

THE EXCAVATIONS

The Archaeology of Deadwood's Chinatown: A Prologue

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The discovery of gold in the northern Black Hills affirmed frontier capitalist ambitions and swelled the population of many loosely organized mining camps in the region. As one historian described it, "A buoyant, wistful, little trail beaten hard by the booted feet of placer miners ran its crooked way to the first rich diggings in Deadwood Gulch."¹ This prospect of "rich diggings" lured prospectors and motivated entrepreneurs whose wanderlust instigated the establishment of the gulch town known as Deadwood, Dakota Territory, in 1876. Located in the north-central area of the Black Hills, the developing mining town was a significant hub directly accessed from the four cardinal directions: Bismarck, from the north; Fort Pierre, from the east; Sidney, Nebraska, from the south; and westerly from Cheyenne, Wyoming. By 1880 Deadwood was a cosmopolitan town supporting various immigrant populations. Among these ethnic groups were the Chinese, a visible and integral part of frontier society and culture in Deadwood.

The City of Deadwood and its Historic Preservation Office have promoted and funded archaeological investigations for the past three years (2001–2003), providing an irreplaceable opportunity to assign significantly relevant ethnic data on the Chinese experience to Deadwood's National Landmark history. Excavations of early Deadwood's Chinatown district, conducted under the direction of the State Archaeological Research Center, a program of the South Dakota State Historical Society, have resulted in the discovery of pristine deposits

1. Estelline Bennett, *Old Deadwood Days* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 3.

and given local residents and tourists from around the world a broader perspective on the cultural diversity of this historic city. As archaeologist Ivor Noël Hume has noted, "Education is our best spokesman . . . and hope of gaining popular support for the study and protection of historical sites."²

The ongoing project was supported with crews made up of archaeologists holding various degrees, avocational archaeologists with several years of field experience, degree-seeking students, and numerous volunteers, all of whom who share a common interest and goal of gaining further knowledge and preserving our fading past. The archaeological investigations and subsequent analysis are providing a significant view into the daily lives of a largely forgotten culture inhabiting a western frontier mining town in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Numerous features (those remains that cannot be recovered as objects) and thousands of artifacts, as well as evidence of several building and demolition episodes of inhabited structures, areas of specific activities that took place within the interior and exterior of the structures, and major events on the landscape are all being revealed.

To understand fully an unfamiliar culture such as that of the Chinese on the frontier, archaeologists must investigate all aspects of a society—its origins, customs, economy, politics, and religion—encompassing all behavior associated with that culture. From this vantage point, archaeologists examine the contextual remains of artifacts and features, integrating this observed phenomena and patterning of a society into an accurate site interpretation. The artifacts and data recovered from Deadwood's Chinatown will provide excellent educational exhibits for state and local museums, research opportunities for future scholars interested in this important piece of South Dakota history, and a new case study of ethnicity on the western frontier.

Following the gold rush, the Chinese arriving in the vigorous mining town of Deadwood almost certainly came seeking economic prosperity, as did the Euro-Americans and other ethnic populations who streamed into the Black Hills in the 1870s.³ The freight line of the

2. Hume, "Historical Archaeology: Who Needs It?" *Historical Archaeology* 7 (1973): 9-10.

3. Daniel D. Liestman, "The Chinese in the Black Hills: 1876-1932" (master's thesis, Midwestern State University, 1985), p. 23.



