

# Frontiers in the Soil: The Archaeology of Georgia

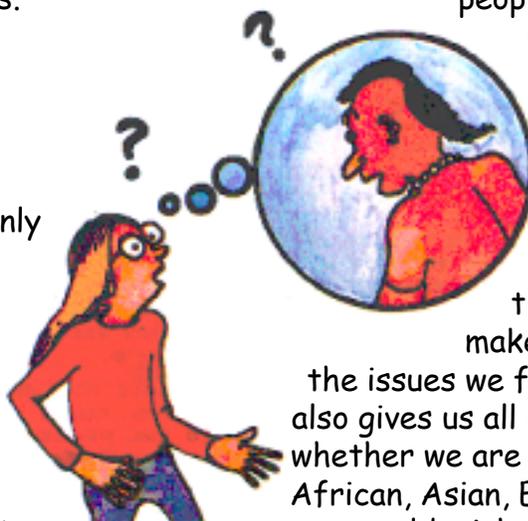
The Society For Georgia Archaeology, Georgia Archaeology Month 2004, Lesson Plan Series, No. 8.

## What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the scientific study of how people lived in the past based on the things they left behind. Archaeology uses a variety of disciplines.

## Why is it Important?

Often archaeology is the only way we can know about the past. For example, 10,000 years of Native American prehistoric life was not recorded in writing. Archaeology provides the most complete tool for understanding how and why Native American life changed over time. Archaeology can also help us understand life among historic people. Even though they had writing, many people in the past did not write so we can't read about what their lives were like. Enslaved African-Americans, poor people, very young children, and females were often illiterate. Archaeology can provide a voice to these people from the past. It can even help tell the stories of those who were literate by providing unbiased information about the everyday life of the rich, famous, and well educated.



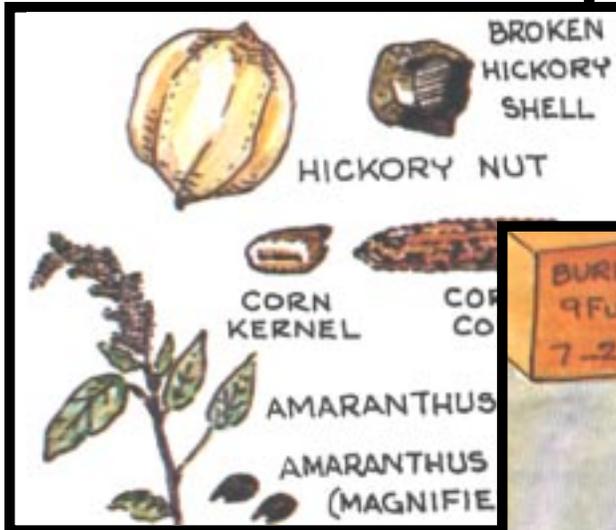
## Can Archaeology Help Us?

Archaeology gives us information important in making decisions in our culture today. We can see not only how people acted in the past, where they lived, how they related to their environment, and how they treated each other, but also the effects of their actions. We can use these lessons learned to make better decisions about the issues we face today. Archaeology also gives us all roots to our past, whether we are Native American, African, Asian, European, male, female, young, old, rich or poor.

## Is There Archaeology in Georgia?

Yes! There are over 37,000 archaeological sites recorded in the state. These range from 12,000 year old Native American sites to 50 year old farms. And there are likely hundreds of thousands of sites not even recorded!

# Study Areas in Archaeology



Draw a line from each picture to the correct definition.

