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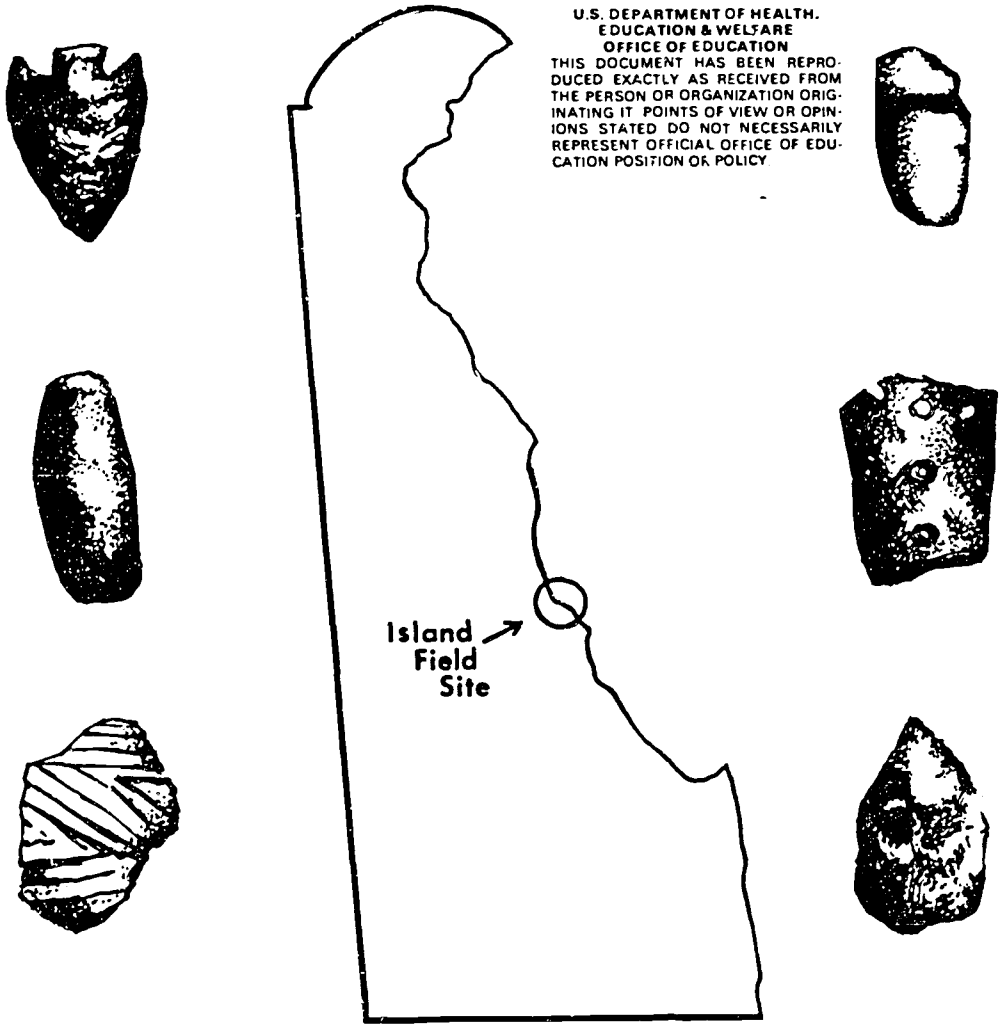
ABSTRACT

The archeology of Delaware, for all practical purposes meaning Indian prehistory, is the focus of this set consisting of teacher's and pupil's guides. Intended primarily for use at the fourth grade level, the material can successfully be adapted for use in grades 5 through 8. The teacher's guide is flexible and non-structured, allowing for individual situations and ideas. It contains references to source material, a glossary, possible topics for discussion, suggestions for the utilization of multimedia materials, and several illustrations designed for the purpose of producing transparencies. The pupil's guide is a well-illustrated introduction to the nature and methods of archeology, emphasizing similarities between human communities. A final section presents a cultural reconstruction of Delaware Indians before the arrival of Europeans. (JLB)



ARCHAEOLOGY IN DELAWARE

PUPIL'S GUIDE

STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

DOVER, DELAWARE

July 1969

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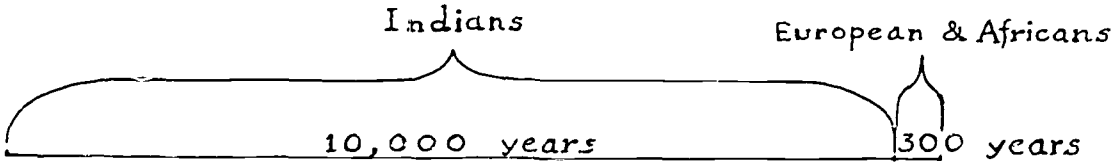
INTRODUCTION

What Are We Studying?

History is the study of how people lived in the past and what they did. It is learned from what people wrote down. In Delaware, history begins when the first Europeans landed here and wrote about their visit.

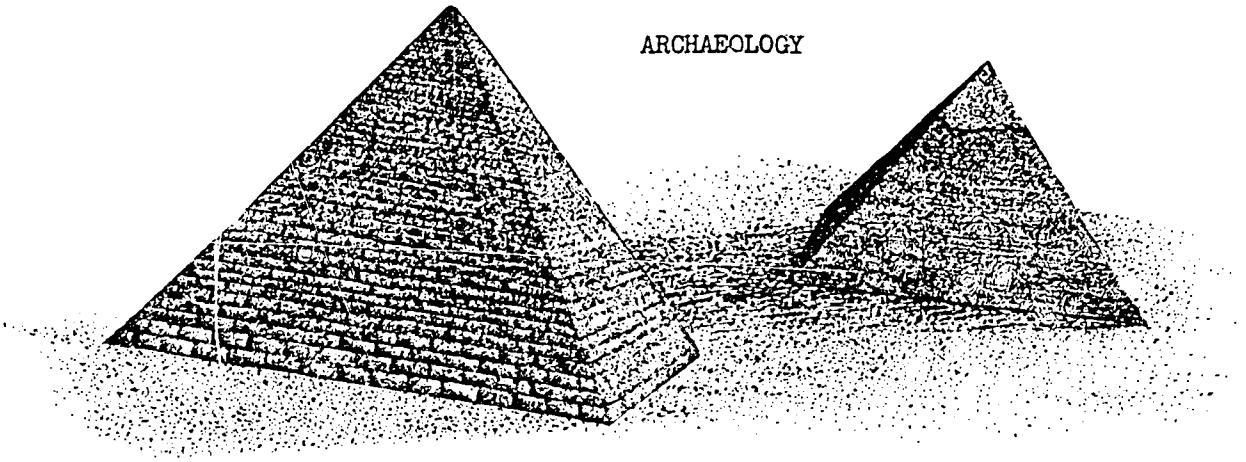
People lived in Delaware long before there was anyone here who could write, almost 10,000 years before. Prehistory is the story of how people lived in the past before written records. We learn about prehistory from the tools and other objects, the artifacts, that were left behind by the prehistoric peoples.



How Do We Study Prehistory?

We study prehistory through the science of archaeology. In this unit we will learn how the archaeologist works and what he has learned about Delaware prehistory.

ARCHAEOLOGY

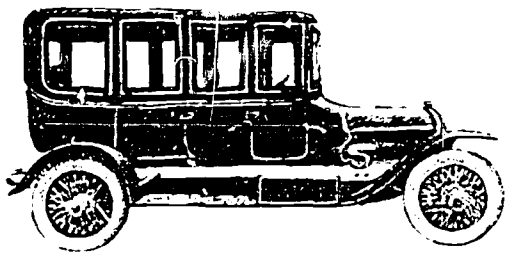


What Is Archaeology?

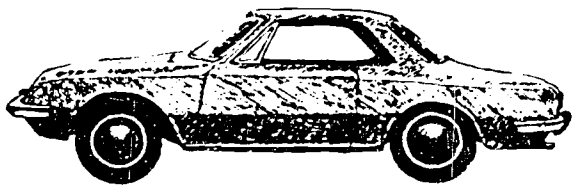
Archaeology is the study of the way people lived in the past, especially before they learned to write. Because they left no records about their life, the archaeologist must study the tools or artifacts which they left behind. All these things tell a story which the archaeologist must learn to read.

When most people think of archaeologists, they think of the pyramids of Egypt or perhaps the early cave men. There is also interesting archaeology in Delaware. In this section we will find out how the archaeologist studies the prehistoric Indians of Delaware. We are going to look at village sites, cemeteries and excavations or diggings. We will also learn about laboratory methods used to study them.

What Is An Artifact?

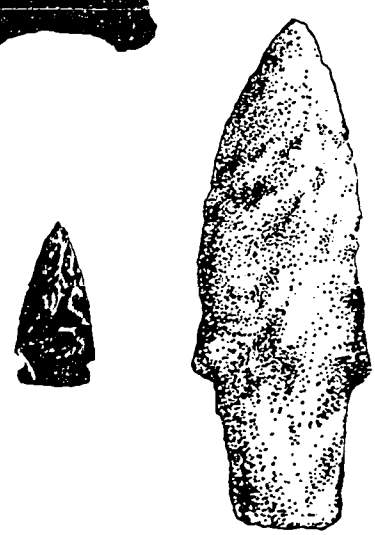


All people, beginning with the cave dwellers, have made use of tools, ornaments, shelters and other objects which the archaeologist calls artifacts. Many of these artifacts were made from raw materials such as stone. These are not easily destroyed. It is often only these objects which are left behind to tell about the people who lived in a particular place.



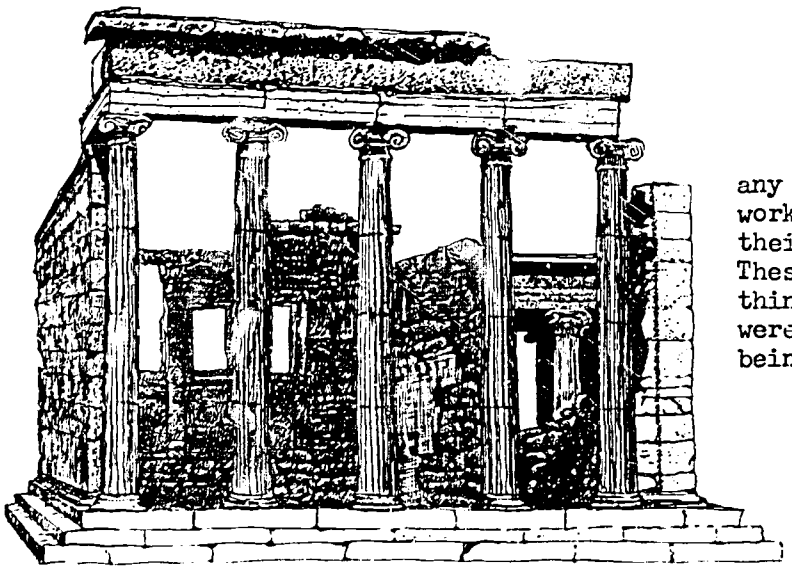
The tools that each group of prehistoric people made are very much the same as those made by other groups. They are different in size, shape and sometimes in the materials from which they are made. Styles in artifacts such as necklaces or spear points change in much the same way as cars or clothing. For this reason, the archaeologist can often tell what group of people lived in a particular place. He can even tell how long ago they lived here by the objects that they left behind.

Prehistoric peoples often used objects which we do not use today. Sometimes the archaeologist finds these kinds of artifacts. The archaeologist must then decide what their purpose was.



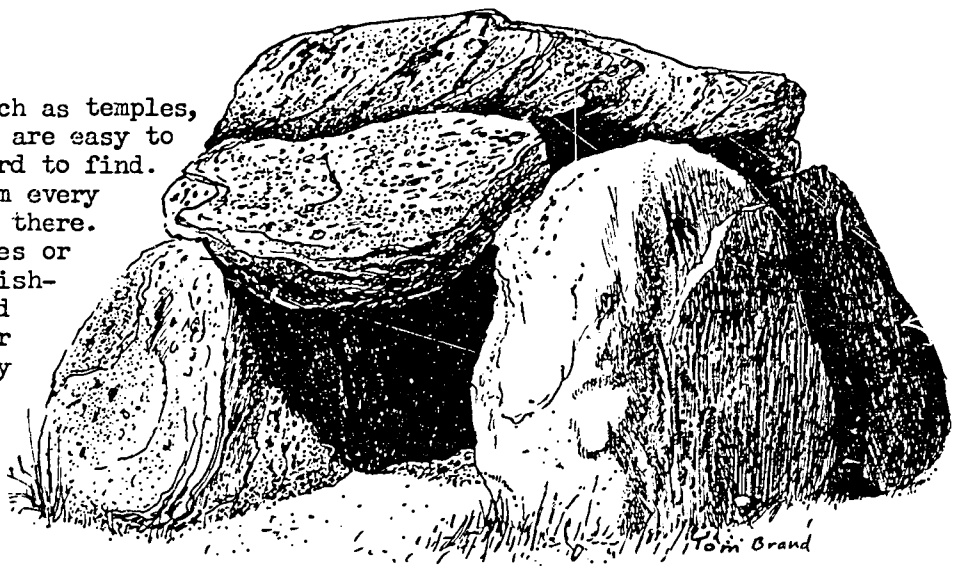
One of the most important jobs of the archaeologist is the study of the artifacts he finds. In this section, we will be learning how the archaeologist finds artifacts and how he studies them. Later we will learn what the artifacts teach an archaeologist.

