological and Historic Preservation Act (AHPA) of 1974
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act (**ARPA**) of 1979
- Abandoned Shipwreck Act (ASA) of 1987
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (**NAGPRA**) of 1990
- Sunken Military Craft Act (SMCA) of 1990
- Curation of Federally Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections (**36 CFR 79**), 2011

there are a number of federal, state, and local protections in place to help (or require) NPS and other government entities to protect the resources entrusted to our care. A resource, in this context, is considered either natural (such as landscapes, geological formations, endangered ecosystems) or cultural (such as historic buildings and districts, burials, and oral histories). I've highlighted the laws we work with the most frequently, but each of these could easily fill an entire presentation on their own. Florida also has their own state laws regarding archeological sites, including submerged wreckage.

Code of Federal Regulations*

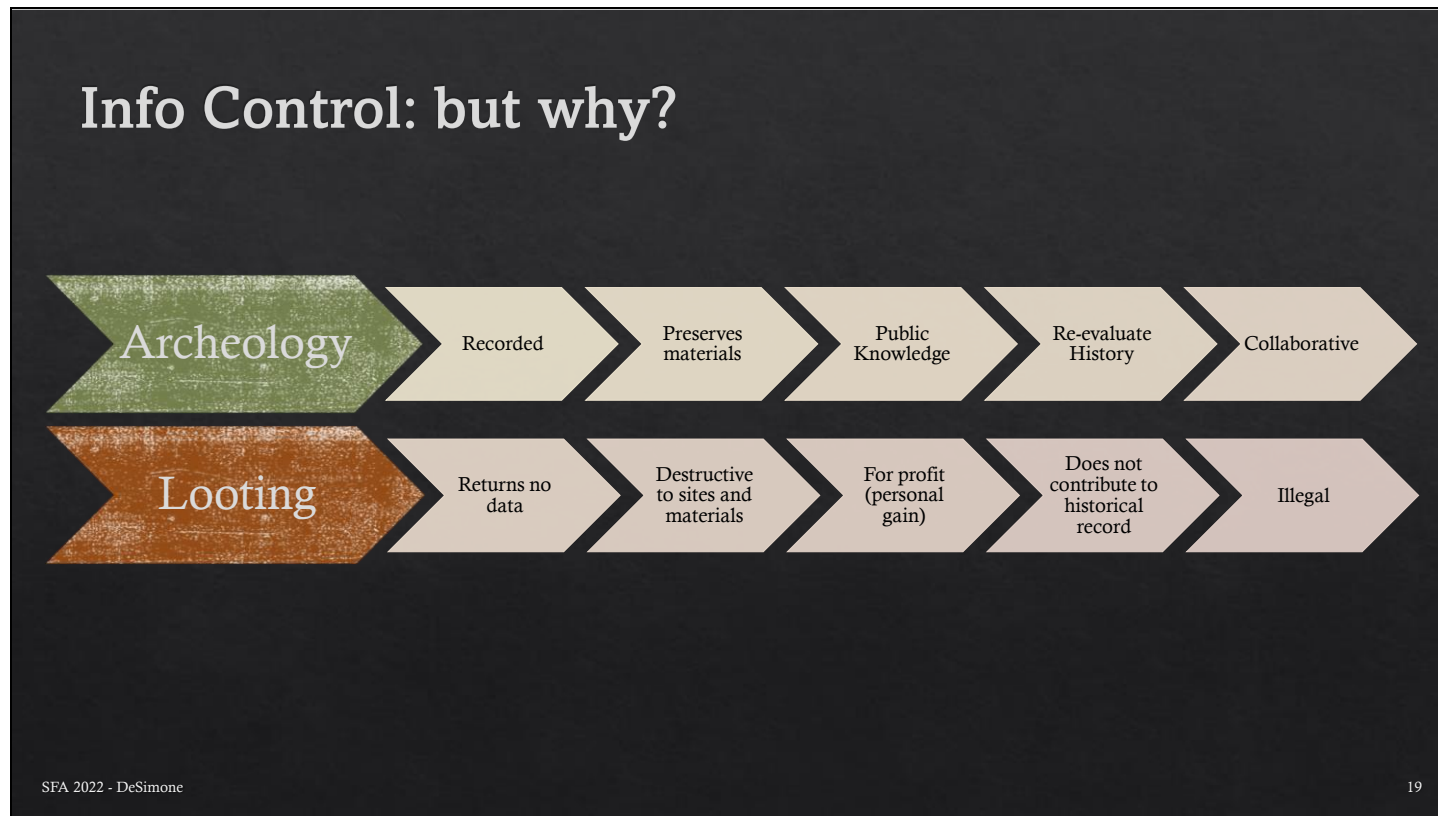
Title 36. Parks, Forests, and Public Property