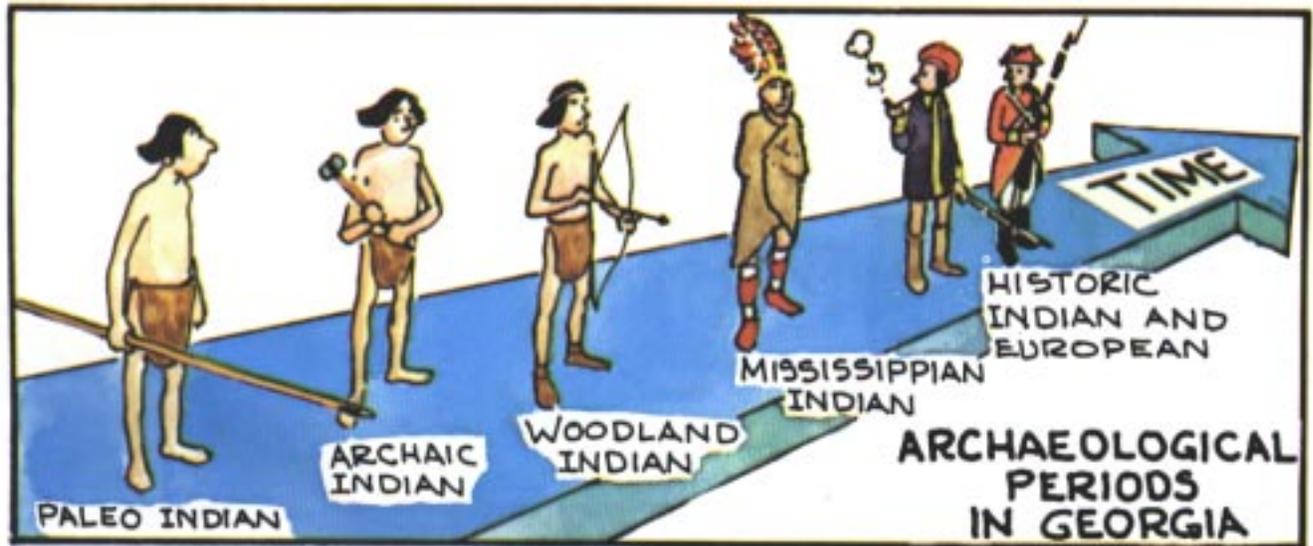
**Ethnobotanists** study seeds, pollen, and plant remains from sites to understand past environments.

**Zooarchaeologists** study animal bones from sites to understand people's diet, and cooking and hunting practices.

**Historical archaeologists** use diaries, letters and other documents to help learn about the sites they are excavating.

**Prehistoric archaeologists** study only objects, such as pottery and stone tools, left behind by people having no written record of their past.

**Physical anthropologists** study human skeletons to determine physical and cultural traits such as size, gender, ethnic background, health, diet, social status, and cultural traditions.



The left end of the arrow represents 10,000 B.C, while the right side points toward the 19th-21st centuries and beyond.

### Period Puzzle

Archaeologists have divided up Native American prehistory into categories, based on cultural changes (such as the invention of the bow and arrow). See if you can number the list below in the correct chronology (order through time), with #1 being the oldest and #6 being the most recent.

