

# A DENE HUNTING CAMP: THE RECENT OCCUPATION AT SWAN POINT, ALASKA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes the historic-era (ca. 1895–1915) artifacts from the Swan Point Archaeological Site in the Middle Tanana Valley, Alaska, and provides an analysis of the artifacts and their manufactured provenance. The Tanana Valley represents one of the last regions in Alaska to be directly impacted by outsiders. Our analyses show the Swan Point historic occupation represents the behavior and activities of local Indigenous Dene and not those of Euro-American prospectors or hunters.

The Swan Point site is geographically associated with a nearby lake, *Ch'etthij' Bene'*, meaning “meat lake” in the Middle Tanana language (Kari and Tuttle 1996); thus, a potential reconstruction for the site name is *Ch'etthij' K'et* “meat place.” It is located about 6 km northeast of the confluence of Shaw Creek and the Tanana River, on an isolated hill in the Shaw Creek Flats near the southern base of the Yukon-Tanana uplands (Fig. 1). The flats are broadly characterized as a black-spruce bog interspersed with small lakes, creeks, and isolated stands of birch and spruce. The current vegetative regime has been stable throughout the middle Holocene (Reuther et al. 2016). The site consists of two loci. The primary locus is at the top of the southeastern portion of the bluff, characterized by 0.7 to 1.0 m of aeolian sand and windblown silt (loess) deposition overlying highly degraded gneissic bedrock. The second locus is 50 m west, downslope along the south-facing slope, with 0.4 to 1.5 m loess deposition. Most of the industrial-manufactured artifacts were recovered in the vegetated mat (O horizon) during metal-detecting surveys at the primary locus. Episodic soil development occurred during periods of low energy with less loess accumulation and less erosion (i.e., deflation) on the land-

form. The stratigraphy and archaeological deposits are relatively undisturbed by postdepositional noncultural mixing processes, such as cryoturbation or bioturbation (Dille 1998; Holmes 2001). No early industrial-manufactured items were recovered from the second locus. The Swan Point collection is curated at the Department of Archaeology, University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks.

## METHODS

Standard archaeological field methods were used to recover subsurface specimens (Burke et al. 2009; Hester et al. 2009). All *in situ* artifacts were recorded by Total Station or hand method using standard three-point provenience, and all excavated material was sifted using 1/8-inch wire mesh. Artifacts were discovered by surface survey, systematic excavation, and scanning along 1 m wide transects with two different metal detectors, a Fisher F2 and a Garrett hybrid twin circuit (Connor and Scott 1998; Haeker et al. 2019; PA SHPO 2017:19–20). The distribution of artifacts is displayed in Fig. 2.

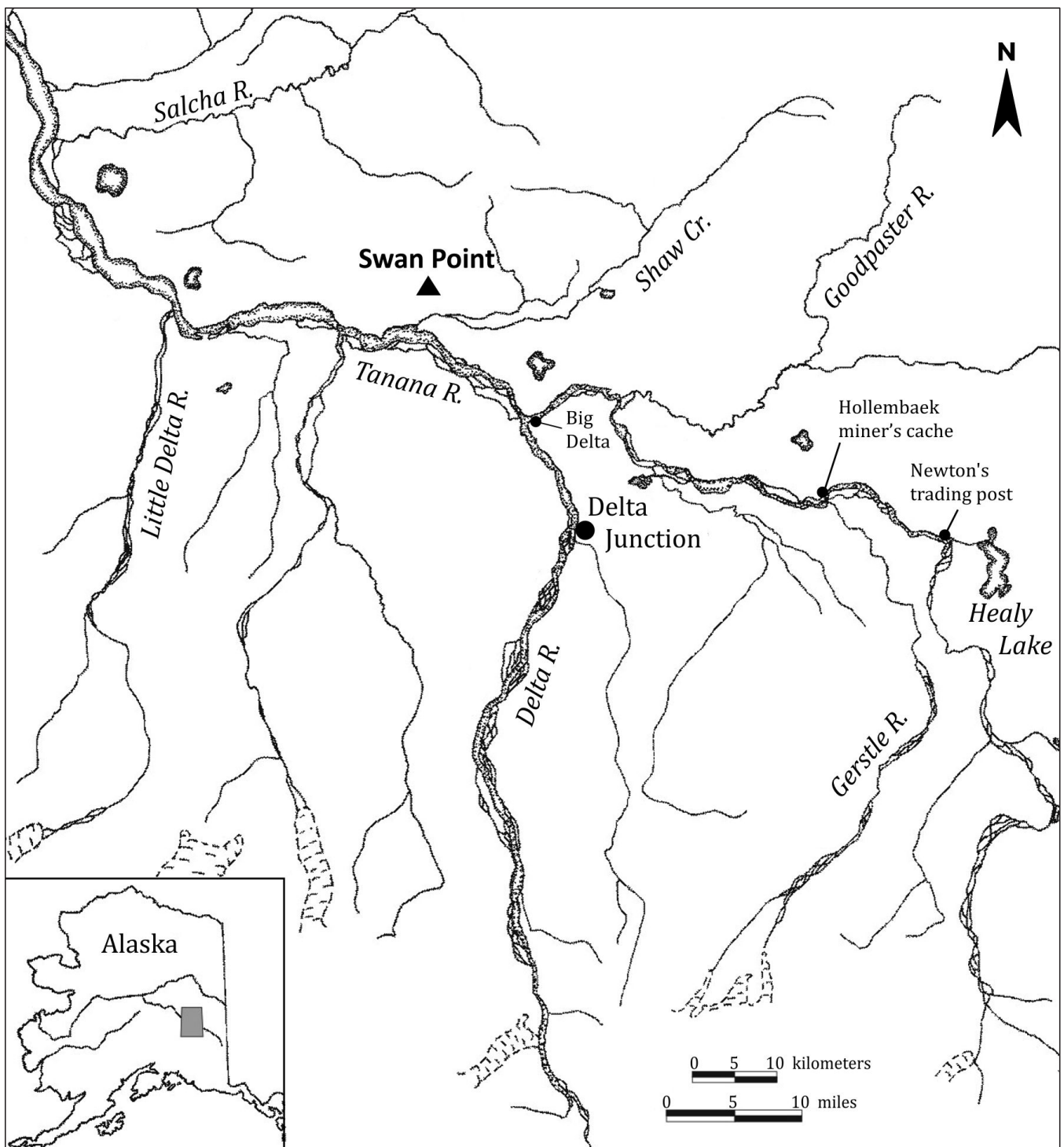


Figure 1. Location of Swan Point (Ch'etthij' K'eet). Prepared by C. E. Holmes.

