

Archaeology Dig – Old Jailhouse

INSTRUCTOR

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Tarragindi.org

AGE

10 -19

FORMAT

In-person

HOURS

18 hours (more
hours available)

OLD JAILHOUSE DIG - COURSE OVERVIEW

In this program, you will participate in a real archaeological dig to find the lost 1830's Old Jailhouse in the historic Berrien Springs Courthouse Square. This is one of Berrien County's earliest municipal buildings, and predates the 1839 Courthouse. We want to discover if the foundations are still there, how big this Jailhouse was, if it was escapable, and what did prisoners, guards, and users of this building leave behind in the ground up to 200 years ago? In this class, you will learn how archaeologists conduct a dig, identify, clean, and date artifacts, and catalog and record their findings.

You are going to gently dig and sift like the pros, and you may uncover some amazing history from our own local area. Because of the gentle nature of this dig, only students aged 10-19 will be permitted to participate. Younger students are welcome to join the Tarragindi Archaeology Dig program, also operated by Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD (we call him Dr Jan), who is the site director for both digs. Dr Jan exceeds the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation and Professional Qualifications Standards as stipulated in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61](#), and is qualified to conduct a dig on government-owned property.

A parent, grandparent, or guardian is welcome to accompany you. School-aged friends or siblings must be registered for this class with the parent partnership to participate.

Dr Jan Sigvartsen also operates Berrien Springs Parent Partnership and Niles Virtual School classes:

1. Archaeology Dig – Tarragindi
2. Archaeology Dig – Old Jailhouse (10-19 year olds only)
3. Archaeology Plus – Long Lake Cemetery Restoration Project
4. Historic Photography
5. Historic Court Trials
6. Board Gaming Eurogames

CLASS TIMES

Due to weather constraints, our classes are longer, but only operate for 8 weeks, and mainly during the latter half of the Spring 2026 semester when the ground is not frozen. As such, every hour of programming constitutes one class, for a total of 18 hours or 18 classes. This includes orientation and the tours, which are an important part of this class. This class is offered multiple times a week, and students can select their preferred time to attend:

- Tuesdays, 10am – 12.30pm or
- Wednesdays, 4pm – 6.30pm or
- Thursdays, 10am – 12.30pm

ARTIFACTS

All artifacts found at the site will strictly remain the property of the Berrien County History Center and, by extension, Berrien County. **Participants will not be permitted to keep any artifacts recovered in this dig.** Artifacts will be preserved and displayed in the Berrien County History Center, and students will be credited for their finds. These artifacts tell an important story about

our county and Michigan's history and are therefore historically significant. Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD, and the Berrien Springs Historical Association Executive Director, will determine what is historically significant, and their decision is final.

SAFETY

Archaeology is a lot of fun and very rewarding, especially when you make a significant find. However, it is not without risks, even though they occur very rarely. We will take all precautions to ensure your safety, but consistent with archaeological digs, all participants will be required to sign a waiver.

Please remember that the dig site is a closed area and you or anyone you know is not to enter the site or dig squares outside of class hours, or when Dr Jan Sigvartsen (Dig Site Director) is not there. There is to be no unauthorized digging on the property by persons associated or unassociated with the dig. Please respect the neighbors' right to privacy and peace by not entering their properties and only parking in the designated areas.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants suitable for being outdoors in April and May 2026
- Sturdy shoes with a thick sole, as we may uncover old nails and glass.

WE SUPPLY

- Dig tools, gloves, notebook, and pen
- Artifact cleaning supplies
- A fire pit (to warm up around), marshmallows, and an outdoor classroom
- Dig site maintenance and use of Old Courthouse restrooms

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 January 6 <u>or</u> 8	ORIENTATION – OLD COURTHOUSE 6pm-8pm
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	This week, we will talk about what archaeology is, see some old artifacts, and some modern ones. We will also undertake orientation for the archaeological dig, confirm our time slots, and sign waivers.
WEEK 2 January 13-15	HISTORY CENTER TOUR – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Before we start digging, we need to know the history and context of what we are digging up. This week, we will take a tour through the Berrien County History Center and learn about the fascinating and multicultural history of Berrien County (this tour will be different from last semester).
Here is where we take a break from programming until the weather gets warmer and the soil is no longer frozen. Don't worry, we will stay in touch with you so you know when we will start the dig component of our program.	
WEEK 3 April 21-23	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	We will survey the area and decide where we want to dig, set up our dig squares, and start digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging.

Week 4 April 28-April 30	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging.
WEEK 5 May 5-7	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging.
Week 6 May 12-14	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging.
WEEK 7 May 19-21	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging. <i>Last week for Berrien Springs Parent Partnership Students</i>
Week 8 May 26-28	DIG SITE – at your selected class time
Berrien Springs History Center – 313 N Cass St, Berrien Springs	Digging, cleaning artifacts, and cataloging. <i>Last week for Niles Virtual School Students</i>

YOUR PROJECT

Research an artifact and try to find an answer to: what was it used for, when was it made in this style, is the manufacturer still in business, do they still make that product, and how has this product changed over time? Is the product still used or has it been replaced with a new invention or technology?

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Jan Sigvartsen PhD (Dr Jan) has taught Archaeology and Ancient Religion classes at Andrews University, Michigan, and the Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany, where he was also their PhD Programs Coordinator and Associate Director of their Institute of Biblical Studies and Archaeology. He has participated in archaeological digs in the USA and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. He has traveled extensively to historic sites globally and has lived in Israel, Norway, England, Germany, Australia, and the United States. Dr Sigvartsen exceeds the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation and Professional Qualifications Standards as stipulated in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61.](#)

Leanne Sigvartsen (Ms Leanne) originally trained as a psychologist in Australia and spent many years as a counselor and academic advisor for teens and young adults. She then transitioned to research project management, working on a number of projects, most recently as the Research and Special Projects Director at the Chicago-based *Center for Collaborative Study of Trauma, Health Equity, and Neurobiology*. She is a triple citizen of the United States, Australia, and Malta, and has lived in the United States, Australia, and Germany. She wants to see young people succeed, be happy, and grow into thriving adults in a community that they feel connected to and valued by - especially those who have experienced trauma, bullying, and adverse childhood experiences.