

Recommended Guidelines for Historic Materials

13 September, 2007

Introduction:

The Historic Materials Review Committee (HMRC) was formed by the Board of Directors of the Association of Oregon Archaeologists (AOA) at the November 2004 annual membership meeting. The committee was asked, by the board, to develop recommended guidelines on the collection of historic artifacts; recording standards; culling and /or sampling approaches that would apply to historic archaeological sites; and curation standards for historic artifact collections. The guidelines that resulted from the AOA review committee are presented below for reference to archaeologists working in Oregon. Recent information regarding OSU's curation status has been added since the completion of the guidelines by the committee.

Topic I Pre-Field & Background Preparation

Members of the committee wish to emphasize the need for educating more students in the field of Historic Archaeology, and for qualified historic archaeologists to be in the field when historic archaeological projects are undertaken. In addition, we want to state the importance of continuing education and the recognition of professional standards. The following recommendations include information and resources that we believe archaeologists who undertake historic archaeological projects should be aware of and use in their work.

I. Pre-field Analysis of Project:

Determine if the project is Section 106 related and what archaeological laws (federal vs. state) apply.

II. Pre-field Background Data Research:

1. **State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Database**¹: (contains available site & survey data, GLO maps, orthographic photos.
2. **General Land Office** (GLO) Survey Maps and notes: earliest record of systematic survey across each land section.

¹ Data sources marked in bold are considered primary sources that should be consulted for all projects. Non-bold underlined sources are considered secondary sources and are encouraged to be checked when available.

3. **Sanborn maps** (if working with a town of any size):
4. **Historic photos, aerial and orthographic photos**: Early photos provide a visual record of changes to the landscape through time (check US Army Corps office for archive photos of your project area. Historic photographs can often be found at local museums, historic societies and the Oregon Historical Society Museum in Portland. Aerial photographs as early as 1930 are known to exist for Columbia River, Oregon coast and much of the Willamette Valley).
5. **Property title search**: Useful for tracking any change of ownership of land parcels through time. Records are readily available at title offices and city halls.
6. **Historic records**: Diaries, journals, ethnographic and ethnohistoric documents can often be found in local libraries, museums and historic societies.
7. **Oral History**: When available, interviews with area elders (both native and non-native) should be considered a valuable resource for unwritten records of the past. See SHPO webpage (www.hcd.state.or.us) for recommended guidelines for conducting oral history interviews.
8. **Federal Archives, Sandpoint Washington**: Federal archives may provide supplemental historic data on federal lands, in addition to census data, timber surveys and other historic maps.

III. Research Design:

Based on background data and literature search (see above) a research design should be developed for all projects. The research design should be based on anticipated results and known sites.

1. **Historic sites**: If a date for occupation of land is available, what are the implications of land history? Homesteads? Military roads? Mining? Logging? What is the potential for surface/subsurface site within the project area?
2. **Prehistoric and Protohistoric sites**: What types of sites are known or thought to be present in project area? How is land thought to have been incorporated in the seasonal round through time and by which groups of people? Food and medicinal plants known to be in area? Historically popular areas for fish? Hunting? Resource extraction?

IV. In-Field Artifact Identification:

1. Age required for site recordation: Federal land = 50 years; state public and private land =75 years.
2. Knowledge of historic artifacts in region: Site date should be sought using observable artifacts, nature of the deposit, background research, and personal/professional experience in area. If a site does not extend to age required for site recordation (see above), Oregon site form does not need to be completed. However, all site discoveries should be noted in field notes and final reports for modern sites will become historic sites in time if left in place.

V. Bibliography and Web-Links:

1. Familiarity with historic material culture typologies: Historic typologies are available from numerous data sources including personal libraries, AOA/SHPO/BLM web pages and links, workshop manuals.
2. A Bibliography and list of web links compiled by members of the committee and recommended for historic artifact identification is attached to this report.

Topic II. Approaches to Collecting Historic Materials

I. Pedestrian Survey

1. The AOA committee recommends that collecting should in principle be avoided at the survey level. Exceptions may apply in particular cases when archaeological material is threatened. In these cases, the project field director should determine when exceptions occur. In Oregon archaeological permits are required for archaeologists to collect artifacts from sites whether on non-federal public or private land.
2. In the field detailed recording should be made of historic artifacts in lieu of collecting, particularly where crews may lack adequate training for full assessment of the materials present.
3. Field Records should assess, or allow expert assessment, of site chronology and function (including relevant associations), and include descriptions of artifact types, rough counts, and the range of variability. Sampling may be necessary for large sites.

4. Field Records should include verbal and visual records, in particular ample photo-documentation (ideally digital). Photos should include overview, close-ups of artifact concentrations, and artifact details, with scale. Artifact illustrations are an excellent and welcome addition.
5. In exceptional situations where collecting takes place all records, including field notes, site forms and reports should:
 - specify reasons for making the collection (e.g., emergency situation where artifacts might be threatened by vandalism or destruction)
 - provide an inventory of all artifacts collected
 - indicate curation location/provisions

II. Subsurface Reconnaissance (i.e., site discovery probes such as augers or shovel tests)

1. In Oregon an Archaeological permit must be obtained before subsurface reconnaissance is undertaken on any non-federal public lands.
2. An archaeological permit is not required for site discovery probes undertaken on private land but a permit is necessary to investigate any known site on such lands.
3. Artifacts must be collected during all subsurface reconnaissance/testing investigations (as per state law and OSMA approval). State law (**ORS 390.235**) links curation decisions to the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology (OSMA) who reviews all permit applications.
3. Artifacts from Isolated Finds should be collected and recorded as to location, depth and description as they are found. If it is later determined that there are fewer than 10 artifacts recovered from a subsurface investigation (i.e., not part of a recognized archaeological site) the artifacts can be returned to a single unit in a plastic bag with the isolate locale number and associated artifact information included in the project's final report .