What Is An Archaeological Site?



The archaeologist is interested in any place where people have lived, camped, worked, practiced their religion, buried their dead, or simply stopped to rest. These places are called sites. The only thing they have in common is that people were there and left behind evidence of being there.

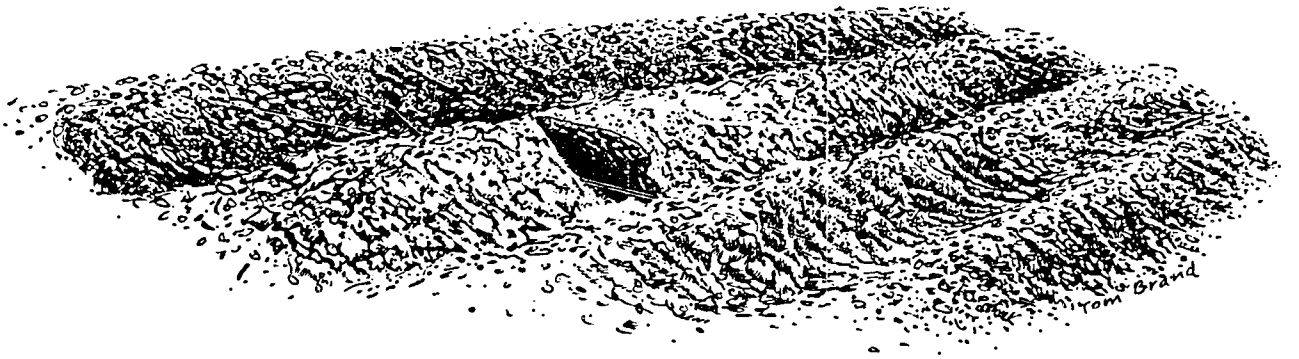
Although some sites, such as temples, pyramids, and ancient cities are easy to recognize, most sites are hard to find. A person could walk over them every day without knowing they are there. Small villages or camps, caves or overhanging rock shelters, fishing and hunting stations, and the sites from which flint or pottery clay was dug may only be recognized by the trained archaeologist. Most sites in Delaware are like these.



How Do We Find Archaeological Sites?

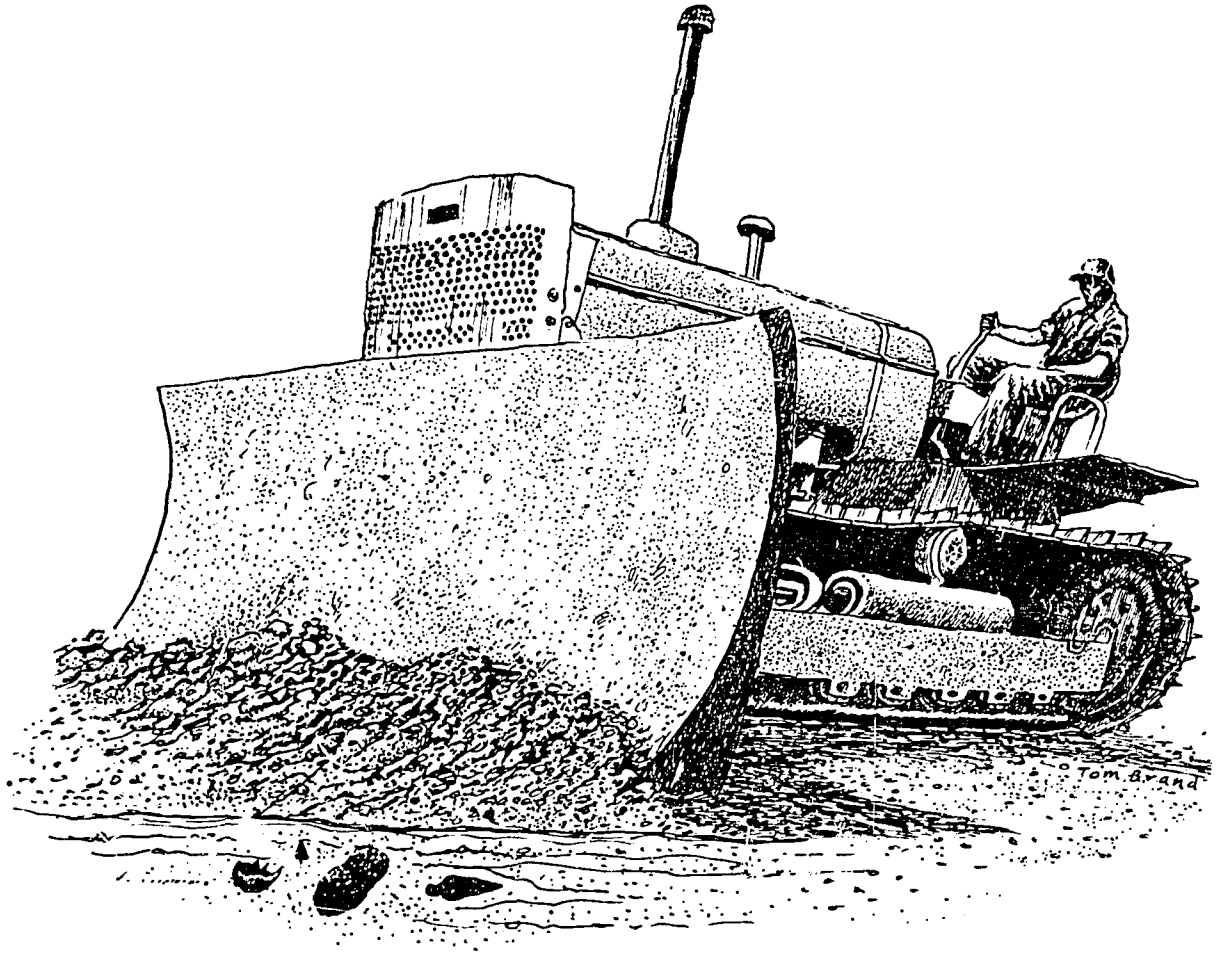
Perhaps the first archaeological site was found by a primitive farmer or hunter who accidentally dug up something left behind by earlier people. Probably no one thought it was of any importance and quickly forgot it. This would not happen today. Archaeologists are always looking for evidence of prehistoric peoples.

Usually the archaeologist finds sites by surface survey. This means that he looks for artifacts or other signs of prehistoric people by looking on the ground. Usually he looks in recently plowed fields or along the banks of a stream. Sometimes he must go by jeep, horseback, or even in a boat. He tries to imagine where he would have lived if he lived in prehistoric times.



Sometimes the archaeologist makes his survey from an airplane. This is called an aerial survey. This helps him see sites that he could not see from the ground. Plants may grow differently over an area where people have lived than where they have not. This can be seen from the air but not on the ground. The soil of this site may be more fertile because of the rubbish left behind. This makes the plants grow better. There may be more stones in the area where people lived, therefore, it would be harder to grow plants. The archaeologist usually takes photographs of the area which he is surveying. He studies them in his laboratory to make sure he has not missed any information.

MANY SITES ARE DISCOVERED BY ACCIDENT



Many sites are discovered by accident in road building or when the farmer plows the field. The archaeologist must always be ready to listen to callers who have discovered sites in this way and would like to have them studied by archaeologists.

How Do We Excavate An Archaeological Site?

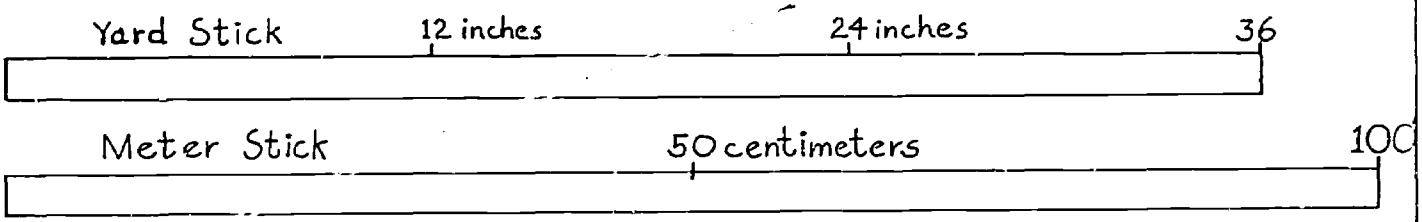
After the archaeologist finds a site, he must decide whether or not the site is important enough to excavate. Usually he can decide by looking at the artifacts he picks up on the surface of the ground. Sometimes this information is not enough. Then the archaeologist must test the site. This may be done in many ways. Usually either test pits or test trenches are dug.

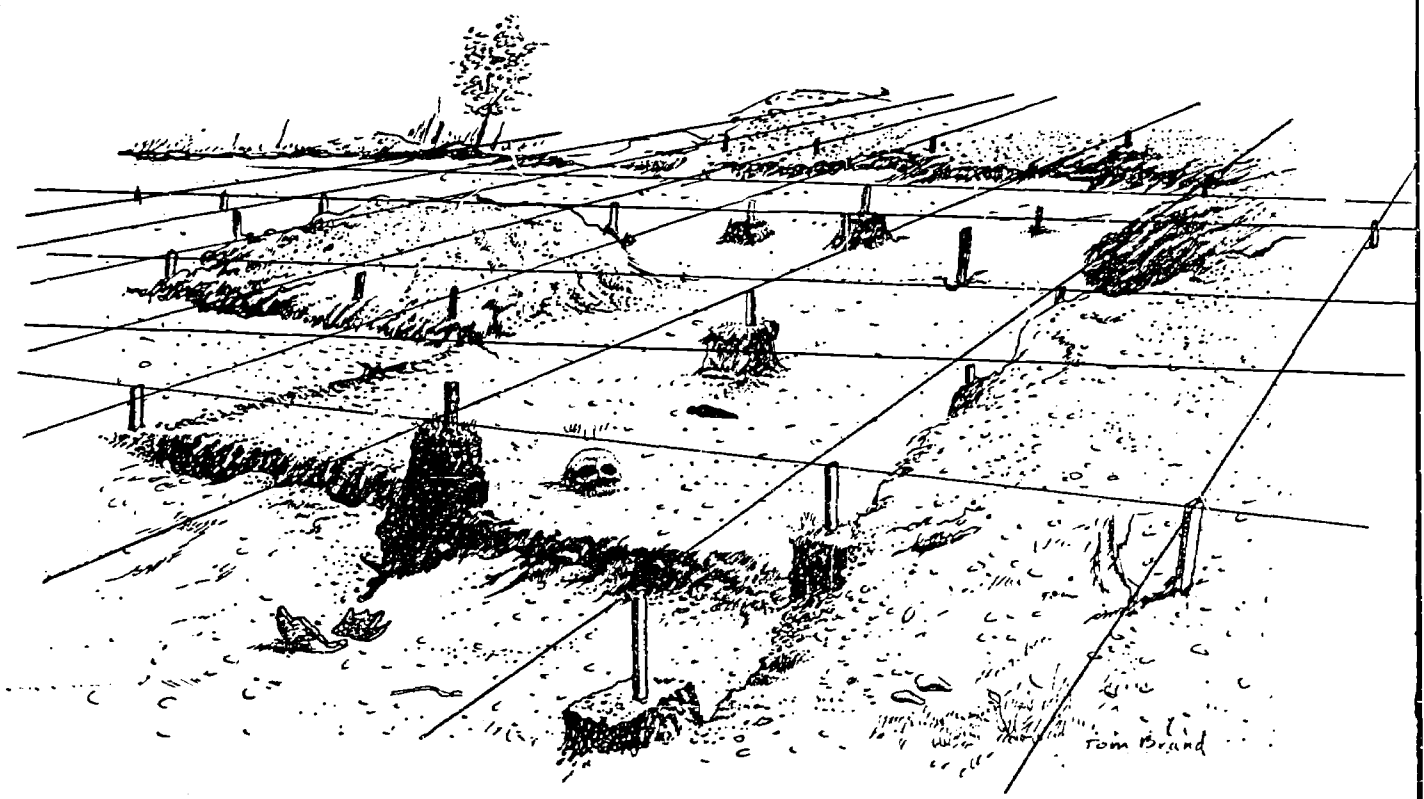
The test pit is a small pit dug by hand at a part of the site that looks as if most of the people lived there. It might have been a house or cemetery site. If nothing has been found, the test pit is refilled and another is dug at a different part of the site.

Sometimes the archaeologist wants to test a larger area of a site that seems to be important. Then he digs test trenches instead of single pits. Although this is often done by hand using shovels, sometimes the archaeologist obtains a mechanical trenching machine. These are used for laying underground pipes or wires. The test trenches are then carefully studied and photographed so that the information will be available to later archaeologists.

