



Research Stations

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People have lived in Arkansas since the last Ice Age over 12,000 years ago. Today, traces of their camps, farmsteads, villages, and religious centers can be found from the Delta to the Ozark and Ouachita highlands. These archeological sites contain discarded tools, ruined buildings, family graveyards, and other reminders of past communities and cultures. Such sites can tell us about the lives of people who may never be mentioned in history books, but who are part of Arkansas's heritage.

Who We Are

The Archeological Survey is part of the University of Arkansas System. Our mission is to discover, protect, and study archeological sites, to learn about the people who lived here before us, and to share that knowledge with all Arkansans. Some archeological sites are associated with American Indians and their ancestors, others are settlements of European explorers, American emigrants, and other Old World peoples who made Arkansas home and transformed it from a territory to a state.

Survey Archeologists divide their time between research, university teaching, and service to individuals and organizations who want information about archeological sites. There are ten regional offices, or Research Stations, across the state. Seven are located on the campuses of public university partners. Two offices are at archeological State Parks where archeologists carry out research and help Park staff to interpret the sites for visitors. One office is at the University of Arkansas System's Winthrop Rockefeller Institute conference and educational center.



Aerial view of an excavation project

The Survey Director, who oversees all of the Survey's programs, and the State Archeologist, who promotes public archeology and preservation activities and works with our Education Outreach Coordinator, are based at our Coordinating Office in Fayetteville. Other Coordinating Office staff provide the Research Stations with photographic, editorial, and publication services, and with equipment and logistical support for all field projects.

Research

Survey research projects touch on all parts of the human experience in Arkansas from earliest times to the present. Examples include excavation of an Ice Age mastodon that will help describe the Arkansas landscape of 10,000 years ago, investigation of a 500-year-old Indian farming settlement in the Ouachita Mountains, and documentation of Indian rock paintings and engravings in the Ozark Mountains.

Archeologists are also interested in more recent times. Examples include a study of sunken boats in the Mississippi River, ongoing studies around the first Arkansas Post, investigations of an African American mill worker's home in the Ozarks and a WWII prisoner-of-war camp in Monticello, and a search for remains of William R. Woodruff's printing shop in downtown Little Rock.

We use the latest techniques of geophysical remote sensing to find traces of houses and other buried features, for example in recent fieldwork at a Native American village in central Arkansas, and to learn more about the Civil War landscapes at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park and at Pea Ridge National Military Park.

We invite volunteers to participate in these field and laboratory activities whenever possible.



Gradiometer survey at a NW Arkansas site



Osage Nation elders on a tour of the Coordinating Office

Public Service

The Survey works with many individuals and organizations to preserve and interpret Arkansas's past. Our Registrar's Office is the central archeological data repository in the state, with files on almost 50,000 archeological sites and over 7300 archeological projects in a modern computer database that is constantly being updated. This information is available to other agencies such as the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, and the U.S. Forest Service for management and research purposes.

Working closely with American Indian tribes and local historic preservation groups, the Survey seeks to ensure that all unmarked cemeteries are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Outreach

Survey archeologists will work with any land-owner interested in learning about and preserving archeological sites. Often we can rescue information from sites threatened with destruction. Sometimes we can work with organizations that protect important sites through purchase or conservation.

Our staff are available to answer questions, identify artifacts, and give advice on issues of site preservation and management. Through websites, public talks and exhibits, school visits, demonstrations with hands-on activities, brochures and pamphlets, and larger publications, Survey archeologists distribute information about prehistoric cultures, early historic settlers, American Indian tribes, and about archeological sites and the laws that affect them.

Volunteers & Citizen-Science

The Survey has a unique partnership with the Arkansas Archeological Society, an organization of people interested in archeology and Arkansas history. Society members assist with research and preservation activities as volunteers. The Survey and Society co-sponsor an annual Training Program in Archeology, a short field school at a research project where volunteers participate in excavation, field survey, and laboratory activities under the instruction of experienced archeologists. Open to anyone with an interest in archeology, the Training Program began in the 1960s and is one of the largest volunteer programs in the United States. The Society has several Chapters around the state, a newsletter, and an annual Bulletin. Join at their website: <http://arkarch.org>

Support for Education

The Survey develops educational materials about Arkansas history and prehistory for teachers and students at all levels. Our archeologists teach college courses, visit schools, make zoom presentations, develop exhibits, and distribute educational materials to teachers, parents, and students. The Survey website has classroom handouts on a number of topics and a free 5th grade social studies lesson sequence aligned with Arkansas Department of Education standards. Every March is Archeology Month, an annual celebration with dozens of events around the state that promote learning and appreciation of Arkansas's rich archeological heritage. We have several books for general readers in our Publications series. The Survey also has interactive educational websites about Arkansas Indians, Bluff Shelters in the Arkansas Ozarks, Arkansas Novaculite, and Arkansas Rock Art.



Young visitors at the Celebrate Archeology open house