



Snare Creek: Historic Archaeology at a Han Athabaskan Enclave in the Coal Creek Mining District, Alaska

Cultural Resource Report NPS/YUCH/CRR—2016/002



ON THE COVER

A selection of artifacts discovered at CHR-00117
Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service

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October 2016

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources Program
Alaska Regional Office

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Please cite this publication as:

Houlette, C.W. 2016. Snare Creek: Historic Archaeology at a Han Athabaskan Enclave in the Coal Creek Mining District, Alaska. Cultural Resource Report NPS/YUCH/CRR—2016/002. National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

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Abstract

During the summers of 2009 and 2010, archaeological investigations were carried out at the “Slaven’s Dome Cabin” site (CHR-00117/YUCH0023). The purpose of the project was to investigate the history of three indigenous Han Athapaskan families and how their way of life was affected or altered by living within the immediate influence of the placer gold dredging industry on Coal Creek in the 1940s and 1950s. The project also had an educational component designed to immerse young, high school aged scholars in the nature and practice of historical archaeology through collaboration with the University of Alaska, College of Natural Science and Mathematics’ Alaska Summer Research Academy.

Acknowledgments

The successful completion of this project is directly tied to the great cast of characters that have been involved in it over the years. That said, without the funding provided primarily by the National Park Service, with some additions by the Bureau of Land Management, and the University of Alaska Museum of the North and Alaska Summer Research Academy (ASRA), none of these efforts would have taken place. As such, it is important to first and foremost thank (posthumously) Doug Beckstead for initially proposing that the project be undertaken and Jeff Rasic for following through on that proposal and suggesting to us the collaborative effort with ASRA.

While the project may well have been able to take place without the ASRA component, by no means would it have had the same impacts. For the opportunity to share the experience with various youth in an effort to promote our interests and the disciplines of Cultural Resources Management and Historical Archaeology, I would like to extend sincere gratitude to the University of Alaska School of Natural Resources and Mathematics for supporting the ASRA program and in turn the two years of ASRA involvement with this project. Of course, it was the students (see Appendix A) who were at the center of this effort and whom I must wholeheartedly extend my thanks to for keeping me on track and not letting me take myself too seriously.

However, without the technical and methodological support provided principally by Robin Mills, with help from Jim Whitney, none of this would have taken place as it did. The expertise and guidance they provided, first in the field and through to the post-field processing and follow-up, this report may not have come to pass. Other invaluable field assistance was thankfully provided by Dael Devenport, Jessica Peterson, and Tim Williams. Thanks also go out to the University of Alaska Museum of the North Archaeology department staff and volunteers including Steve Lanford and Lori Hansen. In regards to the writing of this report I would like to again thank Robin Mills for his continued patience and encouragement while guiding me through. For editorial reviews and comments I wish to sincerely thank Jessica Peterson, Adam Freeburg, and my wife, Shannon Houlette.

Finally, I would like to thank, and ultimately honor, Isaac Juneby for his curiosity, his insight, his patience, and his consent during our investigation of his childhood home. Though I did not know him well, he is missed and our thoughts remain with his family and friends.

Chris Houlette

Introduction

In 1936 an industrial gold dredging operation rumbled to life in the remote Coal Creek valley in the upper Yukon River region of Alaska. Unlike the small scale prospecting and placer mining efforts commonplace on the creeks throughout the region since the late-1800s, the consolidation, and subsequent industrialization of the claims on Coal Creek by the newly formed Gold Placers, Incorporated¹ required teams of laborers (Beckstead 2003). A camp was established to support the undertaking, and the economic and social opportunities provided there would prove to have lasting effects on the small communities of Eagle and Eagle Village roughly 60 miles (~97 km) up-river near the international border with the Yukon Territory, Canada (Beckstead 2000). Willy Juneby, Susie Paul, and Harry David, the patriarchs of three Han Hwech'in Athapaskan families, were among the group of local residents hired by the mining company. However, rather than seasonally relocate when the dredging operation shut down each winter, they chose to move their families from Eagle Village and establish a new home on Snare Creek, a tributary of Coal Creek (Mishler and Simeone 2004).

During the summers of 2009 and 2010, archaeological investigations were carried out at what is officially identified as the "Slaven's Dome Cabin" site (CHR-00117/YUCH00233, Figure 1). The purpose of the project was to investigate the history of these three indigenous Han Athapaskan families and how their way of life was affected or altered by living within the immediate influence of a large scale, industrial, placer gold mining development. The project also had an educational component designed to immerse young, high school aged scholars in the nature and practice of Historical Archaeology through collaboration with the University of Alaska, College of Natural Science and Mathematics' Alaska Summer Research Academy.

¹ Also, a partner company was formed soon after, Alluvial Gold, Incorporated to manage a second dredging operation on the neighboring Woodchopper Creek.

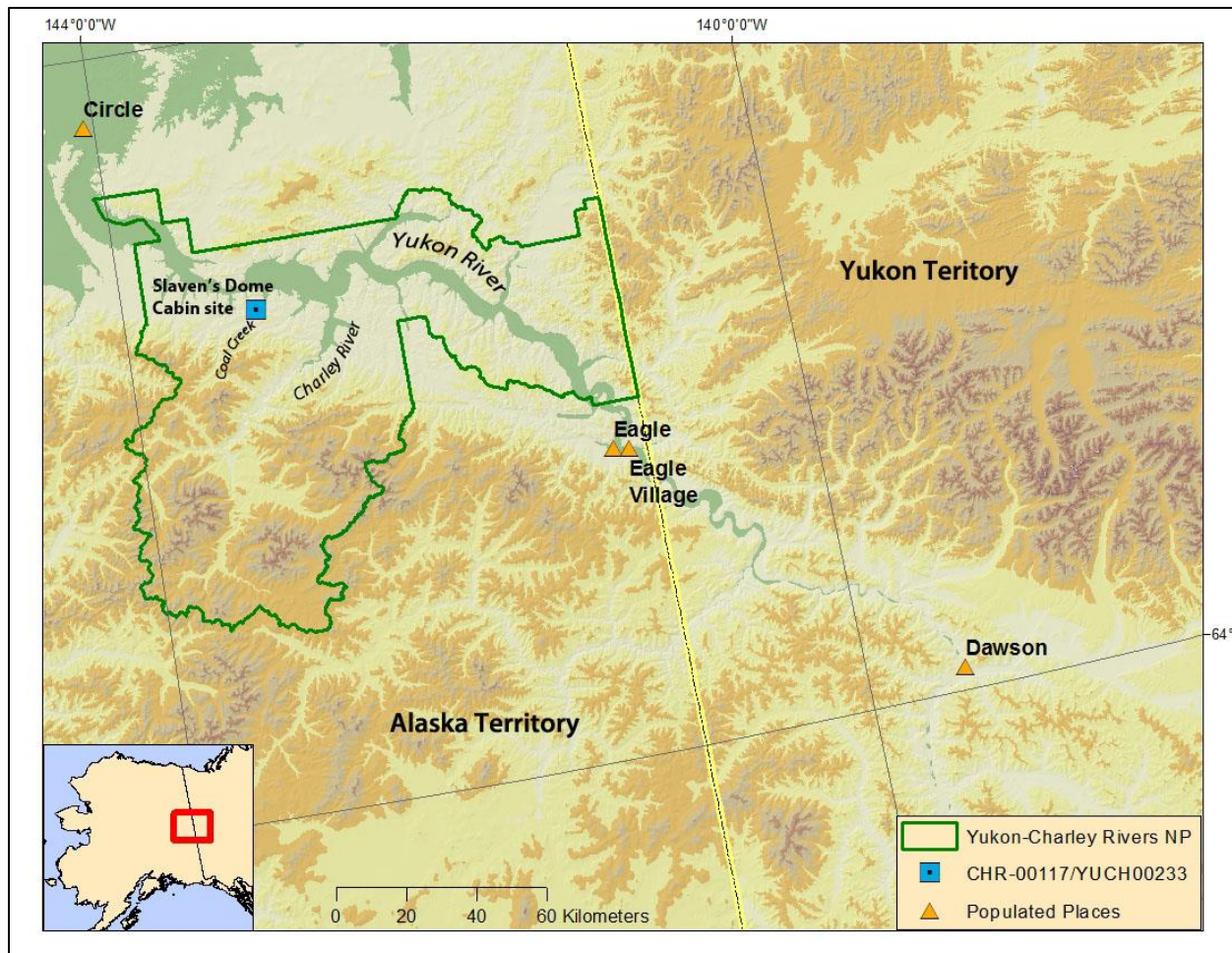


Figure 1. Location of the Slaven's Dome Cabin site within Yukon-Charley Rivers NPr. and in relation to the greater Upper Yukon River region.

Today, the site consists of four discernible, yet collapsed or collapsing structures (including one cabin) amidst a diffuse scatter of surface artifacts partially buried in a thick cover of forest detritus. However, a fifth structure had escaped detailed recording² until a formal, historic landscape mapping project was conducted in the area in 2004³. The Juneby cabin (recorded as Feature 5) had burned sometime in the early 1950s leaving only a faint trace of the original structure. While a tragic and total loss for the original owners, this situation offered an opportunity for archaeological investigation. During the fire the building collapsed, potentially preserving some objects and their placement within the cabin at the time of the fire. Thus, of the

² A 1998 site survey noted a vague depression in the area, but there was no specific data captured.

³ During this effort a total of nine distinct features were recorded at the site, all of which are described in greater detail in Section 3.

nine features recorded at the site, the Juneby cabin was chosen as the primary focus of the project because it was thought to have the most integrity, from an archaeological perspective.

The site at Snare Creek and its associated family histories exemplifies a historic nexus between Western Capitalist interests originating with British Hudson Bay traders in the mid-1850s and a traditional indigenous, subsistence lifestyle stretching back perhaps thousands of years. On the one hand, the industrial dredging operation on Coal Creek is primarily the result of non-native economic interest in the region. On the other hand, the Juneby family, Han Hwech'in Athapaskans, represent a local, indigenous history. It was postulated that materials discovered through excavation may well represent the interaction of this indigenous family with the outside influence provided by an industrial placer gold mining operation. The goal of the project, then, was to examine and document this potential comingling of two very different cultures through the excavation and study of what was left behind at the site.

Formal excavations at the site took place during two, two week periods in the summers of 2009 and 2010 to coincide with the educational aspect of the project. During those four weeks, two features at the site were test excavated: Feature 5, the Juneby cabin ruin, and Feature 7, an adjacent trash scatter. These investigations resulted in the excavation of 17.25 square meters of the site. The artifact assemblage was initially processed at the University of Alaska Museum of the North Archaeology Department in Fairbanks, Alaska, to meet current, best practice, archival standards. The collection was transferred in 2012 to the National Park Service (NPS) Fairbanks Administrative Center Curation Facility in Fairbanks for permanent storage.

Historic Background

The upper Yukon River region that serves as the backdrop for the people, places, and events to be discussed here has, historically, been a sparsely populated landscape, excepting a handful of years surrounding the boom and bust of the Klondike gold rush at the end of the 19th century. Starting in the mid-1840s, traders, trappers, explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and scientists from various nations and with various agendas began exploring the area encompassing the Yukon River drainage. Certainly the Klondike, the so called “Last Great Gold Rush,” is the most notable event in many respects, yet this was just the apex of activity. Starting with the Fortymile gold strike in 1886, a series of gold rushes drew miners back and forth through the region; a trend that has continued in one degree or another even into the current day. However, as noted above, there are two trajectories that need to be addressed in this section: the history and prehistory of the local indigenous populations, as well as the activities and events inherent to the Euro-american outsiders' expansion into the region. Over the course of time these two paths become intertwined, as is evident at Snare Creek.

Han History

Relatively little is known about the prehistory of the Han Hwech'in Athapaskans. According to ethnographic accounts (Osgood 1971, Mishler and Simeone 2004), at the time of initial, direct

contact with non-native interests, the Han were known to inhabit the entire drainages of the Charley, Kandik, Nation, Tatonduk, Seventymile, Chandindu, and Klondike rivers, as well as most of the lower Fortymile River. These river systems drain much of the Yukon-Tanana uplands and form the bulk of the upper Yukon River watershed (Figure 2).

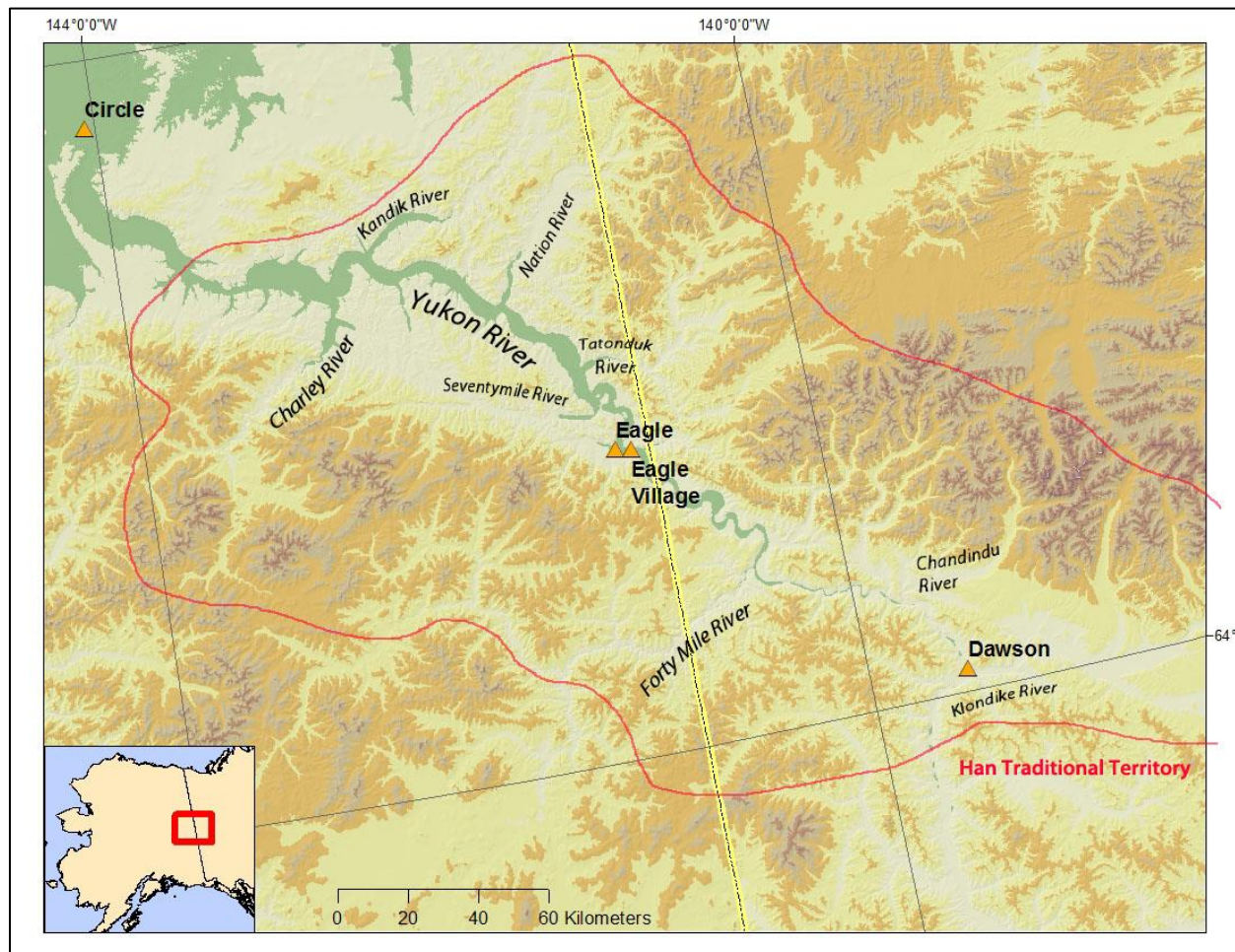


Figure 2. The portion of the Upper Yukon River region that was the traditional home territory of the Han at and before the time of direct contact with Euro-American explorers.