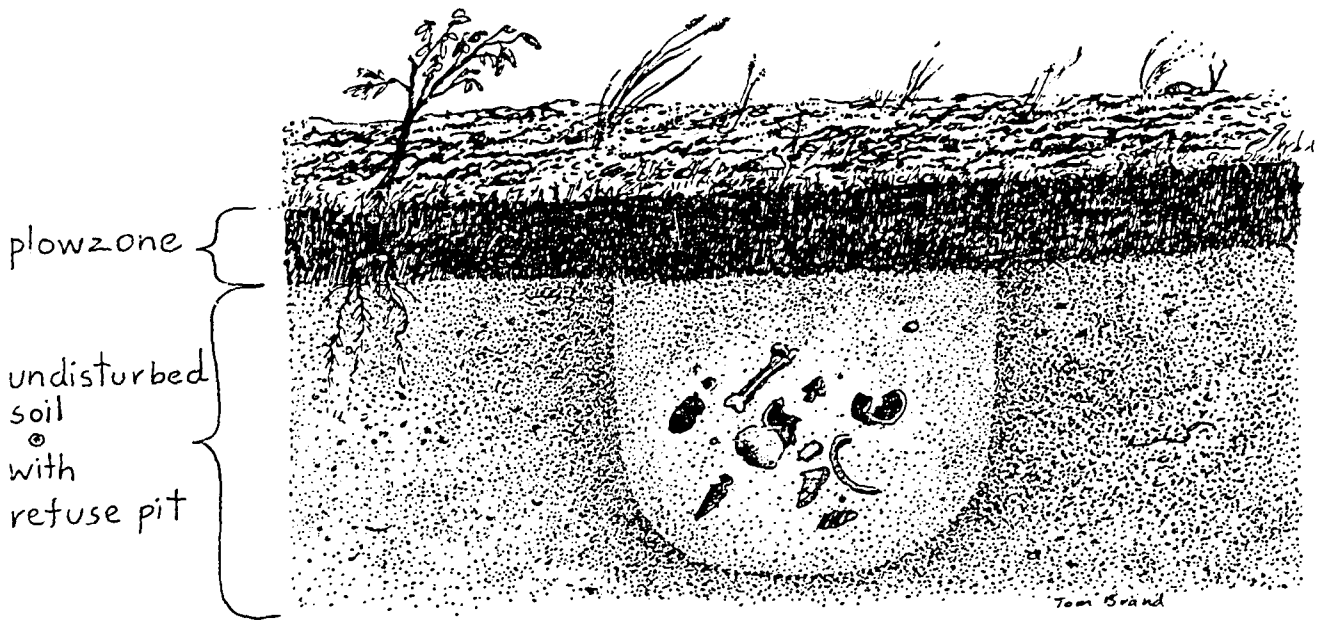
Before he begins excavating a site, the archaeologist must make a detailed map using a transit or other sighting device. He must draw in trees, rocks, streams and rises in the land. He must also place on his map any important finds which he may have located during the testing of the site. Because his excavations may change the site, the map he draws and the photographs he takes will be the only information about the site left for future archaeologists.

All archaeological excavations in Delaware are done in small square units or pits that measure two meters by two meters. A meter is a unit of measurement a little more than a yard used by scientists all over the world. Each unit has a number which tells the archaeologist exactly where on the site it is located. These excavation units are drawn on the site map. They are marked out on the ground with string and wood or metal stakes. This is done with the same sighting device that was used to make the map. All of these squares together is called the grid system.

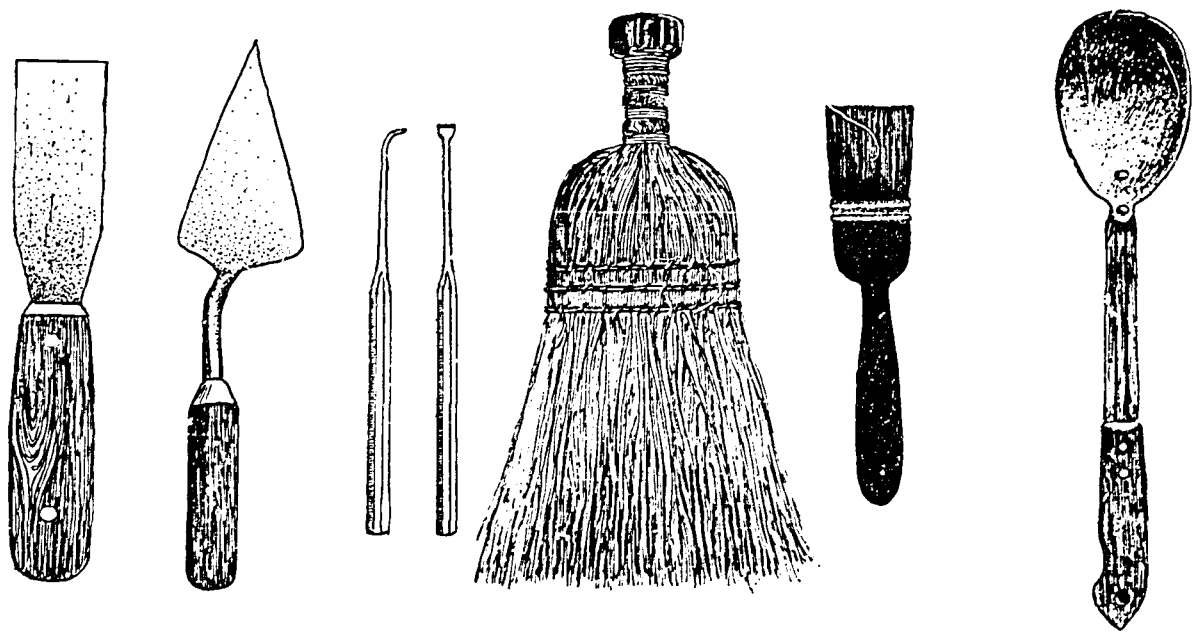




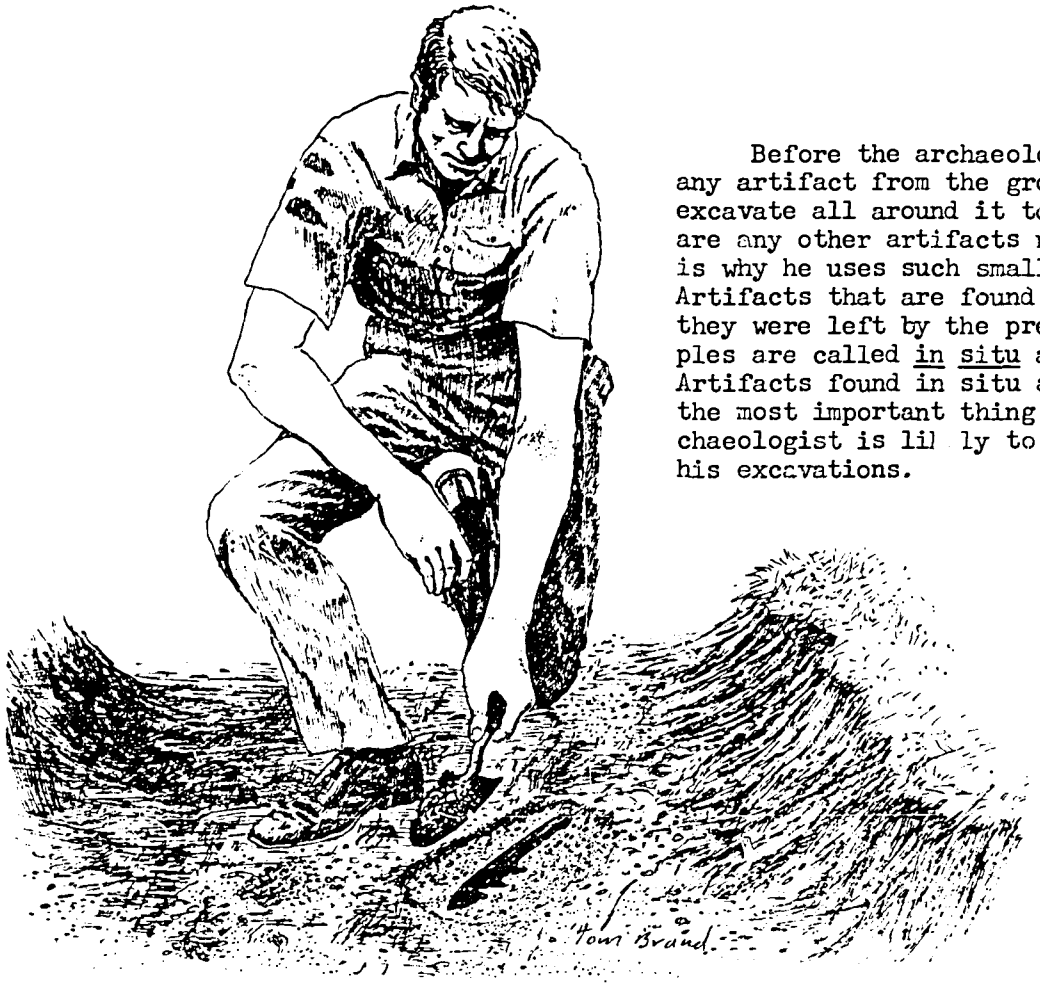
On most archaeological sites in Delaware there is a layer of soil that has been mixed around by plowing. This may have been deposited after prehistoric times. This is called the plow zone. Artifacts may be found in this layer but they are not exactly where they were left behind. The soil in this layer is dug with a shovel and sifted through a screen to find these artifacts and anything else that the prehistoric people may have brought to the site.



Underneath the plow zone the soil has not been disturbed. When the plow zone has been removed, the archaeologist digs very carefully. The soil is scraped down flat with the mason's trowel and swept clean with a whisk broom. If the soil is dry, it may be dampened with a pressure water sprayer. This makes the difference in color between the natural soil and man-made features. A feature is anything made by man which cannot be picked up and carried away. These features may include fire hearths, storage pits, refuse and garbage pits, house floors, or small filled-in post holes. By carefully outlining any such features, the archaeologist is able to tell much about the everyday living conditions of the people.



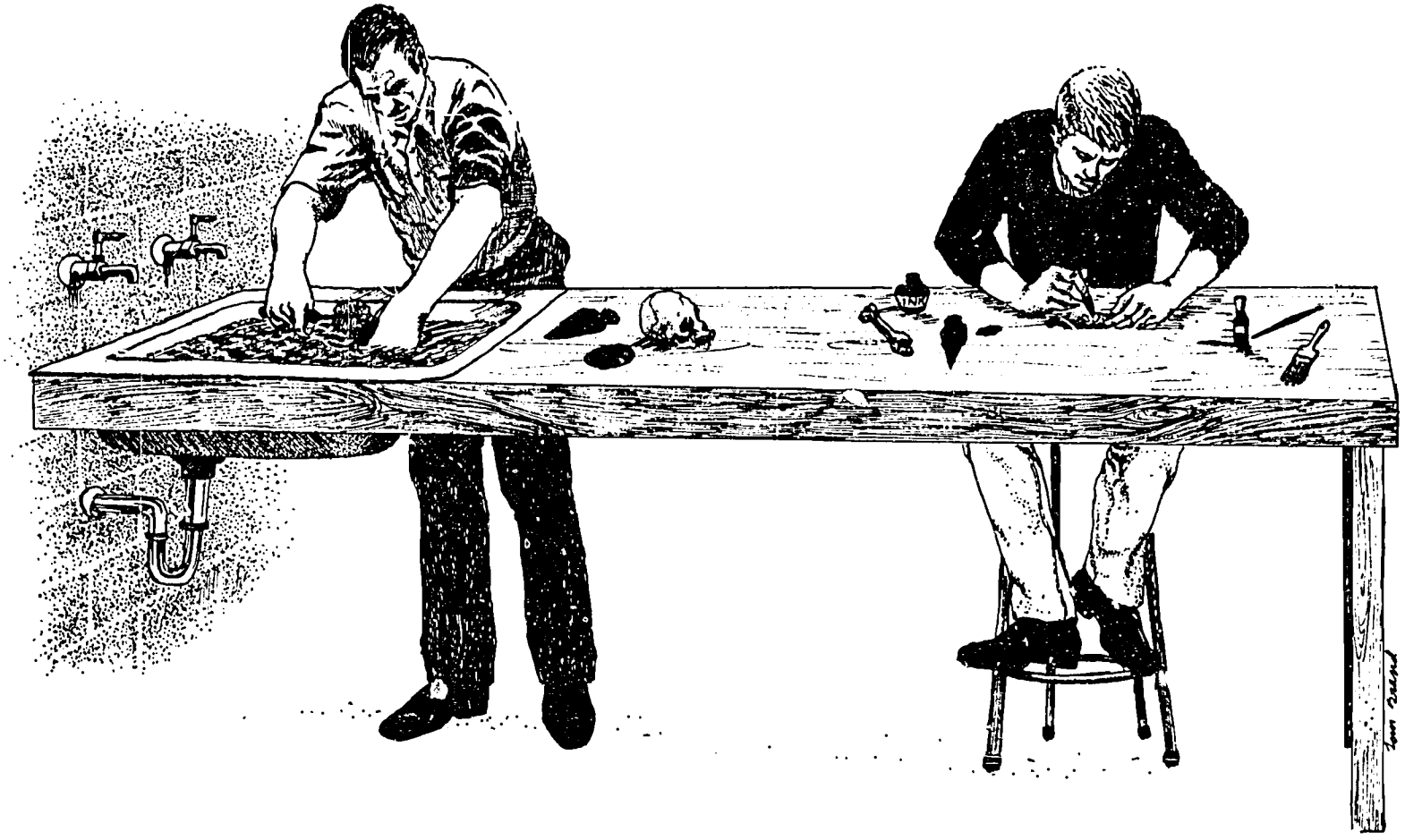
The tools used by the archaeologist depend upon the features or artifacts being excavated. Since he cannot tell what he may need, he tries to keep everything on hand. The usual tool kit of the archaeologist is pictured above. As you can see, he often makes use of kitchen utensils, carpentry and masonry tools and even dental tools.