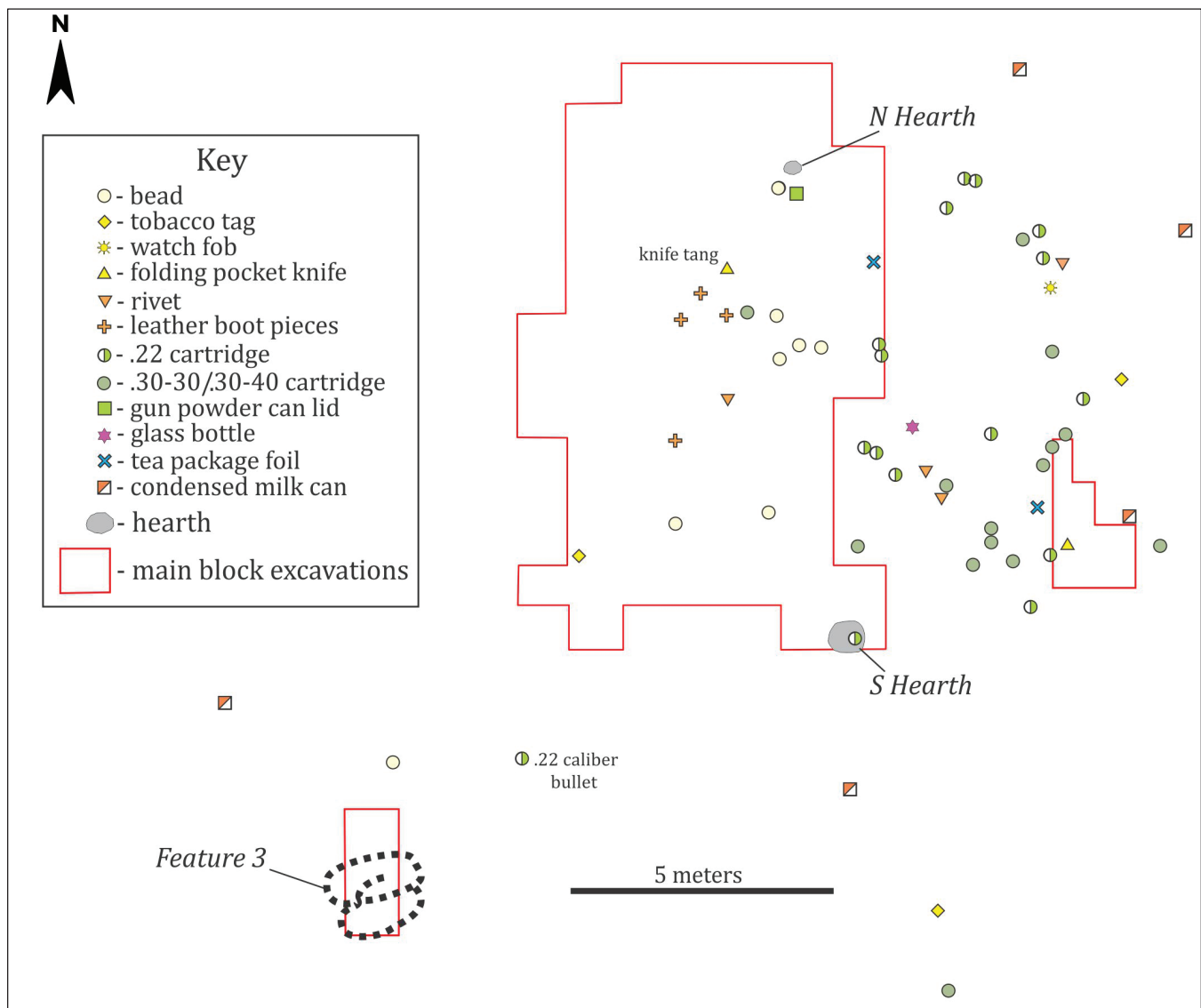


Figure 2. Distribution of key historic-era artifacts at Swan Point, Cultural Zone 0. Prepared by C. E. Holmes.

The site structure of CZ1 and CZ2 at Swan Point are recognized as ancestral Dene (Holmes et al. 2023; Smith 2022:171–215). The following description of CZ0 will present the argument that the artifact and feature patterns of the uppermost component also reflect recognizable Dene behaviors. CZ0 demonstrates the incorporation of Western-manufactured items into the traditional Dene lifeways of the Middle Tanana people.

## FEATURES

Today, the Swan Point site and bluff are accessed from the north by a modern unmaintained trail about 1 mile (1.61 km) in length. Near the bluff's base, the trail passes by a culturally modified spruce tree. The tree trunk is

twisted and bent approximately 8 feet (ca. 3 m) above ground where it healed decades ago and continued to grow. The tree's distinctive appearance suggests it was made as a trail marker. Images of this tree are published in Smith (2020:Fig. 17) and Smith (2022:Fig. 2.12) (see also Duer et al. 2020).