Although the Han are, in fact, the “People of the River,”⁴ they also inhabited and utilized adjacent highlands. The harvesting of salmon and caribou formed nearly equal parts of their subsistence rounds (Osgood 1971).

The upper Yukon River region has also been defined as a “Last Frontier,” that is, one of the final places to be explored by Euro-American expansionist interests⁵. As such, during the early

⁴ Or “River People”, the literal translation of the Han language dialect term *Han Hwech'in*. Mishler and Simeone 2004

historic period⁶ the indigenous inhabitants of this region were some of the last to be encountered by Euro-Americans in North America. From ethnographic and historic standpoints, this might be expected to have provided a useful dataset, yet there is a relative paucity of such information relating to the Han Athapaskans. Throughout this period various explorers, traders, and missionaries moving through the country made sporadic notes of the Han, sometimes describing village size or composition or commenting on particular customs or behaviors. While valuable as the earliest known accounts, the information they contain is sparse and often inconsistent⁷. In 1906, Ferdinand Schmitter of the US Army Medical Corps, assigned to Fort Egbert in Eagle, recorded certain ethnographic information about the local native population that interested him⁸. Yet it was not until Cornelius Osgood's work in 1932 that any professional ethnographic work was undertaken, and this, by his own admission, was limited. The most recent effort to document the ethno-history of the Han is the work published by Craig Mishler and William Simeone in 2004.

Historic accounts become more numerous with the increase in exploration of the region by outside interests and the eventual establishment of more stable settlements. In 1885 gold was found on the Stewart River, some ways upriver on the Yukon from Han territory. The next year coarse placer gold was discovered on the Fortymile River, well within Han territory. The new frontier town of Forty Mile was established shortly thereafter at the confluence of that river and the Yukon. By 1894 the new town offered a vast array of goods and services including bakeries, blacksmiths, restaurants, hardware operations, dance halls, and of course the ubiquitous saloons (Gates 1994). Buxton Mission had been established by William Bompas of the Anglican Church⁹ and Fort Constantine was set up by the North-West Mounted Police. Yet it is almost in the very nature of a gold strike that there is never enough gold to support the number of miners that show up, and so widespread prospecting throughout the area continued. In 1888 gold was discovered on the Seventymile River, another tributary of the Yukon. In 1893 there were further finds to the west that were significant enough to spur another rush downriver to the newly established Circle

⁵ From an archaeological perspective it was one of the earliest "frontiers" in the settling of the New World, being very close geographically to some of the oldest known sites in North America. Also, the Brooks Range in Northern Alaska remained a blank spot on the map until the end of the 19th century.

⁶ The middle to late 19th century is also described as the "contact" period.

⁷ Details such as village location or size were at times conflicting in these early accounts and have made subsequent positive identification of sites difficult (Bland 1993, Mishler and Simeone 2004).

⁸ His article "Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folklore" is reasonably astute in terms of how it was recorded given that he was not a trained anthropologist. Regardless, it is the earliest thorough description of Han lifeways.

⁹ Bompas began ministering to the Kutchin Athapaskans at Fort Yukon in 1865. He moved upriver to establish the mission at Forty Mile in 1891. Bompas and the Anglican Church would eventually be succeeded by the American Episcopal Church as the primary religious entity in the upper Yukon River region.

City on the far western boundary of Han territory. Then in 1897, back upriver on Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River in the Yukon Territory, more gold was found. This latter case, of course, marks the beginning of the great Klondike gold rush.

The search for gold in the upper Yukon River region during the years of the late-19th and early-20th centuries had varying impacts on the lives of the Han. The establishment of Eagle City in 1898, followed by the arrival of the United States Army and the subsequent construction of Fort Egbert, displaced most of the remaining members of the Han living in Alaska. They moved a few miles upriver to re-establish themselves at what became known as Eagle Village¹⁰. In 1909, Eagle Village was devastated by a Smallpox epidemic. According to U.S. Census records, only sixty-nine people lived in there in 1910. The next census, in 1920, documents only sixty individuals. Then in 1925 the village was ravaged again, this time by Tuberculosis, although the next official census data notes eighty-nine people in 1930. A similar metric¹¹ from across the border in the Yukon Territory notes that in Moosehide, at this point the only other significant Han population center, there was a total population of seventy-six individuals¹² (Mishler and Simeone 2004).

The 1930s would usher in yet more change, this time influenced by an increased introduction to, and use of, machinery. Steamships had been plying the waters of the Yukon since the early days of Euro-American exploration and certainly this had an effect on the Han, not the least of which was that they would offer a source of employment. In truth, some of the earliest wage-based employment available to the Han was working as deck hands on the steamships during the summers. Another opportunity steamships provided was the winter activity of cutting firewood that could then be sold as fuel to the steamship companies during the summer (Mishler and Simeone 2004). Steamships required an incredible amount of wood for fuel and over the years wood cutting camps were established up and down the river to furnish this resource¹³. With the introduction of industrial mining techniques and technologies, a wide array of machines was brought into the country. Two of the most lasting introductions, in terms of impact and/or influence, were the bulldozer and the large industrial gold dredge.

¹⁰ Initially established sometime between 1899 and 1900, the village was destroyed in a catastrophic flood during river breakup in the spring of 2009.

¹¹ Data from Statistics Canada, after Mishler and Simeone.

¹² Moosehide had been the primary Han population center since its establishment by the Anglican Church in 1897. Dawson fell on hard times around the same time as Eagle City, with most of the population moving to Whitehorse.

¹³ It was at one such camp, specifically Heine Miller's wood camp (CHR-00009) near the mouth of the Tatonduk (Sheep) River not far downriver from Eagle Village, that some of the Han men would find employment and be exposed to operating heavy machinery.

Mining History and the Coal Creek Historic Mining District

The Fortymile strikes were the first genuinely productive mining prospects in the Han region. This productivity resulted in the establishment of the frontier town of Forty Mile as noted above. However, like so many boomtowns of this era, both the mines and the town were relatively short lived¹⁴. New strikes downriver in the Mastodon and Birch creeks area prompted the establishment and subsequent rise of Circle City. Once hailed as the “largest log cabin city in the world,” Circle drew many people away from Forty Mile and sent them all charging westward once more across Han territory (Gates 1994). Not long after, the Klondike struck and Circle too would be largely abandoned in yet another stampede back to the east. The peak activity surrounding the Klondike ultimately lasted only about three years. New strikes in the Alaskan interior, far beyond the upper Yukon River region, drew away many of those who had not prospered on the Yukon, and diverted most of those who had arrived too late.

While the Klondike boom generated the most activity, many small-scale, individual miners and prospectors held out hope for other opportunities in the region. Much like the finds on American Creek, which helped to prompt the establishment of Eagle City but which never amounted to much, similar scenes played out again and again on other creeks downriver (Figure 3).

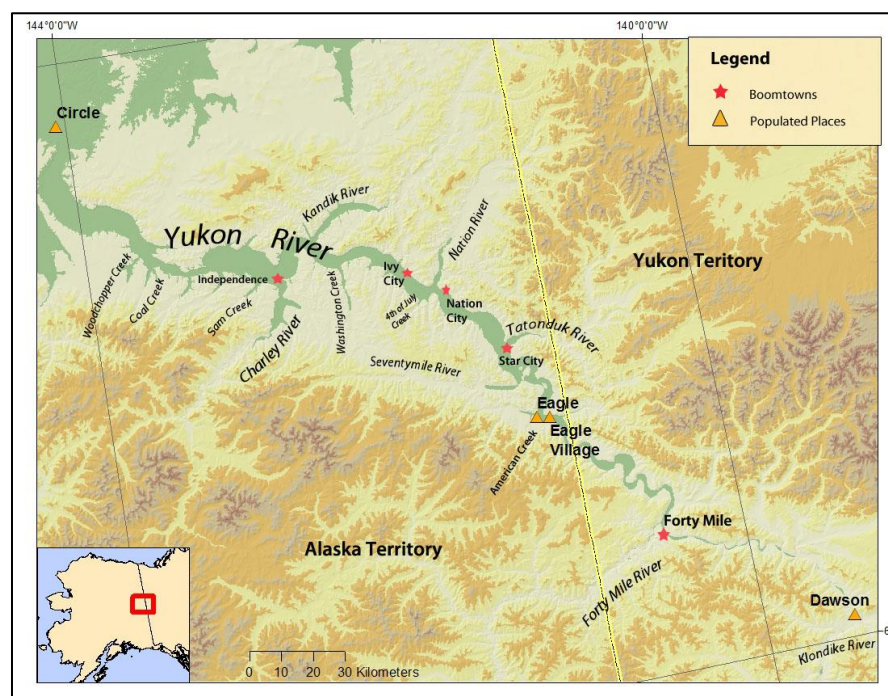


Figure 3. Map of Upper Yukon River gold strikes and resulting “boomtowns” staked between 1886 and 1898.

¹⁴ None of the upper Yukon River gold deposits could even remotely rival the richness that would eventually be realized through the Klondike phenomenon. However, many of the early deposits, particularly those in the Fortymile and Circle Mining districts are still being worked to this day.

Prospects seemed good on the Seventymile River and so Star City sprang to life. So it was on 4th of July Creek, prompting the establishment of both Nation City and Ivy City. Likewise, Independence cropped up at the mouth of the Charley River. Sam Creek was purported to have good possibilities, but again these did not materialize in any grand sense (Webb 1977). The reality, however, is that none of these places, neither the prospects nor the “cities,”¹⁵ ever panned out. One creek did eventually prove to be more productive, even though it never quite elicited the same sort of “rush” behavior. No grand, patriotic name was assigned to it, nor would a “city” ever be established nearby. The first claim staked on this creek was not for gold, but for coal; hence the name Coal Creek.

Unfortunately, the coal was found to be of insufficient quality to burn in the steamships and those prospects were abandoned. There did, however, turn out to be gold in the area, and between 1901 and 1916 several mining claims were staked. Over the next 30 years or so a series of small but productive gold mining efforts prospered in the Coal Creek and neighboring Woodchopper Creek drainages (Beckstead 2003). The majority of these claims were consolidated in 1935, and in 1936 an industrial placer gold dredge began operating on Coal Creek. The specific history of the development of gold mining, especially the dredging operations on Coal and Woodchopper creeks, has been dealt with elsewhere (Baird 2005, Beckstead 2000 and 2003). That said, there are certain particulars of that history that have direct bearing on the topic at hand.

¹⁵ Despite the names, these brief settlements did not last for long and most would barely grow beyond a tent camp.

The Trail to Snare Creek

A cross check of the employee roster from the mining operations of Gold Placers, Inc. (Beckstead 2003), and the Han lineages compiled by Mishler and Simeone (2004), shows that between 1936 and 1960 twenty people from Eagle Village worked at Coal Creek and Woodchopper Creek (Table 1).

Table 1. The portion of the employee roster from Gold Placers, Inc. and Alluvial Gold, Inc. that reflects the names of Han people from Eagle Village and the years that they worked at the mines. The letter designations reflect the site worked; C for Coal Creek, W for Woodchopper Creek and B for both.

Name	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Adam, Daniel							C																		
Andrew, David														C											
Charley, Dolphas	C																								
David, Harry			C	C	C	C	C			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	W	W	C	C	C	C	W	W	W
Juneby, Isaac A.																									W
Juneby, Willie J.			C	C	C	C	C		W	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	W	W					W	W	W
Lyman, Elisha							C	W	W	C	C	C	C		C										
Malcolm, Jacob													B	W			W	W	C	C	C	C	W	W	
Malcolm, Mathew														W											
Malcolm, Peter N.													C												
Malcolm, Timothy																					C	C			
Paul, Albert							C			C	C														
Paul, Harry T.																					C		W	W	
Paul, Mrs. Susie (Louise)										C											C				
Paul, Susie									W	C	C	C	C		C	C	W	W	C	C	C	C	W	W	W
Silas, Charles (Charlie)							C				C	C	C	C	C						C	C			
Silas, Peter										C															
Stevens, Andy P.												C	C												
Stevens, Arthur									W																
Stevens, Silas A.													C												

Both Willie Juneby and Harry David began working for the mining operation in 1938 and are on the roster through 1942. At this point, it is uncertain if they were living at Snare Creek during that time or if they stayed at the main camp that was built to house the workers that originally built and then operated the dredge. That camp, referred to now as “Camp 1,” was established near Cheese Creek, a small tributary of Coal Creek roughly 6 ½ miles (~10.5 km) upstream from the confluence of Coal Creek and the Yukon River (Figure 4).

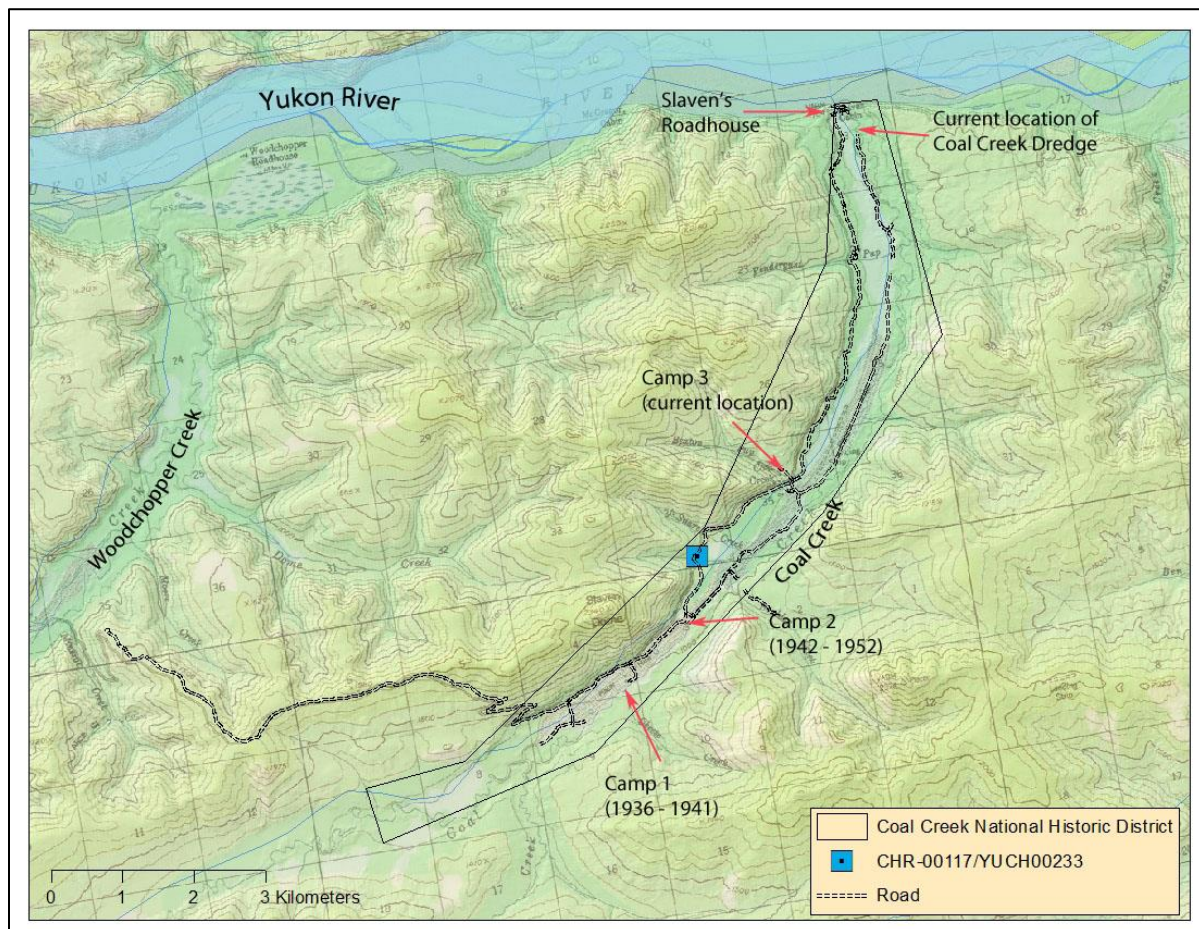


Figure 4. The Coal Creek Historic Mining District as part of Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

With particular foresight, the camp was constructed on skids so that as the dredge worked its way downstream the camp could be relocated. In 1942 a new site was established and buildings were moved a short distance north, to establish “Camp 2” (CHR-00141/YUCH00213) closer to where the dredge was currently working. However, with the onset of World War II, the Federal Government forced many gold mining operations to shut down, with Gold Placers, Inc. and the partnering Alluvial Gold, Inc. among them.