Before the archaeologist removes any artifact from the ground, he must excavate all around it to see if there are any other artifacts nearby. This is why he uses such small tools. Artifacts that are found exactly where they were left by the prehistoric peoples are called in situ artifacts. Artifacts found in situ are perhaps the most important thing that the archaeologist is likely to find during his excavations.

Very often the archaeologist discovers an in situ artifact that is too fragile to move and which may fall apart when it is uncovered. In these cases he must coat the artifacts with a chemical preservative. The preservative protects the artifact and hardens it so that it can be moved to the laboratory.

Before all the artifacts are removed and the excavation units are filled in again, everything that has been found must be drawn on graph paper showing each excavation unit. Photographs are also taken of everything that has been found. The archaeologist also writes down his ideas after each days work so that he will not later forget any important information. The record made at the site will often be redrawn in the laboratory so that they can be seen by people who are interested.



What Happens In An Archaeological Laboratory?

The archaeologist's laboratory does not look like a chemist's laboratory, full of test tubes, chemicals or computers. He does work closely with specially trained assistants who clean, catalogue, and sort (or classify) all the material he has excavated. When they have finished, he can begin to study this material to better understand the life of the prehistoric peoples he is studying.

Clearing

Before anything else is done, the artifacts must be taken from their containers and carefully cleaned. Some artifacts may show signs of paint, stains, or other features which may be destroyed by cleaning. These artifacts must be studied just as they come from the ground.

The most common way of cleaning artifacts is by scrubbing them with a brush in plain water. Detergent may be added if it is necessary. Occasionally the stone or pottery may have been coated with minerals from the soil in which it was buried. If this is the case, it may be removed by using chemicals.

Labeling

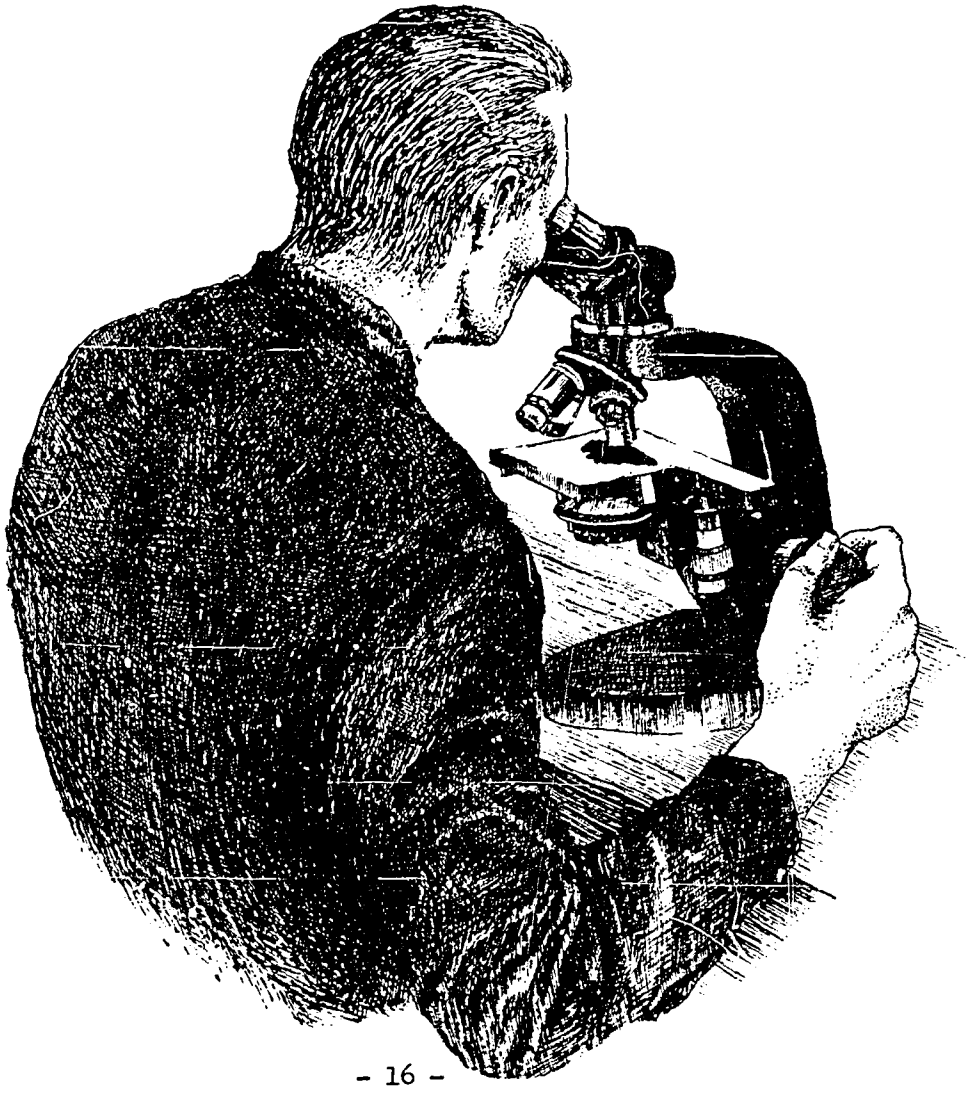
When the artifacts have been cleaned and dried on specially made racks, they must be labeled with a number that tells where they came from. This number is put on the artifact with pen and ink and then it is coated with fingernail polish (clear). In this way the number will always be handy and will not be rubbed off during the study.

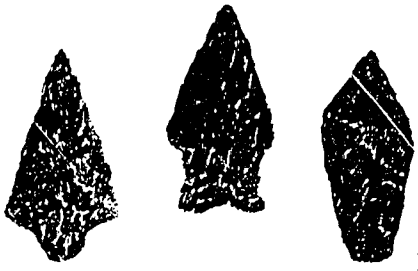
Identifying

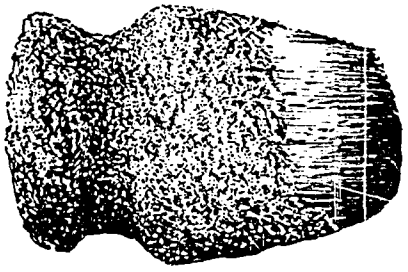
When all of the materials from the archaeological site have been cleaned and labeled, they must all be identified. The archaeologist or his assistants must decide whether each piece is stone, bone or pottery. They must also decide what kind of stone, bone or pottery it is, how it was used and how it was made.

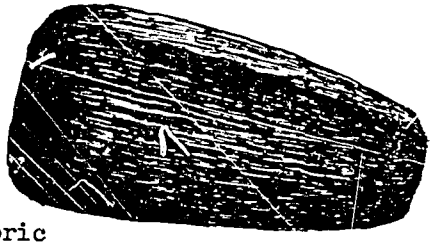
Most archaeologists can tell what kind of a bone or stone something is, but few can tell the age or species of each bone or where the stone came from. The archaeologist must talk to people who know these special studies. Often the archaeologist must talk to many of these specialists.

The ways in which prehistoric people made their tools and the kinds of tools they made tells the archaeologist much about their life. There are no specialists to tell him about these things, so he must find out about them himself. He spends long hours studying artifacts under a microscope or a magnifying glass. Sometimes he tries to make or use tools the way he believes the prehistoric people did.

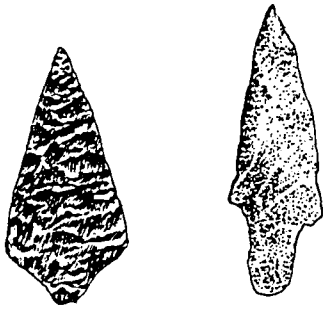


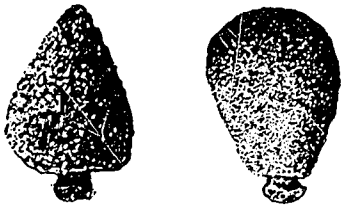


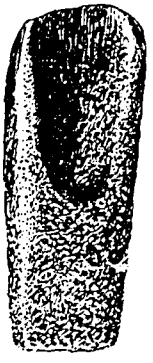


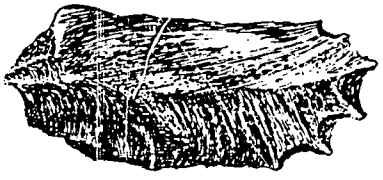


Different groups of prehistoric people made the same tools in different ways. There were styles in tools, pottery and ornaments just as today there are styles in cars, clothes, haircuts and even houses. The archaeologist must decide what these styles were and how they are related to each other. To do this he looks at all the artifacts that are made of the same material such as stone or bone that were used for the same purpose. He tries to see some pattern in the way in which these tools were made. Eventually he is able to place all of the artifacts in groups. All those in one group are almost the same but are different than those in other groups. Placing the artifacts in groups that are almost the same is called classification.





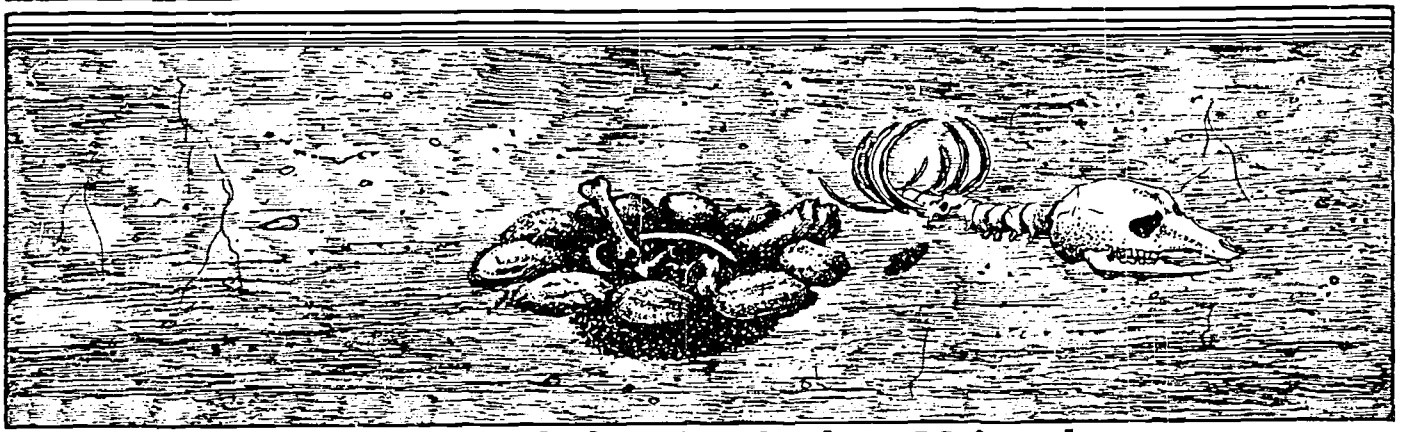




After the archaeologist has put all of the artifacts in groups and has described them, he still must find out when the people who made them lived at the site. It is easy enough to say that they lived before America was discovered or after the time of the cave men in Europe. This of course is not accurate. In order to be able to learn about the people, the archaeologist feels that he should know within a few hundred years of when they lived. Today there are many scientific methods of helping the archaeologist answer this important question.

Many things are being done today with radioactive materials. It will not surprise you to learn that archaeologists have found a way to make radioactivity help them find out how old something is. Every living thing is made partly of carbon. A certain amount of this carbon is radioactive. We call it Carbon-14. Some of this Carbon-14 is always changing to nitrogen. Living things replace the lost Carbon-14 with Carbon-14 from the air. When the plant or animal dies, the Carbon-14 keeps on changing. However, it is not replaced. The change from Carbon-14 to nitrogen happens at a certain rate so that scientists can tell how old something is by how much Carbon-14 is still left. Scientists have found that at the end of 5,730 years only half of the Carbon-14 will be left. Burned wood or burned bone is best for this kind of dating. It is almost solid carbon. The archaeologist can only use this method if he finds a fire hearth with burned wood or bone in it.

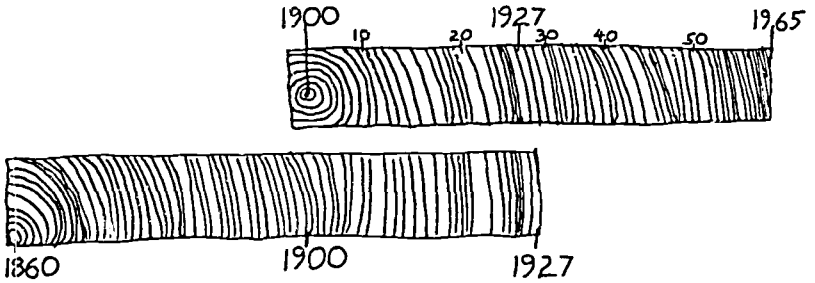
Cosmic rays produce lost Carbon 14 in plants and animals

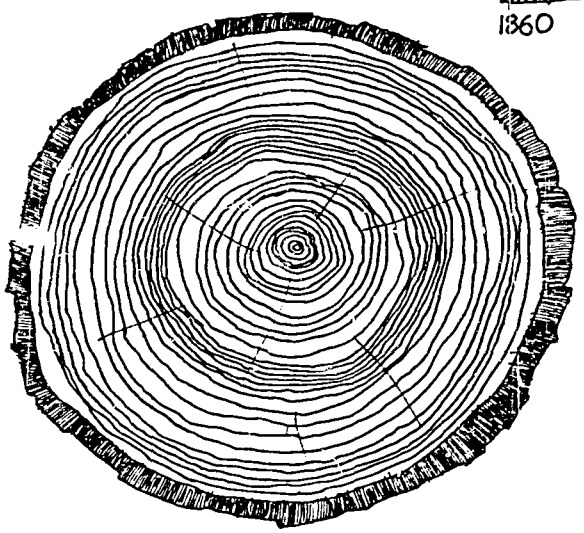


When a plant or animal dies its Carbon 14 intake stops

Since the rate of loss of Carbon 14 is known, scientists can tell when a once living thing died. This also helps to tell age of artifacts that may be nearby.