Visitors at Deadwood Chinatown excavation site, 2002

Cheyenne and Black Hills Stage and Express Routes, operating between Cheyenne, Wyoming, and the Black Hills in late 1875, recorded the transportation of consumer imports headed for the Chinese population in the Hills.⁴ The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* recorded an exodus of Chinese leaving on the Cheyenne stage heading for the Black Hills in January 1876.⁵ Newspaper headlines confirm an almost continual flow of Chinese into the Hills beginning in 1877: “Chinese in Cheyenne, heading for Black Hills”; “Two dozen arrive in town from Evanston, Wyoming”; “Chinese 50 of them on way to Deadwood”; and “Four Chinese listed as arriving in Deadwood.”⁶

The area commonly known as Chinatown was established between a section referred to as the Badlands, adjacent to the city of Deadwood

4. Grant K. Anderson, “Deadwood’s Chinatown,” in *Chinese on the American Frontier*, ed. Arif Dirlik and Malcolm Yeung (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 415–16.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

6. *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, 16 May, 14 Apr., 13 Aug. 1877, 19 July 1878.

proper, and a small suburb called Elizabethtown. A Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the city of Deadwood for 1885 indicates an area referred to as Chinatown on lower Main Street and identifies Chinese businesses, as do early city directories.⁷ It is not until 1891 that a San-

7. The Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd., of New York sent employees to numerous cities to compose plan view maps outlining each building in the city. Deadwood was mapped in 1885, 1891, 1897, 1903, 1909, 1915, 1923, and 1948. The purpose was to sell fire insurance to various residences and businesses. These maps are significant in an archaeologist's planning of field methodology, potential remains, and historic research.



View of Deadwood with Whitewood Creek and lower Main Street (right), 1876

born Insurance map identifies many Chinese residences and businesses on lower Main Street. Preliminary research, however, suggests that the Chinese established themselves in the lower Main Street location as early as 1877; it is expected that continuing research may establish the boundaries of Deadwood's Chinatown.

Collective living enforced cultural integrity and unity among the Chinese. The insularity of Chinatown served to extend kinship through familiar patterns and customs and may also have provided a defense against what seemed an unfriendly environment. While such segregation appears to be self imposed, further research is needed to determine if the Chinese pattern of life was circumscribed by economic and political stresses of the town of Deadwood, western sentiment, or a hierarchical regime dictated by their own countrymen.

Early newspaper accounts indicate that the Chinese population endured local discrimination and anti-Chinese sentiment due to racial, social, and cultural differences. The objection to the Chinese way of life was basically economic. The cry of "Chinese must go" was the result of a perception that Chinese labor was a threat to white laborers, but the real threat to Deadwood may have centered on the Chinese economy.⁸ Much of the earned income of Chinese laborers was sent home to their families in China or used to pay their obliged contract, rather than spent in supporting the dominant Euro-American economy.⁹ Much of the traditional tableware and staples of rice, tea, and medicinal herbs were imported to local Chinese-owned emporiums and purchased by the native Chinese populations. Locally grown agricultural products, including vegetable gardens and pig production in Chinatown, supplemented their traditional diet. These native consumer services further separated the Chinese community from the local frontier economy. The Deadwood economy made its gains from the Chinese population through local residential and business taxes

8. Liestman, "The Chinese," p. 39.

9. Liping Zhu maintains that there were two types of emigrants from China: those who came as free men and bound laborers who came on credit. The bound laborers were either indentured or contract workers repaying their passage from earned wages or labor for a certain period after arriving in the United States. Zhu, *A Chinaman's Chance: The Chinese on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado 1997), p. 22.

and court fines and fees raised from transgressions against city or county ordinances.

While the archaeological research is preliminary, it appears that culturally ingrained economic and political factors dictated the Chinese experience in Deadwood. Chinese social organizations, such as the Chinese Six Companies, later called the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of America (CCBAA), represented and protected the general welfare of the Chinese in America, thus keeping tight control on maintenance of Chinese traditional culture.¹⁰ Subsidiary organizations also played a regulatory role in the daily lives of the Chinese. For example, *tongs* were a mutual-aid society, most likely accommodating "vice" interests such as gambling, opium trade, and prostitution.¹¹ The long arm of the CCBAA and other associations that reached the Black Hills and Deadwood area appear to have used general segregation to enforce traditional social institutions and customs and possibly their own economic and political standing.