Three surface depressions were identified at the site that have different cultural affiliations. Feature 1 (primary locus) resembles a cache pit measuring 4 x 1 m associated with CZ-1a1 ca. 850 cal BP (940±20 BP; UGAMS 43503) (Reuther et al. 2023; Smith 2020:175). Feature 2 at the second locus is a house pit measuring 6 x 3 m associated with CZ1a2 ca. 2050 to 1800 cal BP (Reuther et al. 2023, Smith 2020). Feature 3 at the primary locus is a small, oblong surface depression with an associated berm, 2 x 1 m

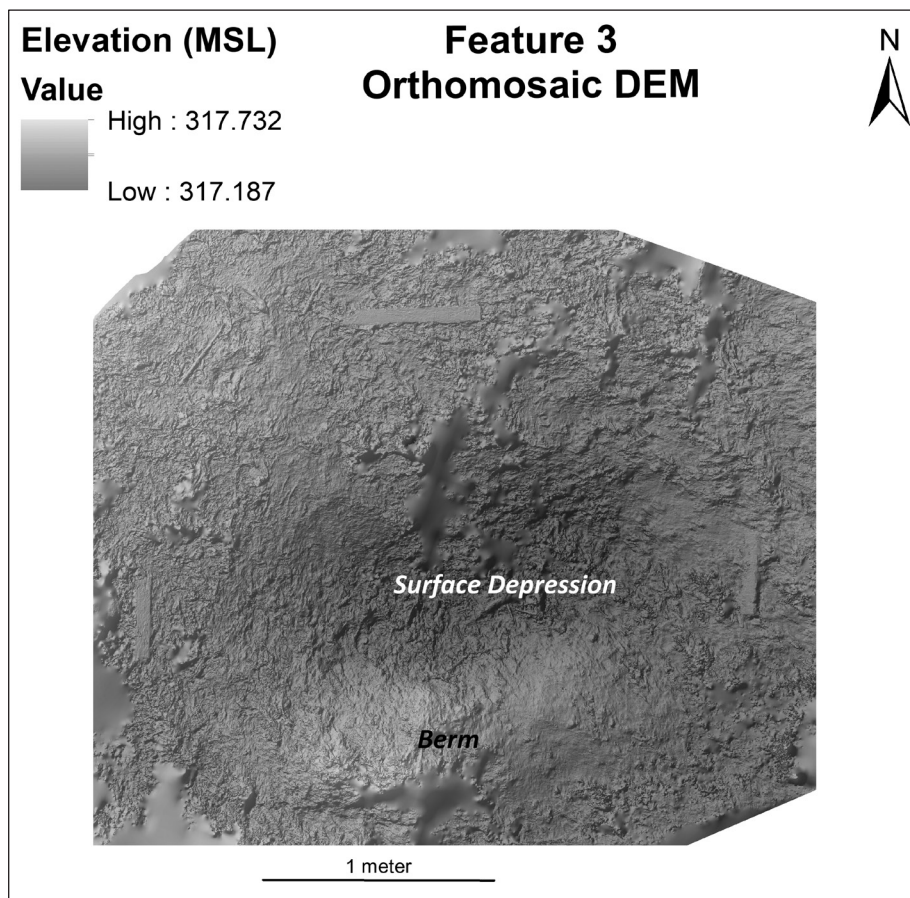


Figure 3. Orthomosaic digital elevation model (DEM) in meters above sea level (MAS) of the Feature 3 surface, a historic-era depression and berm. Image by G. M. Smith.

(Figs. 2 and 3). The feature intruded into the undisturbed sediments and soil horizon (lower C horizon). It lacked any directly associated artifacts in primary provenience, except for a handful of scorched wood at the base. All lithics recovered appeared to follow the general disturbance pattern of the strata and are assumed to represent a mix of CZ1a and 1b. Calcined bone fragments included marten (*Martes americana*), and a wood sample from the base of the feature returned a modern date of  $200 \pm 20$  cal BP (UGAMS 43502) (Reuther et al. 2023; Smith 2020). No other *in situ* artifacts were found and no evidence to suggest the feature's construction, although its size indicates possible use as storage.

Evidence of two hearths was observed beneath the forest duff in the O soil horizon above the E horizon. These features are likely associated with the historic artifacts and faunal elements described in this paper; however, their apparent young age did not warrant radiocarbon dating that would likely return a spurious modern date.

## ARTIFACTS BY CATEGORY

### FOOD

**Evaporated milk cans:** Pieces of five to seven evaporated milk cans were found (Fig. 2 and Fig. 4a). All of these cans have double-locking side seams with hole-in-cap lids, commercially available by the late 1890s. They all conform to Type 6 sanitary cans produced between 1903 and 1914. Dimensions are  $2 \frac{15}{16}$ -inch diameter and  $4 \frac{3}{8}$ -inch high with a  $1 \frac{1}{16}$ -inch hole-in-cap lid. Construction is tin with stamped ends, fill hole-in-cap, and lock side seam or double seam. The cans show evidence of opening with knife slits placed at the margins (one can has the entire lid removed). Condensed milk was formulated to provide the liquid with a longer shelf life, making it available for long-distance trade. They are common in colonial-era sites in Alaska. These cans are often dated by the dimensions, and different sizes provide different

production runs (IMACS 1992). Due to its shorter shelf life, the milk cans provide a good proxy for occupation date estimation.

**Glass condiment bottle:** One unbroken lavender-colored bottle was recovered (Fig. 2 and Fig. 4b). It appears to be a finished mouth-blown condiment bottle from the early twentieth century with a tooled capseat accepting finish. It measures  $8 \frac{1}{4}$ -inch tall,  $5 \frac{1}{16}$  inches high to the shoulder,  $1 \frac{1}{2}$ -inch opening inside diameter at the bore, 2 inches wide outside diameter at the mouth,  $\frac{9}{16}$ -inch finish without collar, and 3-inch diameter at the cup base that expands to  $3 \frac{3}{8}$ -inch diameter at the shoulder. Side seams are visible on both sides that extend to a tool-finished lip. Evidence of turning is present in the side mold seam and in the air bubbles in the lip. There are also several linear bubbles running vertically in the body. Six spaced vent holes appear on the shoulder of the bottle  $1 \frac{1}{16}$ -inch from the seam at  $1 \frac{3}{16}$ -inch intervals. Three vent holes are present on the base.