- Chapter I; National Park Service, Department of the Interior
- *Part 78: Waiver Of Federal Agency Responsibilities Under Section 110 Of The National Historic Preservation Act*
- *Part 79: Curation of Federally-owned and Administered Archaeological Collections*
- Chapter XVI; [FOIA]
- *Part 1600: Public Availability Of Documents And Records*

Title 44. Public Printing and Documents

- Chapter 31: Records Management by Federal Agencies

CFR 36 is a major component of our daily work. This regulation provides guidance for the management of our resources, and how we protect them. CFR 36 also partly dictates what we can and cannot share for public access or in response to FOIA requests. CFR 44 is our Records Management guidance for general practice.



One of the reasons we keep strict controls on information is to prevent looting – remember when I said our teams do investigations? They are mostly investigating unauthorized, illegal, archeological recovery acts on federal lands. While we want people to come and explore and love the parks as much as we do, in order to preserve our resources “for the enjoyment of future generations,” we must also protect them from destruction or unauthorized removal. For this reason, we are required to keep archeological site data – such as coordinates and specific locations – confidential. Remember I said we would circle back to provenience? Unauthorized investigation of an archeological site would be comparable to someone breaking into your repository, grabbing a completely unprocessed collection, and dumping folders out of boxes until they find what is valuable to them. And then leaving.

If you are ever at a park and see something that might be of interest – don’t dig it up yourself, make notes on the location and report to a Park Ranger.

Federal Records

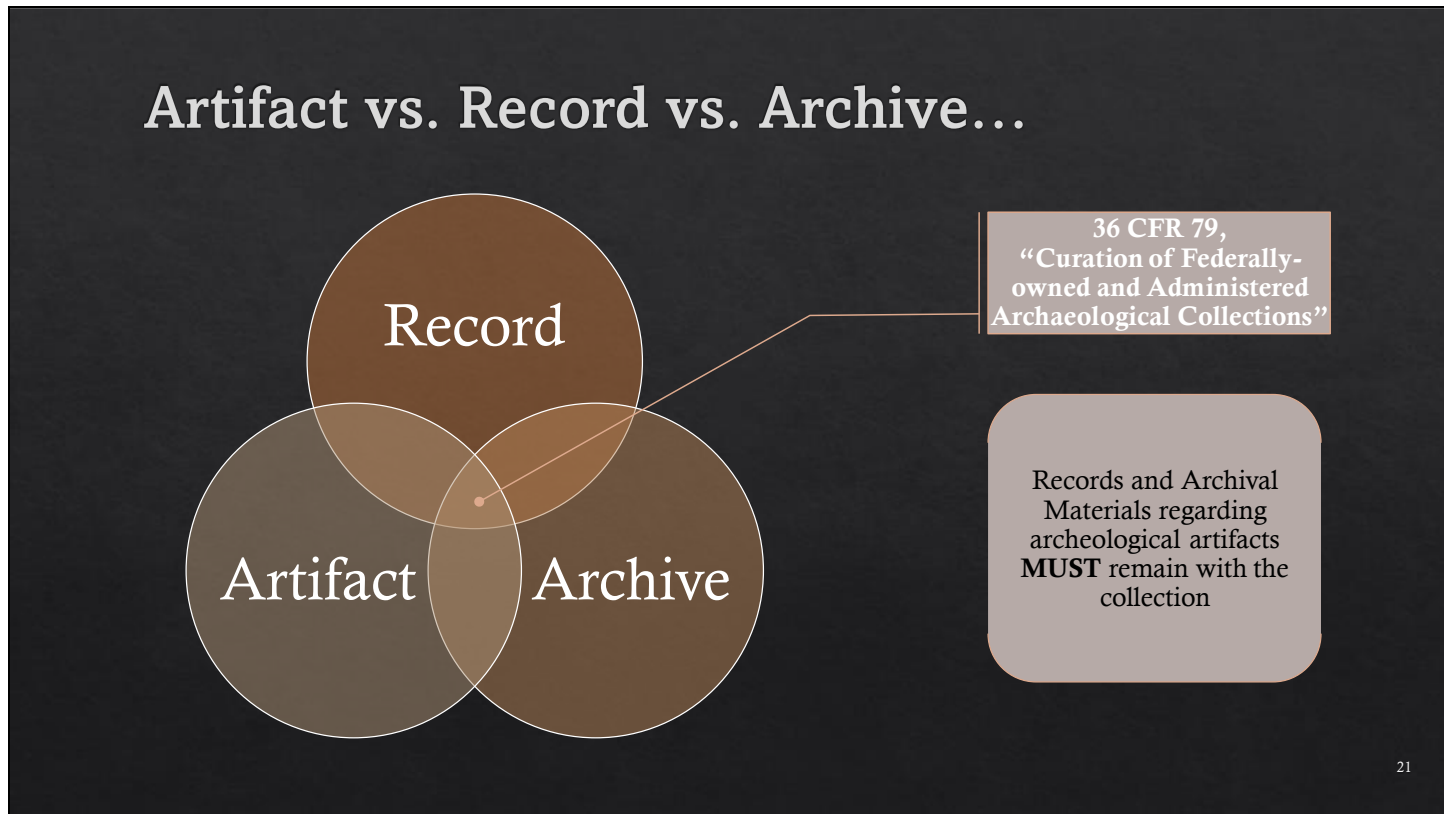
“includes all recorded information, regardless of form or characteristics, made or received by a Federal agency under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the United States Government or because of the informational value of data in them...”