One major element of the frontier Chinese life that distinguished it from life in the home country was the lack of a family social organization, which would have provided a settling influence. In Deadwood, as elsewhere, the Chinese immigrants were predominantly male and mobile, largely moving toward economic advancement. The influence and pressures of various laws or acts limiting, suspending, or preventing Chinese immigration helped to maintain this status quo.¹²

10. Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 45-50.

11. Liestman, "The Chinese," pp. 70-71.

12. The United States maintained an open immigration policy up to 1875. The Exclusion Act of 1882 was designed to limit the number of Chinese allowed into the United States through a ten-year suspension of Chinese immigration and withholding of naturalization. The act did allow for the immigration American-born Chinese or those who had American spouses. It was extended for another ten years in 1892. The Scott Act of 1888 permitted Chinese officials, teachers, students, merchants, and travelers to enter the United States. The Geary Act, passed in 1892, required all Chinese currently residing in the United States to apply for a certificate of residency. Restrictive acts in 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1924 prevented Chinese from entering the United States and expelled some of those already established. South Dakota law prohibited miscegenation, or mixed marriages, under penalty of voiding the marriage, fines, and/or imprisonment.

Securing an accurate account of the Chinese population in Deadwood is difficult. The census is not entirely reliable as a source of population figures because some Chinese did not validate their existence for fear of retribution stemming from various treaties, federal acts, and discrimination. Daniel Liestman, using the 1880 federal census, states that there were 221 Chinese in Lawrence County.¹³ Joe Sulentic compiled population figures for Dakota Territory counties, indicating 220 Chinese in Lawrence County in 1880, 152 in 1890, and 120 in 1900.¹⁴ Local literature, however, suggests a larger population. For example, Watson Parker estimates that the number of Chinese in the Black Hills may have been as high as four hundred around the turn of the century, while the *Black Hills Times* reported that “the population of Chinese in Deadwood had reached 500 at one time.”¹⁵

The majority of new arrivals operated their own private businesses, minimizing the competition with non-Asians, which would likely have helped to avoid competition and conflict. They filled a profitable economic niche by offering necessary domestic services to a predominately male frontier population. There were no restrictions for the Chinese on ownership of property.¹⁶ The most influential of this population were most likely store owners, such as Wong Fee Lee, who owned the Wing Tsue Emporium, and Hi Kee, who owned the Hi Kee Company, providing customary wares and articles necessary to maintain traditional ways of life, customs, and ceremonies. Many Chinese set up laundry facilities, a familiar scene along Chinatown’s business district and Deadwood proper. Above and beyond the customary charge, it is legendary that the laundrymen recovered snippets of gold dust left in the miners’ dirty garments and wash water. Chinese-owned restaurants profited from the appetites of the miners, serving

13. Liestman, “The Chinese,” p. 32.

14. Sulentic, “Deadwood Gulch: The Last Chinatown,” in *Chinese on the American Frontier*, p. 459.

15. Watson Parker, *Deadwood: The Golden Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 144; Sulentic, “Deadwood Gulch,” p. 433.

16. Deed indexes indicate sixteen transactions in which Chinese purchased property prior to 1890. See Liestman, “The Chinese,” p. 59.

WING TSUE,
Dealer in
Chinese Groceries
and Provisions. 
Chinaware and Japanese Goods,
Silk Handkerchiefs, Silks and Dry Goods of all
Kinds. Fireworks, Chinese Curios,
Novelties, Etc., Etc.
I also carry a full line of Chinese Medicines Chinese shoes
and Clothing. Americans as well as Chinese are invited to call
and inspect my goods.
Lower Main Street, Deadwood, S. D.

