

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

There are two basic types of archaeological evidence which indicate the presence of an **archaeological site, artifacts and features:**

Artifacts are defined as any portable object made and/or used **by** humans.

Features are defined as non-portable evidence of past human behavior, activity, and technology.

Both artifacts and features may be prehistoric or historic. Prehistoric artifacts and features are Native American in origin and date to before recorded history in Indiana, ca. 10,000 B.C. to 1650 A.D. Historic artifacts and features in Indiana date after this time and refer to peoples of many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These include Native Americans, and many people of Old World cultural backgrounds who settled and populated the region which became the state of Indiana.

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.

Artifacts may be made of a number of raw materials, the most common of which are: chipped stone, ground stone, clay, bone, shell, wood, fibers, and metal. These often take the form of tools, weapons, utensils, ornaments, and artistic and ceremonial items. These artifacts may have been used in relation to a number of activities, including architecture; food procurement, preparation, and consumption; defense; toolmaking; clothing; personal use and recreation; household activities; ceremonies and rituals; transportation; etc.

Common **prehistoric 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 **historic artifacts** found archaeologically 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.

Features may be recognized by the presence of non-portable evidence of past human activities. Common evidence of features includes soil stains of a different color or texture than the surrounding natural soils, burned earth, ash and charcoal lenses and pits, clusters of artifacts, pits, foundations and structural remains, evidence of old postholes, the presence of human or animal bone, and earthworks or embankments.

Prehistoric 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 (eg., 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).

Historic 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 (eg., wells, cisterns, fencelines, ditches, canals, landscapes, embankments, mill races, dams, old trails and roads), cemeteries, human burials, and clusters of historic artifacts.

Some common site types include refuse heaps and/or dumps, old homesteads and

farmsteads, artifact caches, villages and camps, cemeteries, family plots, burials, workshops (eg., 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.

James R. Jones III
November, 1993
Revised 8/96.

For further information, contact:

Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology
402 West Washington Street, Room W274
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2739
Phone: 317/232-1646
Fax: 317/232-0693
www.IN.gov/dnr/historic
dhpa@dnr.IN.gov



This product has been financed with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior and administered by the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Department of Natural Resources. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program activity or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

3/10/04