44 USC 3301

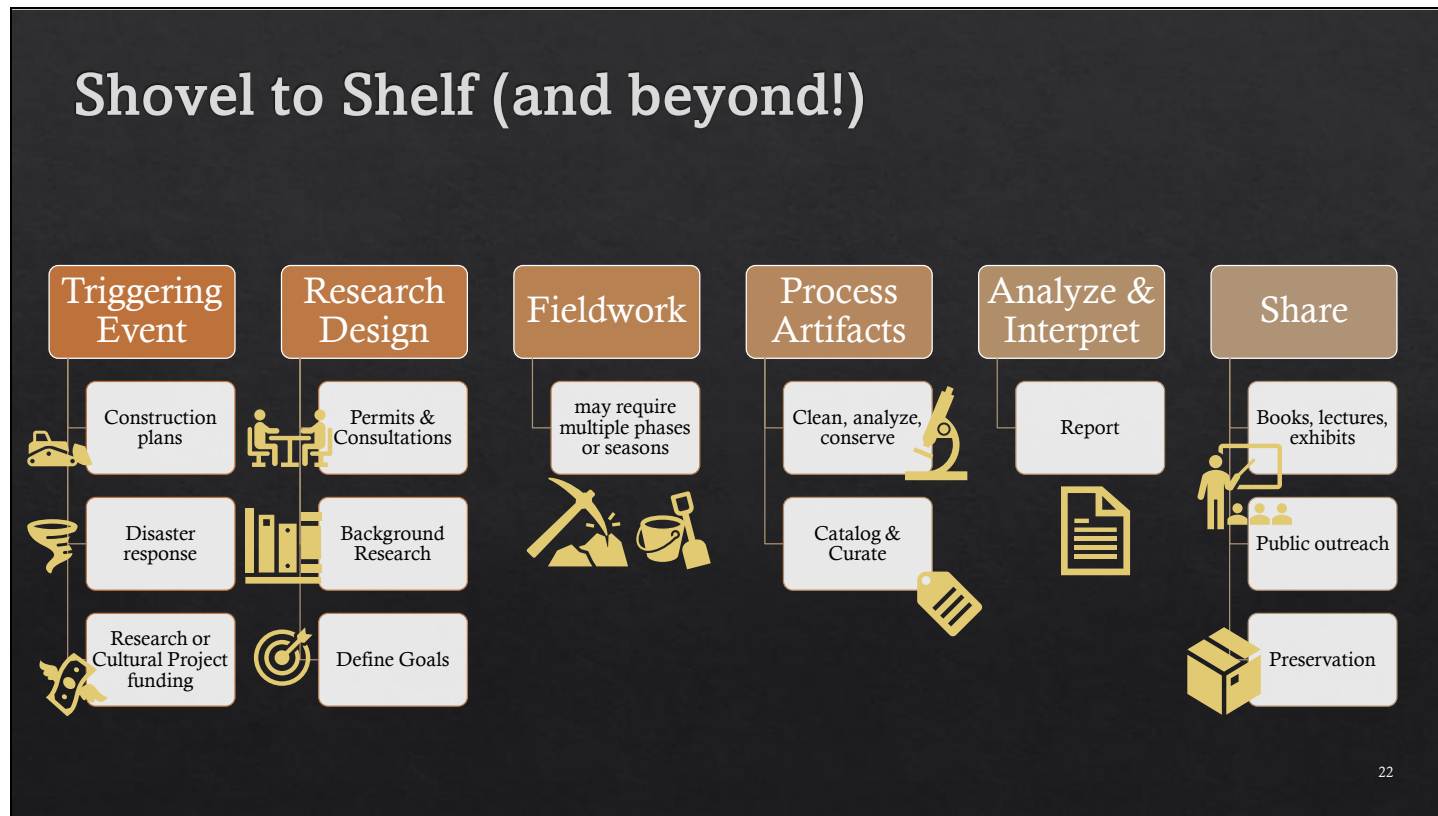


20

A couple [points] to emphasize here, are “all recorded information” and “regardless of form or characteristics.” for our archeologists, this may include GIS/GPS mapping data, digital images, field notes, and lots and lots of internal forms. An additional **factor** that applies to SEAC, but less-so for individual parks, is that all materials must remain together as a collection. The records and materials present explain, describe, and document the items in the collection; explaining the importance and relevance of the items that have been collected from the field. I’ll circle back to this idea after I explain a bit more about the foundations of federal archeology projects.



There's a lot of debate about the differences between records and archives, or archives and museums; but 36 CFR 79 says that no matter what, these connections are so important, that we must keep all these things together, as a collection.



Shovel to Shelf is the colloquial name for the overall process of a federal archeological project. While not every project will go through the same exact steps, they will follow the same pattern.

Of particular note, the research design can occur up to three years in advance for planned projects; but for rapid response projects, the design may be determined in the field, or may change as new information comes to light. A Triggering Event could be one of many things: Plans for renovations, an inadvertent discovery, a proposal funding, etc. After a project is completed, it is standard for the archaeologist prepare a report, and in appropriate cases, to share their findings with applicable audiences and communities. One thing I learned at AVAR was that “good fieldwork generates more questions” – at any step in the process, a project may be stalled, cancelled, recycled, resurrected – you know the archive term for this, say it with me – “it depends.”

At each stage of the process, archeologists and their staff are generating federal records. As you can imagine, this goes far beyond the concept of ‘federal records’ used in standard records management training, which usually covers forms, admin and operations records, and employee information.