In the southwestern part of the United States it is very dry. Sometimes wood is preserved for hundreds of years. You probably already know about the rings a tree makes when it grows. A tree makes a new ring every year. If there is not enough water, the tree grows very little and there is a narrow ring. All the trees in a certain area will grow the same way. The patterns made by wide and narrow rings can be matched in logs from different trees. The drawing below will show you how the archaeologist uses tree rings to count back in time. This kind of dating is called dendrochronology, or tree ring dating. Count the rings below to find out how old the tree is.



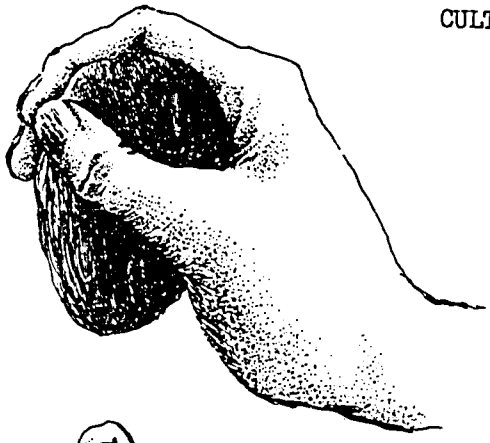


Carbon-14 dating and dendrochronology are called absolute dating because they tell how old something is in years. Sometimes the archaeologist only knows that something is older or younger than something else. This is called relative dating.

When a group of people live in one place for a long time, they build up a layer of soil that contains artifacts and bones and other materials. This is particularly true if they threw their garbage out the door the way most of the prehistoric people in America did. Older garbage and artifacts will be buried by newer garbage and artifacts. Sometimes these layers of soil become quite deep. In America many sites contain three or more feet of buried debris. In other parts of the world, these layers may be over a hundred feet deep. The archaeologist has learned that the material on the bottom is older than that on the top. By carefully measuring just how deep an object was below the surface, he can tell whether it was older or younger than other debris. Most relative dating is based on deposits like these which we call stratified. Stratigraphy is the study of archaeological objects found in different layers of soil.

Sometimes the archaeologist excavates a site that contains no fire hearths, no preserved wood and is not stratified. He must decide how old his site is by comparing the artifacts he has found with artifacts which can be dated.

Very often the archaeologist is asked by an interested person if he can tell them what tribe made the artifacts that have been excavated. He must explain that because the people have long been dead and did not write that he has no way to tell what they called themselves. However, he does give them a name so that he can talk about them more easily. The archaeologist does this only after he has decided where they lived, when they lived and how they lived.



CULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

How Do We Reconstruct Culture?

Culture is the way a group of people live. It includes their tools and everything they make or use as well as what their families are like and how they make rules for their group. One of the goals of the archaeologist is building a picture of how the people he is studying lived. This is what we call cultural reconstruction. This is done by studying everything that was left behind - their garbage, the scraps left over from making their tools and other objects, the things that they made or used, their house remains and their burials.

Technology

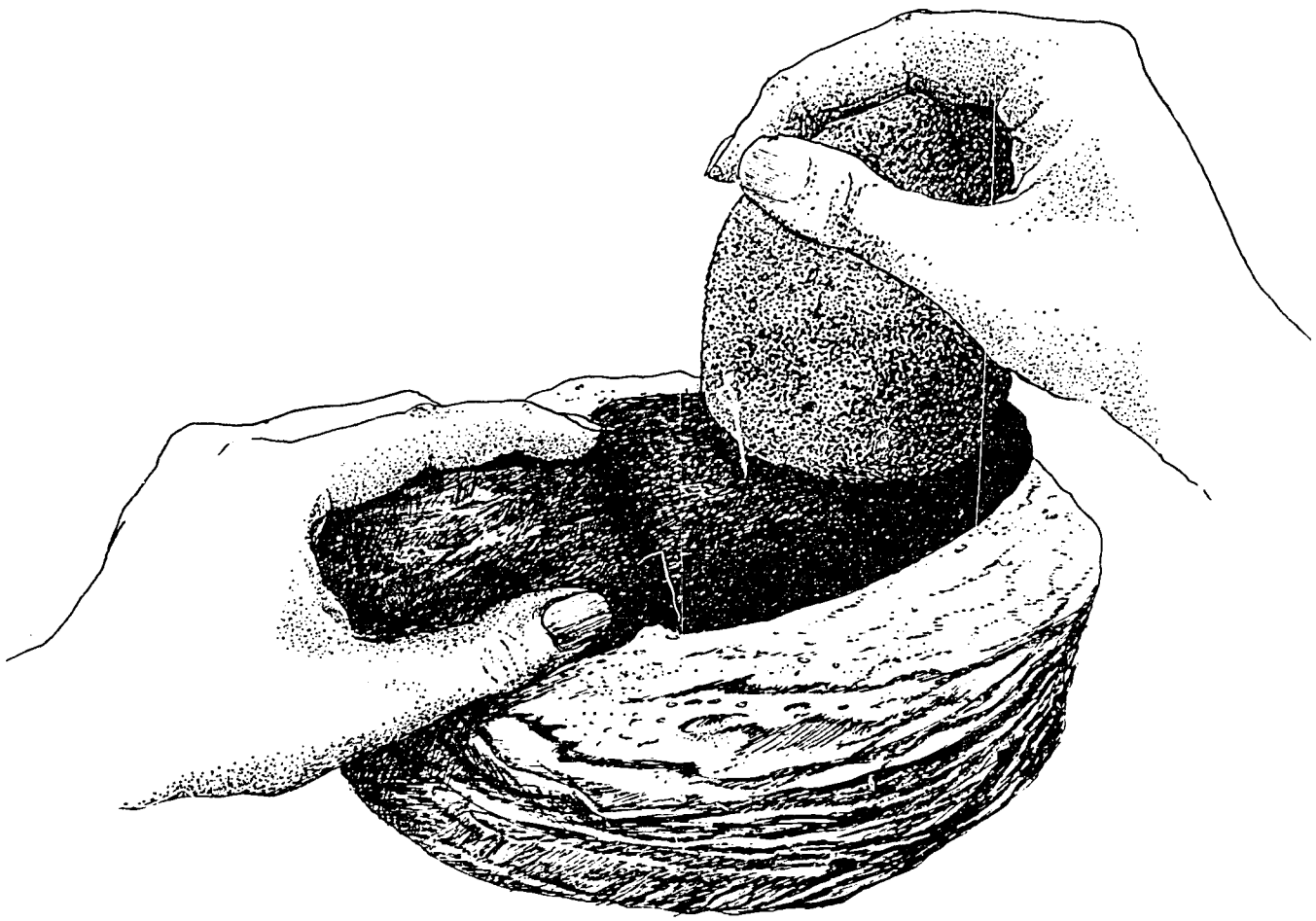
Technology means the way in which tools and other objects are made and used.

Chipped Stone Tools

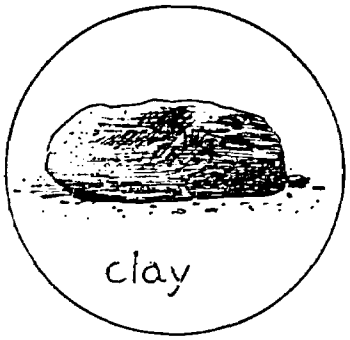
The prehistoric peoples of Delaware made many tools with sharp edges or points from hard stones. One of these kinds of hard stones is called flint. The Indians made their tools by knocking off chips until they had the shape they wanted. They began by breaking a large flake from a piece of flint called the core with a small round hammerstone. Then they used the hammerstone to form the large flake into the shape they needed. Some groups of people did all their chipping with a hammerstone. Others used an antler tip from a deer to make fine chipping on the tools so that they would be sharper and the sides more even. Spear points, arrow points and knives were made by chipping and are easy to recognize. Scraping tools were also made this way. Sometimes the larger flakes left after making other tools were used because they had sharp edges.

Pecked and Ground Stone Tools

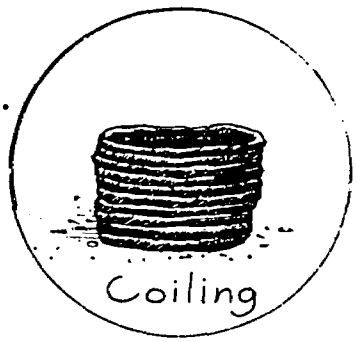
Some of the prehistoric peoples made tools by pecking or pounding stone into shape with a hammerstone. These stones did not chip like flint. Sometimes the tools were smoothed by grinding with another stone. The Indians could also make a sharp edge on tools by grinding. Axes were made in this way. Many of the tools used to prepare food were made by pecking.

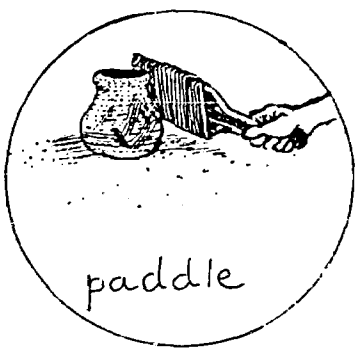


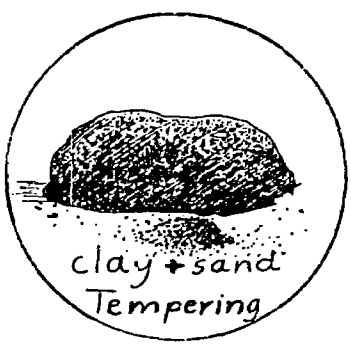
Pottery



Some of the prehistoric peoples of Delaware made cooking and storage pots of clay. They found the clay in natural deposits along stream banks and other places. They mixed this clay with harder material such as sand or crushed shell to keep it from cracking as it dried. The pot was formed by making "ropes" of clay and coiling them around and around. These coils were pushed together so that they could not be seen. The pot was pounded with a wooden paddle which had been wrapped with cording or some kind of fabric. Then the pot was fired by putting it in or near a fire. This made it very hard. Usually the archaeologist only finds parts of these pots. The broken pieces are called potsherds. Potsherds can tell the archaeologist much about the pots they came from. We know that the pots were made by coiling because we have found potsherds that have broken apart along the coils. The tempering can be seen on the broken edges of a potsherd. Sometimes the marks of the cord or fabric which was wrapped around the paddle can be seen on the potsherd. Some potsherds show what kind of decoration was used on a pot, scratching, punching, or adding bits of clay to the surface. Occasionally a large sherd or several that fit together will tell the archaeologist how big the pot was.

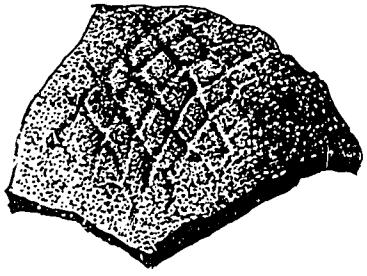






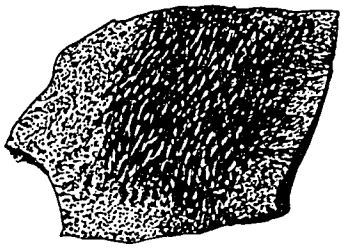
Fibers

Fibers from tough plants or sometimes from animal hair can be made into string to use for cord, fabric or nets. These things decay when they are lost. Therefore, we have never found any in Delaware. However, when the pottery is pounded with the paddle wrapped with these materials, they leave impressions like animal tracks. This tells the archaeologist what they were like. We know that the prehistoric peoples who made pottery also made cording, woven fabrics and nets.