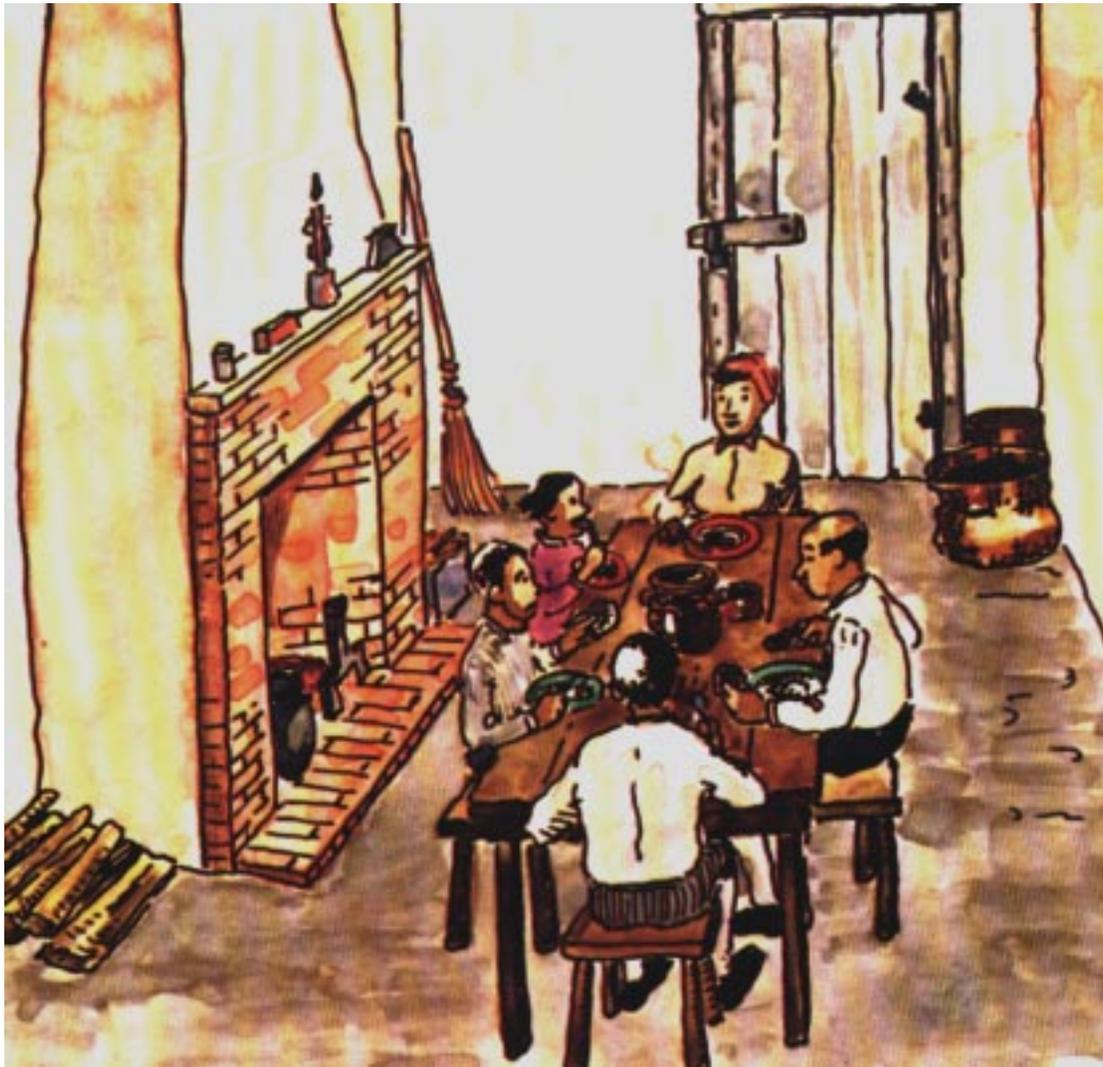
- \_\_\_ Europeans introduced iron, glass, and guns to this group.
- \_\_\_ The very end of this period saw the use of stone bowls and clay pots, but no bows and arrows yet. It dates sometime after the Paleo period.
- \_\_\_ Oldest named period.
- \_\_\_ Period before European contact when Native Americans did not have writing, but did have complex societies with vast trade, religious, and political networks.
- \_\_\_ Native Americans during this period invented the bow and arrow.
- \_\_\_ The most recent period represented in the picture above.

### Bonus

Can you put the following more recent events in chronological order?

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ___ Beginning of the 21st century | ___ Computers invented             |
| ___ American Revolution           | ___ President Lincoln assassinated |
| ___ Blue jeans invented           | ___ Model T Ford invented          |
| ___ Man lands on moon             | ___ MTV established                |

Teachers cover when copying: Period Puzzle Answers: 5 (historic); 2 (Archaic); 1 (Paleo); 4 (Mississippian); 3 (Woodland); 6 (European). Bonus Answers- Down Column 1 then Column 2: 8, 1, 2, 5, 6, 3, 4, 7.