Advertisement for Wing Tsue Emporium, 1898

Asian dishes as well as the common frontier fare. Chinese owned or operated seven restaurants in Deadwood in 1893.¹⁷

Some Chinese men arriving in Deadwood chose to work as miners. Local claim documents confirm that Chinese could purchase mining claims.¹⁸ Early newspaper accounts corroborate the common mining pursuit of reworking tailings from previous mining activities, producing profit for their labor. As a result of changing mining methods around 1880, independent prospectors found themselves working for corporate-owned mines, and the Chinese were not welcomed by the non-Asian miners, who considered them a menace to their employment. Other Chinese worked as house servants, cooks, servants in bathhouses, sawyers, cowboys, barbers, gardeners, physicians and druggists, prostitutes, and opium-den proprietors.¹⁹

17. *Ibid.*, p. 104; *Black Hills Residence and Business Directory* (Deadwood, S.Dak.: Enterprise Printing, 1889), p. 86.

18. Liestman, "The Chinese," p. 33.

19. Several early newspaper accounts mention Chinese physicians. Liestman names Pin Hoy, Isaid, Fing Kee, Et Sing, and Soo-Hoo-Beck. Liestman, "The Chinese," pp. 53-57.

With the modernization of Deadwood over the past five decades, much of what has been recognized as “Chinatown” has been destroyed. Currently, this area includes commercial businesses with several lots that have been graveled parking areas for approximately the last fifty years. The subsurfaces of these graveled properties retain undisturbed deposits associated with Chinese occupation, first identified in the spring of 2001 when a building, formerly home to a popular eating establishment known as Louie’s Chicken Hut, was razed. Archaeologists exhumed a culturally rich deposit of artifacts and features related to the Chinese occupations in early Deadwood.

The State Archaeological Research Center (SARC) conducted an evaluation at this location (39LA300-CL) in May 2001.²⁰ The SARC identified significant artifact deposits and intact features, including building foundations and at least one privy. This combination of intact data sets made the site particularly significant. With these, and the probability of additional features, the site was determined eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places as a contribution to the National Historic Landmark of Deadwood. Through the cooperative effort of the City of Deadwood, the local historic preservation commission, and the SARC, archaeological investigations on three lots over a twelve-week period in 2001 were approved.²¹

At the request of the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission and the City of Deadwood, archaeological investigations resumed in 2002 and continued in 2003 in several lots adjacent to the 2001 summer fieldwork. Through preliminary research of historic documents within the area of Chinatown and the integrity of deposits recovered from the investigations in 2001, it was apparent that these ad-

20. The site was assigned the Smithsonian trinomial number of 39LA3000-CL, CT. The number 39 represents South Dakota alphabetically in the list of states; LA is the abbreviation for Lawrence County; 3000 is the number assigned to the City of Deadwood as a National Historic Landmark; CL and CT are abbreviations assigned to the contributing areas of the site.

21. Research into Chinese cultural traditions and behavior and proper identification of artifacts from the site have been conducted with attention to ethnocentric bias, the persistence of Chinese frontier lore, and ethical considerations. More study is required to achieve appropriate archaeological and cultural synthesis.



Excavation site with floor of burned structure (center) and privy (front center), 2001

joining lots could, as well, contribute significant archaeological data to the ethnic population being studied.

Historical documents being used to research and recognize the Chinese experience in Deadwood include early photographs of the local landscape, buildings, and inhabitants; historical maps of the area; local literature; deed, tax, and census records; various years of the city directory; and early newspaper accounts. Maps and photographs were studied and used to anticipate the location of subsurface architectural remains. Principal among the historic documents are the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps designating buildings that once stood within the project areas and indicating construction attributes such as building dimensions, materials used in exterior construction, number of stories, number of interior partitions, and the functional use and address number of the building and lot. The data was later used to delineate

areas of possible/probable structural wall remnants remaining from previous standing structures during the excavation phase.

Information on seven Sanborn maps between the years of 1891 through 1948 allows identification of at least twenty different buildings with interior and exterior structural design variations within the area examined in 2001 and 2002. Six additional structures that pre-date the 1891 map have been examined in an early photograph of the Chinatown area from about 1877. The complexity of the site areas became apparent shortly into the commencement of excavations.