Neither Juneby nor David worked at the mine in 1943; however, in 1944 Juneby returned to work at Woodchopper Creek along with Susie Paul. Given the proximity of Snare Creek to the location of the new “Camp 2,” in addition to the fact that the two most prominent structures at

Snare Creek are attributed to Juneby and Paul, it seems likely that this is when the site was first inhabited. The next year, dredge operations resumed on Coal Creek, and Juneby and Paul, as well as Harry David, Elisha Lyman, Albert Paul (Susie's brother), Louise Paul (Susie's wife) and Peter Silas, all Han Athapaskans, are listed on the roster (Table 1). In 1952 and 1953 the Coal Creek dredge was idle while work resumed over on Woodchopper Creek¹⁶. Also during this time, the Coal Creek camp was moved again to establish the "Camp 3" (CHR-00102/YUCH00339) location on Beaton Pup, where it is currently found, and the Coal Creek dredge renewed operations (Baird 2004). Although both David¹⁷ and Paul stayed on for several more years, 1953 is the last year that Juneby is listed on the roster.

The camp at Coal Creek, complete with bunkhouses and a mess hall, provided summer room and board for the workers, but would largely shut down in the winter or be reduced to a skeleton crew. According to Willie Juneby's son Isaac, who lived at Snare Creek as a boy, in the summers the families living there could order groceries from the camp mess hall. Otherwise, they hunted, fished, and foraged for much of their food off the land. Additionally, they trapped and cut wood for wages during the winter (Isaac Juneby, personal communication 2009). In the winter of 1952/1953, the Eagle Village school, run by the Episcopal Church, was re-opened and the Juneby family seems to have left Snare Creek so that their children could attend (Mishler and Simeone 2004)¹⁸. It is likely that during that winter the cabin fire that consumed Feature 5 at the site occurred, although the precise date is not known.

This small Han Athapaskan enclave on Snare Creek shows how, rather than simply joining the mining camp, the Juneby family, along with the David and Paul families, re-established themselves in a separate location, one half mile (~.8km) downstream from the main mining camp¹⁹. Rather than wholly adopting the new culture around them, they continued their own way of life, supplementing what they traditionally acquired with goods purchased from the camp. They combined their pre-contact, traditional subsistence lifestyle with earning cash by cutting firewood and working in the mining operations. These multiple influences are likewise apparent in the archaeological assemblage from the Juneby cabin, as described next.

¹⁶ Dredging operations occurred on both Coal and Woodchopper creeks, but never at the same time. The two dredges were nearly identical and frequently parts from one would be used to facilitate operations of the other (Beckstead 2004).

¹⁷ Interestingly, Harry David worked at the mine longer than any other person from Eagle Village. Most of his children were born during that time, presumably at Snare Creek, and yet a third cabin was never located at the site, while the two known cabins seem solidly attributed to the Juneby and Paul families.

¹⁸ The Episcopal Church opened a "day school" in Eagle Village in 1905 which operated into the 1940s. Its closure may have influenced decisions on the part of the David, Paul, and Juneby families to move to Snare Creek.

¹⁹ This refers to the location of "Camp 2", not that of the current placement of "Camp 3" which lies roughly another mile (~1.6km) further downstream from Snare Creek.

The Archaeology of CHR-00117

Physical Environment

Situated deep within the Alaskan interior, the upper Yukon River region is characterized by a sub-arctic continental climate. Relatively low amounts of precipitation, and sustained temperatures at or below -30 degrees Fahrenheit, characterize the long dark winters. Summers are similarly dry but at times exhibit temperatures at or above 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The lower and mid-elevations, from river bank up to around 2000 feet, are characterized by mixed boreal forest consisting of black and white spruce, birch, poplar, aspen, alder, and willow. Multiple species of berries, grasses, and sedges fill the low bogs and line the dry slopes, while above tree-line are stretches of alpine tundra and barren rocky slopes. Much of the forested understory is covered with a thick layer of insulating moss that helps to maintain the frozen permafrost substrate. Mosquitos are abundant. Black and grizzly bears roam the country, as do moose, caribou, wolves, wolverine, small furbearers, and numerous species of birds. Arctic grayling and Dolly Varden inhabit the smaller tributaries, and three species of salmon (Chinook, Coho, and Chum) migrate in summer and early autumn up the Yukon River on their return to spawning streams. Also, as suggested above, gold can be found in many of the creek beds, particularly those that drain the Yukon-Tanana uplands which form the varied topography south of the Yukon River.

The site at Snare Creek — in essence a satellite settlement from Eagle Village — is now a part of the Coal Creek Historic Mining District (Figure 4) in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (YUCH. Coal Creek itself winds through a low, U-shaped valley bordered by roughly north-south trending ridgelines which reach elevations of up to 2000 feet (Figure 5).



Figure 5. View of the Coal Creek Valley looking south towards Slaven's Dome; note the burned black spruce and preponderance of fireweed, evidence of a large wildfire that burned through the area in 2004.

Snare Creek is a small tributary of Coal Creek that flows approximately one mile south-east from the northern flanks of Slaven's Dome (Orth 1971). Winding through mixed boreal forest, the stream flows through a culvert that is a part of the historic Alaska Road Commission (ARC) road which was constructed to serve the Gold Placers, Incorporated mining operation²⁰. On the north bank of the creek just east of the culvert is a low bench, characterized as a dry, flat, gently sloping landform in a thick patch of mixed foliage. It was in this spot that the families from Eagle Village lived for nearly a decade.

Archaeological Investigations

Previous Work

A limited amount of in-depth, archaeological work has been undertaken in the upper Yukon River region in the area of YUCH. In the Yukon Territory of Canada, limited testing was done around Dawson and Moosehide, with surface investigations having occurred at various locations including Forty Mile and the site of Fort Reliance. In the early-1990s Donald Clark conducted excavations at the site of Fort Reliance (Clark 1995). Beginning in the late-1990s, a series of investigations were carried out at Forty Mile (Hammer and Thomas 2006) and at Tro'Check, a traditional fish camp site near Dawson (Dobrowski and Hammer 2001). These investigations helped to expose the breadth and depth of indigenous use of these sites, beyond the more well-known historic occupations.

During the 1970s and 1980s, several cultural resource surveys were conducted in the upper Yukon River region of Alaska, largely in relation to the eventual formation of Yukon-Charley River National Preserve (Griffin and Chesmore 1988.) The first serious testing in this area, as it relates to Han prehistory, was done in 1976 at a site called Nibaaw Zhoh (EAG-00139) where two contact period semi-subterranean Han dwellings were fully excavated just downriver from Eagle Village (Andrews 1987). In 1992 NPS archeologists conducted limited test excavations at a site determined to be Charley's Village (CHR-00001), an historic habitation site attributed to the early-20th century Han leader, Chief Charley (Bland 1993). The most extensive excavations in the region have occurred near Calico Bluff just outside of the preserve. These efforts have been undertaken by crews associated with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and have unearthed historic and prehistoric materials which almost certainly include Han-related materials. One feature in particular, a cabin ruin, is attributed to Willie Juneby, although investigation of the site has not been fully reported (Sattler, personal communication, 2013). Numerous other historical investigations have taken place, principally along the Fortymile River, which is overseen by the Bureau of Land Management on the United States side of the border.

CHR-00117

As mentioned above, the small cluster of Han dwellings near Coal Creek is officially identified as the "Slaven's Dome Cabin" site (CHR-00117/YUCH00233). It consists of a series of documented

²⁰ Today this road connects the initial Coal Creek Camp site near Cheese Creek with Slaven's Roadhouse on the Yukon River. While it is open to the public it is little more than a trail in many places and is used primarily in an administrative manner by NPS staff.

archaeological features including one easily identified collapsing log cabin, one log cabin ruin foundation, and numerous associated smaller structures (or the remains thereof), including an outhouse, two caches or sheds, a dispersed midden along the creek bank, and various isolated artifacts scattered across the surface of the site.

The Coal Creek Historic Mining district (CHR-00089/YUCH00087) of Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, and in particular the dredging operation that was the primary industry there, have been extensively researched (Baird 2005, Beckstead 2003). However, the first official mention of the site at Snare Creek can be found in the documentation that resulted from an early National Park Service (NPS) Cultural Resources survey shortly after the establishment of the preserve. The original documentation focused on Feature 1, the largest and most obvious building at the site, which was purportedly occupied by the Paul family from Eagle Village (Berg and Daigle-Berg 1983). The site was briefly noted again during a preliminary assessment of the proposed historic district (Birkedal 1987). The site was first mapped and thoroughly described during a visit to generate documentation for the NPS List of Classified Structures (Devinney and Tidlow 1998). An NPS fire crew visited the site again in 2002. Finally, in 2003 a Determination of Eligibility to the National Historic Register was completed (Sweeney 2003), which compiled most of the information known about the site to that date.

In general, the site received mostly superficial notice. On each occasion basic notes or forms were recorded, and during most of the visits photographs were taken, again focusing primarily on the few, more obvious features that were in various states of disrepair. It was not until the work done by Pat Baird and a team of archaeologists in 2004, as part of a landscape mapping project of the entire historic district, that CHR-00117 was more thoroughly investigated. During this effort the number of recorded features was increased from four to nine. The subsequent landscape-based study produced the first holistic mapping and recording effort for the Coal Creek Historic Mining District (Baird 2005). That same year, Doug Beckstead, YUCH Historian, proposed a more in-depth investigation of the site. The proposed project, titled “Excavating and Documenting an Alaska Native Enclave Within an Industrial Mining Setting,” lay fallow until 2009 when funding was granted to undertake the project.

The project was carried out through a cooperative effort between archaeologists from the National Park Service (NPS), the University of Alaska Museum of the North (UAMN) Archaeology Department, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), all located in Fairbanks, Alaska. Additionally, the project was further developed to have an educational component through collaboration with the University of Alaska College of Natural Science and Mathematics’ Alaska Summer Research Academy (ASRA). This two week immersive “science camp” pairs primarily high school aged students with professionals in various fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The excavations during the 2009 and 2010 seasons were undertaken in conjunction with the ASRA project, thus including students in a field school-style setting. The methodological approach for the excavations was determined primarily by Robin Mills with the BLM, and Jim Whitney with UAMN. The role of the author, first with UAMN and then with NPS-Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, was as Lead Instructor, primarily responsible for the teaching portion of

the project with assistance from NPS archaeologist Dael Devenport. Also, in 2009 there were two additional archaeologists as part of the crew: Tim Williams, a seasonal NPS technician, and Jessica Peterson, then an undergraduate student with UAMN. The crew in 2010 was the same, minus Williams and Peterson.

Site Description by Feature

For reasons that will be described in greater detail below, we chose to focus our investigations primarily on Feature 5, the Juneby cabin. However, to place the cabin in a more complete context, it is best to describe the site as a whole. Many of the following descriptions consist primarily of brief summaries gleaned from more thorough descriptions which are the result of previous recording efforts. Figure 6 shows the placement of the various recorded features described next.

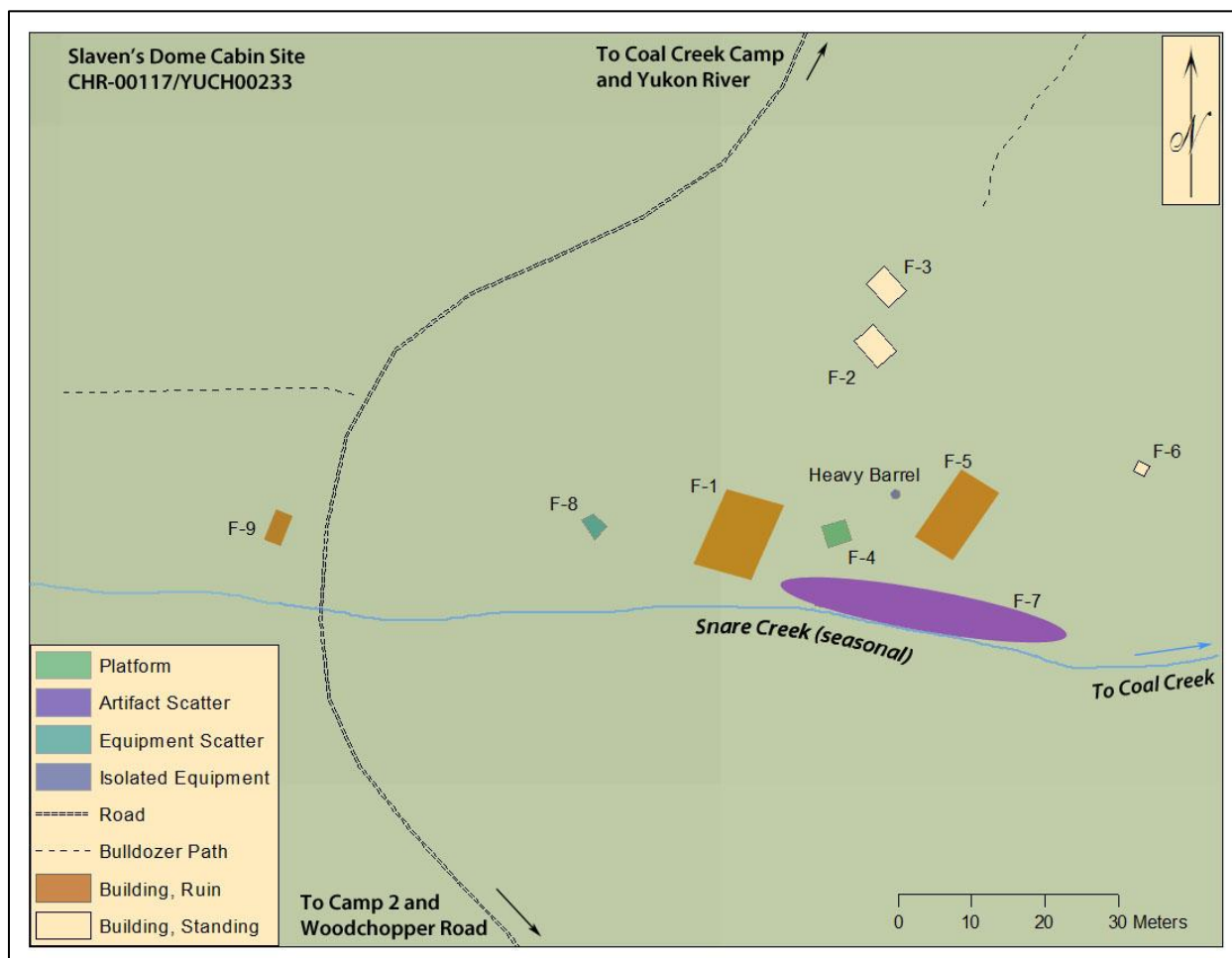


Figure 6. The Slaven's Dome Cabin site map (after Baird 2004).