## Survival of the Fittest

Archaeologists don't excavate everything people left behind. Wood, cloth, and other organic material usually rots in the ground. Iron artifacts rust. Other metals deteriorate. Make a list below of things you might expect archaeologists to excavate from the site pictured above. Make another list of things at the site that would not survive in the moist, acid soil of Georgia. How does this affect the story of the past?

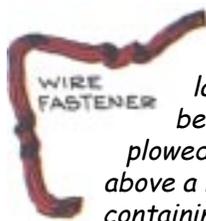
Artifacts That Survive

Artifacts That Don't Survive

Artifacts That Survive	Artifacts That Don't Survive

# The Dating Game

How do archaeologists know the age of different artifacts? There are two kinds of dates; absolute dates and relative dates. Dating techniques resulting in an age in years are called absolute dates. Techniques that tell archaeologists something is older or younger than something else are relative dates. Archaeologists date some artifacts by their style and the material used in their making. Things that change styles through time, such as cars or clothing, can then be dated by their typology, or how they change. Archaeologists can then give each car or item of clothing a date range relative to the years. Put an "A" next to the items below that give **absolute dates** and a "R" next to the items giving **relative dates**.



Found in a layer of soil below a layer plowed in 1975 and above a layer of soil containing a 1910 silver dime.



SAVANNAH RIVER POINT  
ABOUT 3000 TO 1000 B.C.



MORROW MOUNTAIN POINT  
ABOUT 4000 TO 3000 B.C.



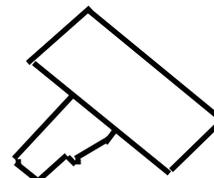
STANLY POINT  
ABOUT 5000 TO 4000 B.C.



KIRK POINT  
ABOUT 6000 TO 5000 B.C.



PALMER POINT  
ABOUT 7000 TO 6000 B.C.



Bricks found on a city lot that was not sold until 1883.

# Preserving the Past

*Archaeological sites offer unique and important information about our past through not only the artifacts they contain, but through the clues in the soil. When soil on sites is disturbed, then these valuable clues are destroyed, along with the stories they contain. Sites are destroyed every day in Georgia through construction and vandalism (looting). Sometimes archaeological excavation is required before a construction project begins. When this happens, the information from a site can be saved by careful scientific excavation, interpretation, and report production. These artifacts and notes are curated (saved forever) so they can be displayed in exhibits and studied by future researchers.*

## Brainstorming & Projects

**1.) How can I recognize an archaeologist?** (Look for poison ivy rashes, insect bites, and brier scrapes! Seriously though, an ethical, professional archaeologist: completes reports with specific standards for every site excavated; does not keep or sell artifacts he or she finds; recognizes the non-renewable nature of archaeological sites; shares information with the public and other archaeologists; and stays current with the latest professional research and techniques. Most archaeologists have a minimum of a B.A. usually in Anthropology, specializing in Archaeology. Many have a M.A. or PhD in Anthropology or related field and have had supervised field training).

**2.) How can I recognize a legitimate archaeological society or organization?** Many organizations call themselves archaeological societies. An organization that would be recognized as legitimate by the major national and international Professional Archaeology groups (such as The Society for American Archaeology) would: encourage public outreach between individuals and professional archaeologists through exhibits, books, and volunteerism; find the digging of sites without the supervision of a professional archaeologist unacceptable; and strongly discourage the buying and selling of artifacts since that activity fuels site looting.

**3.) How does the use of a metal detector, without the supervision of a trained archaeologist, hurt archaeological sites?** To locate an object found by a metal detector, one must dig through the soil. This digging destroys the soil layers that help date a site. A trained archaeologist records the soil information, along with the depth of the artifact and its precise location across the landscape. These clues, along with the artifacts themselves, provide vital details about what happened in the past.