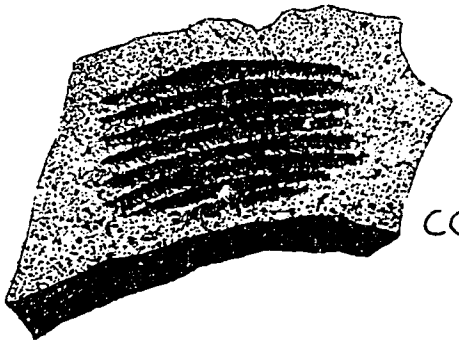


netting marked

Potsherd



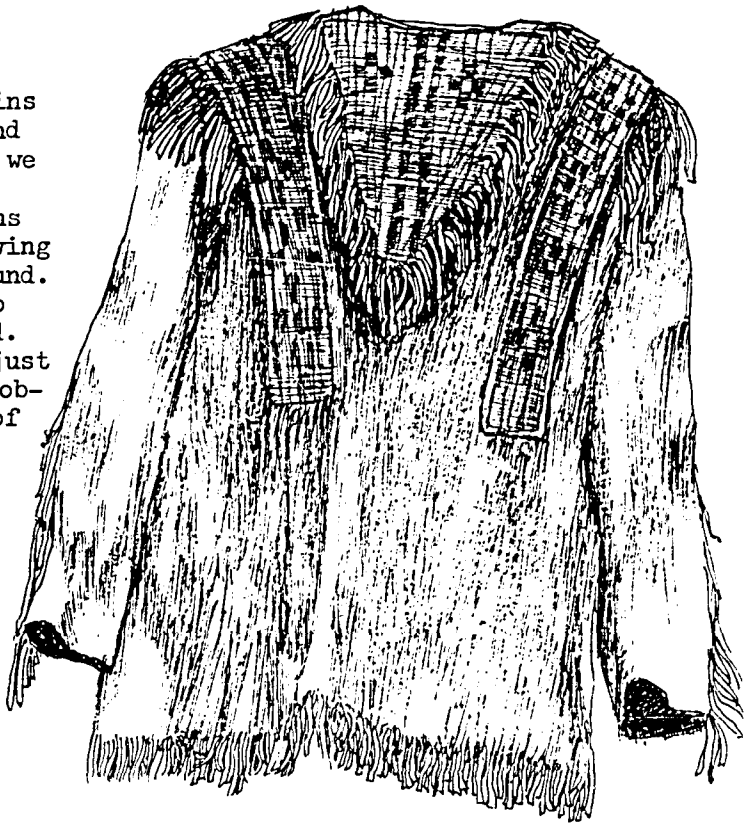
fabric marked

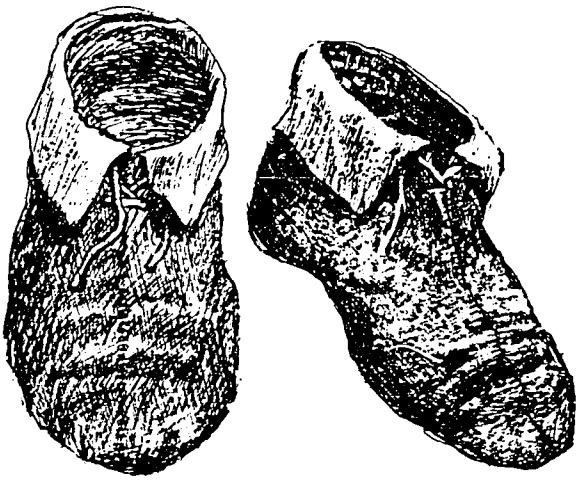


cord marked

Clothing

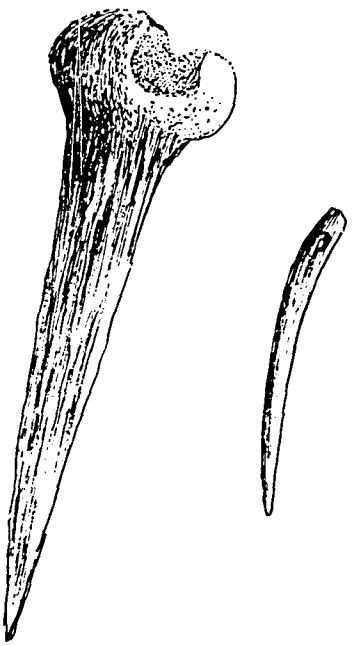
Like fibers, clothing made of skins decay very fast, so none has been found in Delaware. However, the bone tools we find tell the archaeologist something about the clothing. We know that skins were used because bone tools for removing flesh and hair from them have been found. Awls for punching holes in the skin to sew them together have also been found. This tells that the clothes were not just skins thrown around the shoulders. Probably they also made sandals or shoes of some kind.

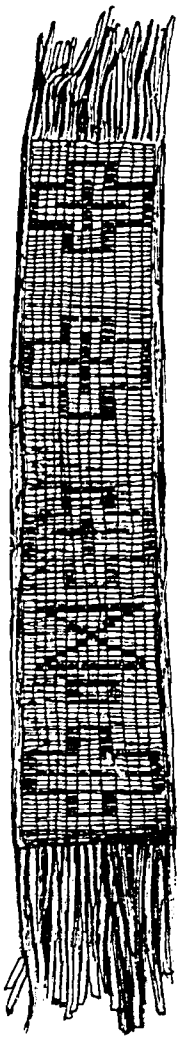




Bone Tools

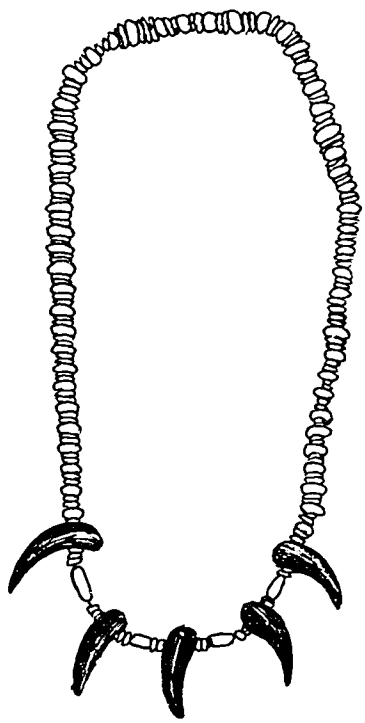
Many tools and ornaments were made of bone. They were made of the bones of the animals that the prehistoric peoples hunted for food. The tools were made by scraping away at the bone with stone scrapers until the proper shape had been made. The archaeologist learns much about other parts of their culture from the kind of bone tools they used.





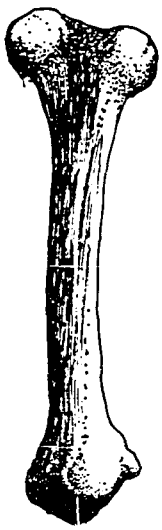
Ornaments

Prehistoric people, the same as people today, liked jewelry and other ornaments. Most of the jewelry that archaeologists have found have been shell beads and pendants. Beads were also made of bone and stone. Stone pendants are sometimes found. Probably many other kinds of decoration such as paint and bird feathers were used. However, these have decayed or washed away.



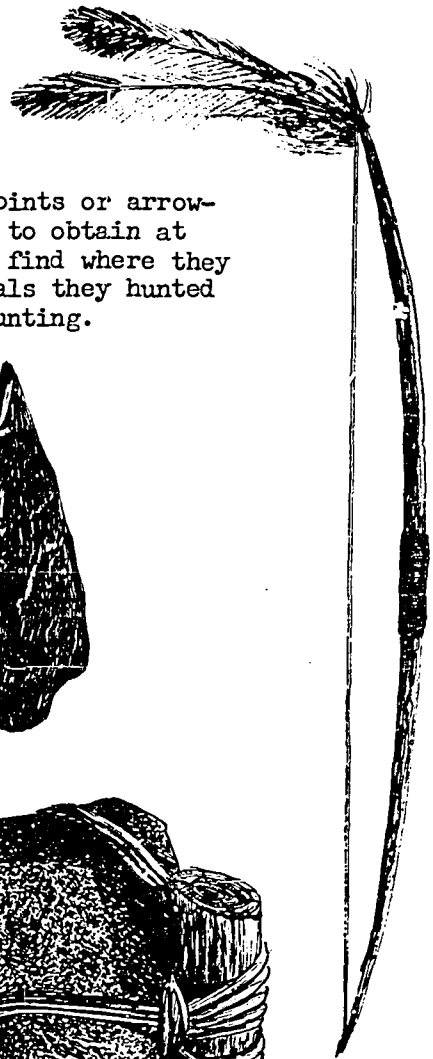
Economy

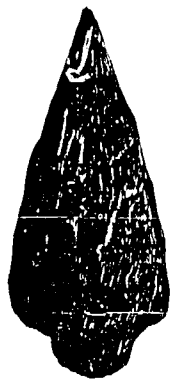
Economy means the way in which people get the food they need and the materials for their tools and ornaments.

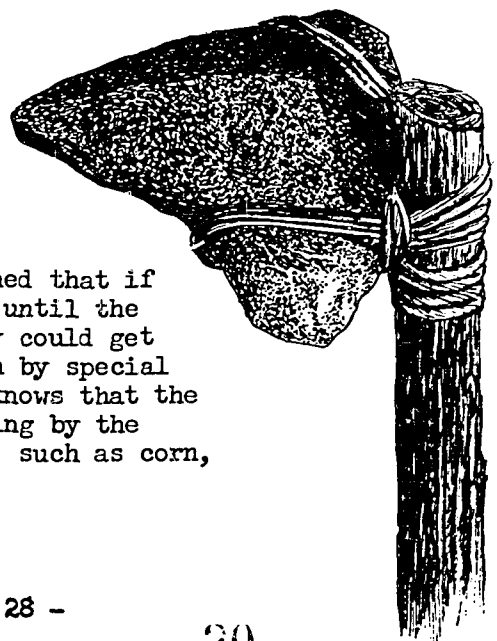


Hunting

If a group of people used spear points or arrow-points, this shows us that they hunted to obtain at least part of their food. The bone we find where they have lived tells us what kinds of animals they hunted and how much of their food came from hunting.







Farming

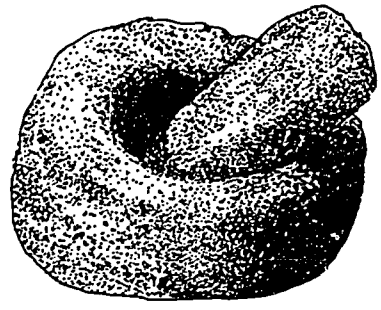
Some prehistoric peoples learned that if they planted seeds and tended them until the crop was ready to be gathered, they could get more food. Sometimes this is shown by special tools. Usually the archaeologist knows that the group he is studying did some farming by the presence of burned seeds of plants, such as corn, which cannot grow wild.

Fishing

Many of the prehistoric people of Delaware ate both fish and shellfish. Usually, the archaeologist learns this by the fish bone and shell that he finds. Sometimes he may find special tools such as fish hooks or net sinkers or even potsherds with the marks of fish netting on them.

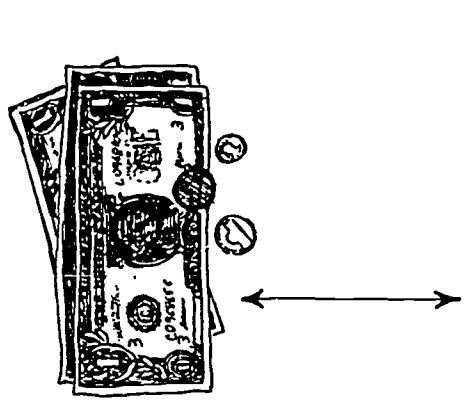
Food Gathering

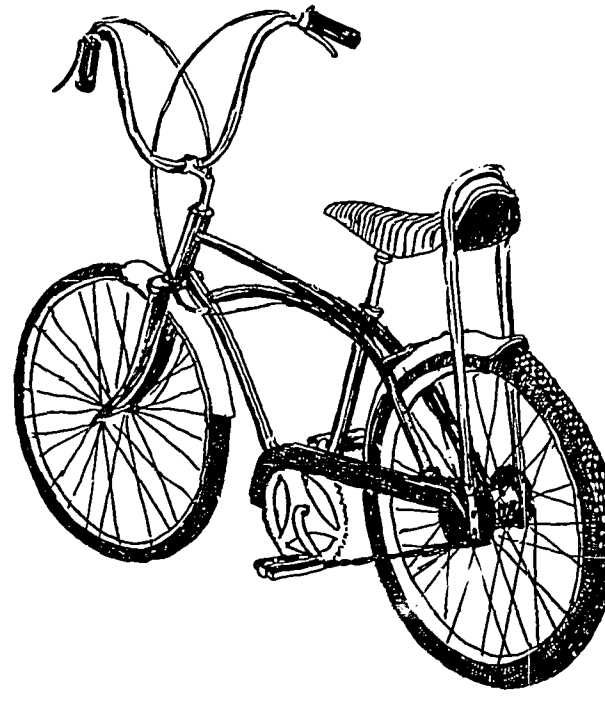
Some prehistoric peoples got much of their food by gathering berries, nuts, roots and seeds. Usually the archaeologist can tell this by the special tools they used to prepare the food for eating. Occasionally burned nuts or seeds may be found.

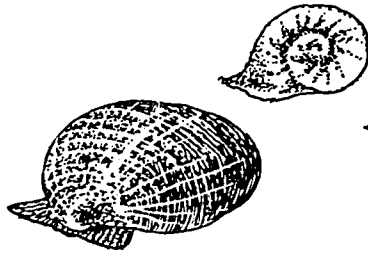


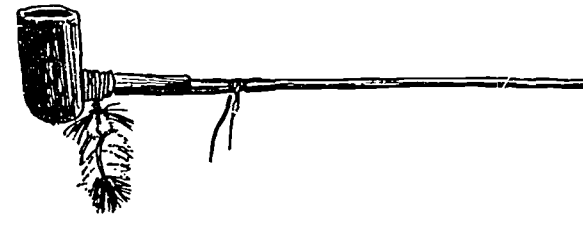
Trading

Trading is exchanging something you have that another person wants for something he has and you want. It usually involved things that the Indians wanted, but did not need, such as shells and different kinds of stones than were found in their own area.



