

Commonly Asked Questions

Q. How long have people been on Whidbey Island?

A. We don't really know. We're not even really sure when people first got to North America. We do know that Whidbey Island was covered with several thousand feet of glacial ice from about 13,000 — 12,000 years ago to about 30,000 — 28,000 years ago. Nobody lived on Whidbey Island during this period. Whether people were present prior is completely unknown, but there is some reason to believe that they were shortly after the departure of the ice. At least one site near Penn Cove may be as much as 11,000 years old. Artifacts in private collections from Central Whidbey suggest the area has been occupied almost continuously since that time.

Q. Which Indian people are represented by the archaeological sites on Whidbey Island?

A. It is difficult to make precise ethnic identifications from archaeological materials, and this is especially true in this region. We can note that nearly all of the historic Indian tribes of the Northern Puget Sound Basin are members of a broad community of related groups referred to as the Coast Salish (e.g. Lummi, Samish, Swinomish, S'Klallam, Skagit, etc.). Even if we cannot identify individual tribes, it is quite likely that the recent prehistoric archaeology of Whidbey Island represents prehistoric Coast Salish peoples directly related to the historic tribes of the Northern Puget Sound Basin. The antiquity of Salishan Peoples in Western Washington is uncertain, but it may be considerable.

Q. I hear the name "Snakelum" around here (eg. Snakelum Point) and I assume that he was a local Indian person. Who was he?

A. The Snakelums were a prominent Penn Cove Indian family during the 19th and 20th centuries. Early historic Indian people on Penn Cove are generally referred to as Lower Skagit Indians, and they occupied several large villages in the area. The Snakelums were associated with a large village at Snakelum Point.

Q. What should I do if I think that I have found an archaeological site?

A. First and foremost, do not disturb it. Neither remove or move anything from the vicinity of what you think might be an archaeological site. Carefully look around a bit and prepare reasonably detailed answers for these questions: (1) why do

you think that this is a site? (2) what kinds of archaeological resources are present? (3) how big an area are they distributed over? and (4) where is the site located? When you have collected this information, communicate it to the State Archaeologist at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The State Archaeologist will compare your report to his records. While you may be reporting one of the several thousand archaeological sites already known to exist in Washington State, it is also possible that you have discovered a previously unknown archaeological site. If so, your discovery will be listed on the State inventory and you will have made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the region's archaeological resources.

Q. What should I do if I encounter evidence of vandalism or other damage to a site?

A. Since archaeological resources are protected in Washington, disturbance to them is a criminal matter. If you suspect a violation, don't disturb it further. Report it to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the County Sheriff's Office, and/or other relevant land management agencies.

Q. I know that I shouldn't dig, but is it okay to collect artifacts exposed on the ground surface on public lands?

A. No, it isn't. Artifacts from archaeological sites on public lands belong to the public in a collective sense and they are the responsibility of the agency responsible for the land. While artifacts exposed on the surface may represent deposits which have already been destroyed, they may not be, and it really takes an archaeologist to tell. If such materials are encountered, they should be treated much as described in the preceding questions. Remove nothing, take note of the above-cited details (i.e., what have you seen? how big is the area? where is it? etc.), and report it to the State Archaeologist. If there is a local ranger, land manager, or other official with jurisdiction for the land, tell him as well.

Q. What if the site is on private land and I have the owner's permission?

A. While archaeological resources on private lands in Washington State are considered to be the property of the land owner, State law still requires that a permit be issued before anyone removes artifacts from an archaeological site. Disturbing known archaeological sites of any kind on private land is a criminal offense.



CENTRAL WHIDBEY'S Archaeological Heritage



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Clues to the Past

Central Whidbey Island is home to Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. The area is rich with clues to the past—clues that tell us something about the people who lived here before us, and whose descendants still live in the Northwest today. These clues are archaeological resources. If destroyed, they cannot be replaced or restored. They are significant because of their potential to reach out across time. The management and protection of these clues to the past is an important responsibility for our land-use managers, planners, and ourselves.

Central Whidbey Island contains at least 60 known archaeological sites, and it is likely many more are here. Most sites are evidence of American Indian activities from prehistoric times until the early part of the 20th century. A few sites represent 19th century activities of Anglo-American homesteaders. Well over two millennia of human history are probably chronicled in the landscape of the reserve.

