

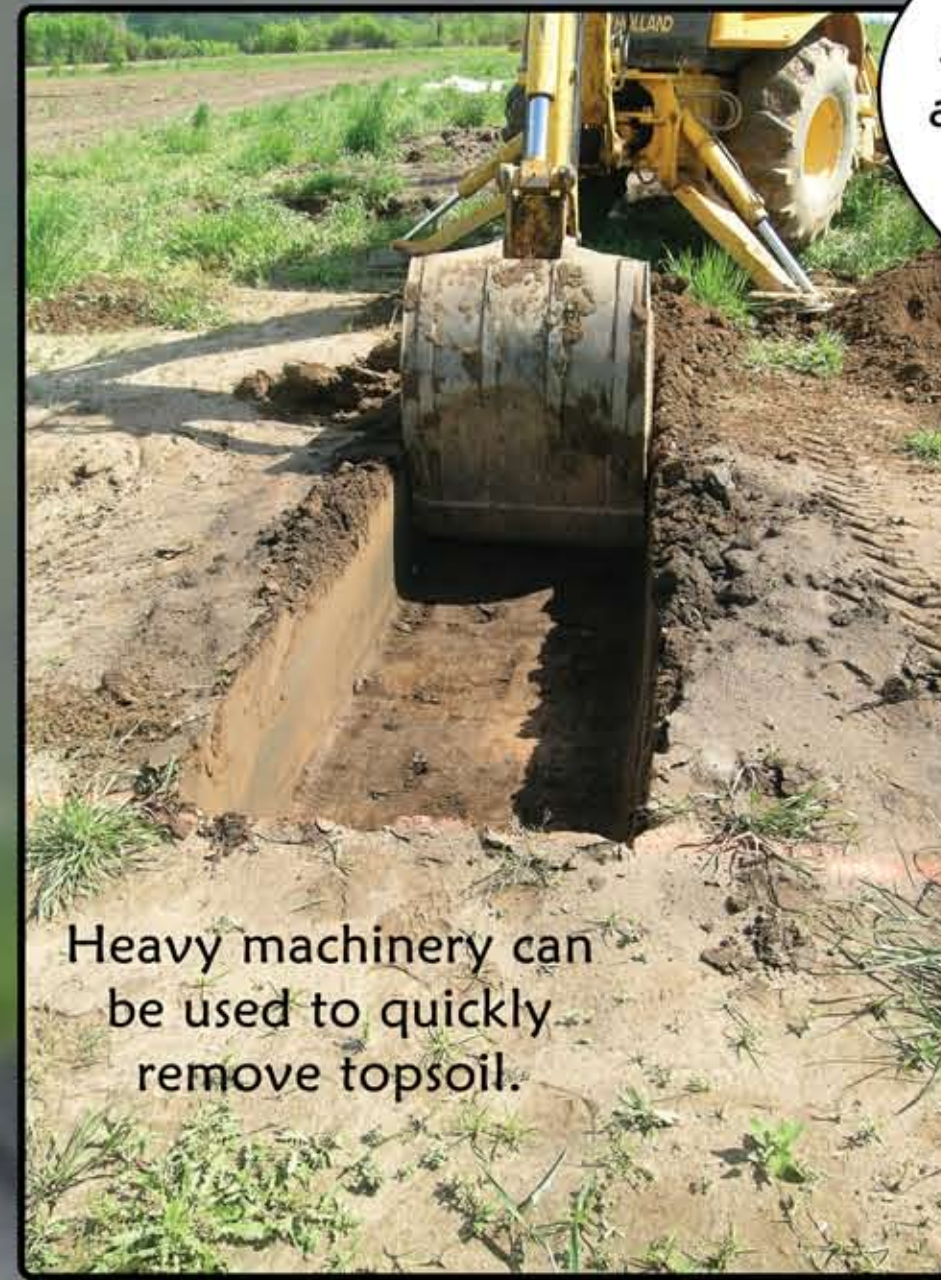
CAN YOU DIG IT?

ARCHAEOLOGISTS don't dig for dinosaurs (paleontologists do). So what *do* archaeologists look for?

Archaeologists study objects to learn about people. Like any good detective trying to solve a mystery, an archaeologist must carefully investigate sites to uncover clues.

Fortunately for archaeologists, people tend to leave their "fingerprints" at the places they go and on the things they do. Think about everything people leave behind, from trash, to buildings, photographs, and letters. Those are all clues that an archaeologist can use to find evidence of past human activity.

At an excavation archaeologists use many different tools and methods. Working at a site might mean using large tractors or small dental picks. No matter what they're doing, archaeologists work carefully to protect the site and the information it holds.



Heavy machinery can be used to quickly remove topsoil.

Compare this large piece of machinery to the small trowel below. These tools are very different but they each serve an important purpose at an excavation.

Evidence suggests that it's been hundreds of years since American Indians last lived at the Leake Site. In that time nature has taken a toll, burying the site beneath layers of dirt. Objects that have been covered up for that long tend to be fragile and digging too quickly or using the wrong tools can damage them and destroy the information they hold. Archaeologists often have to work carefully and slowly to remove and protect objects.



The archaeologists who worked at the Leake Site used small trowels to carefully scrape away dirt, reveal features, and recover small, fragile artifacts.



Archaeologists investigate sites by digging in square or rectangular sections, called *units*. This makes recording data easier and more efficient.

Excavated dirt is passed through wire mesh screens which catch small objects that might be missed otherwise. Here archaeologists are using water to soften the hard dirt.



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