Archaeology

In Howard County and at Mount Pleasant
(The Howard County Conservancy)
Archaeology is:

1. the **systematic** unearthing of material culture (artifacts)
2. the **scientific** attempt to reconstruct our past
3. a **method** of recovering evidence of human culture
4. protecting our antiquities
There are **five basic steps** that archaeologists follow in their line of work.

**Where** - to look

**How** - to go about recovering evidence of human culture

**Recording** - the location of artifacts and features

**Analyzing** - what is found

**Reconstructing** - what occurred at a specific site at a specific time
3 Ways to locate a site or extract information from a site

Surface Reconnaissance- Flag, Measure, Bag

Excavation by Meter Square

40x40 cm Shovel Test Pits
Shovel Test Pits, 40 X 40 cm, are placed at predetermined intervals, along a grid, to search for evidence of material culture beneath the surface.
If artifacts/features are discovered the STP may be expanded to a meter square
A controlled surface collection (reconnaissance) may be conducted in farm fields where the soil has been tilled and artifacts are on the surface. Flags are used to mark the exact location of artifacts which are then placed on a grid map.
Full scale excavation occurs when squares or trenches are set in place to expose subsurface artifacts and/or features.
A feature is a group of related artifacts/remains. Features, as this dog burial, are left in place (pedastaled) and carefully drawn to scale on a plan view map. Features include fireplaces, building foundations, postmolds, trash pits (middens) etc.
A brick foundation feature is shown in this 2 meter square
A posthole and mold for an actual post is shown above. Careful excavation allows archaeologists to reconstruct a fence row, palisade and any number of other subsurface features.
A trash feature is shown in the above square. It includes bones, pottery sherds, brick, charcoal.

Archaeologists dig up other peoples garbage.
Prehistoric Archaeology in America refers to Native American or Aboriginal sites.

Native American sites in Howard County date to 14,000 BP (Before Present). Evidence of their presence has been found in caves, tilled fields, and near rivers and streams.
They utilized a variety of materials including stone, bone, wood and clay.
Paddles used to shape and decorate clay vessels

Woodland Indians lived in villages and raised corn
Although most of Howard County’s 289 registered archaeology sites are prehistoric very little evidence has been found of their presence at Mt. Pleasant.... at least so far.
Native American sites have been identified in the Patapsco Valley; please report evidence of sites on or near Mt. Pleasant to the staff at the Conservancy.
Historical Archaeology utilizes written records including deeds, letters, wills, photographs, diaries, inventories, Census data, etc. to help archaeologists locate sites and interpret artifacts and features.

Originals of land transactions can be found at the Hall of Records in Annapolis and at the Land Records Office in Howard County.
This section of The Howard County Land Grant Map shows the two 18th century grants, Ranters Ridge and Good Fellowship, from which Mt. Pleasant was created.
Most of the 232 acre Mt. Pleasant parcel is part of the 415 acre 1703 land grant made to Thomas Browne and known as Ranters Ridge.
He was known as the Patuxent Ranger and was charged with keeping an eye on Indians in the Middle and Little Patuxent area between Laurel and the Patapsco River (the boundary between Howard and Baltimore County).
This 1703 deed describes the 5 metes and bounds of Ranters Ridge

East north east 66 perches, north 32 degrees east 153 perches, north 79 degrees west 370 perches, South 16(it is actually 60, 16 is a mistake) west 30 perches, south 6 degrees east 270 perches, then a direct line to the first=415 acres. 1 perch = 16.5 feet.
Family genealogies have been helpful in tracing the transfer of land within and between families. Four generations of Browns are shown on the next two slides. When Benjamin Brown married Susannah Randall the present property adjacent to Mt. Pleasant, known as Good Fellowship, came into the Brown family.
4th - 6th generation descendants were involved in numerous land transactions. Two of which resulted in the creation of the present 232 acre tract known as Mt. Pleasant. 6th generation Samuel Brown purchased a 192 acre tract in 1838 from Thomas and Camilla Herbert and added a 40 acre tract in 1859. He purchased it from his brother John Riggs Brown. The two tracts total 232 acres.
Mt. Pleasant has the potential for any number of prehistoric sites and several historic stone foundations and architectural features have already been identified.

At present only one feature, a trash midden, has been investigated archaeologically.
Field work began in 2002. Travis Young, in order to fulfill his Eagle Scout Archaeology Merit Badge requirement, received permission to conduct a dig in an area where “broken glass and other pieces of debris”, had been found on the surface.
Two of the three squares excavated are shown below. The artifacts were cleaned and placed in a cabinet that is on display in the farm house.
The Upper Patuxent Archaeology Group (UPAG) offered to identify the horizontal and vertical boundaries of the entire midden and to catalogue and analyze the artifacts.
Dr. Charles Hall, Terrestrial Archaeologist for the State of Maryland, and archaeologist Kathie Fernstrom help in the setting up of the site grid.
Lee Preston’s Physical Anthropology/Archaeology students from Howard Community College assisted in the field/lab work from 2005-2006.
Two, one meter units were opened. One, between the Eagle Scout units and one toward the eastern boundary.
UPAG applied for a site number from the State of Maryland. Mt. Pleasant became the 269th Howard County site officially registered with the State-18 HO 269.
Dirt is removed with trowels and placed in buckets.
Buckets are dumped into ¼ inch mesh screens and the dirt is sifted separating any artifacts missed with hand trowels.
Artifacts are placed in bags and transported to the lab for cleaning, categorizing, and labeling.
Artifacts are placed on drying racks and then labeled with the site and square number.

Often artifacts are washed and placed on racks in the field; allowing volunteers to analyze what was just excavated.
70+% of the artifacts found thus far are in 2 squares- N10W2 and N10W3.

Many were complete and most are associated with the late 19th-early 20th century.

Thus far the evidence suggests a one time clean out and dump; not a long term stratified 18th-20th century midden.
Piecing together broken pot sherds (articulation) also takes place in the laboratory.
Artifacts are categorized by functional groups:

- Architectural
- Food and Beverage
- Domestic
- Personal
- Aboriginal
Most of the artifacts are bottles including, Mason jar lids and liners, A&P Extracts, Rumford Baking Powder, Listerine and other medicinals.
A unique ceramic vessel

Glyco-Thymoline is a mouthwash
Additional squares have been opened and fieldwork will continue until the boundaries of the midden have been identified.
Augering is being conducted to identify how far the midden extends N-S and E-W.
Holes are dug at one meter intervals in order to determine the horizontal limits of the midden.

Present evidence suggests the bulk of the deposit is within a 4x4 meter area.
The auger dirt being sifted.
UPAG members as well as Conservancy members and other volunteers have helped in the field and lab work.
Visitors learn proper field techniques; and everyone seems to enjoy the excitement of discovering pieces of our material culture.
Field and laboratory work will continue, as well as the archival research associated with Historical Archaeology.
Contact the Conservancy if you’d like to be involved....Thank You.