Feature 1, a collapsing log cabin, remains the most visible building at the site, being both larger and generally more obvious than the others. Early records associate the cabin with Frank Slaven, although subsequent ethno-historical inquiry suggests that the cabin was originally constructed by the Paul family of Eagle Village (Isaac Juneby, personal communication 2009). The building was constructed of spruce logs with a plank and tarpaper roof, and measures approximately 20 by 25 feet.

A detailed recording effort from 2002 indicates that the floor was dug out at least two logs deep, suggesting a partial semi-subterranean effect²¹. Construction logs were hewn flat on their interior surfaces but otherwise left unpeeled. Corner joints consisted of saddle notches secured with spikes, and moss chinking was used as insulation between each course of logs. The door and window openings were framed with both vertical logs and rough sawn dimensional lumber. Remnants of at least one bed frame, a wooden table, a prefabricated plywood cupboard, and a small wooden plank box were noted inside the structure, although no detailed survey or inventory was conducted of the interior. Today, the building is in complete disrepair. The ridgepole has buckled inward beneath the collapsed roof and the log gable ends have fallen outward and lie rotting on the ground. The remnants of the walls are little more than three or four logs high.

Feature 2 is roughly 20 meters to the north-northeast from Feature 1, and is a mostly intact, but severely compromised, shed-like structure. It includes an odd mixture of rough sawn dimensional lumber, log, plank, plywood, and split spruce pole construction elements, and measures roughly 8 by 8 feet square. There is a scatter of miscellaneous tin cans and a single metal bucket located on the surface nearby. A hand drawn map (Figure 7), undated but noted as relating to discussions with Paul Gleason and Bert Paul, that was found in the site documentation file identifies this feature as belonging to Harry David (noted on this map as a cache". This would tentatively agree with a similar map (Figure 8) drawn by Isaac Juneby in 2003. That said, it is clearly not a habitation structure as it is far too small and unsecure to have served as a cabin. It more likely served as a cache or storage shed of some sort, as suggested by the Gleason and Paul map.

²¹ However, this may not be the result of intentional excavation by the builders so much as subsidence of the structure over time due to the melting of permafrost.

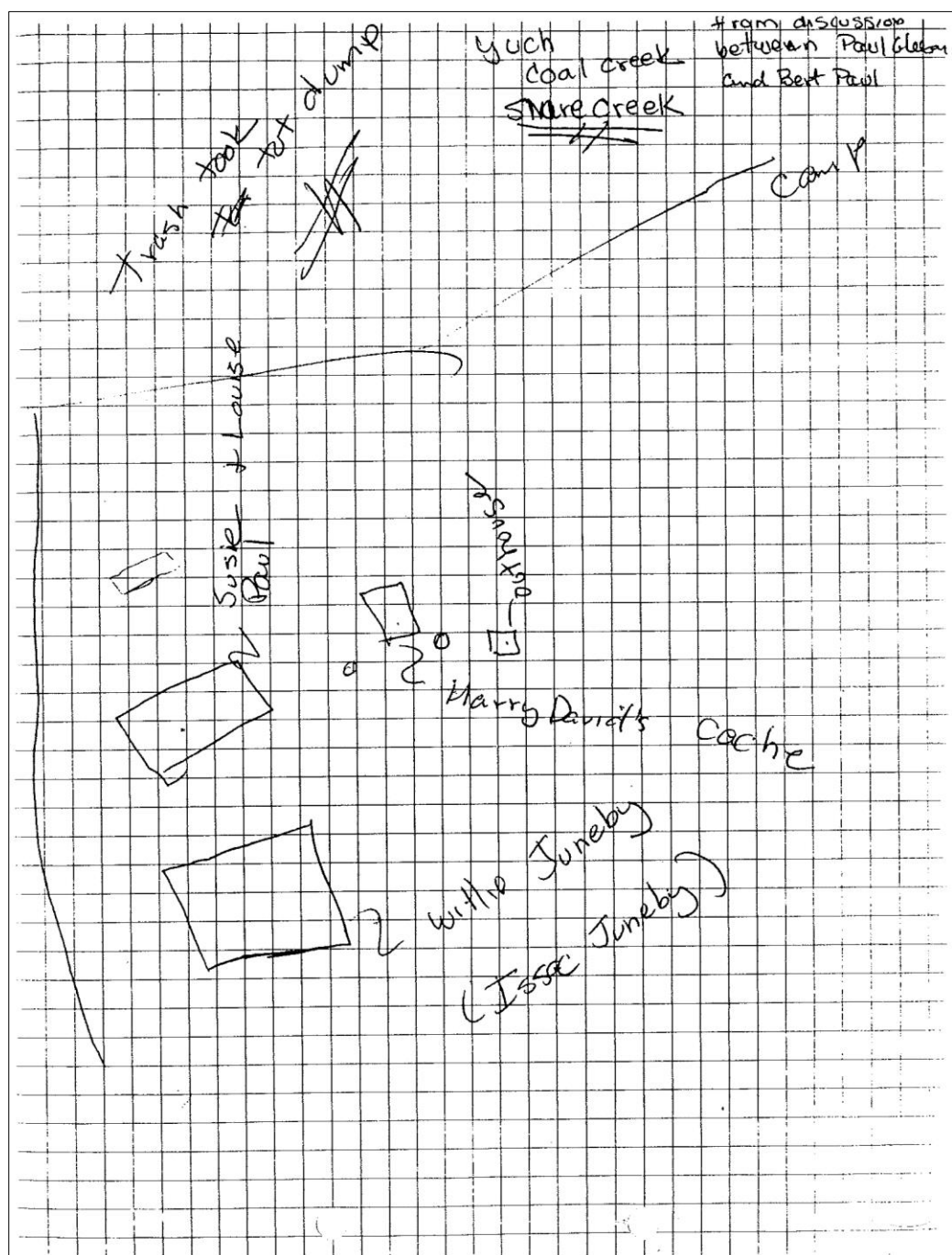


Figure 7. Early sketch map of the Slaven's Dome Cabin site. Unsigned and undated but noted as created from discussions between Paul Gleason and Bert Paul.

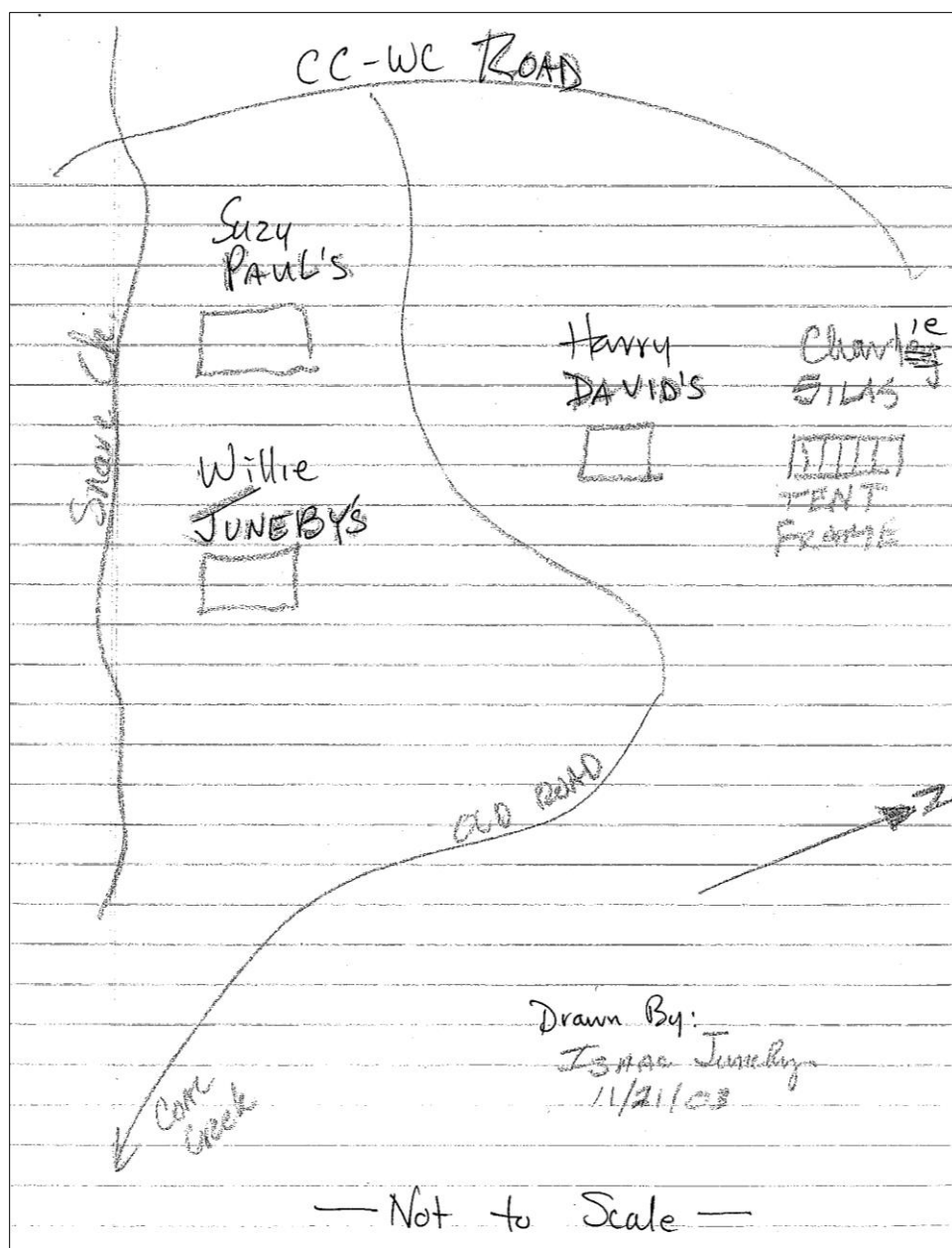


Figure 8. Another variation of a site sketch map, Isaac Juneby 2003.

Feature 3, roughly 5 meters to the north of Feature 2, is a two-seat outhouse. The frame was constructed with 2x4 dimensional lumber and was then sided with various materials, including plywood and rough cut planks. As one of the more unique structures at the site, it alludes to the nature of the site itself. In and of itself, the dual seat aspect makes this feature interesting; however, the particulars of the construction takes this attribute one step further in that one of the two seat positions was clearly designed to accommodate children as the seat surface is lower to provide ease of access for one of smaller stature (Figure 9). Over the years, this feature has attracted the most

attention of any at the site, and rightly so; the nearly undeniable inference to the presence of children strongly suggests that this was not a typical gold mining-specific structure.



Figure 9. Detail of the two seat outhouse.

Approximately 10 meters east of Feature 1 is a nondescript wooden platform loosely buried in leaf litter. Labeled Feature 4, there has been little to no speculation regarding a potential use for this feature. However, the sketch map by Isaac Juneby (Figure 8) might offer a possible interpretation. On his map there are four habitation features noted, the houses belonging to the Pauls (Feature 1), the Junebys (Feature 5) and the Davids (never located other than Feature 2), as well as a tent frame belonging to Charlie Silas (also never located). While it is unlikely that Feature 4 could be the remains of the David cabin, it could be a remnant of the Silas tent frame, and while it is not in the correct location according to the map it could certainly have been moved. Either way, this feature was not investigated in any depth and so any interpretation is speculative.

Roughly 25 meters to the east of Feature 1, lying overgrown and mostly hidden in the brush, Feature 5 was overlooked for years and only officially recorded in 1998 as a vague rectangular berm, within which was noted a stovepipe section and a burned cook stove (Devinney and Todlow 1998). Baird's crew, in 2004, undertook a more thorough recording effort of the site, and noted that this feature actually consisted of a relict cabin foundation, roughly 21 x 30 feet in size. They also note that the feature was largely overgrown and contained numerous small trees growing within the berm area. The site recording form associated with this effort identifies it as the Juneby Cabin, which correlates

with both of the hand drawn maps mentioned above. This feature was the primary focus of the 2009 and 2010 efforts described in this report, and as such will be described in much greater detail in section 3.2.4.

Feature 6 lies another 20 meters further east into the woods from Feature 5 and was not investigated in 2009 or 2010. According to Baird's 2004 work, the feature consists of a collapsed shed that contained a wash basin and was surrounded by kerosene cans. The description notes that the structure was comprised of scrap milled lumber and had enlisted the use of a leather boot upper and sole as hinges.

Feature 7 is the trash scatter, measuring approximately 4 x 15 meters, that runs along the north bank of Snare Creek. Feature 8 rests in the brush roughly 20 meters west of Feature 1 between the ruin and the road, and was also not investigated in 2009 or 2010. Referring again to the 2004 work by Baird, this feature is a possible workbench consisting of shelving, a galvanized counter, and sink. Additionally, a small sledge or sled was identified and documented at this location. And last, Feature 9 is noted by Baird as the remains of a possible cabin which was originally identified on the opposite side of the ARC road from the other described features at the site. In 2009, we attempted to relocate this feature but were unsuccessful. A large wildfire burned through the area in 2005²² making the identification of landmarks and other related features described in 2004 difficult at best.

Excavation Details

The 2009 season began by first identifying Feature 5, which consists of the burned and decomposed remains of a rectangular building that measured roughly 20 feet by 30 feet and was surrounded by a low earthen berm on three sides. The work area was cleared of vegetation²³ and an axis baseline was placed along both the north and east berms. Measuring from these, a 1 x 1 meter grid was established over the feature, aligned to the outline of the berm. Excavation units were chosen partly to expose wall segments and corners in an attempt to better understand the architecture of the structure. Excavation was done by trowel in 50 x 50 centimeter quads and in natural layers. Excavated soil was passed through ¼" mesh hardware cloth. Artifacts were collected by 50 centimeter quad and level.