**“Show me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.”**

Confucian philosopher Xun Kuang,
4th Century B.C.

Shamelessly swiped this quote from a new coworker’s email signature. This is the core of experiential learning. So, to better understand the records and materials in MY care, I knew I needed to literally get my hands dirty. Re-enter AVAR.

Who (or What) is AVAR?

American Veterans Archeological Recovery

The following factors have been credited with effectively combating isolation and disempowerment among the veteran community:

- Mission Focus
- Mindfulness
- Outdoor Activity
- Structured Environment
- Thrill of Discovery

*"AVAR terms this emerging field **Rehabilitation Archaeology**, defined as the adaptation of fieldwork to generate consistent, positive long-term, personal and professional outcomes for participants."*

Program GOALS:

- Develop technical and field leadership skills
- Reduce the physical impact of fieldwork
- Maintain wellness benefits over the long-term

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The dig is being run as part of Operation Keeping Faith, a partnership between the the US Government's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and American Veterans Archeological Recovery, a company giving veterans the chance to work on archaeological sites to gain experience and boost mental wellbeing

Jul. 2021, from "The Hunt for Johnny Reb," DPAA.mil



CEO Stephen Humphreys started AVAR after working with UK-based Project Nightingale, a similar archeology-focused veteran outreach program. After wrapping up his PhD with Durham University, he led the first few digs in 2018. Since then, Stephen and his team have excavated in the UK, Italy, Israel, and here at home in the US. Most recently, they wrapped up recovery of a P-38 (WW2) aircraft in Italy. Aircraft recovery projects, which fall under both salvage and conflict/battlefield archeology, are largely funded by the DPAA.