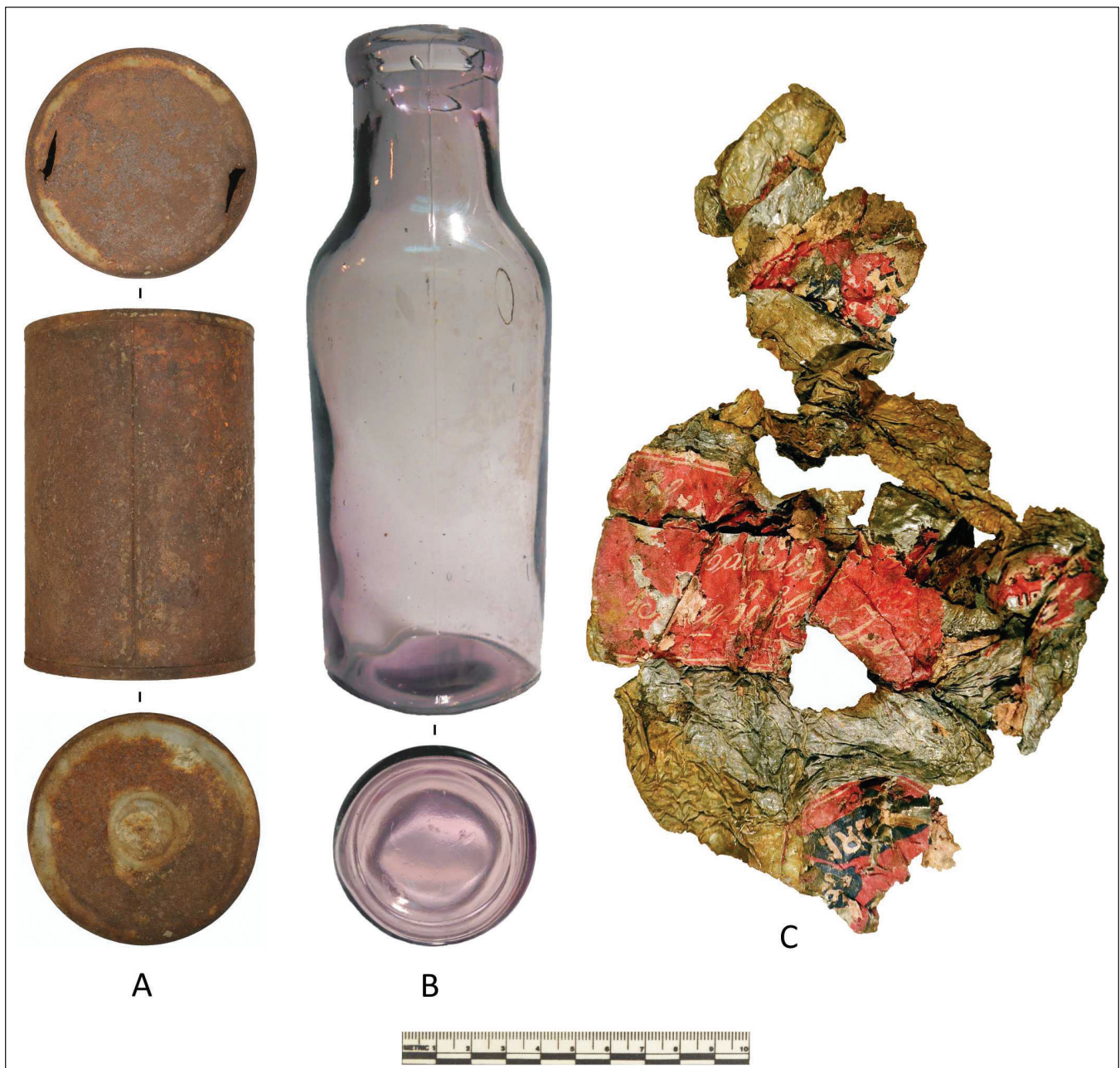


Figure 4. Food related. A: “Type 6” sanitary can for evaporated milk; B: glass condiment bottle; C: lead-based package marked “Canada’s Blue Ribbon Tea.” Photo by C. E. Holmes.

Cup-bottom molds were used to produce just about any type or class of mouth-blown bottles, with the majority of use made between the mid-to-late 1880s and the late 1910s, when automatic machines dominated the bottle-making market (Toulouse 1969, 1971). The production glass used had small amounts of manganese dioxide added as a decolorizer to offset the iron impurities present in virtually all sands; however, when exposed long term to sunlight, manganese dioxide turns glass to a lavender amethyst color (Dillon 1958; Kendrick 1968; Lockhart 2006).

It was America’s most widely used decolorizing agent until approximately 1915. World War I cut off supply sources, and by 1916 glassmakers were forced to use the more stable but also more expensive decolorizing agent, selenium (BLM and SHA 2022, Society for Historical Archaeology n.d.). “A practical end date for manganese use in all but specialty bottles is about 1920, although some use continued until the early 1930s” (Lockhart 2006:54).