Excavation progressed by first removing Layer 1, which consisted of 4 to 7 centimeters of thick organic duff and which was generally sterile of artifacts aside from a few random isolates. Layer 2 is described as the "burn layer" that is immediately associated with the fire which destroyed the structure; this was the main artifact bearing layer. The depth of this layer varied among the units, but generally it consisted of an 8 to 25 centimeter thick matrix of organic loess/silt with numerous charcoal inclusions and soil discolored by burning. Additionally, this layer included the surviving remnants of the cabin foundation, including sill logs, floor joists, and possible remnant floorboards.

²² In this area at least; thankfully the fire did not cross the road in this spot and so the remainder of the site was not affected.

²³ That is, brush and small trees were cleared away as needed. In the approximately 60 years since the abandonment of the site, numerous trees had grown up, many within the perimeter of the cabin foundation berm.

Layer 3 is the culturally sterile substrate upon which the foundation was originally constructed and consisted of dark reddish brown silt. In some test units the burning coloration extends down into this layer, suggesting a high intensity of the fire. During the 2009 effort, a total of six 1 x 1 meter units were established in the cabin (Figure 10) and two units (Units 7 and 8) were established in Feature 7, the trash scatter lining the north bank of Snare Creek.



Figure 10. Feature 5 overview at close of 2009 season. View is to the East.

In 2009, a nearly complete, folding, metal bedframe was uncovered within Layer 1 in the north-west corner of Feature 5 (Units 1 and 2). The frame itself was intact, although the wire mesh bedspring structure was in a state of disrepair (Figure 11). The object lay across the majority of the two units as well as some ways outside of the unit boundaries to the north and west of the feature. The frame was excavated in its entirety, in order to remove it to allow for continued excavation of the units. It was left on site, although a sample of the springs was collected. A burned and dilapidated wood cookstove that had settled into a circular depression was mapped in 2009 but left in place. A section of stove pipe found on the surface nearby was mapped and recorded, but was also left on site. Structural elements, mostly burned, were discovered in Units 1, 2, 5, and 6. Also in Unit 6, some sort of machine fabricated, metal screen was discovered and collected, although a positive identification as to use was never made (Figure 12).



Figure 11. Bedframe exposed in Units 1 and 2 in 2009. The object was removed so that excavation could proceed, but was left on-site.



Figure 12. Robin Mills and Allison Ward, one of the ASRA students, unearthing an unidentified sheet metal screen.

The 2010 season began where 2009 had left off. In wrapping up the previous year, while excavated units had been backfilled, corner nails were left in place to facilitate ease of reconstructing the excavation grid. Based on the results of testing in 2009 several new units (Units 9 through 13) were established at the beginning of the 2010 season. As these were completed, test excavations were expanded into additional units (Units 14 through 20 then 22, 23, and 25). Also, the fourth quadrant of Unit 3 (only three quadrants were excavated to sterility in 2009) was excavated. A third unit (Unit 21) was established in Feature 7, and four final units (24, 26, 27, and 28) were established to investigate an isolated find near Feature 5. Of the 25 excavation units established in Feature 5, the total number of quadrants (50x50 cm) that were fully excavated to sterility totaled 12.75 square meters (Figures 13 and 14). Additionally 2.5 square meters (in three units) were fully excavated to sterility in Feature 7 (Figure 15). Finally, two square meters (in four units) were fully excavated to sterility across an isolated set of four test units in order to fully exhume a complete canid skeleton (described further in section 3.4.3).



Figure 13. Feature 5 overview at the close of the 2010 season. View is to the South.

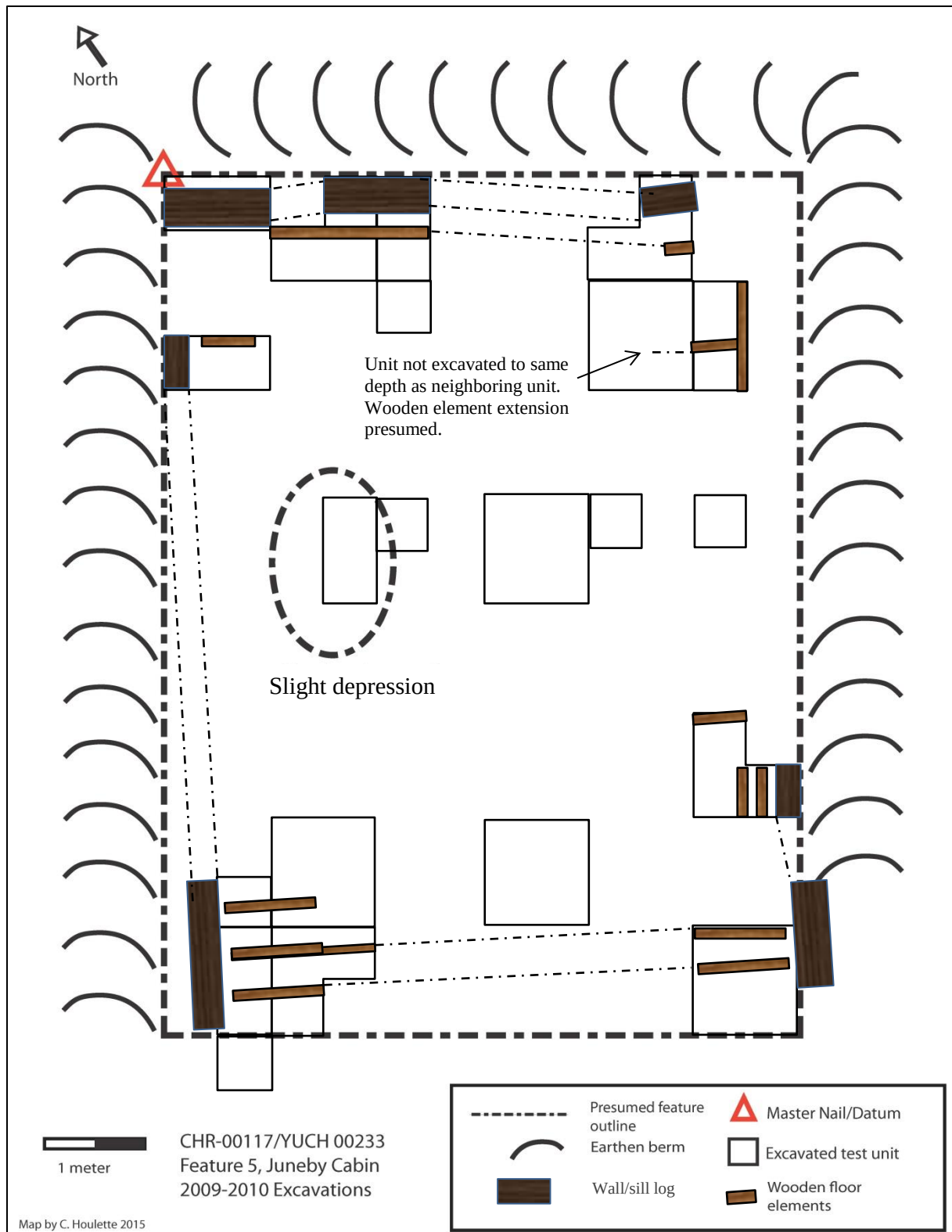


Figure14. Feature 5 excavation map. For more explicit details refer to Mills/Whitney field notes.

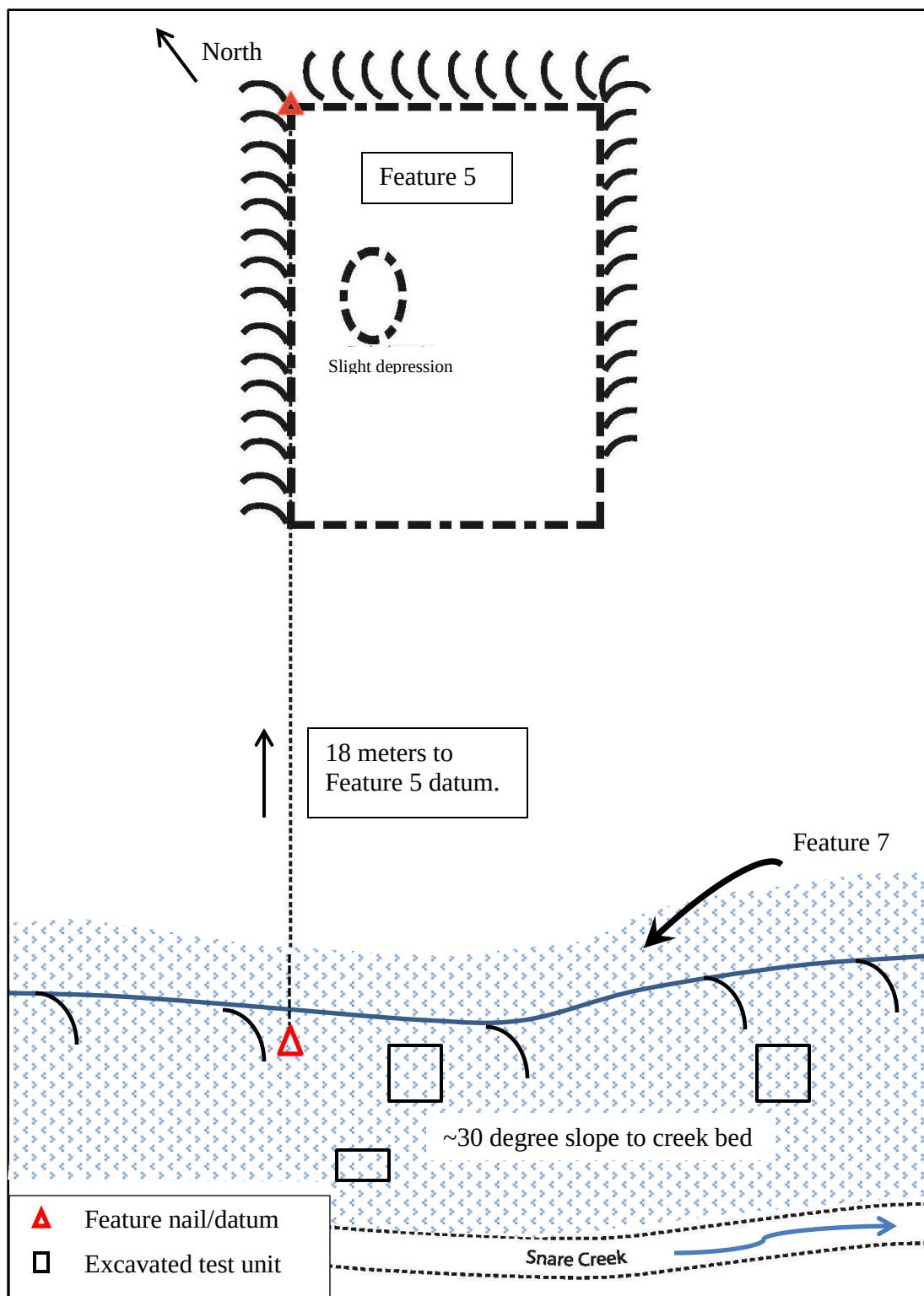


Figure 15. Feature 7 excavation map.

A small depression near the center of the building was assumed, correctly, to be a subterranean storage pit. The wood cookstove, as noted above, had settled into the depression and had to be removed before this feature could be further investigated (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Obvious depression and wood cookstove, prior to removal and excavation.

The pit had filled with water and debris over time. However, through clearing and gradual excavation (Unit 16) it was revealed that the pit had been rectangular and was lined with small wooden poles and flat planks (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Unit 16, storage pit excavated to frozen ground, note structural elements as described.

Many objects were recovered from the pit feature and, perhaps due to being submerged and/or protected from the general catastrophe of the building collapse, many were exceptionally well preserved (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Jim Whitney excavating the storage pit, Unit 16. Note the small toy plane that was discovered.

Many construction details were difficult to ascertain due to the fact that the cabin had burned down. Although numerous wooden structural elements were uncovered, most were charred and/or heavily burned. Many seemed to still be in place, and some included intact nails and spikes. From the limited testing inside the feature, we can state that, not surprisingly, the walls consisted of spruce logs, and the floor incorporated logs hewn flat on the upper surface to serve as floor joists. These joists ran perpendicular to the long axis of the building (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Heavily charred, but preserved floor joists and additional leveling element. Southwest corner of Feature 5 (Units 9, 14, 17, 18, and 19).

Extra sections of poles were found underneath some of the joists, in order to level them sufficiently to provide an even surface on which to lay the rough floorboards, which would have been nailed down perpendicular onto the joists (Figure 20). A corner notching style could not be determined because the remains were too degraded.



Figure 20. Possible floor board, Unit 19.

At the close of the 2010 season, all open excavation units were backfilled, all corner nails were retrieved, and the site was left in as natural a state as possible. There are currently no plans to return to the site for further investigation.

Collection and Curation Details

The collection methods were the same for both years. As objects were located they were assigned a field specimen (FS) number and recorded in a master field catalog. Collection of excavated items occurred by unit, quad, and level, and in many cases by lot or level bag. In some rare occasions, certain objects were cataloged with an FS number but were not collected, and were noted instead as having been “Left in Field” (LIF). Examples of these were the metal bed frame and dilapidated woodstove noted above from Feature 5, or a long, large strip of corroded metal, possibly a sled runner, discovered in Feature 7. All collected items were then brought back to the University of Alaska Museum of the North Archaeology Department for processing, final cataloging, and analysis.

Excavations in 2009 and 2010 resulted in a total count of 6129 individual objects and 13 artifact lots collected from the Snare Creek site. All collected items received a lab catalog number based on the year of excavation and were entered into a master catalog which reflects the entire assemblage. All objects were investigated and described to the level of material, object type, and where possible, manufacture, age, and use. During cataloging, objects were further identified and classified using the Sprague Function Code (Sprague 1981): an alpha-numeric system designed for the functional classification of 19th and 20th century historical assemblages. It has been used extensively for the cataloging of historical collections in the Alaskan Interior and provides a standard system for comparing assemblages throughout the region (Mills 1998, Sweeney 2000, Whitney 2009). The system consists of eight broad categories, each of which is further subdivided into a hierarchical structure in order to classify items as closely as possible to a specific use.

Preliminary analysis of the collection also involved attempting to identify characteristic marks or elements that would allow for a more detailed description of the objects. Efforts that were undertaken include: isolating and deciphering labels, makers’ marks, and embossing; comparing structural elements, material types and colors; and refitting. Where organic remains are concerned, objects were identified to type of material (bone, shell, etc.), and, in regards to food items, to type of food (egg shell, prune pit, etc.). Faunal remains were also identified and sorted to species where possible.

Finally, in regards to the curation of the collection, archaeological collections have the potential to include numerous, identical, and/or duplicative items, and sufficient space to house such collections is often at a premium. During the initial processing of the Snare Creek collection, the entire assemblage was cataloged and described following the procedures noted above. Through the course of this process certain objects were identified as duplicative or unnecessary to curate in perpetuity. Prior to being fully accessioned into the NPS-YUGA curation facility, the catalog records for these objects were adjusted and assigned, in effect, a post-field LIF status. This “culling” process entailed close inspection of all items in order to identify unnecessarily duplicative objects (i.e., numerous nails of the exact same size and make), unidentifiable items (i.e., chunks of melted metal or glass), or both (i.e., broken glass fragments unable to be identified to any structural level or matched with any identifiable elements).

