Archaeology Process and Methods

Beginnings

Prior to excavating the Carmel mission, it was necessary to remove plants from the garden and tile flooring from the side-altar enclosure of the convent wing. This prepared the site for a proper archaeological process and application of methods.

Sifters

The soil from each level is sifted first through a 1/4-inch screen, and then sifted again through a 1/8-inch screen. The intention of this process is to recover artifacts from each level. Once collected, the artifact is placed on a tray that is labeled with the level and unit number that was sifted. The trays are transferred to the lab for further examination and processing.

Lab

In the lab the artifacts are washed in buckets of water and carefully scrubbed with toothbrushes. Once washed the artifacts are identified and grouped. All like artifacts are bagged and labeled. The information is further recorded into a database using wireless pocket PCs and a satellite uplink to the Internet.

Recording

Each student archaeologist participates in a portion of this process and records their observations in a personal journal. These journals are kept as primary documentation of the excavation of the old Mission. This is done to maintain both hardcopy and electronic versions of the database as well as an electronic one. In addition to data and documents, photographs are also produced. A mug board is prepared and the unit photographed with the completion of each level.

Written and visual documentation of the project is posted at the California State University, Monterey Bay archaeology website, http://archaeology.csumb.edu/wireless.

For further reading on Archaeology process and methods see: Archaeology: Basic Field Methods by R. Michael Stewart.

Unit Levels

The site has been divided into one-meter square grid units. Trowels, picks and shovels are used to remove soil from each unit. The soil is collected and then put into buckets, which are used to transport the soil to the sifters. Each arbitrary level is removed 10 cm at a time. This is done in order to condense the amount of soil that is processed.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Monterey Bay