Rehabilitation Archeology – While a number of us seek to pursue archeology academically or professionally, there are some enthusiastic hobbyists as well. Everyone has the opportunity to cycle through different tasks, “from shovel to shelf,” including metal detecting, digging, sifting, documentation, cleaning, analysis, and curation. These skills are tracked with MAPS (Modular Archeology Progression System) to document experience and field time. Returning veterans can accrue additional hours, advancing to the title of Excavation Technician if they desire.



AMDA was on site our first week to help train us in both the practical and ethical skills involved with metal detecting for archeological purposes. Kids, don't try this at home. If you show up to a national park (or any public lands, really) with a metal detector, you will likely be asked to leave. However, with the accompanying research permits and under supervision of NPS archeologists, our team of 15 (ish) were able to survey DOUBLE what the researchers had hoped to accomplish – over 3 acres of land – which resulted in almost 1k data points for the NPS team. For me, it was a wonderful learning experience, and allowed me to more fully understand the materials I was/am attempting to arrange and describe.


The Battle(s) of Saratoga

“The Turning Point of the Revolutionary War”

New York | Sep 19 - Oct 7, 1777

“One of the goals was to learn more about movements on the field and the lay out of the battle — including the location of the cannons. During the survey at Saratoga, dozens of case shot (small iron balls placed in a canister) were recovered. The location of a recovered shot was determined using a GPS, and the spot was recorded on a map.

“After the field was completely surveyed, archeologists noticed two overlapping patterns fanned out in an almost baseball diamond shape. One pattern was for the 12 pounder case shot and one pattern was for the smaller 6 pounder case shot. Following the patterns to the points (near home plate), archeologists calculated the location of those cannons that tried unsuccessfully to stop the Continental troops!”



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26

This battle is called by many “the turning point of the American Revolutionary War.” The series of battles throughout the fall eventually resulted in a decisive Continental Victory and Burgoyne’s surrender.

One aspect of this battle which was of interest to our PI’s, was that only the British had cannons present. In 2019, AVAR supported Phase I of this research investigation, which involved methodically metal detecting one of the main battle sites, the Barber Wheatfield. As we’ve heard, good research raises more questions, so the team sought to return to the field in 2020 to further define the battlefield and troop movements, and attempt to locate possible remains of a home that had been inconsistently portrayed on maps over time. Due to the pandemic-imposed travel restrictions, the 2020 field season was effectively cancelled.

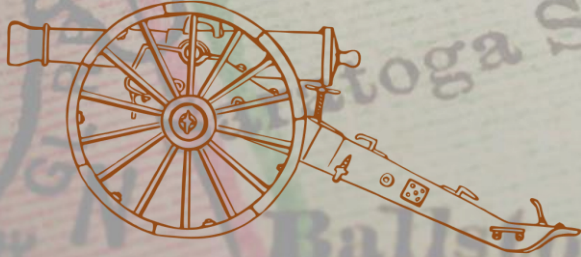
In 2021, armed with masks, sanitizer, and vaccines, we were able to head to the field and work on Phase II. This involved more metal detecting, as well as excavation in shovel test pits and even a bit of a trench. In addition to NPS and the Park’s local community, I want to briefly thank the sponsors and partners that helped make this event possible.

Preliminary Findings

~950 total artifacts recovered (all types, including discards).