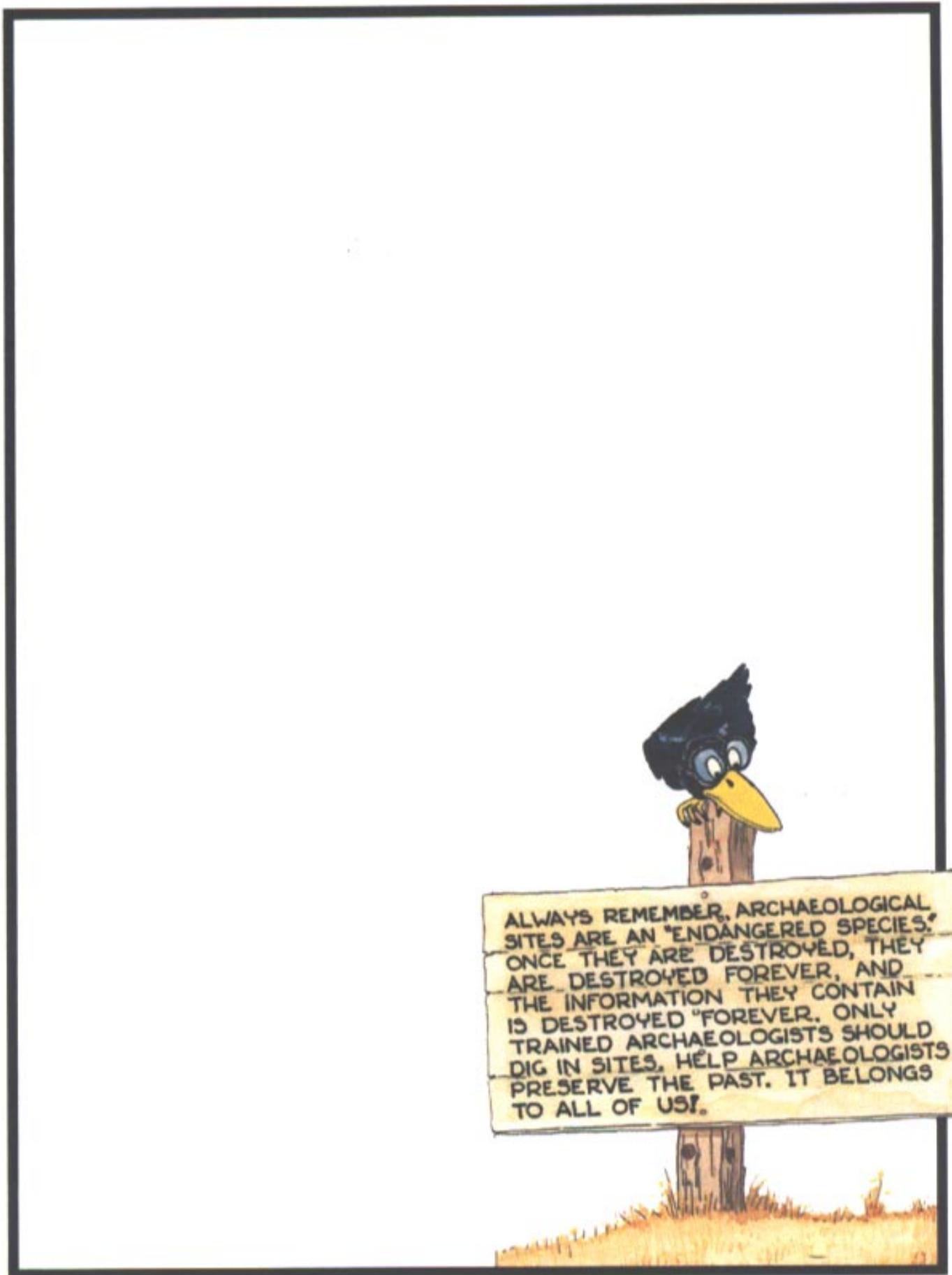
**4.) Why shouldn't people dig up sites if they are not archaeologists?** Archaeologists have had years of class and field training in how to excavate a site to retain the maximum amount of information available. Training includes how to recognize important stains and clues in the soil; how to record the data properly; how to clean, process, and conserve the artifacts; how to interpret the data to understand the story the site is trying to tell; ways to share this information with the public; and ethics that are part of the responsibility of doing archaeology.