III. Excavation (Units 50x50 cm and larger used in Testing and Data Recovery projects)

1. Everything from excavation units should be collected in the field when work is being done under a State of Oregon Archaeological Permit, and taken back to the laboratory. Following analysis all artifacts should be curated. Modern items may be discarded in the laboratory. (According to state law [ORS 390-.235, sub-section 3] everything of archaeological significance 75 years and older must be collected under an excavation permit and curated.)

2. In some circumstances culling of historic material may be acceptable but this should happen in the laboratory and only after consultation with the repository that will be curating the collection (in Oregon this is predominantly OSMA for prehistoric collections, Oregon State University (OSU) for historic materials, or an alternate facility that OSMA has agreed upon).
 - An exception to the above policy may be made, particularly during data recovery excavations at large historic sites, if in the course of excavations the project director obtains an agreement from the director of the approved repository that allows for culling of some redundant material types in the field.
 - If culling is allowed to be done in the field during excavation the agreement outlining the accepted policy to do so should be in writing and filed with SHPO in the archaeological permit file. Collection and culling policies should be adequately described in the project's final report.
 - Decisions on culling of artifacts should not be made in advance of excavation since such decisions are only appropriate within the context of each specific site.
 - Artifacts that are culled should be quantified and recorded, and documentation should indicate where the artifacts were disposed of. It is preferable that artifacts that are culled in the laboratory not be returned to the site for disposal.
3. The committee recognizes Federal Agencies have a range of policies regarding collections.
 - Some have a "No Collection" policy and others have adopted a variety of approaches to collection strategies and curation, which include culling of some artifact types.
 - Although ORS 390.235 applies only to collections made under a State of Oregon Archaeological permit, the committee recommends that Federal Agencies adopt these proposed recommendations in their approach to culling of historic artifact collections in Oregon.
4. For historic site excavations the preferred screen size is 1/8th inch mesh. However, other alternatives may be considered, based on site-specific contexts, but must be included in the research designed that is sent to SHPO during the archaeological permit process. The selection of screen size should be made by the Project Director and should be included in the research design, which will be reviewed during the permit process. Reasons for the decisions

on screen sizes used should be explained in the methodology section of the report.

- For historic sites, coarser mesh may be acceptable when controlled column samples of 1/8th inch are used for known features.
- Screen size may vary based on soil type (e.g. coarser mesh in wet clay) or recovered artifact types (e.g., beads vs. tinned cans).
- In some cases it may be appropriate to evaluate and adjust the screen size strategy (if needed) as an excavation proceeds.

Topic III.

Curation Standards and Repositories

Oregon State law (ORS390.235) links the curation of archaeological artifacts recovered under a state Archaeological Permit with the University of Oregon's Museum of Natural and Cultural History (here after referred to as OSMA). State permits are required for any archaeological subsurface investigation on public lands and any subsurface investigation of a known archaeological site on private land. Curation of artifacts from public and private lands, however, differ in that while artifacts recovered from public land are to be curated with OSMA or an institution that they recognize, artifacts recovered from private land are the property of the landowner. Archaeologists are encouraged to suggest that private landowners donate any recovered artifacts to a museum of their choice but if the landowner desires to keep the recovered artifacts they can.

The AOA's Historic Materials Review Committee has been asked to address curation guidelines that may affect recovered archaeological materials in Oregon. To accomplish this task OSMA was contacted regarding their current curation policies. We discovered that while OSMA remains the central curation facility in the state of Oregon they had authorized Oregon State University (OSU) to serve as a separate curation facility that specialized in historic materials' collections pertinent to their research interests. While such a designation did not necessarily mean that OSU would continue to house all historic archaeological materials' collections from throughout the state, this has been their practice for the past 10+ years. At present, OSU has stopped accepting any artifact collections due to lack of space. All collections should now be referred to OSMA until further notice.

In light of the relationship between these two recognized facilities, both OSMA and OSU were contacted regarding their current curation guidelines. Both curation facilities were discovered to be in a period of transition. OSMA has recently gained a new curator, Dr. Jon Erlandson, with the recent retirement of Dr. Mel Aikens. As such, Dr. Erlandson is currently reviewing museum policies and guidelines and will inform the AOA of any changes to their guidelines in the months to come. Current OSMA curation guidelines

have not been updated in many years and the AOA should await word from Dr. Erlandson if they will need to be modified.

OSU has recently pledged to make a thorough review of all of their museum collections and draft up curation guidelines, that will be applicable if and when they can begin accepting future collections. These guidelines will be shared with Oregon Tribes and the archaeological community upon completion.

To address the current absence of detailed curation guidelines from OSMA and OSU, and the request from private museums as to established archaeological materials curation policies, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has included minimum curation standards in their Guidelines for Conducting Field Archaeology, available on the SHPO's web page (http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/ARCH/arch_pubsandlinks.shtml). These guidelines (see Appendix D of the Field Guidelines), have been slightly modified for Oregon from Maryland's State Guidelines and should be considered only as a guide until we hear back from OSMA and OSU.

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Field Guidelines

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(<http://www.drexelantiques.com/patent.html>)
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