**Tea packages:** Two crushed foil packets (thin malleable lead-based metal) retain some partially identifiable

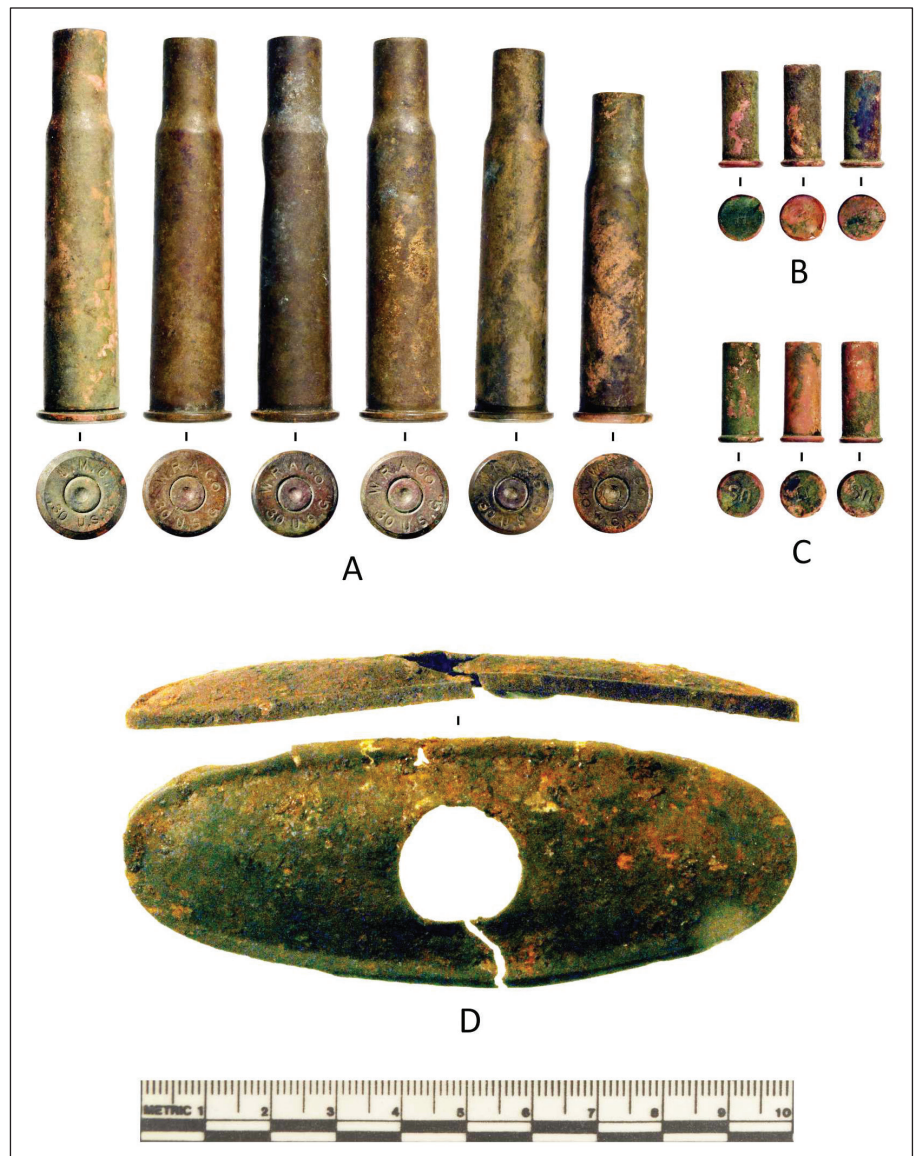
labeling (Fig. 2 and Fig. 4c). The labels are fragile paper-based, but “Canada’s Blue Ribbon Tea” can be seen on one. Cursive sans serif letters appear on a white block with a red background and blue shadow, giving a 3D effect. Although mostly illegible, the letters appear across a banner design similar to vintage newspaper advertisements (e.g., *Winnipeg Tribune* 1912).

Blue Ribbon Tea was distributed by a large grocery wholesaler based in Winnipeg, Canada (Asmundson and Goldsborough 2022). The company began in 1882 as a tea import and grocery wholesaler that prospered and would grow to establish agencies in Toronto, Prince Albert, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver (Wardhaugh 2023). By 1897 it was a large successful business and later developed into the highly successful Blue Ribbon Tea Company (Wardhaugh 2023). The company touted the benefits of its lead wrappers for Blue Ribbon Tea, claiming that the lead-based packaging sealed in freshness and prevented any odors from being absorbed during storage (West End Dumplings 2017). Aluminum foil wrapping began replacing lead in the 1910s, and by the mid-1920s, most food packaging had shifted from lead to aluminum materials (Hook and Heimlich 2017).

#### FIREARM-RELATED

**Rifle cartridges:** There are three types of brass ammunition casings found at the site: .30-caliber centerfire, .30-40-Krag centerfire, and .22-caliber rimfire (Fig. 2 and Fig. 5a–c). The Union Metallic Cartridge company produced .30 caliber .30-40 Krag cartridges, head stamped “UMC - .30 USA,” between 1895 and 1912, when they merged with Remington Arms (Henshaw 1993). The .30-40 cartridges, head stamped “WRA Co. - .30 USG,” were produced for the

U.S. government. These had a short-term U.S. military use between 1892 and 1903 and were used by civilians into the 1930s (Venturino 2018). Also in the assemblage is a .30-caliber cartridge head stamped “WRA - .30 WCF” (Winchester Centre Fire). The .30 WCF designation first appeared in 1895 and lasted until 1934, when “Co.” was eliminated from the headstamp (Barnes 2009; Huegel 2012). Twelve cartridge casings marked “W.R.A. 30 U.S.G.” were also described from the Hollembaek Cache Site (XMH-00201) dated to 1905 (Browne 2002, 2003).



**Figure 5. Firearm related.** A: military .30-40 Krag cartridges “U.M.C. - .30 U.S.A.,” “W.R.A. Co. - .30 U.S.G.,” and one .30 caliber cartridge “W.R.A. - .30 W.C.F.” (Winchester Centre Fire); B: United States Cartridge Company .22 cartridges with “US” head stamp; C: .22 cartridges with sunken “H” head stamp; D: gunpowder can lid. Photo by C. E. Holmes.



The .22-caliber rimfire cartridges were developed in France in 1845 and were first available in the United States ca. 1886 (Smith & Wesson n.d.). The collection has two sizes: “short rifle” ( $n = 5$ ) and “long rifle” ( $n = 1$ ). Two .22 cartridges have the “US” headstamp from the United States Cartridge Company and were produced between the mid-1890s and 1910 (Barnes 2009; Huegel 2012). Those with a sunken “H” head stamp ( $n = 2$ ) were manufactured by Winchester beginning in 1873 (Williamson 1952:448). Four spent lead bullets were also recovered.

**Gunpowder can:** This can fragment is an elongated oval with a  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch hole in the center (Fig. 2 and Fig. 5d). It measures 4 inches long by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. Only the top of the can was recovered, but it appears to have a crimped edge to bond to the body of the can with a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch lip around a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch indented edge. It is a typical dome-shaped lid for a gunpowder tin. Similar cans have been found at Crow Village, Tikchik, and Kijik (Oswalt and VanStone 1967; VanStone 1968; VanStone and Townsend 1970).

