

IN HIS OWN BACK-YARD

BY SARA FAUST

Digging up the past meant finding a future career.

A narrow dirt path leads into the trees and down a steep hill. At the bottom, the sound of a fast-moving creek rumbles in your ears. Sunlight winds its way down to the tall grasses and shrubs along its bank. A perfect place to spend your summer. Actually, 14-year-old Abram Sorensen does spend almost all summer here. It's his backyard, but he's not just playing. He's working on an archaeological dig. This is the place where he made his first big discovery.

For as long as he can remember, Abram has loved to dig. He can't say exactly why, but he's been digging and collecting since he was four. His official project began when he was nine. He saw something poking out of the ground in his backyard. He dug a little and found some bits of pottery, metal, and glass. Not much, but it was enough to spark his curiosity. "I just wanted to know why the stuff was there in the first place. I thought it was pretty cool," he says. So he kept digging. "He dug all summer," Abram's dad, Roger, recalls.

Eventually Abram found more than pieces of glass—lots more. After four years



Abram's interest in archaeology started in his backyard but led him to volunteer with Ron Rood (right), Utah's assistant state archaeologist.





The Book of Mormon is one of Abram's favorite books. He found that digging deep applies to scriptures as well as the ground.

of digging, Abram has collected over 10,000 objects. "That's when I stopped counting," he says.

What has he found? Marbles, buttons, farm tools, glass medicine bottles, dishes, nails, even a toy car. "This is the first thing I found—this lock," Abram says as he holds up the dark gray pieces. "I found all the pieces, and I fit them together. It had broken up while it was in the ground."

Where did it come from?

Why was all this stuff in his backyard? "It's an old pioneer dump site," explains Abram's mom, Rebecca. "The early settlers used to dump along the creek banks." In 1869, pioneers began developing the area of the Salt Lake Valley where Abram's home now stands. Some of the objects Abram has found come from those first pioneers.

From the beginning, Abram wondered about the stories behind some of his discoveries. He tried looking in the library for information—nothing. He asked other people—no luck. His mom then called a professional archaeologist. Ron Rood, the assistant state archaeologist, came to Abram's house. He was so impressed with nine-year-old Abram's questions and notes about the discoveries that he invited Abram to a state dig site where he put Abram in charge of sketching. Abram has continued to work with Rood on other projects. This past summer, while working on a dig, Abram found a 1,000-year-old arrowhead. Now

Abram regularly helps in Utah's state archaeology lab.

Digging into the Book of Mormon

In addition to digging, Abram has another great love—the Book of Mormon. When his younger sister passed away in 2005, Abram read the Book of Mormon for comfort. He says, "As I started reading it more, I really got interested, and now I'm studying more and more."

Abram has learned a lot while studying. "It gave me a stronger testimony when Christ came to teach the people. And it talked about a lot of things that He taught that we still do today. That was a big leap in my testimony. It was really special," he says.

Luckily, Abram gets to combine his two passions: there's a strong connection between the Book of Mormon and archaeology. The Book of Mormon talks about changes in the land before Jesus Christ visited the Nephites. And there are a lot of fascinating archaeological details in the Book of Mormon. Maybe Abram can help make connections between the two in the future.

All this has helped Abram realize that he wants to be an archaeologist in Central America when he grows up. For teens trying to figure out what they want to do or study, he suggests, "Just follow your inspiration and do what you're interested in at the time. If it changes, then change with it. And if you really like something, then stick with it and work more." In other words, dig deep. **NE**



8 WAYS TO FIND WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO

1. Identify what you like to do. What are your favorite classes? What clubs do you belong to? What are you interested in?
2. Learn about what kinds of jobs go along with your interests. Check out career books from the library.
3. If you're having a hard time finding something, try out different things.
4. Think about your personality. Would you like a fast-paced job? Do you like helping others?
5. Ask adults you know about the jobs they have.
6. Have your parents, teachers, or Church leaders help you meet someone who works someplace where you'd like to work.
7. If possible, spend time at that person's workplace.
8. Take a work interest test at a career center at your school or elsewhere.

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK ADULTS

1. What do you do for a living?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. How did you get there?