These objects were then physically separated out, leaving a subset of 1860 individual items from Feature 5 and 461 items from Feature 7. This subset was then used to create a *separate*, secondary catalog which was reviewed and translated into the specific format designed for import into the NPS

Interior Collections Management System (ICMS) database for YUCH. Finally, the entire collection, (including the culled items), was transferred to the NPS Curation facility for YUCH. The secondary catalog, minus the culled items, was entered into the ICMS database, while the complete catalog, accounting for all collected items, remains with the site documentation in the YUCH archives.

Assemblage Details and Discussion

The Feature 5 assemblage

A total of 5272 individual specimens and 12 lots of material were collected from Feature 5, representing six of the eight Sprague Function code categories (Table 2). A cursory assessment (Figure 21) shows that 45% of the materials fall into the Unknown/Unclassified category. This is not particularly surprising given the evidence of a catastrophic burning event; e.g., charred structural elements, discolored soils, melted glass, and disfigured metal fragments. It was expected that many objects that had been either within or part of the building would be damaged beyond recognition. Neither is it surprising that the second most represented category is Architecture (31%), due to the fact that this was a building which collapsed onto itself and building materials such as window glass, nails, and other construction related hardware were expected to have at least partially survived the catastrophe. On the other hand, numerous other items were unharmed or at least only marginally damaged, and as the building did collapse onto itself, many were well preserved. Given that, Domestic items represent 14% of the assemblage, while Personal items account for 6%. Despite the low counts (3%) in the Commerce and Industry category, where mining-related objects would be classified, this initial assessment does not particularly set the assemblage apart from what one might expect to find in a mid-20th century cabin associated with a gold mining operation (Higgs and Sattler 2011, Saleeby 2011, Smith, Mills and Spude 2011, Whitney 2007). Closer scrutiny, however, shows this assemblage to be somewhat unique.

Table 2. Feature 5 assemblage counts by Sprague Function Code category.

Category	NISP	Lot Count
1-Personal	346	3
2-Domestic	741	4
3-Architecture	1620	1
4-Transport	32	
5-Commerce and Industry	146	1
8-Unknown/Unclassified	2387	3
Grand Total	5272	12

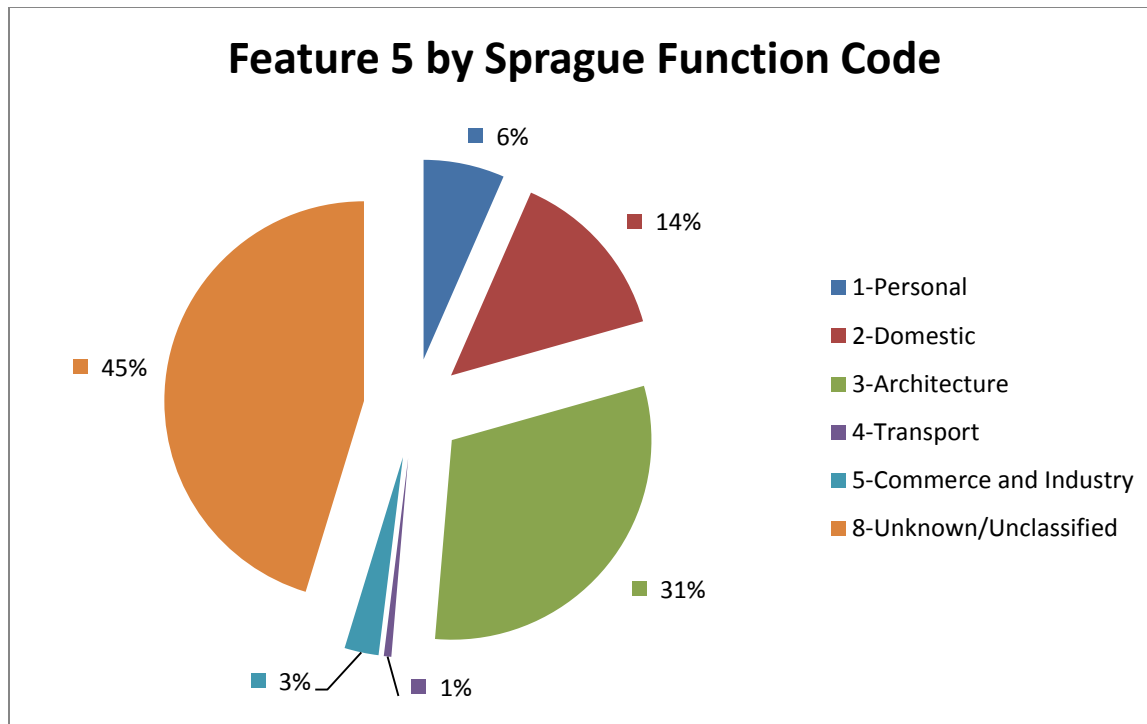


Figure 21. Feature 5 assemblage assigned to Sprague Function code classifications.

While there are objects “specifically related to male occupancy” such as “rivets, buttons [snaps], and suspender buckles associated with utilitarian work clothes” (Higgs and Sattler 2011), there are also numerous, more feminine oriented objects including a brooch clip, garter belt fragments, and other small, delicate items such as shell buttons and decorative buckles (Figure 22).

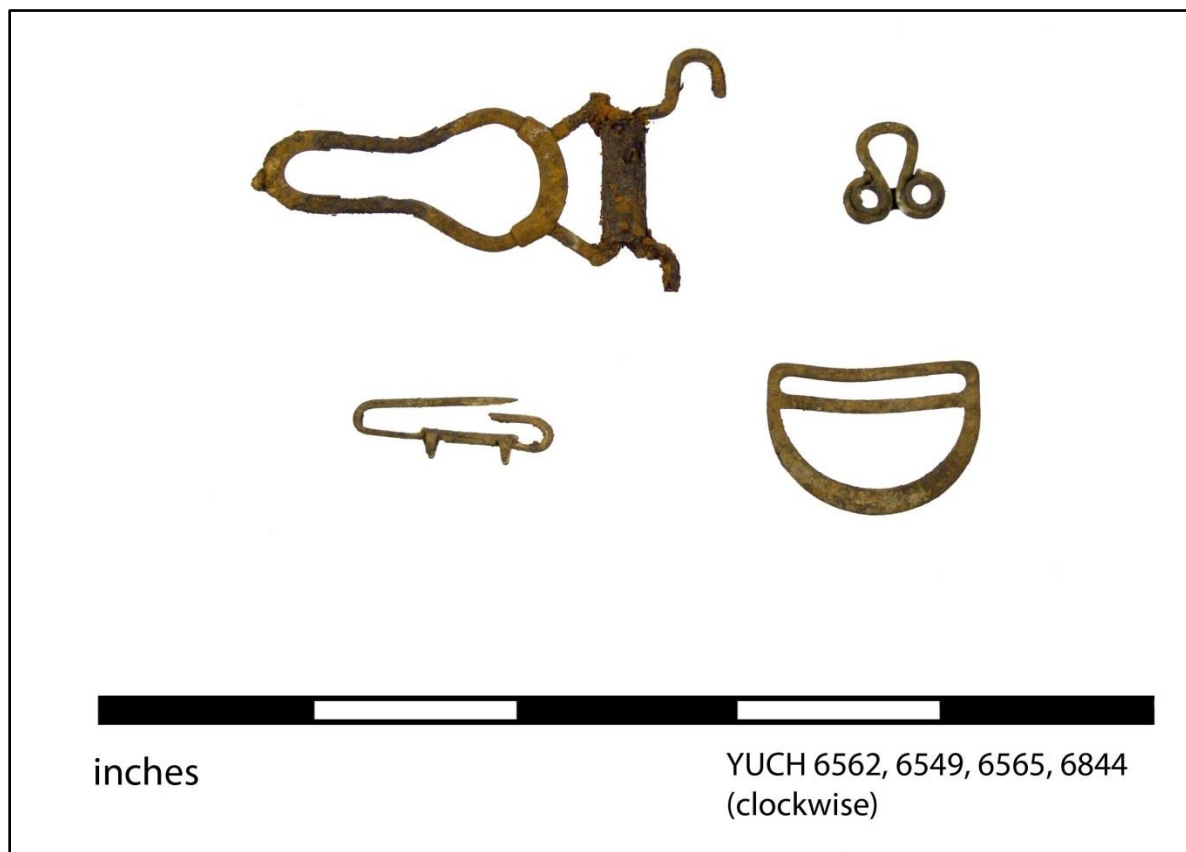


Figure 22. YUCH 6562, 6549, 6565, and 6844, delicate metal clothing related items including a garter clasp and brooch clip.

Likewise, while there are items such as a comb, razors (Figure 23), and a toothpaste tube, these are not overly gender specific. On the other hand, the majority of such Personal Grooming or Body Ritual (Category 1D) items are more feminine in character, including bobby pins, hair curlers, and a nail polish container (Table 3). Also, while the Indulgences category (1G) includes the near ubiquitous tobacco-related products that are found in most mining-related settings in Alaska, the bulk of the objects in this category from Feature 5 are candy and gum related (Table 4). While these are not wholly unexpected items, the same cannot be said for those representing the Pastimes and Recreation category (1H), such as the baby rattle fragment and the numerous toys, which clearly show evidence of children (Table 5). Objects classified as Domestic items (Category 2), especially in the Cleaning and Maintenance sub-category, include fragments of at least two Clorox bleach bottles, fragments of a table cloth, and a portion of a clothing iron (Figure 24), further suggesting a family setting (Table 6).

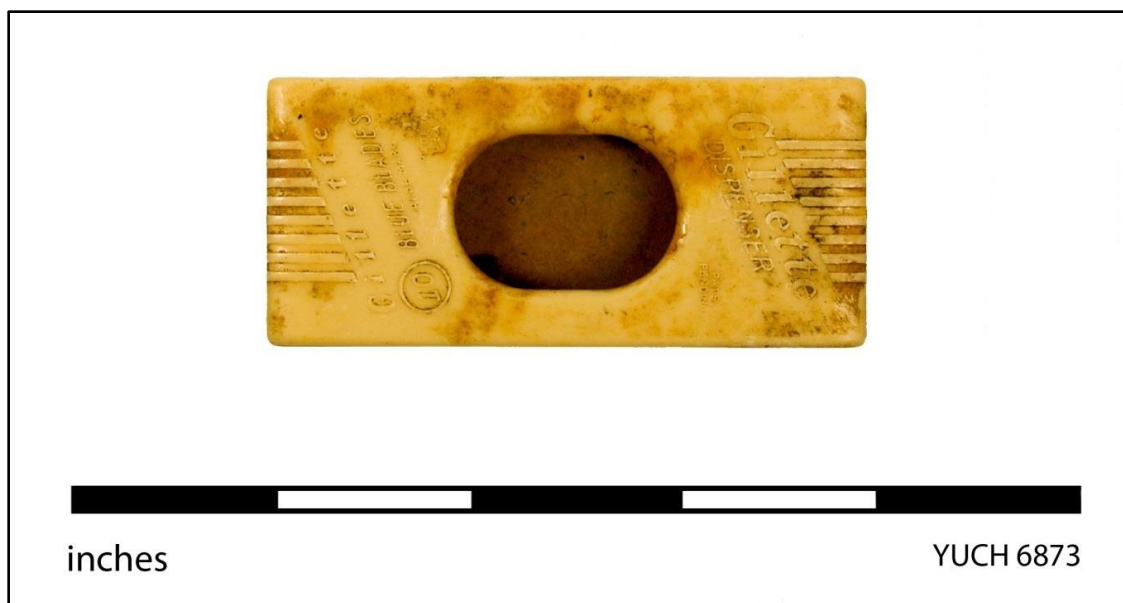


Figure 23. YUCH 6873, Gillette "Blue Blades" razorblade dispenser case.

Table 3. Category 1D, Body Ritual and Grooming.

Object	NISP
Bobby Pin	5
Comb	5
Curling Iron	6
Hair Care	1
Hair curler part	2
Hair Tonic Container	1
Jar Lid	1
Mirror	3
Nail Polish Container	1
Razor Blades	1
Toothpaste Tube	1
Tweezers	1
Grand Total	28

Table 4. Category 1G, Indulgences.

Object	NISP
Beer Can	1
Candy/Gum	22
Cigarette Package	18
Lighter Flint Case	1
Tobacco Tin	7
Tobacco Tin Lid/Candle	1
Grand Total	50

Table 5. Category 1H, Pastimes and Recreation.

Object	NISP
Baby Rattle fragment	1
Marble	10
Musical Instrument, Fragment	5
Pencil ferrule	1
Pencil Shaft	2
Poker Chip	17
Record album fragment	4
Scissors	1
Toy airplane	1
Toy Tea Set	1
Toy Tractor	1
Toy, bead	1
Toy, game	3
Toys	2
Yo-Yo fragment	3
Grand Total	53



Figure 24. YUCH 7101, Asbestos "Sad" iron, metal heat core.

Table 6. Category 2, Domestic items.

Category	NISP	Lot Count
2A - Furnishings	93	1
Furnishing Tacks	19	
Furniture and parts	4	
Furniture Springs	66	1
Table cloth	4	
2B - Housewares and Appliances	569	2
Battery	45	1
Beverage	3	
Big stirring/cooking spoon	3	
Book	10	
Bottle and can openers	1	
Bottle/jar seals	1	
Bowls	24	
Butter Container		1
Canning/ Mason jar	9	
Caps	16	
Ceramic fragment	26	
Closers (bottles & jars)	4	
Closers (bottles, jars)	1	
Cooking pots & pans	3	
Cups: ceramic, enamelware	3	
Evaporated milk can	5	
Food bones	140	

Food Container	14	
Food Shell	8	
House wares and Appliances	25	
Kitchen appliances	1	
Knife	1	
Knives	1	
Lantern parts	5	
Lid and melted glass	1	
Magazine	1	
Matches container	7	
Meat/Fish/Bacon container	3	
Milk Can	26	
Newspaper	3	
Pits/Seeds	94	
Plates	65	
Portable heating/cooking	1	
Pot Lid	1	
Spices bottle/can	3	
Spoon	5	
Turn key	6	
Turn key strip	3	
Wash Basin	1	
2C - Cleaning and Maintenance	79	1
Cleaning and Maintenance	1	
Clothes pin	5	

Glass fragment	55	
Glass fragment/ Clorox bottle	10	
Hanger, clothing	2	
Iron, clothing	1	
Safety pins	2	
Scrub Brush	1	
Sewing	2	1
Grand Total	741	4
2A - Furnishings	93	1
Furnishing Tacks	19	
Furniture and parts	4	

Finally, a brief note on the two least represented categories, Transport (Category 4) and Commerce and Industry (Category 5), which together represent only 4% of the overall assemblage. Items related to transportation are divided into only two subcategories: vehicles and maintenance. The first contains items interpreted to be associated with dog traction, while the second is exclusively made up of bailing wire (Table 7).

Table 7. Category 4, Transportation items.

Object	NISP
4A - Vehicles	2
Harness keep ring	1
Swivel snap or other clip	1
4B - Maintenance	27
Bailing Wire	25
Modified Bailing Wire	2
Grand Total	29

Items identified as Commerce and Industry are divided across four sub-categories (Table 8).

Table 8. Category 5, Commerce and Industry items.

