

Why Collect?

There are plenty of good reasons to collect archaeological artifacts. Collectors have found many very important archaeological sites, helping professional archaeologists to preserve these sites for future generations. Collectors have also alerted professional researchers to sites being damaged or destroyed by erosion, logging, or even development.

Careful collectors will also record information and preserve collections from sites that are being destroyed -- ensuring that at least some of the information the site contains is preserved. By providing information about the site and its location to the State Archaeologist's office, these collections are helping future generations learn about their past.

Thieves of Time

But, unfortunately, there are also unscrupulous collectors. Individuals whose only interest is in the actual possession of the artifact. They aren't interested in recording information about the site, or sharing information with professional archaeologists. They are only interested in what an artifact is worth, or how unique it is, or what they can trade it for. Often they will destroy archaeological sites, looking for a "perfect relic."

These people are thieves of time. By destroying archaeological sites they are taking away a part of history that belongs to all of us and hoarding it for their personal benefit or monetary gain.

Archaeological sites are fragile resources and these people waste and squander our heritage.

What's the Law?

There are laws protecting some archaeological sites and artifacts. For example, it is illegal to collect artifacts from any federal lands, such as military bases, forests, or national parks. In South Carolina there are also laws that protect many archaeological sites, especially those that are recognized by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. At least one town in South Carolina, Hilton Head Island, has enacted a law protecting all of their archaeological resources, making it illegal to disturb or collect sites.

While none of these laws protect archaeological sites on private property, land owners have the right to protect archaeological resources just as they would protect trees or other resources under their control.

What About Private Collections?

Important artifacts in private collections may become nothing more than curios or relics when they are traded or sold, because important information such as the site from which the artifact came is often lost. When this happens to an artifact, it loses most of its importance to posterity. Other tragedies that befall private collections are fire, disposal by a disgruntled or uninformed spouse, theft, or disposal by the collector's heirs who are unaware of the scientific importance of the specimens.

These tragedies occur frequently enough to private collections that many scientific journals are reluctant to publish papers based on specimens not deposited in a museum for fear that future

researchers won't be able to go back to the original data. In fact, there are examples of important collections published in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century that are now lost. For the scientific community, then, a non-profit, self-perpetuating museum is considered the safest depository for archaeological collections.

An Artifact with a Future!

How will donating artifacts to a museum benefit you? Not very much materially, since the IRS places very little monetary value on artifacts. But you will receive a letter acknowledging your gift, a copy of which will be placed in the permanent accession file; your name will be acknowledged as the collector whenever the specimen is published. Your children, and your grandchildren will be able to visit the museum to see the specimen you donated and the documentation pertaining to it.

These benefits may not seem like much, but your artifact collection will be preserved in your name for generations to come, and it will be available to archaeologists from all over the world. You will have the satisfaction of contributing to the cumulative store of human knowledge and of accomplishing something that will outlive you as an individual.

You will have made an important contribution to the study of South Carolina archaeology, and the story of your collection will live on.

Will your collection achieve its scientific potential, or will it eventually become a curio or someone else's trash?

**For
More
Information**

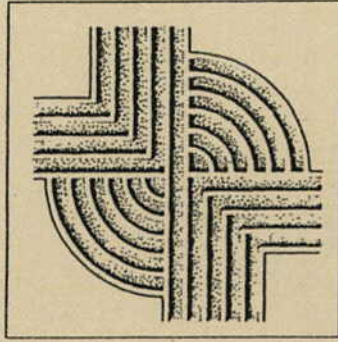
If you would like more information about the law, collecting artifacts, or donating artifacts to museums, you can contact any professional archaeologist or museum near you. Or you can call or write any of these institutions:

Site Files Manager
S.C. Institute of Archaeology
and Anthropology
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
803/777-8170

Chicora Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 8664
Columbia, S.C. 29202
803/787-6910

The Charleston Museum
Department of Historical Archaeology
360 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29403
803/722-2996

S.C. State Museum
History Curator
P.O. Box 100107
Columbia, SC 29202
803/737-4921



Chicora Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 8664 ■ 861 Arbutus
Columbia, S.C. 29202-8664
803/787-6910

*A Public, Non-Profit Foundation
Preserving the Past for the Future*

Additional single copies of this brochure may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed business envelope to Chicora Foundation at the address above. Multiple copies may be ordered for .30¢ each.

Collecting Artifacts:

Looting or Your Gift to the Future?