Objects of note include:

- 50 musket balls
- 14 remnants of case shot
- 1 six-pounder cannon ball
- Remnants of 19th C. foundation
- Possible chimney/hearth feature



*Want more historical details?
Ask Eric Schmitzer,
the park historian
(and a fantastic storyteller),
pictured here in full
reenactment garb, 2014.*

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Did we find what we were looking for? Well, #yesandnobot. We were able to add approximately 60 crucial data points (the ammunition finds) that help interpret the battlefield. Out of the nearly 1000 artifacts, most were 'cut nails' from previous farm-related structures. The archeologists would log the data each night after field time, and decide what areas of the field to focus on the following day. While we did find a possible building foundation, it was unlikely to be the Weiser House we had hoped to locate. A nearby cache of brick, charcoal, slag, and glass may have led us to the Weiser House, but as with many projects, the most interesting finds tend to occur as a project is wrapping up. The materials are currently being analyzed and catalogued at the Museum Curation Center in Lowell, Mass; some artifacts will be returned to the park for exhibits and storage. In addition to these historical findings, I, personally, found new skills, new friends, and a new passion; as well as a better understanding of what is needed of me as an archivist serving a federal archeology curation center.

Our wonderful official NPS chaperones

- SARA Superintendent
- NARP Archeologist
- NARP Senior Archeologist
- SARA Curator
- NARP GIS Specialist
- NARP Senior Archeologist
- SARA Ranger & Historic Arms Expert

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Archaeologists from NARP – Northeast Archeological Resources Program – as well as local staff from SARA. Bless their kindness and patience for wrangling unruly veterans for over three weeks! It was truly a pleasure working with them all.

NARP is sort of a sibling program to SEAC; whereas we manage all our collections etc., NARP (Northeast Archeological Resources Program) partners with existing facilities at the Lowell Mills curation center in Mass for their curating, cataloging, and some storage needs.



A Holistic view of the process – multidisciplinary – opportunity for GLAM/admin folks to visit the field, and for field folks to see behind the magic that happens afterwards. Additionally, the outdoors provide natural social distancing opportunities – and many of us were feeling the stress of isolation due to covid precautions.

Top Left: getting a feel for the metal detectors at Day One training. Bottom Left: Digging and Screening shovel test pits, average ~xxx cuft of soil. This is where some really interesting finds occurred, such as glass, ceramic, and what we think may have been remnants of a hearth. Right: historic weaponry and other artifacts in museum storage.



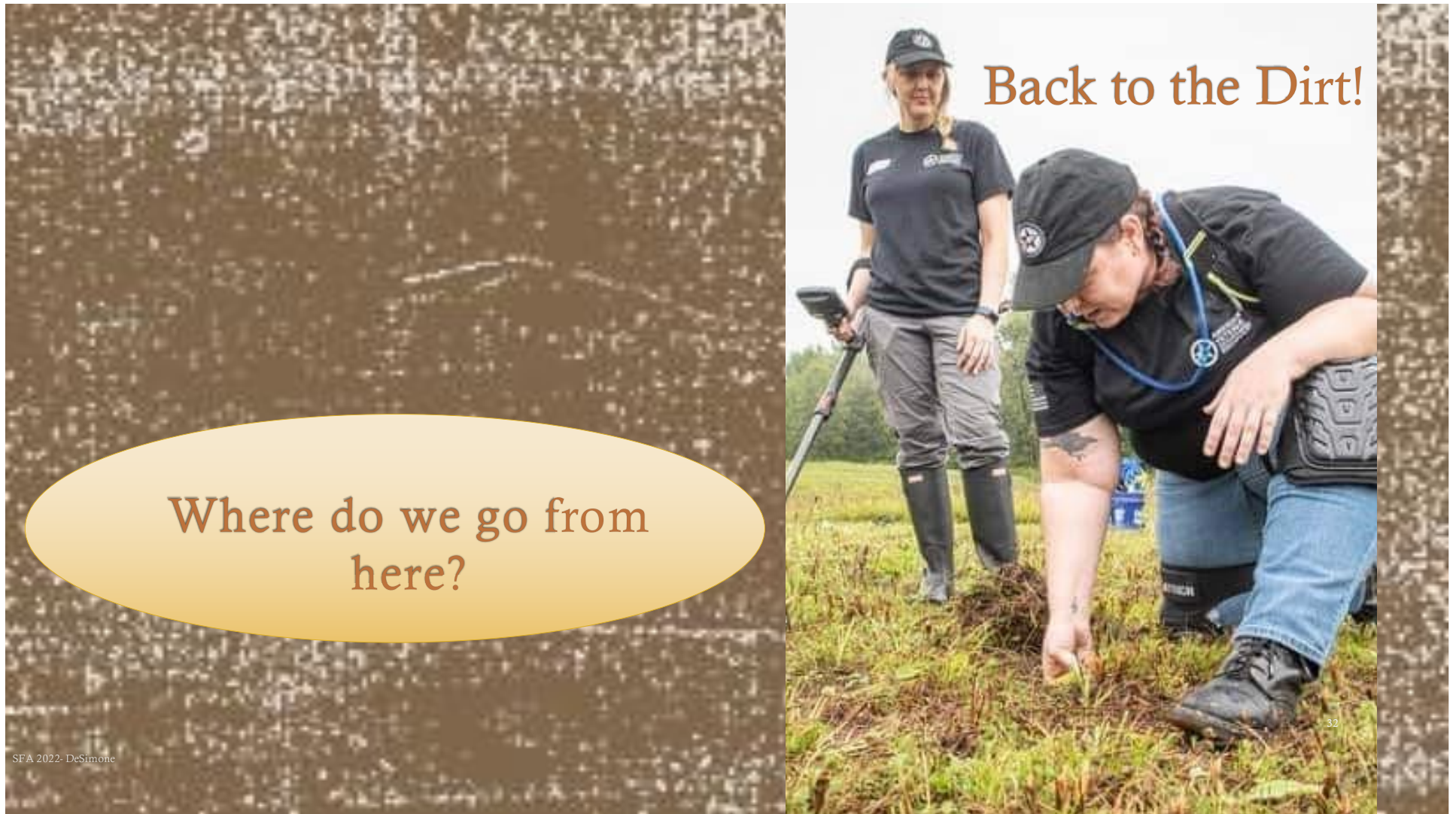
Historic Reenactors at nearby Fort Ticonderoga shared with us reconstructed grapeshot (left) and tin-canistered case shot (right). Both rounds contained projectiles that were intended to cover a wide area of the battlefield.