Category	NISP	Lot Count
5B - Hunting	34	0
Lead shot for a hunting gun	1	0
Rifle cartridge, large caliber	13	0
Rifle cartridge, small caliber	20	0
5G - Mining	1	0
Penny weight	1	0
5H - Construction	8	0
Ax head	1	0
Tape Measure	2	0
Construction item, miscellaneous	1	0
Hand tool, file	3	0
Hand tool, plane	1	0
5J - Commercial Services	10	2
Mail order catalog	2	2
Barrel Fragments	8	0
Grand Total	53	2

Of special interest is the collection of cartridge casings, over half of which are .22 caliber. While this is not overly peculiar from an Alaskan setting of this time period, the selection also includes a suite of larger caliber casings used in several different rifles, including a shotgun (Table 9 and Figure 25).

Table 9. Detail of Category 5B2, Ammunition, collected from Feature 5.

Object	Description	NISP
Lead shot	Single-2mm diameter. Lead shot (from shot gun).	1
Rifle cartridge, large	\ SUPER SPEED\30 W.C.F.\, fire damaged no primer or lead bullet core head stamp	6
Rifle cartridge, large	Fired; \.30-06\ cartridge case /REM-UMC/.	1
Rifle cartridge, large	Fired cartridge case head stamped /REM-UMC/30-30/ nickel coated primer, neck crushed.	1
Rifle cartridge, large	\30 W.C.F.\SUPER SPEED\ head stamped cartridge case, fire damaged-no primer, bullets, powder.	1
Rifle cartridge, large	Fired \REM-UMC\ 300 SAV\; not burnt.	1
Rifle cartridge, large	.30 cal. Unfired bullets; bow-tailed with cannulure.	2
Rifle cartridge, large	Bullet jacket; Flat Base, scalloped point .308 dia. .924 long; lead melted out, no rifling marks.	1
Rifle cartridge, small	Fire damaged .22 cartridges-head stamp H - 1 case has apparent 2.2mm bird shot adhering to side.	13
Rifle cartridge, small	Fired .22 cartridge- head stamp U; rectangular firing pin impression.	1
Rifle cartridge, small	Head stamp partly visible but IND; fire damaged; .22 rim fire cartridge (not fired-exploded in fire).	1
Rifle cartridge, small	Unfired .22 cartridge case; fire damage; head stamp /H/.	1
Rifle cartridge, small	Unfired, no fire damage.22 Cartridge case ; head stamp /U/.	1
Rifle cartridge, small	.22 Rim-Fire cartridge case, \U\ Hi Speed\ head stamp no firing pin mark; fire damaged.	2
Rifle cartridge, small	Fragments of melted metal with .22 cartridge case melted in; unfired, head stamp is unreadable.	1



Figure 25. YUCH 7214, 7216, and 7215, cartridge casings.

The remaining items in this category include objects in accord with the oral history from the site, specifically in regard to woodcutting (i.e., an axe head and hand files), and the only object recovered that seems to have any relationship with gold mining area: a penny weight (Figure 26).



Figure 26. YUCH 6707, 10 DWT, pennyweight.

The Feature 7 assemblage

In addition to the materials collected from Feature 5 there is a separate assemblage that was recovered from the units excavated in Feature 7, a nearby trash midden which spills over into Snare Creek. In many cases, trash scatters are prominent and important features for the interpretation of historical sites (Smith, Mills and Spude 2011, Whitney 2007). However, only limited testing occurred in this feature: a total of 2.5 square meters were excavated from an area measuring approximately 60 square meters. Knowing that there were multiple households present at Snare Creek, and assuming that all of them utilized the midden, as no other trash disposal feature was present at the site, we further assume that it is not possible to isolate materials discovered there solely associated with the occupation of Feature 5. It is proposed that the surest way of making such a connection would be to identify objects from both assemblages that “refit,” thus providing a direct link between the features. During the sorting and preliminary analysis of the whole collection, therefore, an effort to find such a connection was undertaken, but to no avail. That said, numerous refits of materials were discovered *within* each excavated feature’s assemblage. As a result, it was determined to assess the Feature 7 assemblage separately.

In total, 460 objects were excavated. Overall, the assemblage is similar to that from Feature 5: the same six Sprague Function categories are represented (Table 10). Similarly, artifacts from the Unknown/Unclassifiable category are the most numerous, followed by the Domestic and Personal Items categories. The Commerce and Industry category is the least represented (Figure 27). Despite the similarities between the two assemblages, there was one prominent difference. In discussions about life at Snare Creek, Isaac Juneby noted how there was no alcohol in their home (personal communication 2009). While there was a single Budweiser beer can collected from Feature 5, it was found in Level 1, above the burn layer, and therefore determined to be not directly associated with the original occupation. The same is not true for Feature 7, where 30 individual bottle fragments were collected which, once reconstructed, represent a minimum of six distinct liquor bottles (such as Figures 28 - 29). The fact may remain that no alcohol was consumed in Feature 5, the Juneby home, as we could find no direct correlation between the two features. Thus, the bottles could very well have been deposited by visitors or other families at the site, or even at some time after the Juneby family had moved back to Eagle Village.

Table 10. Feature 7 Assemblage counts by Sprague Function Code category.

Category	NISP	Lot Count
1-Personal	83	
2-Domestic	309	1
3-Architecture	135	
4-Transport	3	
5-Commerce and Industry	4	
8-Unknown/Unclassified	315	
Grand Total	849	1

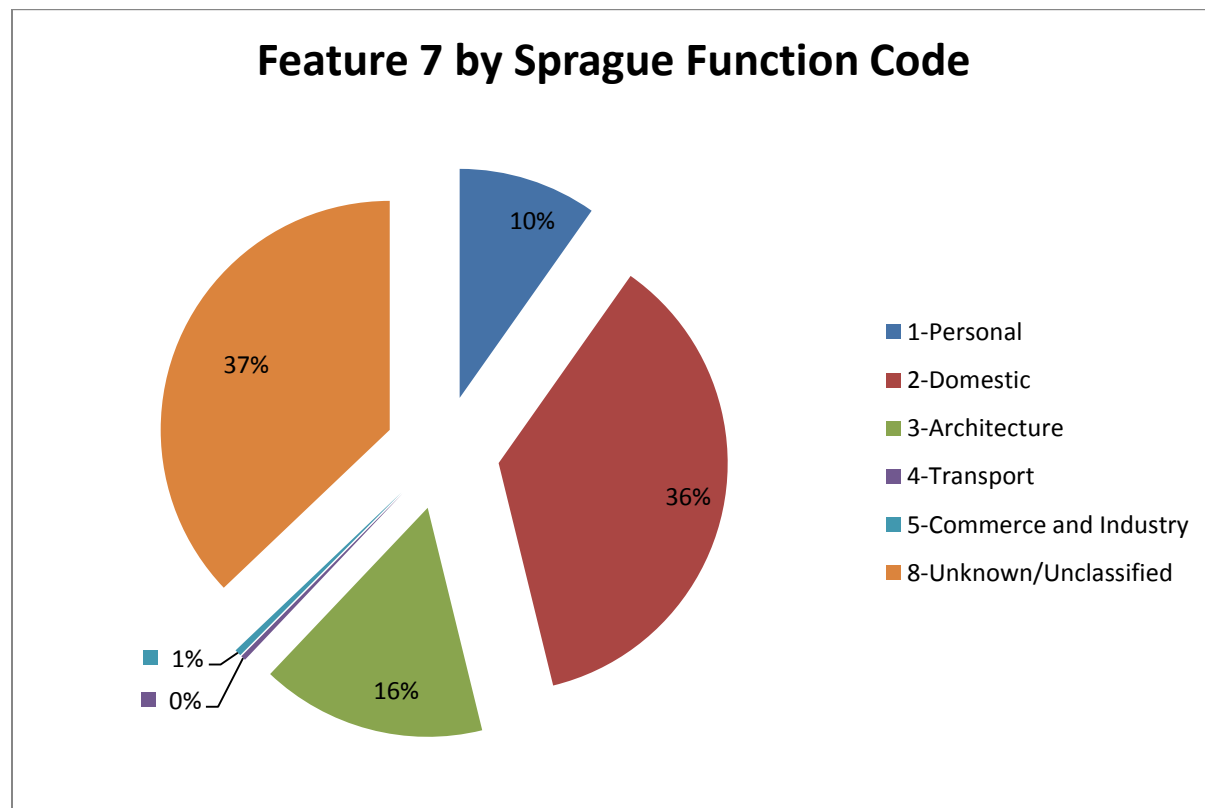


Figure 27. Feature 7 assemblage assigned to Sprague Function code classifications.



Figure 28. YUCH 7482, Virgin Islands Distillery “Cruzan” rum bottle.



Figure 29. YUCH 7478, beer bottle.

Isolated Units 24, 26-28

One further part of the collection deserves mention. Late in the 2010 season a mostly intact canid cranium was discovered approximately mid-way between Features 1 and 5. One complete and three partial 1 x 1 meter square units were laid out and tied into the Feature 5 grid. Subsequent excavation revealed an intact canid skeleton (*Canis familiaris*), minus the humerus and radius of the left foreleg (Figure 30).



Figure 30. Canid skeleton in situ excavated in Units 24, 26, 27, and 28. Scale arrow points north.

A few nails, a fragment of a tongue and groove board, and an unidentifiable piece of fragmented plastic were also recovered. The skull was partially fragmented and was missing pieces from the rear portion of it, leading to the hypothesis that it may have been shot (Devenport 2010). There was no obvious evidence that the dog was intentionally interred. It is uncertain how, or if the dog might be associated with the occupation of Feature 5, but based on the stratigraphic level of deposition, it is likely to be more recent in age. Regardless, as mentioned above, elements of dog-related paraphernalia were recovered from Feature 5, along with a D-ring from Feature 7 that is probably from a dog collar or harness, further attesting to the presence of dogs as a part of life at the site (Figure 31).



Figure 31. YUCH 7633 and 6777, dog related items.

Discussion

While it may be true that more analyses could result in further classification of the numerous fragmentary items, in the end we know that this was a cabin built from wood, metal, and glass, which was inhabited by people. It is also known that these people enlisted the use of ceramic dishes, glass bottles, and animal meat on the bone as a part of their lifestyle, as shown in the relatively high count of Domestic items. Having a precise count of the number of these objects that were intact and present in the cabin prior to the fire does not tell us much, at least in terms of the functional use of this feature. One exception may well be the bone fragments, in regards to identification to a finer taxonomic level and specific skeletal elements, which could inform us further on the types of animals the inhabitants were targeting for food resources from the land, and potentially how they were processing these resources. Another related exception might be commercial food containers, which if quantified more specifically could give a more complete view of food resource acquisition, use, and preference.

On the one hand, looking at the data at the coarsest level shows that this was primarily a habitation site which was located in the vicinity of an industrial mining operation, as opposed to a site specifically and directly associated with said operation. On the other hand, in regards to any inquiries regarding the daily lives of the people that lived at the site, identifiable objects collected from Feature 5 which can be functionally identified as Household/Domestic or Personal items are more telling. As

an example, being a mid-20th Century domestic log cabin, one might expect to find the ubiquitous enamel kitchen ware that is so often found at mining-related sites in Alaska (Saleeby 2011). However, from Feature 5 we recovered instead fragments of colorful ceramics, including willow ware china (Figure 32). Similarly, numerous objects associated with a Coleman type kerosene lantern (a staple of cabin life even today) contrast with parts of batteries and light bulbs which suggest a closer relationship with the industrial nature of the mining camp. There were no roads into the upper Yukon River region until construction of the Taylor Highway connected Eagle to Tok in the early 1950s. Even so, that road ends in Eagle, with a spur to Eagle Village, and Snare Creek is still many additional miles downriver. Any exotic items found at the cabin would almost certainly have had to be brought in via steamboat, and likely at considerable cost²⁴. While there were steamship supplied mercantile shops in Eagle at that time, this might merely provide access to such exotic goods, but not necessarily the direct means to acquire them.

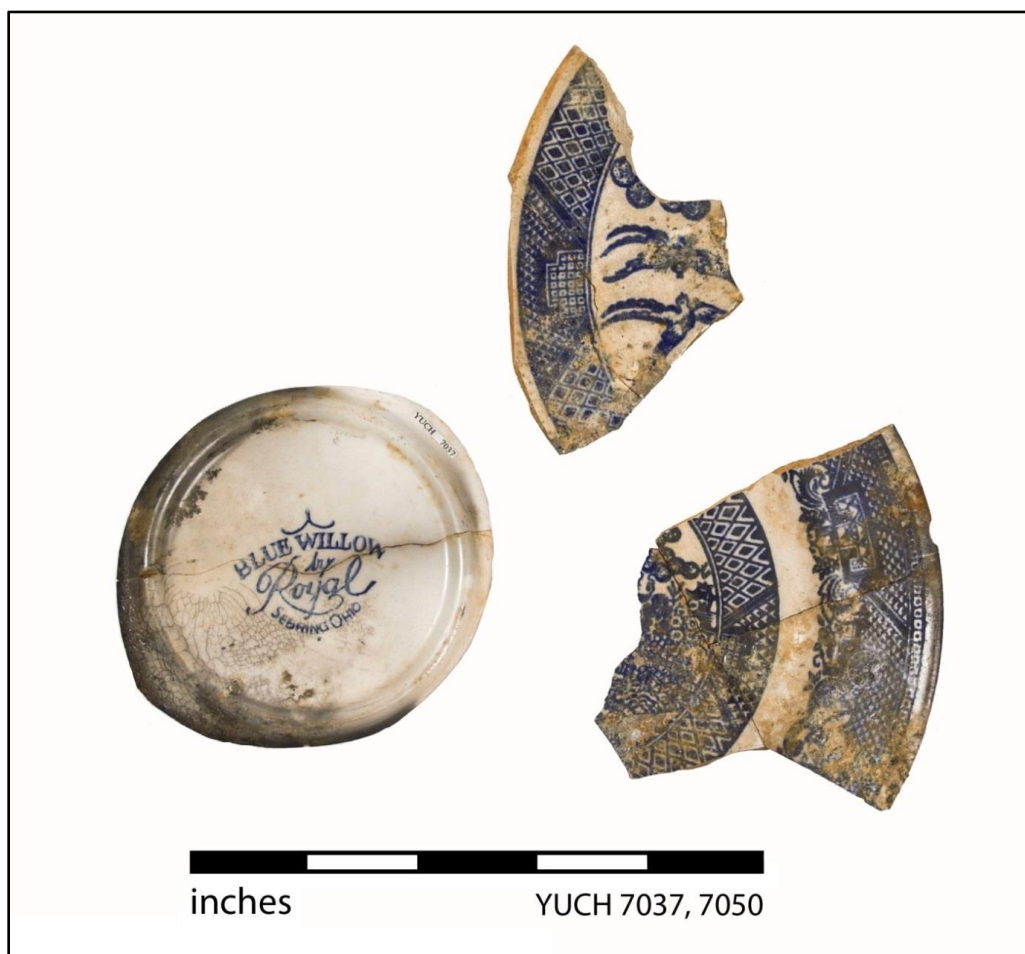


Figure 32. YUCH 7037 and 7050, "Blue Willow" china plate fragments.

²⁴ There was a small airstrip that supported the operations on Woodchopper Creek, but it was seldom used and the one on Coal Creek was not built until the 1960s (Beckstead 2000).