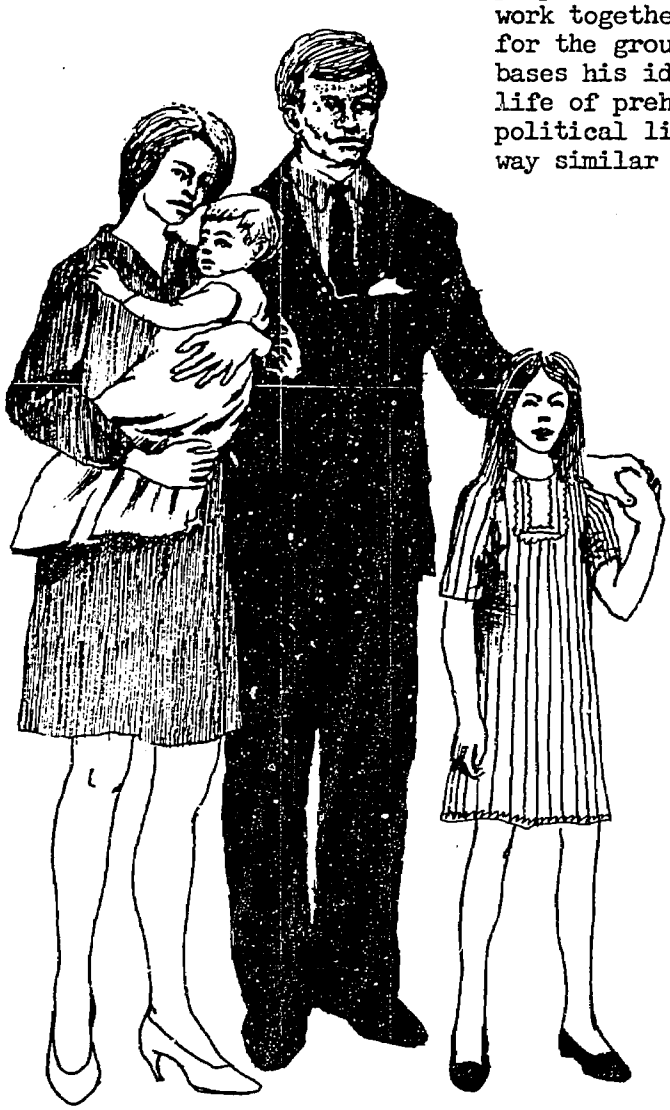






Social and Political Life

Social life means the way families are organized and the way people act toward other people. Political life means the way people work together in groups and make decisions for the group. Usually the archaeologist bases his ideas about the social and political life of prehistoric people on the social and political life of living people who live in a way similar to the prehistoric people.



Modern Family

A modern family usually consists of a father, a mother, and children.

Indian Family

An Indian family includes the grandparents, mother and father, children, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Modern Government

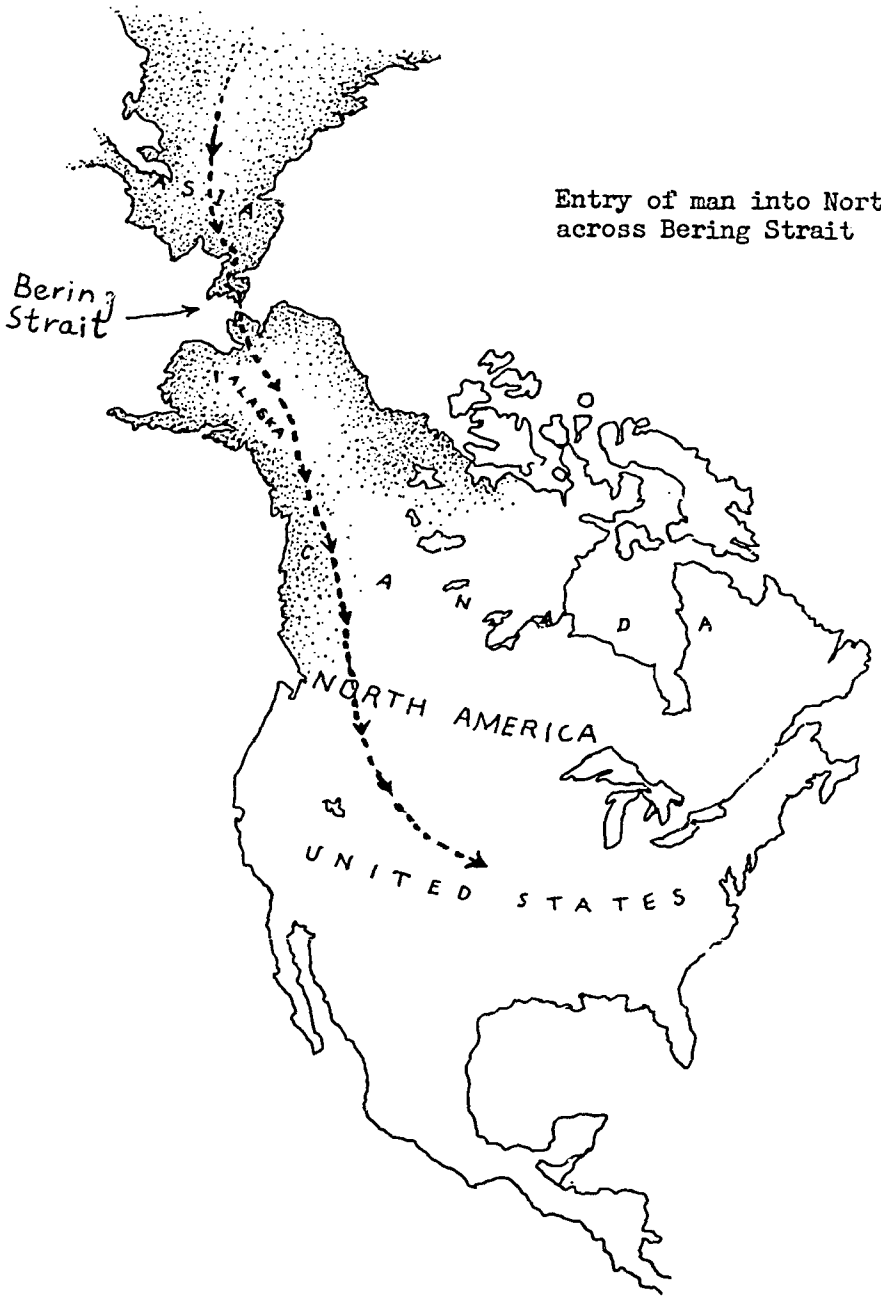
Elected officials make decisions in our political life.

Indian Government

The older men made decisions for the Indians.

Religion

Most of what we know about the religion of the prehistoric peoples comes from the way they buried their dead. Sometimes we find images and ornaments which tell us more.



Entry of man into North America across Bering Strait

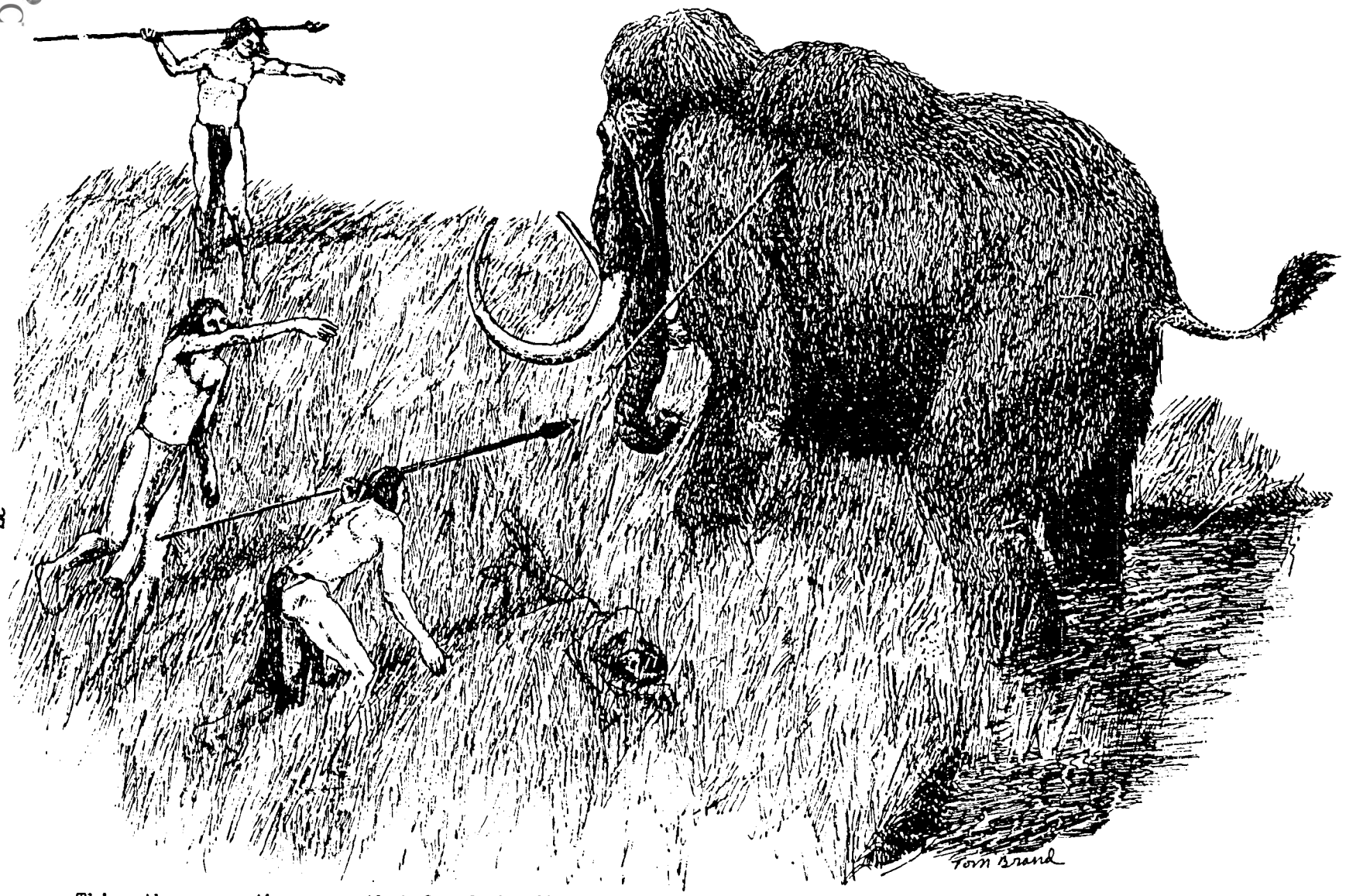
The Prehistory of Delaware

When the first European explorers came to the Delaware Bay and landed on the shores of Delaware they were met by people whose ancestors had lived here for perhaps ten thousand years. The land that we now call Delaware belonged to several groups of Indians including the Lenni Lenape or Delaware, the Nanticoke, and a tribe living near the town of Lewes at a place called Sickoneysincks. Another group of Indians, the Assateagues, had just recently moved from their Maryland homeland to the Indian River where their descendants still live.

The Indian tribes visited by the English, Dutch, and Swedish explorers, however, were only the latest in a long history of Indian occupation in Delaware. Archaeologists estimate that the first Indians to visit Delaware came here over ten thousand years ago. Of course we will never know the names of these early visitors or very much about the way they lived. Archaeological investigations can, however, tell us about the tools which they made and used and perhaps something of the animals they hunted.

When the first Indians visited Delaware the climate was much different than it is today. Ten thousand years ago the last of the four great glaciers of the Ice Age had moved southward to a point about one hundred miles north of Delaware. The weather was harsh and the land was almost bare of trees. The animals that lived along the coastal plain included the mammoth, the horse, the camel, the giant ground sloth, the must ox, and a large number of smaller animals many of which no longer exist.

At that time the sea level was much lower than it is today. Much of the land that is now beneath the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean was dry. It is estimated that the coast of southern Delaware may have been over fifty miles further east than it is now. The Delaware River was probably a small stream carrying fresh water to the sea edge. Most of the land that is now marshy would have been dry and the hills of the plain may have been higher.



This, then, was the scene that faced the first hardy band of hunters who entered what is now Delaware and decided to make it their home. These people are called PALEO-INDIANS by the archaeologist, a word meaning old Indians. The Paleo-Indians lived almost entirely by hunting the large animals that lived in large herds throughout the Eastern United States. They used spears and clubs to kill the animals after driving them into bogs or running them off high bluffs. They probably were wanderers who followed the herds as they moved from place to place. The life of the Paleo-Indian was surely a dangerous one.