*Staff & Team on an educational trip to Ft. WilliamHenry Ghost Tours
(masks removed for photo only)*

Staff & Team on an educational trip to Ft. William-Henry Ghost Tours – masks were removed for only the photo 📷

This retreat was an opportunity to relax and unwind a little, and for some of us, encourage a return to normalcy. An opportunity to re-socialize with familiar personalities with mutual understanding, before returning to large-scale society, where veterans can sometimes struggle to “people” properly [just one example, but most of us are prone to swearing too much!].



Whether you're an experienced archivist or someone joining the field; whether you're starting fresh with a new institution or moving to a new industry, everyone can benefit from experiential learning. It is largely how we make sense of ... everything. The pandemic has given some of us a hiatus, a brief pause to catch our breaths, perhaps pivot, and to renew our efforts. As we all adjust to the 'new normal,' I encourage you to spend some time – maybe a day, maybe only a couple hours! It doesn't have to be three whole weeks – in your 'field' with your records creators. When you understand how the materials are used and created, I guarantee that you will become a better archivist, or your work will begin to feel easier and less frustrating. Field work for an archivist helps to provide essential context that may be "lost in translation."

Resources & References

- ◇ Photos courtesy of AVAR, NPS, American Battlefield Trust, Associated Press, Kathy Kouzmic and Laly Mendez (unless otherwise credited).
- ◇ 36 CFR 79: Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archeological Collections [& Associated Records]
- ◇ [Rehabilitation Archaeology \(americanveteransarchaeology.org\)](http://americanveteransarchaeology.org)
- ◇ [Cataloguing & Analysis: Findings From the AVAR Saratoga Project | American Battlefield Trust \(battlefields.org\)](http://battlefields.org)
- ◇ [Battle of Saratoga: When Goliath Blinked | American Battlefield Trust \(battlefields.org\)](http://battlefields.org)
- ◇ [The hunt for Johnny Reb: American veterans dig up wreckage of WW2 B-24 Liberator that crashed in Sussex field after 1944 bombing raid in search for three crew who didn't make it - Via The Daily Mail > \(dpaa.mil\)](http://dpaa.mil)
- ◇ [A case of living history \(timesunion.com\)](http://timesunion.com)
- ◇ [Archaeology - Division of Historical Resources - Florida Department of State \(myflorida.com\)](http://myflorida.com)
- ◇ [Florida Public Archeology Network \(fpan.us\)](http://fpan.us)