A major hypothesis of this entire inquiry, i.e., analyzing the assemblage of materials excavated from Slaven's Dome Cabin site, was that we would see a convergence of different lifestyles based on the material culture found there, Native Alaskan on the one hand, and Euro-american on the other. In this regards, we do find such a convergence ... with some interesting inconsistencies. This is where the value of the hierarchical nature of the Sprague Code classification system becomes apparent. The presence of some objects in the cabin clearly demonstrates evidence of outside influence on the lives of the Juneby family, while others seem more traditional. The presence of a broach clip (Category 1C, Adornment), bobby pins, a nail polish container (Category 1D, Body Ritual and Grooming), not to mention marbles (Figure 33),

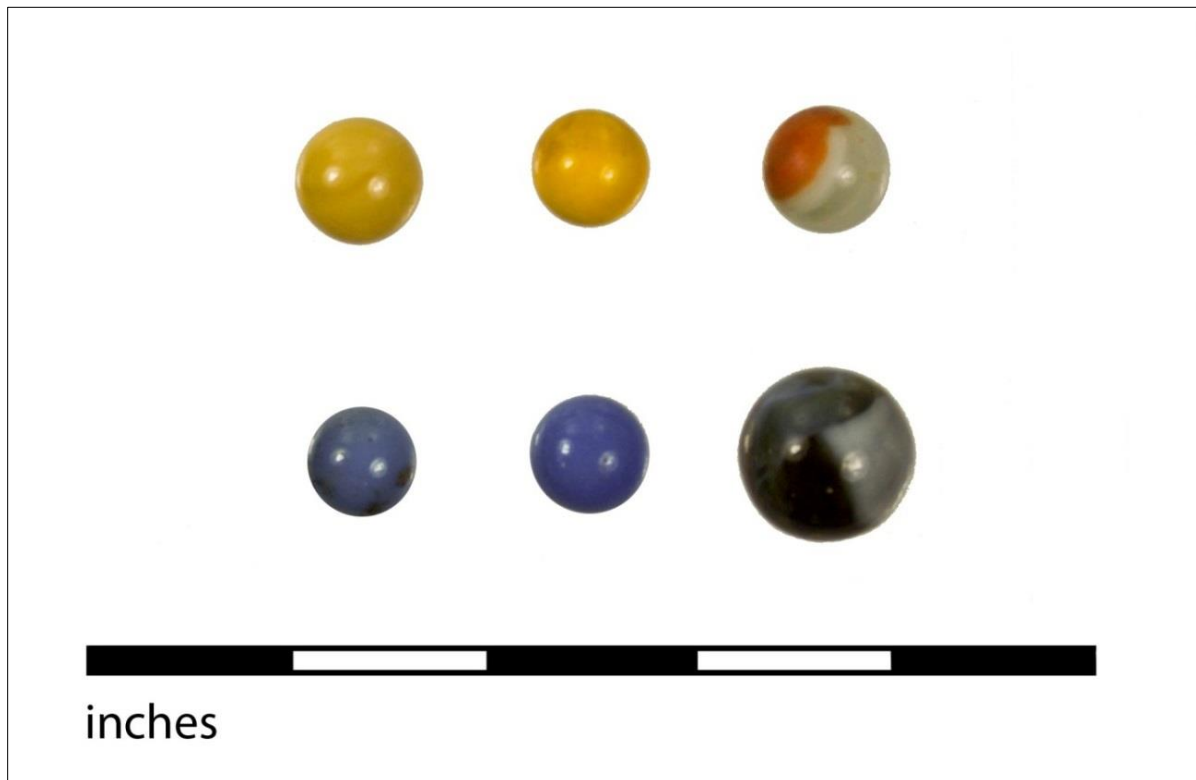


Figure 33. YUCH 6589, 6925, 6923, 6921, and 6926 (x2) (clockwise from top left) marbles.

a toy tea set, and a baby rattle (Category 1H, Pastimes and Recreation) place this assemblage outside of the realm of what one might expect to find in the ruins of a mid-20th Century miner's cabin (Higgs and Sattler 2011, Saleeby 2011). However, neither does it seem suggestive of an upper Yukon River Han Athapaskan habitation site. Moose and caribou bone fragments, as well as guitar fragments (Figure 34)



Figure 34. YUCH 6587 and 6588, guitar tuning plates.

and the presence of beading materials, in particular an intact decorative element (Figure 35),



Figure 35. YUCH 6576, beaded decoration (three views of same object, right to left; detail of separate pieces, complete piece, reverse of same.)

suggest a more traditional continuation of Han culture. Yet, it seems to be one quite different from that suggested by the garters and hair curlers (e.g., Figure 36)



Figure 36. YUCH 6872, Plastic hair curler component.

or prunes and hazelnuts which seem much more exotic. So, too, with the record albums, numerous games and toys (e.g., Figures 37 and 38), and the clothing iron noted above; objects that seem more fitting for a modern city such as Fairbanks, than a cabin on the edge of a solitary gold mine some 150 remote miles distant.



Figure 37. YUCH 6915, "Mickey's Air Mail" rubber toy plane.



Figure 38. YUCH 6906, child's safety scissors.

Conversely, despite the location and the evidence of influence that can almost certainly be tied directly to the mining operation, few items were recovered that represented any sort of commercial or industrial enterprise. The only object with any seeming association with gold mining in any way is the single penny weight noted above (Figure 26).

There are no tools present other than the double bit axe head and a series of metal files (Figures 39 and 40), alluding to the wood cutting efforts described in oral histories of the site. Alternately, while oral history suggests that trapping was a common winter activity, this is not immediately represented in the archaeological assemblage, aside, perhaps from a single bear canine (Figure 41). It is clear that the Juneby family was influenced by their involvement with the mining operation. Yet, that influence manifests more as a desire to connect with the greater capitalist world beyond the wilds of the Upper Yukon River region and less about the search for gold.



Figure 39. YUCH 6709, double bit axe head.



Figure 40. YUCH 7222, 7223, and 7224, metal files.



Figure 41. YUCH 7415, bear canine.

Conclusions

In and of itself, the Snare Creek site is interesting for several reasons. As one part of the larger Coal Creek Historic District, it contributes to the story of a long-term industrial placer gold mine that operated for nearly five decades, deep in the remote Interior of Alaska. As a part of that story, the site serves as an intriguing variant on life in and around such a mining operation, as it housed three Alaska Native families that lived near, but peripheral to, the main camp. Finally, the site represents a departure from the course taken by the majority of the Han Athapaskans — the regional indigenous population — during this time. On both sides of the International border the Han had come to settle in two distinct communities: Moosehide in the Yukon Territory of Canada, and Eagle Village in the Alaska Territory of the United States²⁵. In the case of Snare Creek, three families from Eagle Village chose to relocate and form a new home that was neither directly connected to the Village, nor wholly related to the Gold Placers, Inc. mining camp. Rather, the archaeological evidence recovered from the Juneby cabin suggests the combined influences of a traditional subsistence lifestyle on the one hand, and a relationship with the mining enterprise which had direct links to the outside world and many of the modern conveniences offered there, on the other.

²⁵ While it is certainly true that many of the Han dispersed further and left the area altogether, that is a different aspect of the story that has already been addressed more thoroughly by Mishler and Simeone (2004).

The archaeological work carried out at Snare Creek, in particular that which focused on Feature 5, the Juneby Cabin, helps to tell this story. By analyzing the material culture left behind at the site, we can gain a better perspective on what day-to-day life was like in that time and place. On the other hand, the historical documents and oral histories that are available inform the timeline of events which can help us to understand how the Junebys and other native families came to settle there, as summarized below.

By the mid-1930s, Eagle City and its associated amenities, such as the Episcopal Church, a roadhouse, a school, and several mercantile stores²⁶, had been waning for years and had very little to offer in the way of employment to Alaska Natives (Scott 1997). Eagle Village, inhabited predominately by Han Athapaskans, was even further isolated. Many Eagle Village residents had taken up wage labor positions at Heine Miller's woodcutting camp near the confluence of the Yukon and the Tatonduk (Sheep) rivers. Willie Juneby first learned to drive a bulldozer while working at Miller's Camp, where he lived in a tent during the summer and returned to the village for the winter. Sometime in 1935, he returned to Miller's camp with his new wife Louise Silas, and later that year their first child was born (Mishler and Simeone 2004).

Sometime in 1937 or 1938, Juneby was hired by Dale Patty to work at a new gold mine downriver (Beckstead 2000). The personnel roster for Gold Placers, Inc. shows that he worked at Coal Creek from 1938 through 1942. The dredge on Coal Creek did not operate in 1943 and only a small crew, which did not include Juneby, worked at Woodchopper Creek. Then in 1944 Juneby is back on the roster, this time working at Woodchopper (Beckstead 2003). In 1942, the main support camp for the mine was relocated to what would be called "Camp 2" (Baird 2004, Beckstead 2003), and it was probably during this time that Juneby moved with his family to Snare Creek. The next year Juneby was working in Coal Creek again and would do so through 1951. In 1952 and 1953 he worked in Woodchopper; then, at some point during this timeframe, the cabin burned down and the family moved back to Eagle Village.

Without the employment offered by the mines at Coal and Woodchopper creeks, life may very well have been quite different for the Juneby family, as such the assemblage of materials recovered from Feature 5 at Snare Creek suggests an interesting juxtaposition of lifestyles. Certain types of kitchen wares, food remains, furniture elements, and toys all speak to the fact that this was a domestic, family residence, as opposed to a "typical" miner's cabin that was inhabited by solitary or small numbers of Euroamerican bachelor males. Yet many of those same objects suggest that life at Snare Creek was neither representative of a typical Han Athapaskan lifestyle, such as one might find in Eagle Village or Moosehide. None of this is intended to force an interpretation of what Han life in the late-1940s should have been, nor how it might be represented in an archaeological assemblage. Rather, this study attempts to highlight some of the more striking contrasts within the assemblage and to further examine how these particular families embraced objects and materials from multiple influences.

²⁶ At least this was the state of the town in 1938. By the mid-1940s the school and roadhouse had closed and the population of the town had dropped to 60 residents. (Scott 1997)

Clearly, the Juneby family was drawn to what the greater outside world had to offer, given the numerous modern conveniences found in the cabin. Yet there was also clear evidence of their desire for a continuity of a traditional lifestyle. During an interview with NPS historian Chris Allan, Isaac Juneby (2009a) noted how living at Snare Creek allowed him and his family to maintain the use of their native language. Later in life Isaac would become a great proponent of the perpetuation of the Han language through his role at the University of Alaska's Alaska Native Language Center²⁷.

If we want to know more about the lifestyle at Snare Creek, conversations with the surviving members of the families that lived there may provide information which could further inform or direct additional archaeological analysis. Through limited oral history we know, to some degree, how they lived (Paul 1993, Juneby 2009a), and we even have a hand drawn map detailing the physical layout of the interior of the cabin when it was inhabited (Figure 42; Juneby 2009b). We know, again from personal accounts, that the Juneby family both hunted and gathered food resources from the surrounding landscape, yet also acquired additional resources from the nearby mining camp. That being said, the cabin burned over 60 years ago and today's informants were only children in the 1940s and 1950s; they might not readily recall details of daily life. Their parents, and even some of their siblings, have passed on. Archaeology has the potential to fill these gaps.

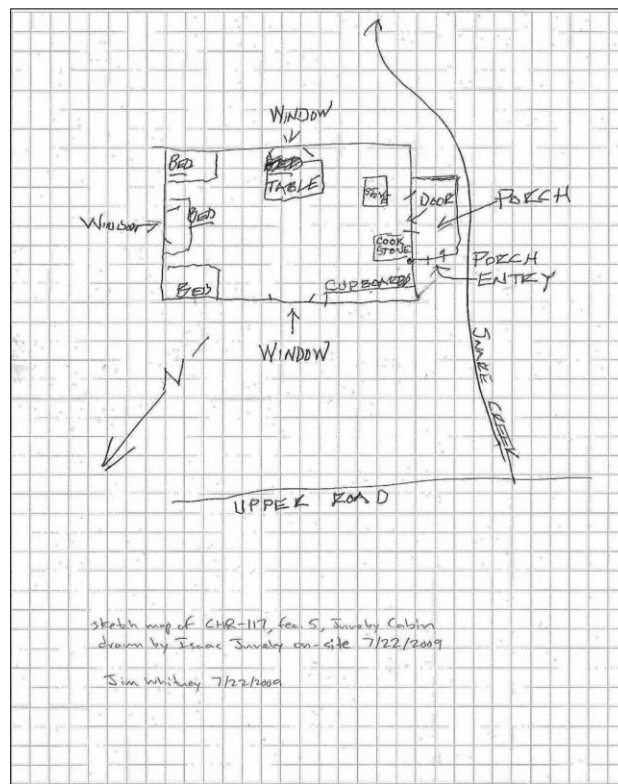


Figure 42. Sketch map by Isaac Juneby of the interior layout of the Feature 5 cabin. Created on-site from memory in 2009.

²⁷ Some of his work can be found here; <http://www.uaf.edu/anla/collections/search/result.xml?contributor=794>

By examining the assemblage of materials recovered from the site, we can piece together a picture that may not so easily come to mind to those that once lived there. Through limited oral history and certain select research we have a new picture of some of the later history of the Han people that have lived in this region for thousands of years. Similarly, the history of gold mining in the area has been fairly well documented. Curiously, however, there are very few occasions where the interaction between these two worlds has been discussed in any detail. The Juneby cabin exemplifies a particular merging of these two cultural trajectories, as shown in this study, and of the types of objects and resources that the family valued and used in their everyday lives. By choosing to settle at Snare Creek, relocating themselves far from the familiarity of Eagle Village, these families chose a different path, at least temporarily. By embracing the changes available to them through direct interaction with the mining operation they embraced elements of the modern, outside world. In doing so, they made a new kind of life for themselves, and in the words of Isaac Juneby (2009a) "...it was a very good life [...] it was such a good life that in even looking back, you could see the good of it..."

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Appendix A

The Alaska Summer Research Academy Students



Figure 43. The 2009 ASRA students, left to right; Julia (Jules) Covell, Emma Westphal, Catherine (Caty) Smith, Allison Ward, Matthew Bishop, and Alaric Cady.

Of note; Emma Westphal is from Eagle and spent several seasons after 2009 working as an Interpretive Ranger at the Yukon-Charley Rivers Visitor Center in Eagle. Allison Ward is from Fairbanks and spent the next two years working in the Museum of the North Archaeology Department, where she greatly assisted in the processing, cataloging and researching of these collections.



Figure 44. The 2010 ASRA crew, including students, from left to right; Dael Devenport (NPS), Aly Zeiger, Sam Schmidt, Samantha (Sam) Haight, Ross Silverman, Deenaalee Hodgdon. Chris Houlette (NPS), Jim Whitney (UAMN), Rachel Moyers.

Of Note; Aly Zeiger went on to pursue a more in depth education in Archaeology and the next summer attended a college level field school. Rachel Moyers was hired first as an intern and then as a seasonal employee of the NPS in the Fairbanks office. In 2012, she was a student assistant with another ASRA archaeology project in Delta Junction.

The Department of the Interior protects and manages the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its special responsibilities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.

NPS 191/134757, October 2016

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U.S. Department of the Interior



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