This diversity of ammunition suggests as many as three different caliber rifles at the site, and the presence of gunpowder indicates that reloading of ammunition was also an activity. At this time, it was common for spent metal cartridges to be reloaded with powder, lead, and primers and “companies such as the Ideal Manufacturing Company (now Lyman) began offering tools during the 1880s, and Winchester, Marlin, Sharps and others also sold accessory tools specifically for their guns and cartridges” (Pearce 2016).

## CLOTHING

**Boots:** A pair of decomposed leather ankle boots was recovered (Fig. 2 and Fig. 6a–b). While the left and right examples are of a similar style, they are not an exact matching pair. The right foot exhibits a rounded toe, while the left shoe has a slightly more pointed toe. Both boots are the same overall

size. The oval-toe style on the right boot grew in popularity after 1880, while the left boot’s pointed toe became more popular after 1890 (Dolmansaxlil 2014).

Both have Blake stitch construction, a method where the upper part of the shoe is stitched to the sole, a process that made commercial shoe production possible (Carmina n.d.). Shoes with the Blake construction method appear after 1858 (Shoegazing 2022). Both boots are made of black leather, including the upper and lower parts. Toe caps are present on both boots, with punch-hole detail along the edge. Leather soles and heels are highly worn down and show signs of multiple repairs. Heels are of a stacked design, consisting of multiple layers of material, to make repairs easier. Both boots have an overall length of  $10\frac{15}{64}$ -inch toe to heel, indicating a modern American



*Figure 6. Clothing related. A: left boot and B: right boot. These leather boots have identical lacing eyelets and hooks. C: metal clothing rivets. Photo by C. E. Holmes and E. Bishop.*

men's size 9, and both boots are 3 <sup>41</sup>/<sub>64</sub> inch wide, revealing a standard C-width construction for the same size. There are six red eyelets and four hooks for lacing up the boots. Both boots appear to be a Balmoral-style construction, suggesting a popular style after 1860 (Nanjappa 2015). After 1900 this typical dress boot style came to be known as Edwardian (Dolmansaxlil 2014). By this time, dress boots were only worn during the day and sometimes had toecaps and other features that would hint at their original use as business attire (Dolmansaxlil 2014).

**Rivets:** Several metal rivets were found (Fig. 2 and Fig. 6c). Levi Strauss & Co. was an established enterprise in 1873 when Jacob Davis partnered with Levi Strauss to manufacture durable workman clothing known as “waist overalls,” now called denim jeans (Cleary 1981; History 2009; Quinn 1978). They used copper rivets to reinforce areas around the pockets and crotch. After their patent expired in 1890, many other companies began copying the rivet design, and Levi Strauss started marking their rivets “LS & Co SF” (Cleary 1981; Quinn 1978). The Swan Point specimens do not appear to be marked.

#### PERSONAL ITEMS/ADORNMENT

**Folding knife:** A pocketknife manufactured by George Wolstenholm with blade markings of “I\*XL, Sheffield, England” was recovered (Fig. 2 and Fig. 7a). The I\*XL brand name was first seen in 1787 (Higgins and Tweedale 1995:1–27). In 1831, the famous I\*XL trademark was assigned to Wolstenholm. The company had taken its first steps into the American export market as early as 1830 (Sheffield Collectable Knives n.d.). Demand from America for superior-quality cutlery was growing, and George Wolstenholm made efforts to ensure that the finest cutlery of the time, his I\*XL knives, were the knife of choice for Americans (Eggington Group n.d.).

The body of the knife is 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch long and 1 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>-inch wide and has a main drop point blade

that is broken. There is a second blade that would be a coping blade, with channel grind, at 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch and is also broken. The width at the handle is <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch. The wooden handle is 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch long but has deteriorated. This knife matches Model 7033 or 13937 illustrated in a Biddle Hardware catalog (1910:987). In 1890, the U.S. McKinley Tariff Act required all imported goods to be marked with their country of origin. Before 1890, it was rare for Wolstenholm knives to be marked with their provenance (TGW International n.d.). After 1890, all Wolstenholm knives were stamped “Sheffield, England,” which remained standard practice until World War II. After World War II, additional markings appeared on the blade's base that read “oil the joints” (TGW International n.d.).

**Watch fob:** A miniature compass, thought initially to be an acetate plug, was recovered by metal detection



*Figure 7. Personal items. A: pocket knife marked “I\*XL, Sheffield, England;” B: watch fob with compass inside; C: tobacco tags, Westover Tobacco company (R.L. Patterson) and Star Tobacco company (Liggett and Meyers); D: glass beads of various sizes and colors. Photo by C.E. Holmes, E. Bishop, and G.M. Smith.*



(Fig. 2 and Fig. 7b). Upon closer inspection, under magnification, it was found to be a compass with a metal pointer. It appears to be a pendant from a watch chain fob. It has an impact point on its face where it was possibly knocked out of its housing. Pocket watches were popular during the Victorian period; watch chains were an accessory to retrieve a pocket watch from a pocket. Pendants of many forms were used to accessorize the chain. In the 1902 Sears catalog, six compass pendants are depicted, designed for watch chains (Sears, Roebuck, and Company [1902] 1969). Pocket watches remained popular until World War I but fell out of favor over the next decade, replaced by the wristwatch (Friedman 2015). The sales manifest for Bennett's trading post lists two watch chains in its inventory (reproduced in Mishler et al. 1984:112–115).

**Tobacco:** Three tobacco tags were recovered (Fig. 2 and Fig. 7c). They are from the Star Tobacco company (Liggett and Meyers) and the Westover brand R.A. Patterson Tobacco Co. (Durham County Library 1999). The use of tobacco tags in the United States began in the 1880s, first as wooden plug tags and later as metal tags (Hyman 2010). With an overabundance of cheap chewing tobacco being produced in the later nineteenth century, manufacturers developed the tag to identify each plug of tobacco to prevent the resale of cheaper products as higher-grade tobacco (Hyman 2010). Chewing tobacco sales peaked in 1890 and over the next 30 years averaged 200 million pounds annually (Heimann 1960; Maxwell 1980). Tin tags collected to redeem consumer goods were a highly successful marketing tactic and remained popular for four decades (Springate 1997). However, the be-

came obsolete in the 1920s when automated machines began wrapping one-ounce bricks of plug tobacco in printed cellophane packages (Disposable America n.d.). Also, by this time, paper coupons had largely replaced metal tags for product redemption (Storino 1995). The Swan Point tobacco tags are dated to 1885–1925.