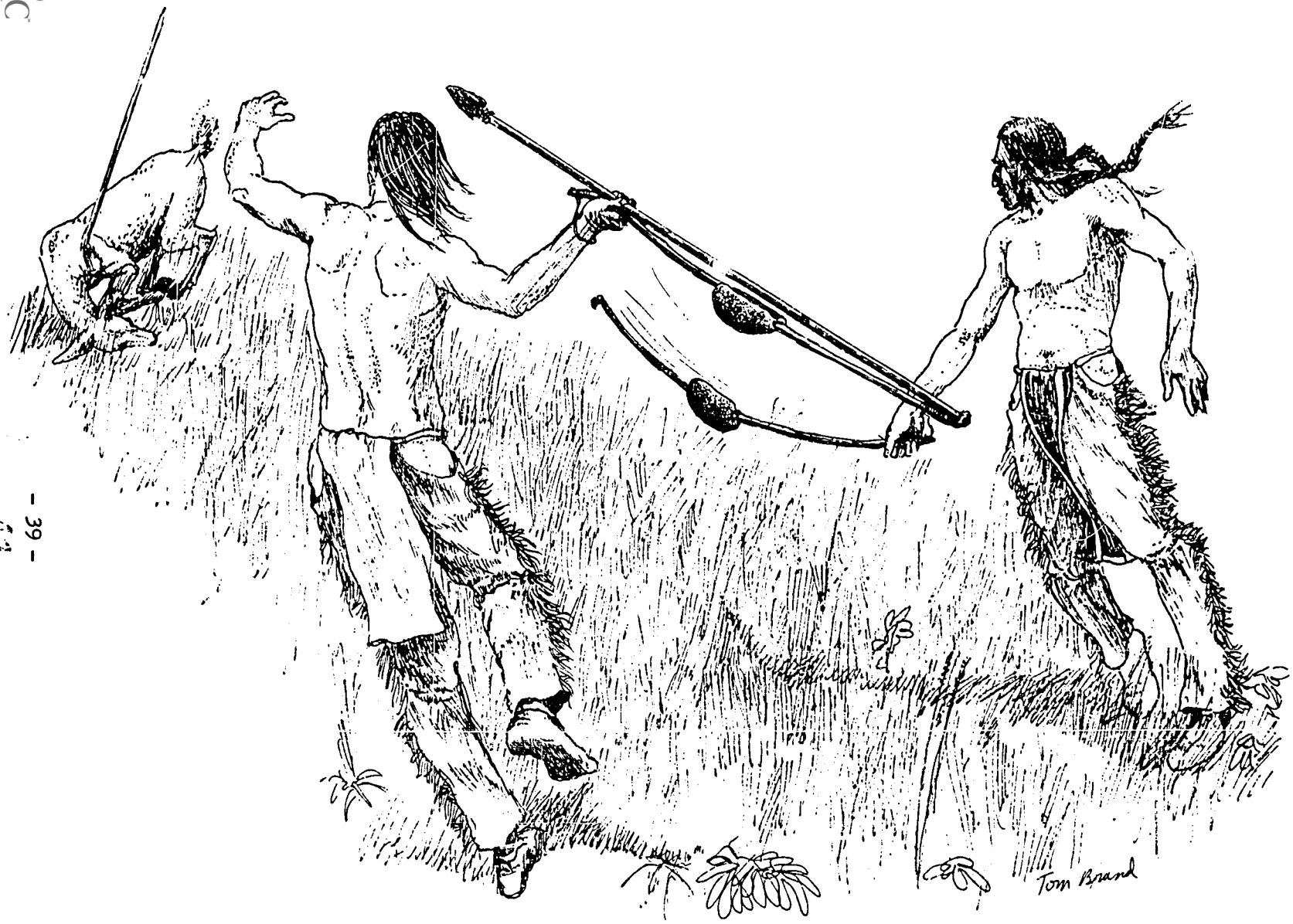
Archaeologists are able to identify the type of spear point used by the Paleo-Indian as well as some of his stone scrapers and knives. The spear points are very unusual and are quite rare. They are called "fluted points" because of the shallow grooves or flutes that run along both faces of the stone point. The scrapers and knives are also quite rare although many more exist. Most people, however, do not recognize a Paleo-Indian scraper and knife.

Not only did Archaic man make chipped stone spear points and knives and scrapers, but he also made axes and other tools by pecking and grinding them to shape. One of the most unusual tools used by the Archaic hunter was the atlatl (attle-attle), or spear thrower. The atlatl was made of a long rod or flat stick with a hook on one end and a weight in the center. The Archaic hunter would place his spear upon the spear thrower and heave it towards the animal which he was hunting. By using the spear thrower, the hunter was able to toss the spear much further and faster and probably with greater accuracy. A more successful hunt was usually the reward.

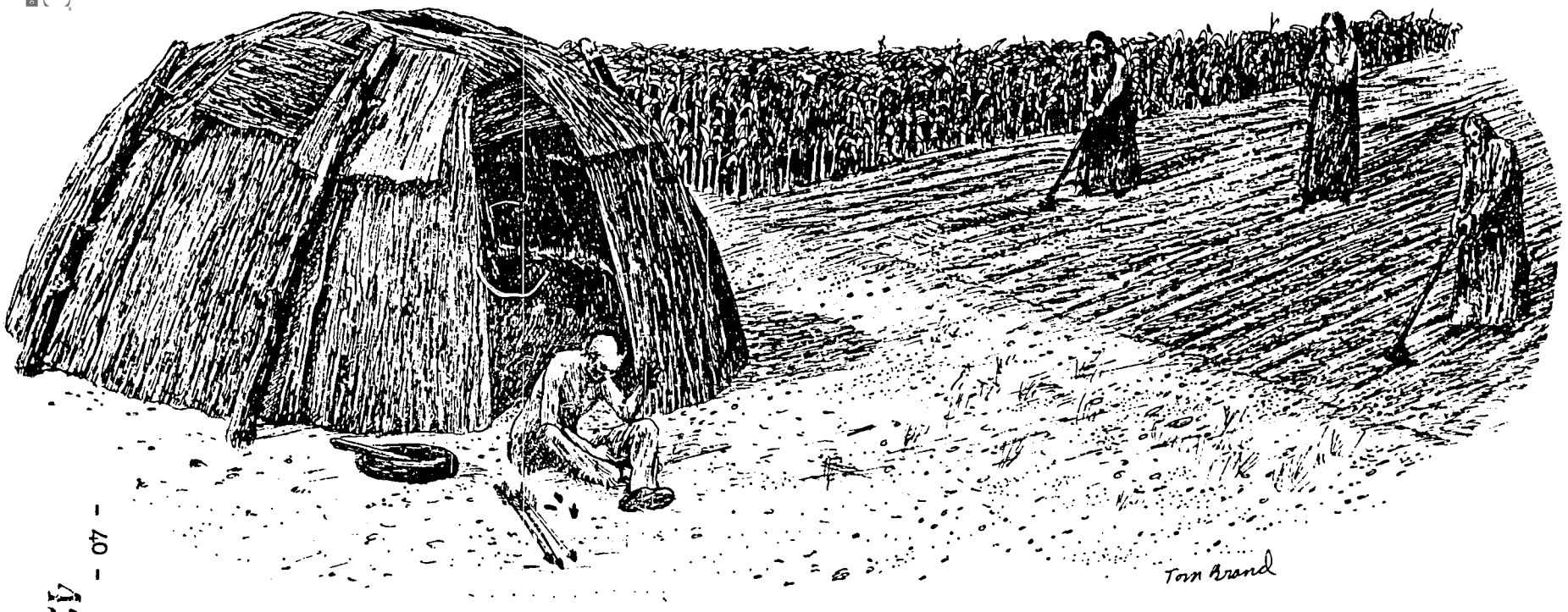
Over the years Archaic man became more and more numerous because of his increasing skill in hunting the animals of the forest, collecting wild plants and shell fish, and because of his ability to fish for larger fish by using a canoe. The canoe also enabled Archaic peoples to carry more tools with them as they traveled from place to place. The Delmarva Peninsula was heavily populated by prehistoric peoples at this time. Almost every field in Delaware that is near a stream contains evidence that Archaic man had lived there.

During the latter stages of the time when Archaic man was living in Delaware other Indian groups of the United States and North America had learned how to cultivate plants. These people lived by planting corn, beans, squash, sunflower, and other plants. They carefully cultivated these plants. Eventually the idea was introduced to the Archaic peoples of Delaware. Although hunting was easy and often provided sufficient food for the increasing population it was not the most dependable way to obtain food. Often the game was scarce and many people would starve. Knowing this, the Archaic peoples probably realized the importance of raising crops for enough food.

Once the Indian gave up hunting and the old or Archaic way of life and became a farmer, we can see great changes in his life. From this point on the Indian groups of Delaware are referred to by archaeologists as Woodland Indians. The Woodland Period in Delaware may have begun as early as three thousand years ago but the earliest archaeological evidence is no more than two thousand years old.



Archaic men hunting with an atlatl



The Woodland Indian lived in small villages or hamlets situated among his fields along the banks of navigable streams. It was the women who farmed the fields, constructed the houses, and probably ran the village. The men continued to hunt as they always had and busied themselves with religious and governmental activities. The crops from the fields were sufficient to feed the people throughout the year and any meat gathered by the men was just an extra treat.

Life in the village was much more pleasant than it ever had been for the people of prehistoric Delaware. Everyone took part in the religious ceremonies. The ceremonies were colorful and probably had great meaning to those that viewed them. Games and other forms of entertainment were widespread now that the people had time to spend on things other than hunting or gathering food. The children had dogs as pets. They assisted in the preparation of food and perhaps the watching of the turkey pens. More people traveled further and probably the returning traveler would spend days telling all who would listen of his adventures.

Archaeologists divide the Woodland Period into three parts: Early, Middle and Late. During the Early Woodland Period many tribes in the Eastern United States built large mounds of earth in which they would bury their dead. People were buried with many of the tools and ornaments they used during their life on earth. These burial goods were sometimes very elaborate. Some of the most beautiful artifacts known in the Eastern United States were found in these mounds.

Toward the end of the Early Woodland Period a group of people from the State of Ohio visited Delaware. These people, who were called the Adena by archaeologists, lived in at least six places in the Delmarva Peninsula. Many of their graves have been found. Although the Adena people built huge mounds when they lived in Ohio, those that came to Delaware apparently did not follow their old customs. Perhaps they were not here long enough or perhaps the people that came died off before they could begin work on a mound.

The artifacts left behind by the Adena peoples who visited Delaware are the most interesting prehistoric artifacts from the entire Delmarva Peninsula and the Eastern United States. While in Ohio, the Adena people had traded far and wide to such areas as Arkansas, Sascatchewan, and the Great Lakes area. Their stone knives were occasionally as long as fourteen inches. They were made of beautiful flints and cherts of many colors. The Adena people also made pipes of a soft stone in the shape of tubes. These were stuffed with tobacco and smoked like a cigar. The grave sites in the Delmarva Peninsula also contained copper ornaments and paint cups. These Indians used paint for decorating their body.

From the time of the Adena to about one thousand years ago peoples of the Ohio Valley and others from New York and possibly New England continued to visit Delaware. It seems that they did not just come to enjoy the fine climate and the Atlantic beaches. What they were probably after were the shells of such shell fish as conch and marginella. The shells were highly prized by the peoples of those areas for use in making jewelry and other ornaments. During these times the great Hopewell peoples of Ohio and the Point Peninsula cultures of New York were among the most frequent visitors.

On the banks of the Murderkill River just about where it enters the Delaware Bay is a large cemetery. This cemetery was used by people who were probably engaged in the trade between the Point Peninsula cultures and the people of the eastern coast of Delaware. This cemetery was discovered in 1967 by archaeologists working for the Delaware Archaeological Board in Dover. This cemetery was very carefully excavated by the archaeologists. It tells us quite a bit about the people who were buried in it. The cemetery is still to be seen and is known as the Island Field Site. It is located near South Bowers and can be visited during much of the year.

The people who lived at the Island Field Site about one thousand years ago were hunters and fishermen. They probably depended more upon farming and shell fishing to gain a living. In spite of the hardships they must have endured, these people also traveled and were able to either visit or trade with most of the peoples of the New York area. Buried with their dead are many objects of fine craftsmanship that must have been imported into Delaware. Perhaps they traded for clam, conch, or marginella shells. Archaeologists call these trading people the Webb Phase or more commonly the Webb Culture.

Soon after the Webb people lived at the Island Field Site new ideas began to enter the State. Farming techniques and crops became more widely used and the people began to depend to a much greater extent on farming. Hunting was then a very unimportant activity. The Late Woodland Period began with the widespread cultivation of corn or maize as it was called by the Indians. The bow and arrow rather than the spear was used nearly all the time. At this time the local people lived in large villages for at least a part of the year. Archaeologists can begin to recognize the direct ancestors of the various tribes that lived here when the European settlers first arrived.

Archaeologists have very little trouble recognizing tools of the Late Woodland people. All of their arrowpoints were simple triangular shapes. They were usually made from brown, yellow and red jaspers. The pottery of these people was finely made by mixing crushed oyster and clam shell with the clay. After the clay was mixed the pot was shaped in a conical form with a rounded bottom. It was then fired at a high temperature in an enclosed oven until it was baked. Late Woodland pottery often has fancy decorations impressed or incised near the rim.

When the first Europeans entered the eastern part of North America they brought with them diseases that were unknown to the Indians. The Indians were not immune to the diseases so large numbers died as a result. Even before the European trader or farmer entered Delaware his diseases had already killed off much of the population. The earliest historical accounts tell us of only two or three villages in the entire State of Delaware. One of these may be under the streets of the present town of Lewes. The other two have not yet been found.

The long history of the Indian on the Delmarva Peninsula had drawn to a close. This wonderful story of hunters, fishermen, mound-builders and traders was over. In 1754, the last of the Nanticoke peoples left the State. The true Indian way of life was never to be seen again in Delaware. It was a sad ending that could have been much better handled had the European given respect to this strange and wonderful way of life of the people known as the American Indians.