

**Appendix E:  
Glossary of Terms**

## ***Glossary of Terms***

**Artifact** -Any object shaped or modified by man, or as a result of human activity.

**Archaeology** -The study of the people of the past through the systematic recovery and analysis of the artifacts/material evidence they left behind.

**Archival Research** – research conducted in places where public or historical records, charters, and documents are stored and preserved.

**Assemblage** – Collection of persons or things: in archaeological contexts, the collection of artifacts from a particular site, from a stratigraphic level, or cultural component within the site, or a particular artifact class, such as lithics or ceramics.

**Census, U.S.** – An official count of the nation’s population taken every 10 years, often including a collection of demographic information.

**Culture** – A uniquely human system of behavioral patterns, beliefs, habits, and customs, used to interact with other people and with the environment, acquired by people through a nonbiological, uninherited, learned process.

**Datum** – A point, line, or surface used as a reference, as in surveying.

**Diagnostic** - An artifact that can clearly be dated and/or identified as to maker, date, place of origin, etc.

**Feature** -Any soil disturbance or discoloration that reflects human activity. Also, an artifact too large to remove from a site; for example, house foundations, storage pits, etc.

**Flotation** – The process of sifting soil samples through a fine screen while running a steady stream of water over the sample; residual materials such as tiny artifacts, seeds, and bones are separated out into light and heavy fractions for analysis.

**Foodways** – The interrelated systems of food procurement, preparation, and consumption.

**Grid** – The two-dimensional intersection network defining the squares in which archaeologists excavate.

**Historic** -The time period after the appearance of written records. In the New World, this generally refers to the time period after the beginning of European settlement at approximately 1600 A.D.

**Holocene** -The latest division of the Quaternary period, which commenced around 12,000 B.P.

**Hundred** -A subdivision of some English and American counties.

**Intestate** -A person who dies without making a will.

**Interface** -A surface regarded as the common boundary of two bodies or spaces, as with soil horizons.

**Intersite Analysis** -Analysis between different sites.

**Intrasite Analysis** -Analysis within the site.

**Loam** -A loose soil composed of clay and sand, especially a very fertile kind containing organic matter.

**Mean Ceramic Date** -A date obtained from the study of historic ceramics recovered from a site that approximates the median occupation date of the site.

**Midden** – A refuse heap usually containing household or domestic debris.

**Munsell Notation System** – A standard means of describing all color gradations along scales of value, hue, and color. Archaeologists use this system in describing and standardizing soil color descriptions. The Munsell system is usually used along with a description of soil type (sand, clay, loam, etc.).

**Orphans Court Records** -The County Court responsible for the welfare of orphans when a father died without a will. Orphans Court watched over the estate until the children (if any) reached majority. A guardian was appointed by the Court, who was to make periodic returns of the estate to the Court. When the youngest heir came of age, then the property could be divided among the heirs. These court records are filled with information regarding income property, education, repairs of houses and outbuildings, contracts, and other useful material about eighteenth and nineteenth century life.

**Physiographic Province** -Regions or areas that are characterized by a particular geography, geology, and topography.

**Phytolith** – Tiny silica particles contained in some plants. Sometimes these can be recovered from sites and used to identify the plant even after it has decayed.

**Plowzone** – That portion of the stratigraphy in which plowing has taken place; generally referred to as the “Ap-horizon.”

**Posthole** -A hole dug in the ground into which a post is placed.

**Postmold** -The organic stain in the ground left by a decayed wooden post. Postmold stains may occur inside of posthole stains on an archaeological site.

**Probate** -The official proving of a will as authentic or valid.

**Profile** – A side view of a feature or excavation unit.

**Sediment** – Soil deposited by wind, water, or glaciers.

**Settlement pattern** – A group’s adaptation to the environment within a regional perspective; how people arrange themselves on the land.

**Sherd** – A piece of broken pottery or glass.

**Soil Horizon** - Soils are divided in three horizons, which reflect different kinds of chemical and physical processes that have resulted from changing climatic conditions.

**Stratigraphy** -The examination of the soil layering on an archaeological site; the characteristics of each individual stratum and its relationship to others in the sequence is critical to understanding the temporal and spatial characteristics of the site.

**Stratum** – (pl. strata), (1) a mass of sedimentary deposits laying in a vertical sequence, and (2) a layer in which archaeological material (such as artifacts or dwelling remains) is found within a site.

**Subsoil** – Sterile, naturally occurring soils not changed by human occupation.

**Subsistence** – A means of obtaining those materials essential to the maintenance of life, such as food and shelter; in archaeology, subsistence deals primarily with dietary composition and food-procurement strategies.

**Subsurface** - Below the surface, not visible from the surface.

***Terminus post quem*** – The “date after which” an archaeological stratum or feature’s fill was deposited, based on the date of the most recently manufactured artifact found in the stratum or fill.

**Truncation** – Partially cut off; for example, plowing “truncates” features and strata in archaeological sites.