**Beads:** Twenty-six glass beads of various sizes and colors were found in CZ-0 (Table 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 7d). Glass beads were an essential exterior adornment on clothing, footwear, weapon cases, and personal bags (McKenna 1959:78–80). Around the turn of the twentieth century, Indigenous men residing in the upper Tanana villages often wore Western suit jackets adorned with beading strips, sashes, or necklaces (McKenna 1959:86–87; Schneider 2018:xvi; Thomas 2005:219). There are also instances of gun sheaths (Fig. 8) and carry bags receiving beading accents (Simeone and VanStone 1986:19). They were traditionally considered to communicate and enhance a Native hunter's luck and social station (Simeone and VanStone 1986:19). Both Euro-Americans and Alaska Natives valued beads but in different ways: Euro-Americans typically used them as a trade medium, while Dene persons primarily used them for adornment (Grover 2016; Zagoskin [1847] 1967:143).

**Copper awl:** During the metal detector survey, a copper bipoint was recovered in subsurface context (Fig. 7e). The subsurface context indicates that it is more likely associated with the lower CZ1a1 (ca. 800–925 cal BP; Smith 2020:268, 364; 2022:184, 223). Although some industrial-manufactured artifacts were also recovered in the top 5 cm of sediment, they were likely trampled out

*Table 1. Swan Point Glass Beads*

| ID    | Count | Color               | Size             | Description                          |
|-------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 22324 | 3     | white               | small, 3–4 mm    | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 16326 | 1     | white               | small, 3 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 22324 | 4     | white on white      | small, 3–4 mm    | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 16348 | 2     | white on white      | medium, 4 x 6 mm | drawn, semitransparent, heat tumbled |
| 24060 | 1     | white on white      | small, 4 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 23171 | 1     | black on black/grey | large, 6 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 22324 | 6     | black on black/grey | small, 3–4 mm    | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 24061 | 1     | black on black/grey | small, 4 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 24062 | 1     | black on black/grey | small, 4 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |
| 24088 | 1     | blue                | medium, 5 mm     | drawn, semitransparent, heat tumbled |
| 16326 | 1     | blue                | small, 3 mm      | drawn, semitransparent, heat tumbled |
| 24064 | 1     | pale blue           | small, 4 mm      | drawn, opaque, heat tumbled          |



*Figure 8. Leather gun case of caribou or moosehide exhibiting Native beading. Reads "Presented by J. S. Leary to Caribou Bill. Jan. 28th 1910. Made by Salchakett Indians 42 Miles. From Fairbanks Alaska." UAMN # UA2020-006. Image used with permission. Images by Angela Linn, University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum of the North.*

of place. An XRF analysis of its elemental composition, when compared to copper from the White River source, found no difference, indicating it was not crafted from an industrial alloy (Thompson 2016). This object was probably manufactured and acquired through Indigenous trade networks. Bipoints were commonly utilized in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as awls for hide piercing. Prior to the availability of firearms and iron, copper arrowheads or end blades were made. A bipoint could be used as a central spine, with a second small sheet of copper hammered around it forming a blade (Franklin et al. 1981:29–30; see also Cooper 2012; Dixon et al. 2005; Hanson 1999, 2008; Hayden 1998; Shinkwin 1979; Thomas et al. 2020; VanderHoek et al. 2012; Workman 1976). As prestige items, copper objects were highly desired (Noguchi and Kondo 2019). They were produced by groups on all sides of the Wrangell Mountains (Cooper 2012). A more local copper source is reported to be on Copper Creek, a Charley River tributary northeast of Shaw Creek (Kari 2011).

## LITHICS

Forty-three lithic reduction flakes were found in the sod and O horizon across the main excavation area, suggesting the possibility that local site residents continued limited use of stone tools into the historic era. This idea is not without precedent; Margaret Kirsteatter (b. 1916±1 d. 1998) of Healy Lake preferred traditional lithic tools

for hide preparation throughout her life and considered them to be superior to similar Western-manufactured items (Combs 2022). However, a recent study, using a total of 43,446 analyzed lithic artifacts from Swan Point (Smith 2020:253–255), applied an independent samples T-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between raw material group ( $n = 49$ ) and Cultural Zone ( $n = 4$ : CZ0, 1a, 1b, and 2) or 5 cm level (Levels 1–8). With a level of significance set at  $p = 0.05$ , differences were observed between raw material

discard types in CZ1a, 1b, and 2 and between individual Levels 1–8, but no difference was observed between the raw material types of CZ0 and 1a or Levels 0–1. Thus, we conclude that all lithic artifacts found in the sod and O-horizon are more likely to be intrusive from CZ1a.

## DISCUSSION

Perhaps the best direct evidence of Dene presence at the site is glass beads. Their variety and scattered distribution are suggestive of accidental loss during routine activities around the camp. Glass beads were commonly worn on clothing used during Dene hunting activities. Hunting luck was believed to be the result of the ability not only to find and capture game but to convince that animal to offer itself as a food sacrifice. Dressing oneself up in decorated clothing would enhance the animal's willingness to offer itself (Simeone and VanStone 1986).

The tobacco, food, firearms, and clothing items were used by all cultures present in the region at this time. Kathleen Newton Shafer, who grew up at Newton's trading post near Healy Lake (ca. 1906–1926), recalled that the only gun calibers present at the Healy Lake village were the .30-30 and .22 calibers (Cook 1969:112, 114). The presence of cartridge cases and spent bullets indicates game hunting. The butchery activities and faunal remains validate that these activities were aimed at procurement and processing of large mammals such as moose.

Study of the faunal remains from CZ0 is ongoing; however, preliminary analyses indicated moose (*Alces alces*) carcass processing consistent with Indigenous Dene cultural butchery practices, such as processing marrow from the phalanges (Krasinski et al. 2017). The association of the butchered faunal remains with Western-manufactured items support the interpretation of a temporary hunting camp exuding Dene behavior and not Euro-American activities.