This brochure will help you better understand our rich archaeological heritage and what you can do to protect and preserve it. It was citizens like yourself who recognized the significance of the area and led the fight in 1978 to create the reserve, a unit of the National Park system. Today, a trust board of residents protect and preserve it.



What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is a type of *anthropology*. Anthropologists study people to learn how we use "culture" to survive. Archaeologists also are interested in earlier humans and study the places and things they left behind. The "things" left behind are referred to as artifacts, which include anything made or influenced by people. Artifacts may be tools, or they may be the unintended by-products of making or using tools, including the remains of various animals or plants used for food.

Among questions archaeologists ask are: do the objects grouped together in one place represent a cooking area, or a workshop, or a refuse

dump? If they know which objects belong together, learning the answers may be easy. On the other hand, if they do not know which artifacts came from which site, our ability to learn from this evidence is hampered.

Archaeologists are interested in past human groups and so they study the places and things left behind by past groups.



Because it is so important to know how artifacts are distributed within a site, it is easy to understand why archaeological excavations take time. In fact, an excavation dismantles a portion of a site so carefully (using photographs and maps) that it can be reconstructed later during laboratory analysis.

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After excavation, all of the recovered artifacts are cleaned, labeled, catalogued, and studied in terms of the groups in which they were originally found. Finally, the materials are studied to understand what was happening at the site and to understand how that site might be related to other sites nearby. When studies end, researchers produce a report which describes the site, the excavation, the recovered artifacts, and their interpretations of the cultures represented at the site.



What are Archaeological Resources?

Archaeological resources is the term used to refer to anything that helps us to learn about past groups of people and their activities. In most cases, it means archaeological sites and the materials (artifacts) found in them.

A place where artifacts are found is called a site. Usually a site is a place where people either lived or worked. Beyond examining artifacts, archaeologists also learn a great deal about how people lived by studying how the artifacts are distributed within a site. Knowing the relationship of each artifact to other artifacts around it (called association or context) is enormously helpful. Study of how various things are distributed can help orient researchers within a site. This can help experts understand past technology, for example, by revealing which tools made which waste by-products.



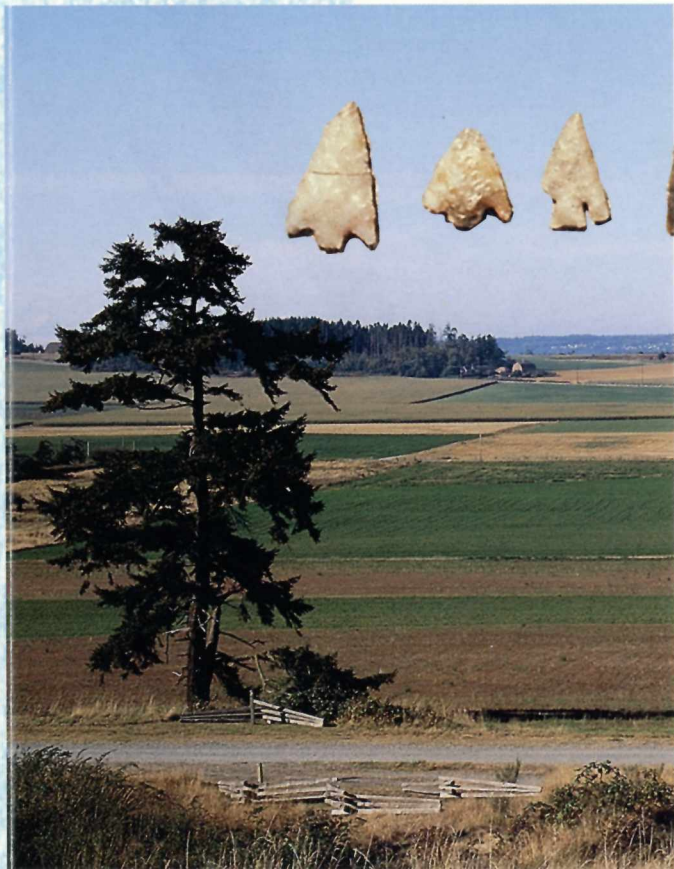
Central Whidbey Island Archaeological Resources

In Central Whidbey Island, the most common archaeological sites are different types of American Indian sites and 19th century Anglo-American sites. The Indian sites are shell midden sites, lithic sites, and rock cairn sites and may be both prehistoric and historic, probably dating from post-glacial times to the early 20th century. The 19th century Anglo-American sites are usually old homesteads dating from the 1850s and later.

