

# ARCHAEOLOGY DOESN'T END IN THE LAB, IT'S GOT AN OFFICE TOO

June 29, 2012 Serra Head Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Education  
Archaeology, Cemetery, Department of Historical Preservation and Archaeology, DHPA, Geographic  
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Today you're going to read lots of great and interesting posts about what we do when we are in the field and lab, but I want to show a bit more than that. I want to take you out of the Field, out of the Lab, and into a place of magic and wonder! I want to show you the world of the Archaeological Office!

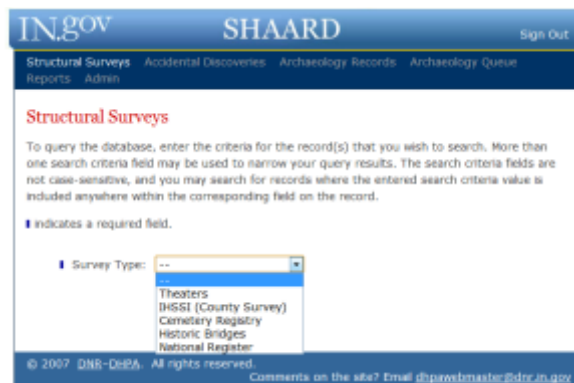
Seriously!



I am currently doing an internship with the DHPA here in Indiana. For those who don't know the DHPA stands for the Department of Historical Preservation and Archaeology. I do quite a bit of a variety of things. I've been in the woods looking for prehistoric artifacts, I've been in the lab labeling artifacts, but mostly I've been in the office, learning GIS and an awesome new system called SHAARD.

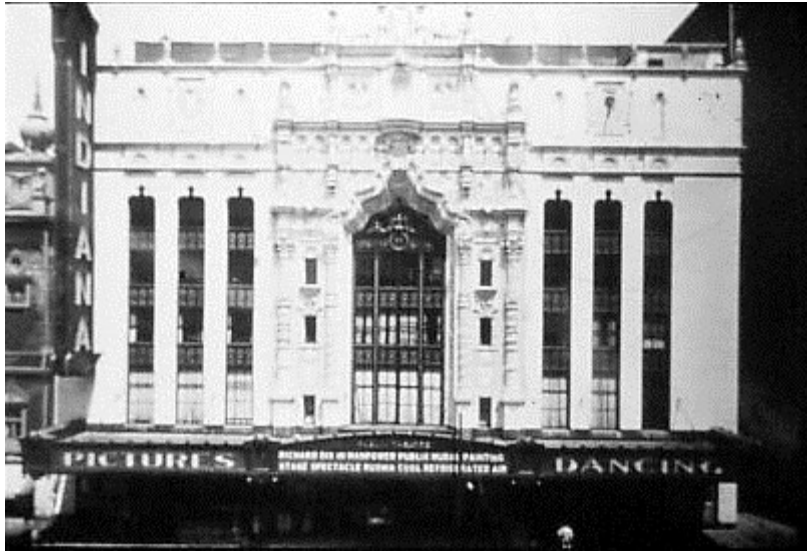
SHAARD and GIS are great for a geeky-chick like me. I've got a soft spot for computers, and I've been fascinated with GIS ever since one of my coworkers took a picture of his cat and made a 3D Topo-map out of it. It was cool.

## **SHAARD**



*SHAARD's main page with a drop down menu showing selections*

SHAARD stands for The Indiana State Historic Architectural and Archaeological Research Database. (It's the government, they love alphabet soup.) This database is open and searchable by the public, except for the archaeological records. Now what does that get the average person? Well, you can search cemeteries, Historical theaters, anything on the National Register, Historical Bridges, and the County Surveys. Check it out, you don't have to do anything to search and access records.



*One of several images in SHAARD for the historical Indiana Theater*

If you are a professional, you can apply to receive access to the archaeological part of the data base, which is where I come in. I am one of a team who are busily inputting data from hand written field and site reports into the online database. This is a whole lot more interesting than it sounds, and sometimes a little more difficult.

*Just a tip to the field people, other people have to read your handwriting...just saying...*

SHAARD is a bit groundbreaking with all it's trying to do. It's unique to the State of Indiana, and it is attempting to be the most complete searchable database out there. It is currently focused on connecting the site information to a massive GIS map of the entire state. When we get done, not only will you be able to log in and see all the data collected so far, you'll see a list of artifacts, references, descriptions, vital contact information, and maps. When you click though, it will take you to a usable GIS map with photo overlay. No more guessing.

I was ecstatic when I found out this last bit, and I will admit, I'm very picky about point and polygon placement on the map. I know what it's like to be out there in the field with a Tremble "guessing" about where the site really is. I've been there, I've dug those empty holes, marched that extra half mile, been lost in that wood. I get it.

I'm also picky because this is what I've decided to get my masters in. GIS is becoming vital to our field. Not just for mapping, but other excellent uses...like making Topo's of your cat pictures...or artifact density analysis, you know, whatever is more important.

## **DHPA and Cemeteries**

The DHPA is also responsible for locating and recording cemeteries in the state. I don't just mean the easy to find ones like beautiful Crown Hill, I mean tiny, probably forgotten, no-tombstone having, cemeteries too. One of my first projects at the DHPA was to help define the borders of a small, neglected cemetery. It turned out, I already knew quite a bit about the cemetery because I'd done work on two sites connected to it already.

I won't lie, I spent a fair amount of time in the State Library going over old records, newspaper clippings, city histories, and Sanborn maps on micro film. (Not a fan of microfilm). I'm a bit of a research nut, so this was pretty cool, and I got goofy excited when we went to the State Records Archives and look at the 1930/40's aerial photography looking for my little cemetery. Sadly, I never did find it, but sometimes this happens.



*John Walters and a cleaned headstone*

Now you all know I'm big with the public outreach and all that, and I was really happy to find out that one of the things the DHPA does is works with our local Historical Foundation to host Cemetery workshops. They host a two-day long class where people come and learn how to restore and preserve the cemeteries around the state. They work with John Walters, an expert in cemetery restoration, to teach people how to clean, repair, and restore tombstones. They also provide lectures on how to identify features of the tombstones, what kind of stone they are, and how to use SHAARD.



*A local geologist showing how to identify types of stone used in headstone production.*

The class also has an advanced component where you can become certified to probe in the state. See, there are laws that control when and how you can dig on land that isn't your own. In Indiana you can become certified to probe with a solid body probe in order to look for buried tombstones.



DHPA is also involved in a little thing called National Archaeology Month, where each year they put on numerous workshops and day camps, bringing archaeology to the public. I'm also going to be involved with those.

So, yah, I'm not bushwhacking though greenfield in 100+ degree weather, fighting for my life against mosquitoes and ticks right now. I am making life a little easier for those who are, and extending archaeology to the public little by little. I like to think this end of archaeology is just as interesting as the survey and recovery end, I know it's just as vital. In the end, I'm having as much fun here as I've ever had in the field, and I know having done the full gambit allows me to understand what people in the field need from those in the office. I feel like I am bridging a gap, for the time being, and when the time comes and I'm out in the field again, I'll understand more about why the Tremble hate us.