



Dell House Dig

Program Purpose

Students will participate in an archaeological dig exploration off of Blackhawk Island in the Wisconsin River where the Dell House once stood.

Length of Program

2 Hours (Warm Weather Only!)
(Life Guard needed)

Age

Grades 4-7

Maximum Number of Participants

10-12

Objectives

After the completion of this course students should be able to:

- Define the terms “archaeology” and “artifact.”
- List possible artifacts that could be found at the Dell House site.
- Demonstrate basic procedures for archeological excavations.
- Verbally describe the historical significance of the Dell House.

Preparation

Before the class arrives:

- Obtain “Dell House Dig” kit from the storage room.
- Read about the History of the Dell House.
- Make sure Barge or Canoes are available.

Basic Outline

- I. Introduction (5 minutes)
- II. Barge/Hike or Canoe (30 minutes)
- III. History of Dell House (10 minutes)
- IV. Intro to Archaeology (10 minutes)
- V. Dell House Excavation (30 minutes)
- VI. Show, Examine, & Conclusion (10 minutes)
- VII. Barge/Hike or Canoe (25 minutes)

Materials

6 Dig Sifters
6 Trowels
Barge or 5-6 Canoes
Picture of the Dell House
Examples of artifacts from the Dell House

Introduction

Introduce yourself to the class and explain that we will be learning about the history of the Dell House. This will include both written history and physical evidence through hands-on discovery of the Dell House. Explain to the students that all artifacts found today will be kept at Upham Woods. The discovery of a very unique item has the possibility of being displayed in the Dell House Dig case in the lodge with the name of the discoverers.

Barge/Hike or Canoe

Classes may travel to Blackhawk Island using the barge or canoes. The method chosen will depend upon the availability of each. If the barge is utilized, dock the barge at the landing on the island and hike the Moccasin Flower Trail to the Dell House site. If canoes are used, paddle over to the Dell House site and land on the Dell House beach. Both methods will take about the same amount of time.

Barge. Meet at the boathouse. Be sure to bring the Dell House Dig kit with you. (Remember to use the check-in/check-out procedure when handing out the Pfd’s.) Have everyone get Pfd’s on, hand out paddles, load the barge, give paddling instructions, and travel to the island. After docking, unload the barge, have the student hang their Pfd’s on the railing buckling the top clip, and hike for about 15 minutes on the Moccasin Flower Trail to the Dell House site.

Canoes. Meet at the canoe boathouse. Be sure to bring the Dell House Dig kit with you. (Remember to use the check-in/check-out procedure when handing out the Pfd's.) Hand out Pfd's and paddles, give paddling instruction, unload and launch the canoes. Then paddle downriver to the Dell House beach and land. Make sure the canoes are secure so they do not float away.

History of Dell House

Please refer to Appendix A, the Dell House pictures and example artifacts found in the "Dell House Dig" kit. Explain to the students that even though the Dell House itself is no longer standing, hidden in the sand before them are artifacts from the 1800's. The movement of the river and sand continually bury and expose artifacts left by the era of the Dell House.

Introduction to Archaeology

Archeology is a set of methods and techniques used to recover and analyze artifacts in order to understand past human life and culture. *Artifacts* are sources of information that can be used to analyze and understand past cultures. Some examples of artifacts would be buildings, tools, jewelry, utensils, pottery, weapons, and oral history. Ask the students if they can name any examples of artifacts. They might come up with the pyramids, dinosaur bones, fossils, arrowheads, ancient pottery or sculptures. Tell the students that at the Dell House site we will be excavating (searching and removing) artifacts that are discovered. Ask the students if they can name any examples of artifacts they might find today from the Dell House? Examples could include bottles, nails, pipe stems, broken dishes, and more.

Dell House Excavation

Once at the Dell House site have the students find a partner. Show the students

the tools they will be using for the dig. Each pair should get a trowel and a sifting screen. Ask a student to help you demonstrate how to use the trowel and sifter in the water. Remove your socks and shoes (roll up your pants if necessary), and ask all students to do the same. Wade into the water up to your knees, hold the sifter screen, and ask the volunteer to use the trowel to place sand into the sifter.

Once you have the sand in the sifter screen gently agitate the sifter, so the sand and water pass through the screen. Watch for any items left in the screen. These could be rocks or (hopefully) artifacts. As the students find interesting artifacts have them place them in a safe spot up on shore. Remind the students that all artifacts found today will either be returned to the site or placed in a display case at Upham Woods.

Students may find objects that are not from the Dell House at all, but the result of heavy recreational use of the Wisconsin River. Use this as an opportunity to talk about current uses of the Wisconsin River, and what happens when people use the river irresponsibly. Students might find litter or other items that have washed into the river through runoff. Gather all litter into a pile so that it can be carried and properly disposed of back on the mainland.

Before the students begin excavating, tell them the rules for the water: no splashing each other and only go in the water up to their knees. When the lifeguard is ready the students may enter the water. They will have about 30 minutes to search for artifacts. Make sure that the partners switch tools so they get a chance to use them both.

Show, Examine, & Conclusion

Have the students get out of the water and place any artifacts found in their screen shifter. Have them all gather in a circle. Go around the circle and have them show the items. Pass the artifacts around and examine them. Ask the students what they think each artifact might have been used for. Does the item exist today, or has it been replaced by something else? (square pegs or nails vs. round nails, glass soda pop bottle vs. 2 L plastic bottles today). Are any of the artifacts dated? How did it feel to search for artifacts? What can they conclude about the Dell House based upon the artifacts found?

Barge/Hike or Canoe

Barge. Gather all special artifacts to be placed in the display, litter, and the kit. Hike back up the Moccasin Flower Trail to the barge landing. Have the students put on Pfd's, load the barge, review the paddling instructions again if needed, paddle back to the main land, and unload. Make sure all the paddles and Pfd's get put in their proper places in the boathouse. (Remember to use the check-in/check-out procedure when handing in the Pfd's.)

Canoe. Gather all special artifacts to be placed in the display, litter, and the kit. Have the students put on their Pfd's and launch the canoes. Paddle back towards the canoe landing, unload, and if the last class, put the canoes back on the racks and lock them. Pfd's and paddles are to be returned to their proper locations in the boathouse. (Remember to use the check-in/check-out procedure when handing in the Pfd's.)

REFERENCES

See Appendix A