■ **Locate a professional archaeologist.** There are more than 100 in Georgia. Many can be found through the Georgia Council of Professional Archaeologists. Prepare questions in advance, interview an archaeologist and provide a written or oral report to the class.

■ **Locate five organizations on the internet that claim to be archaeological societies.** Try to determine if they fit the definition of an archaeological society as recognized by The Society for American Archaeology and described in its ethics statement.

■ **Walk, bike, or ride around your community.** Make a list of places where archaeological sites such as cemeteries, old house sites, Native American sites, underwater sites and other places might exist. Make a list of places where construction, looting, and other ground-disturbing activity is taking place. Do any sites on your two lists overlap? Why or why not?

■ **Research whether your community, town, or county has any legal requirements to preserve archaeological sites or excavate them if they are threatened by construction.** If there are no such ordinances, consider writing a letter to your community leaders expressing your concerns. Share the results with the class.



ALWAYS REMEMBER, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ARE AN "ENDANGERED SPECIES." ONCE THEY ARE DESTROYED, THEY ARE DESTROYED FOREVER, AND THE INFORMATION THEY CONTAIN IS DESTROYED "FOREVER. ONLY TRAINED ARCHAEOLOGISTS SHOULD DIG IN SITES. HELP ARCHAEOLOGISTS PRESERVE THE PAST. IT BELONGS TO ALL OF US!

Draw a picture or write a paragraph about threats to archaeological sites and ways to preserve sites.

## Resources

The images in this document and associated poster are only a small part of the unique book, *Frontiers in the Soil, The Archaeology of Georgia*, by Roy S. Dickens, Jr. and James L. McKinley. The book and an associated teacher's manual can be purchased as indicated below. Please send these materials:

\_\_\_Frontiers in the Soil, 111 pages, softbound..... \$16.95  
\_\_\_Teaching Handbook, looseleaf binder..... \$6.95

Orders must be prepaid (check or credit card). Shipping charges for books: Under \$50, add 5% for library rate; for UPS ground, add \$4.50 for first item, \$1.00 each additional item. Georgia residents should add sales tax, as applicable, at their current county rate.

\_\_\_Check \_\_\_MasterCard \_\_\_VISA Card Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Publications Program, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, 201 N. Milledge Ave, Athens, GA 30602-5482. Phone 706-542-6377; Fax 706-542-6239.

[www.cviog.uga.edu/catalog](http://www.cviog.uga.edu/catalog)

---

## The Society for Georgia Archaeology. [www.georgia-archaeology.org/sga](http://www.georgia-archaeology.org/sga)

Membership benefits include:

- Archaeology Video Library-free rental of videos
- A copy of the annual Georgia Archaeology Month Poster & Education Packet
- Access to educational resources and information about Georgia Archaeology
- Notices of semi-annual, state-wide SGA events and activities
- A subscription to *The Profile*, the quarterly newsletter
- Two issues per year of the journal, *Early Georgia*
- Member discounts on special publications and events
- Provide support for site preservation

<b>Dues Rate</b>	
Individual	\$20
Family	\$25
Student	\$15
Institution	\$50

Membership is yearly (Jan. - Dec.)

Send your check to SGA Membership, P.O. Box 693, Athens, GA 30603.

Rate: \_\_\_Individual \_\_\_Family \_\_\_Student \_\_\_Institute

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone & Email: \_\_\_\_\_

As a condition of membership in SGA, I agree to abide by the Bylaws of SGA and to uphold the Antiquity Laws of Georgia and the U.S.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

*This is one of a series of educational packets produced annually by The Society for Georgia Archaeology during Spring Archaeology Month activities. The series reflects new themes annually and is distributed free-of-charge, along with an associated poster and Events Calendar to all middle/junior high public schools in the state, to regional libraries, state parks and historic sites, and other entities. With the exception of the Events Calendar, the materials are timeless. Librarians at schools and regional public libraries are encouraged to catalog these materials so that they may be used in the future.*