

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

ARCHAEOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF PAST CULTURES

ARCHAEOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF PAST CULTURES. ARCHAEOLOGISTS ARE INTERESTED IN HOW PEOPLE OF THE PAST LIVED, WORKED, TRADED WITH OTHERS, MOVED ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, AND WHAT THEY BELIEVED. UNDERSTANDING THE PAST MAY HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND OUR OWN SOCIETY AND THAT OF OTHER CULTURES. ARCHAEOLOGY IS A SCIENCE THAT COMBINES INFORMATION FROM MANY DIFFERENT FIELDS. THERE ARE COUNTLESS PATHS TO EXPLORE IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS. THIS DISPLAY HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE MOST COMMON AREAS OF RESEARCH USED BY ARCHAEOLOGISTS. CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER POSSIBILITIES? NEW AREAS OF RESEARCH ARE CONSTANTLY BEING DEVELOPED.



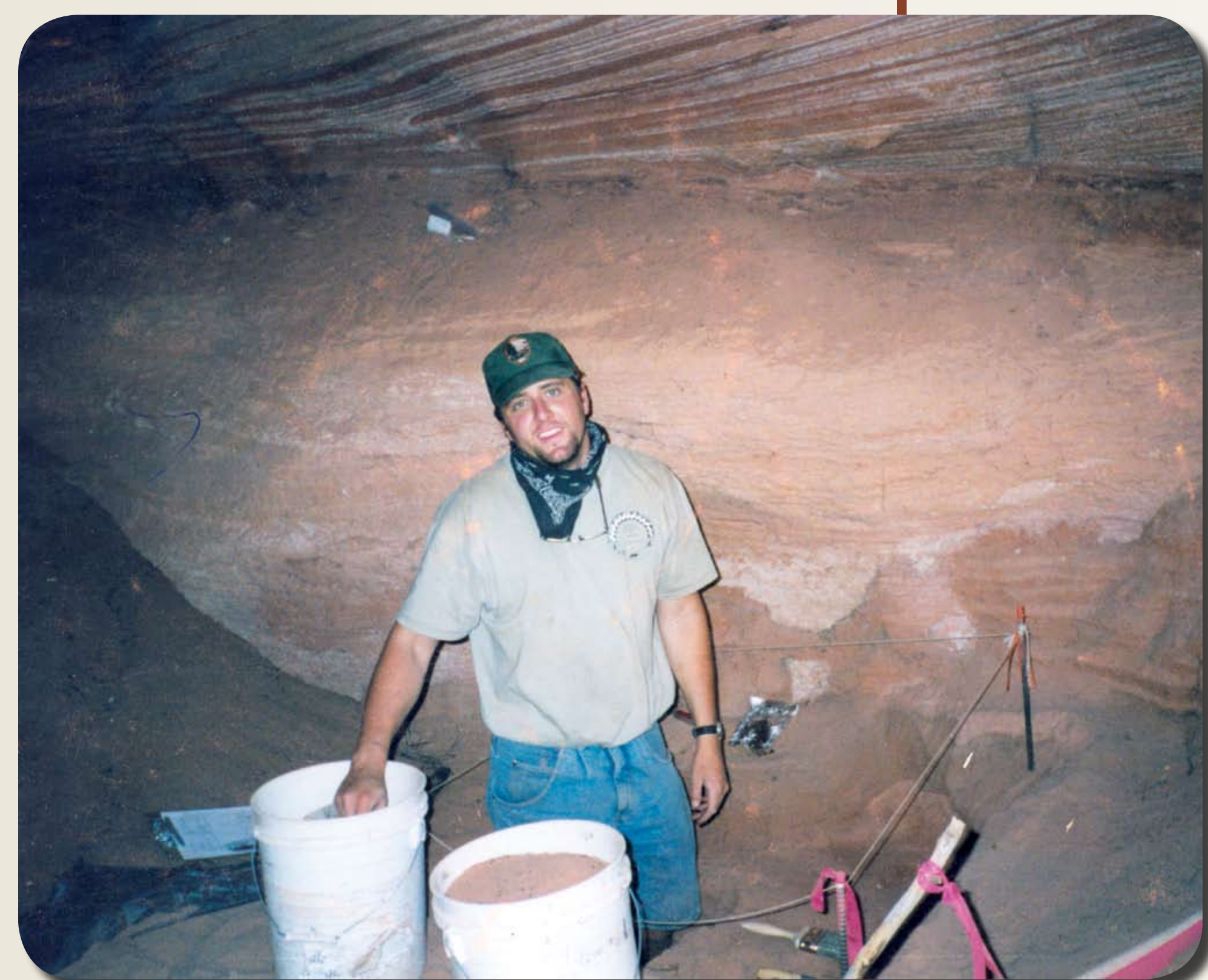
NATURAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES



SOME ARCHAEOLOGISTS SPECIALIZE IN IDENTIFYING PLANT AND ANIMAL REMAINS. OTHERS MAY TEAM WITH GENETICISTS OR FORENSIC SCIENTISTS TO IDENTIFY BLOOD OR PLANT RESIDUES ON ARTIFACTS. THIS ALLOWS THEM TO DISCOVER WHAT FOODS PEOPLE WERE EATING OR WHAT MATERIALS THEY WERE USING FOR CLOTHING AND SHELTER. PLANT AND ANIMAL REMAINS CAN ALSO BE USED TO DETERMINE WHAT THE CLIMATE WAS LIKE IN THE PAST OR TO ESTABLISH THE AGE OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE.

KNOWLEDGE OF PAST ENVIRONMENTS HELPS ARCHAEOLOGISTS TO UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS PREHISTORIC PEOPLES LIVED UNDER AND HOW THEY ADAPTED TO THOSE CONDITIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN SOME ENVIRONMENTS PEOPLE BECAME FARMERS. IN OTHERS THEY HUNTED AND GATHERED WILD ANIMALS AND PLANTS RATHER THAN RAISING CROPS AND LIVESTOCK. HOW PEOPLE MAKE A LIVING INFLUENCES THE TYPES OF TOOLS THEY DEVELOP, THEIR HOUSING AND MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THEIR CULTURE.

THE STUDY OF GEOLOGY HAS ALSO PROVIDED ARCHAEOLOGY WITH IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO UNLOCK THE PAST. KNOWLEDGE OF ROCKS AND MINERALS CAN BE USED TO IDENTIFY WHERE MATERIALS FOR STONE TOOLS, POTTERY, AND BUILDINGS ORIGINATED, AND IN SOME CASES, THESE ITEMS CAN BE STUDIED TO DETERMINE WHEN THEY WERE FIRST USED BY PEOPLE. THESE METHODS ALLOW ARCHAEOLOGISTS TO STUDY TRADE NETWORKS BETWEEN PREHISTORIC PEOPLES OVER TIME. THE STUDY OF SOILS AND LANDFORMS REVEALS HOW LANDSCAPES CHANGE OVERTIME.



SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ARTS

SOME ARCHAEOLOGISTS ARE INTERESTED IN ART STYLES AND CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY. JUST AS TODAY, CLOTHING, ART, ARCHITECTURE, TOOL DESIGNS, AND EVEN TRADE AND COMMERCE CHANGED OVER TIME. ARCHAEOLOGISTS CAN EXAMINE AN OBJECT TO DETERMINE WHEN IT WAS MADE OR WHO MADE IT. BY LOOKING AT TRENDS ACROSS A REGION, THEY CAN DISCOVER HOW POPULATIONS EXPANDED, MERGED, AND DEVELOPED OVER TIME.