Shell Midden Sites are the most common Indian sites. They are largely composed of marine shell, bone, charcoal, ash, fire-cracked rocks, and bone and stone artifacts. Usually found along marine shorelines, most sites probably represent settlements from a few hundred years to a few thousand years old. These sites probably represent people much like, and related to, this area's historic (post 1792) native population. There seem to be several different types of settlements. The larger and deeper shell middens may be large winter villages. Many of the smaller shell middens probably represent several different types of seasonal hunting and food gathering camps.

Lithic Sites are places where the dominant — sometimes the only — cultural materials are stone objects. Chipped stone objects are the most common. These artifacts usually include tools and the flakes which are produced as a by-product of tool-making. Organic materials are scarce to absent and what little organic material is found at a lithic site is usually charcoal. Unburned shell and/or bone is rare.

Lithic sites tend to occur inland, often on or near Central Whidbey Island's prairies. Little is known about these sites, but they appear old. At least one site near Penn Cove may be nearly 11,000 years old. Like shell midden sites, the lithic sites probably represent settlement and a variety of seasonal camps.



Rock Cairns, circular to oval rock piles, are a third type of prehistoric site. They are simple heaps of unworked stones from local sources, typically occurring in groups of fewer than six. Prehistoric rock cairns seem to occur only in certain areas and, frequently, they are found either within or near shell midden sites. Typical locations include: hillsides, headlands, and small nearshore islands. Their age is unknown, but they may be associated with the more recent shell midden sites. Their significance is not fully understood, but at least some rock cairns are burial markers. Others may be associated with vision quest sites or other spiritual or sacred activities.

Homestead sites on Central Whidbey Island represent historic Anglo-American settlement from the 1850s. These sites are typically scatters of glass, ceramics, metal, and organic debris from 19th and early 20th century settlements. Like the prehistoric lithic sites, these homestead sites tend to be found inland, away from the Puget Sound shoreline.

Threats to the Archaeological Resources of Central Whidbey

The archaeological resources of Central Whidbey Island are threatened by both "mother nature" and by the actions of people. These threats exist throughout western Washington. While detailed information is unavailable, there is good reason to think that annually we lose many archaeological resources.

Nearly all of these shorelines are subject to ongoing erosion.

Shoreline erosion is the most destructive action affecting archaeological sites here. The vast majority of Central Whidbey Island's shell midden sites are located along marine shorelines. Nearly all of these shorelines are subject to ongoing erosion. High waves during storms destroy the seaward edge and often scatter all but the heaviest and most durable materials associated with them. Most of Central Whidbey Island's shell midden sites are actively eroding and this alone may destroy most of them.



Human activities have also destroyed many archaeological sites. The most obvious is deliberate vandalism. Relic hunters seeking arrowheads, trade beads, and other artifacts have dug into many sites on Whidbey Island. Vandals usually are interested only in fancy or showy objects. They routinely discard more mundane archaeological materials that are important for research purposes. Uncontrolled digging destroys the site and results in a great loss of materials and information.

Less apparent but still destructive to archaeological resources are a broad range of recent human activities. Historic development activities such as logging, removing tree stumps, and plowing agricultural fields, all caused damage to sites. Often these efforts destroyed the associations and internal structure of sites while leaving many artifacts behind.



Protection for the Archaeological Resources of Central Whidbey

Many different laws and organizations help protect the archaeological resources of Whidbey Island. They include regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. Federal and State laws offer some protection. Taken together, they form a group of legal codes which address some, but not all, of the conditions which threaten archaeological sites. Specifically, these laws address vandalism and development-related disturbances, but not the natural mechanisms like erosion. There are no laws or other preservation programs to protect sites from shoreline erosion here. Various cultural and environmental interest groups also play an important role in protecting archaeology here.

The oldest Federal law to recognize the value of archaeological resources is the *Antiquities Act of 1906* (16 U.S.C. 431-33). This act provides for the protection of all archaeological resources on Federal lands. An important addition to this was the *National*

A number of different laws and organizations work to protect the archaeological resources of Central Whidbey Island.

Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.). The *National Historic Preservation Act* created a National Register of Historic Places and established a formal process wherein the significance of individual archaeological resources could be determined. It also required Federal agencies to manage the resources present on lands within their jurisdictions. Another important Federal law is the *Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979* (16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm). It established a permit application process for the excavation and removal of archaeological materials from Federal lands and lists criminal penalties for the excavation, removal, damage, sale, exchange, purchase, or transportation of such materials without a permit. Violations of this act are punishable by up to five years imprisonment and/or fines of as much as \$250,000. Violators may also be subject to civil litigation by tribal authorities.

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Washington State laws parallel federal law and offer important protection to archaeological sites. Particularly significant is the *Archaeological Sites and Resources Act* (RCW 27.53). This act established a permit application procedure for the excavation and removal of archaeological materials from both public and private lands in Washington State. It identifies criminal penalties for the excavation, removal, damage, or destruction of archaeological materials without a permit. Violations of this act are punishable with up to five years imprisonment and/or fines up to \$10,000. If human burials are disturbed, the *Indian Graves and Records Act* (RCW 27.44) is also being violated.

The *Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation* is an organization charged with the identification, evaluation, and protection of sites which represent Washington's cultural heritage. The State Archeologist works in this office and maintains the State's archaeological site inventory, helps assess archaeological sites in the environmental review process, and issues the archaeological excavation permits for lands under State jurisdiction.

Where You Can Learn More

You can learn more about archaeology of our region from many agencies, organizations, books, and even in cyberspace. You can visit, or even participate in, an archaeological excavation. The following are sources for learning more.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Various government offices deal with archaeology in this region, but two are especially good sources of information. On the federal level, contact: *Archaeologist, National Park Service, Seattle Support Office*, 909 First Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98104. On the state level, contact: *State Archaeologist, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, 111 21st Avenue SW, P. O. Box 48343, Olympia, Washington 98504. The *Trust Board of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve* is also an important source of information for Central Whidbey Island: P. O. Box 774, Coupeville, Washington 98239.

ORGANIZATIONS

Many private organizations support archaeology and archaeological resources on national and regional levels. National organizations which address these issues include: the *Society for American Archaeology*, 900 Second Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002; the *Archaeological Institute of America*, 675 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Ma 02215; the *American Anthropological Association*, 1703 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; and the *Archaeological Conservancy*, 5301 Central Avenue, N.E., Suite 1218, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108. In Western Washington, the *Association for Washington Archaeology*, c/o Curator of Archaeology, Burke Museum, University of Washington, P.O. Box 353010, Seattle, WA 98195-3010; and *Advocates for Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, P.O. Box 10898, Bainbridge Island, Washington 98110, can help you learn about local archaeology.

Suggested Readings

Exploring Washington Archaeology. Ruth Kirk and Richard D. Daugherty, University of Washington Press, Seattle. 1978.

Indian Artifacts of the Northwest Coast. Hilary Stewart, University of Washington Press, Seattle. 1973.

Built in Washington: 12,000 Years of Pacific Northwest Archaeological Sites and Historic Buildings. Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Washington State University Press, Pullman. 1989.

Archaeological Resource Protection. Sherry Hutt, Elwood W. Jones, and Martin E. McAllister, The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C. 1992.

Protecting Archaeological Sites on Private Lands. Susan L. Henry, National Park Service, Preservation Planning Branch, Interagency Resources Division, Washington, D.C. 1993.

Archaeology and You. Society for American Archaeology, Washington, D.C. 1995.

Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities Bulletin. Archaeological Institute of America, Boston, Mass. Annual.

Summer Field School List. American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C. Annual.

Cyberspace

Not surprisingly, an increasing amount of archaeological information can be obtained from the Internet. You can access a wide range of archaeological information from around the country through *ArchNet* (a virtual library for archaeology) at: <http://spirit.lib.uconn.edu/ArchNet/ArchNet.html>. *Arch-List* is an interactive forum where archaeologists from around the world post the latest news and debate all kinds of things; to get on this list, send the message:
Subscribe Arch-L (first name), (last name) to Listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu.

These two sources will lead you to hundreds of other archaeology websites.