The introduction of Western goods and non-Native persons into the middle Tanana Valley made permanent changes to the local Dene culture. In 1904, a small gold strike was reported on Korta ([sic] Corda) Creek, a tributary of Shaw Creek (*Alaska Prospector* 1904), and a small group of prospectors continued to focus their efforts on the southeast drainages of the middle Shaw Creek. Bennett sold his trading post at Big Delta to Daniel McCarty the following year, and E. T. Barnette financed the merchant goods for both men. The trading post/roadhouse then became known as McCarty (Mishler et al. 1984). McCarty’s trading post was stocked with 40 tons of supplies that sought to provide for both the local residents and for the newly arriving prospectors. An inventory of these supplies is published in Mishler et al. (1984:112).

There are numerous consistencies between the goods in the trading post inventory and the artifacts found at Swan Point; these include chewing tobacco (tags), Blue Ribbon Tea, .30-caliber ammunition, .30-40-caliber ammunition, .22-caliber ammunition, and watch chains. It seems likely that Dene persons obtained these items at McCarty’s trading post and transported them to the hunting camp to be used, discarded, or lost. The production and termination dates for the recovered artifacts are displayed together in a timeline (Fig. 9). Due to their shorter manufacture span and shelf life, the milk cans suggest an estimate for the end of the occupation, and with the other artifacts provide a potential 20-year use span from ca. 1895 to 1915.

### CONCLUSION

Swan Point has been an important site to the local Dene for many generations and also to ancestral populations over 14,000 years. Here the cultural data are consistent with hunting activities that include animal processing and various tool workshop behaviors. The landform is a centralized area for subsistence hunting and gathering and was also used for multiyear structures such as dwellings and caches. The artifacts recovered from Swan Point component CZ0

**Historic Timeline for Probable Occupation**

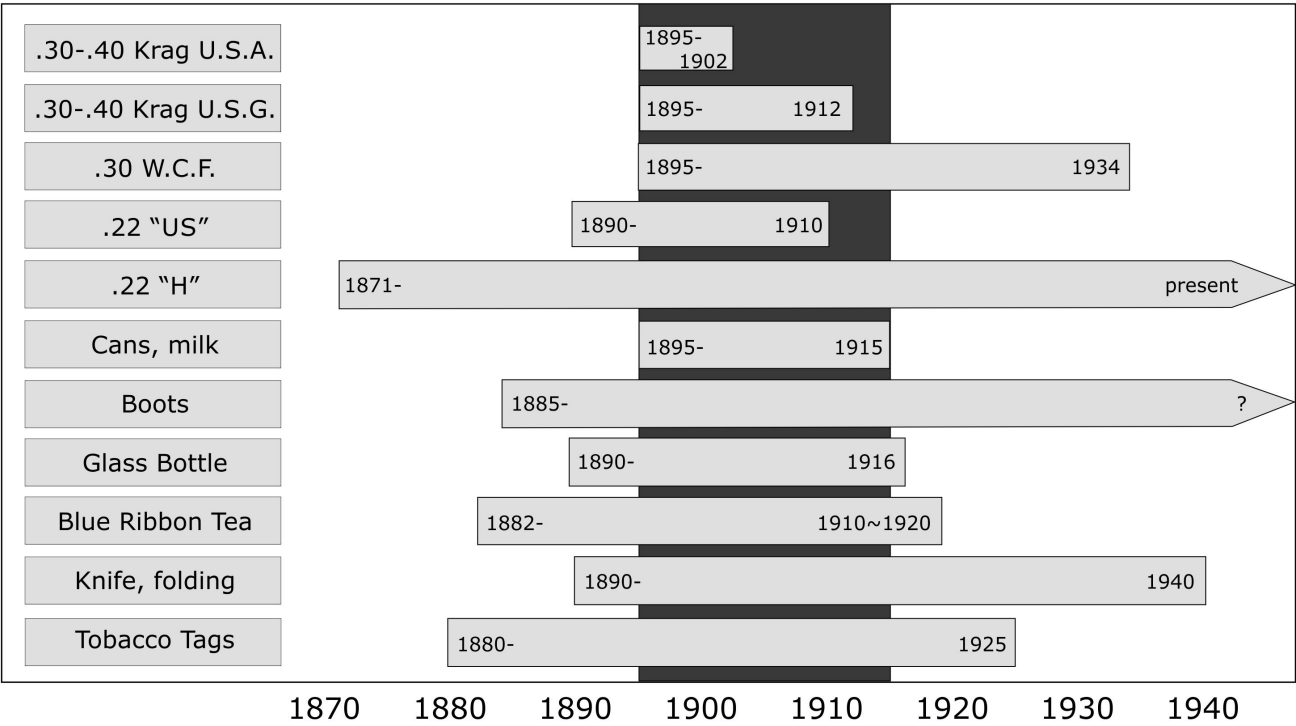


Figure 9. Timeline depicting the manufacture runs of significant artifacts. Prepared by C. E. Holmes and J. Hemmeter.



demonstrate that the Dene traditional use of the site continued into the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Western-manufactured artifacts date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This period marks a critical social and material culture change in the Tanana Valley, shifting from traditional Dene settlement and resource use patterns to the American legal traditions of resource use and residence patterns. That shift in ecosystem relationships is marked in the Shaw Creek and Goodpaster region by the establishment of McCarty's trading post at Big Delta and the influx of a small but steady population of prospectors. The artifacts described here provide a possible occupation range between 1895 and 1915, and many items match inventory manifests from the trading post at McCarty. Given that the Dene population ceased using the lower Shaw Creek area, we suggest that the years 1900–1909 are most likely to be when the Dene used the site for a seasonal hunting encampment.

As Western culture spread across the Alaska interior, the Dene incorporated certain alien aspects into their daily lives and integrated them into their traditional culture. The apparent departure of the Dene from the lower Shaw Creek basin was likely due in part to the long-term erratic behavior by the Shaw Creek roadhouse owner, the Native population congregating toward Salcha and Healy Lake, and the behavior exhibited by other new arrivals to the area seeking their fortune.

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