Field methodology consisted of excavation units dug by standard archaeological techniques: stratigraphic levels of one-by-one-meter test units, the collection of artifacts by provenance and feature, and the recovery of soil from features, such as pits and privies, to be floated and water-screened for fine data recovery. Data was preserved on field forms and plan view/profile maps and digital and conventional photographs.

To assess effectively the presence and significance of subsurface cultural deposits, heavy equipment was used in a limited, systematic approach during the initial fieldwork phase to remove gravel overburden. Controlled trench excavations also effected a more rapid access to the intact deposits. Exploratory trench excavations were strategically placed across portions of the surface of both of the two site areas to allow an insight to subsurface remains. The depth was determined by existing cultural zones, and excavations continued into natural soils void of cultural material.

Trench wall profiles revealed stratigraphically intact areas of cultural remains and possible natural and historic events that took place at the site over time, such as flooding, fires, and early placer mining. Trench profiles showed clearly the depth of the overburden of gravel recently deposited for use as a commercial parking area. As previously anticipated, the major features encountered were architectural in nature, together with depositional zones associated with building construction (i.e., builders' trenches, demolition, and surface leveling) and numerous associated artifacts.

Basic, initial mitigative activity conducted at the site consisted of the construction of a high-resolution grid system in order to map all fea-



Bird's-eye view showing remnants of stone and timber foundations, 2002

tures, grid units, trenches, and significant artifacts. This process provided the basic map reference and grid data for the subsequent fieldwork. The maps were linked with local datums, or assigned points from which elevations and depths could be measured, and all map-

ping and base grid stations were measured with a theodolite transit and stadia rod, which provided vertical and horizontal controls for the excavations.

Recovered artifacts were returned to the laboratory for analysis, where they were cleaned, sorted, labeled and, when necessary, preserved by trained lab technicians. The artifacts were also measured, photographed, and otherwise documented for their distinguishing attributes. This phase of work insured that the data gathered during fieldwork was properly documented and adequately inventoried for the use of future researchers. Once completed, the data for each artifact will be entered into a data base and the artifacts prepared for final study and curation.

Because Asian immigration to South Dakota has not been thoroughly studied, no baseline data on their material culture exists. Thus, one of the primary foci of the artifact analysis was to document and describe the material culture associated with the Chinese occupation in Deadwood. Two types of data are to be generated in the laboratory analysis. First, the analysis will provide description and a list of the characteristics of the artifacts assembled. The second type of data is functional in nature: to gain information about the types of activities that took place at the site and those that occurred in the various structures found in and around the site.

The primary goal of this investigation was to expose, communicate, include, and engage the significant contributions of the Chinese presence in the history of South Dakota. A comprehensive interpretation of the material culture and associated features, together with the analysis of the material and a comparison with other ethnic Chinese assemblages recovered from sites in other states and countries, will be compiled and published when the work is completed.

The Chinese who inhabited Deadwood left a physical presence in the city's history. Understanding where, when, and how they lived are basic keys to answering pertinent questions about this ethnic group. Artifacts are temporal indicators, and in order to understand an artifact beyond its immediate morphology, it is necessary to understand its context. When archaeologists collect artifacts systematically, carefully recording the horizontal and vertical position of each one within

a site, they can make a direct association with other artifacts and features to establish contextual data. Careful record-keeping takes time and concentrated effort, as well as an ongoing effort to control the site, in order to reconstruct the site and the relationships of the recovered materials from the excavation record for subsequent analysis and commentary.

Features as well as artifacts from the 2001 and 2002 investigations provided significant data to better understand the daily lives of the Chinese and other resident populations. Architectural features included within the structural remains of Deadwood's Chinatown include stone foundations, brick and stone rubble foundations, interior partition remnants, hand-hewn timbers, stone and brick piers, floor joists, and wood flooring. Three privies have been located, two in 2001 and one in 2002. A variety of pit and dump deposit features include a relatively large deposit of animal bones, a dump of metal items associated with livery stables and blacksmithing activities, and a pit filled with various metal and bottle glass.

Burned structural remnants and associated artifacts remaining in a boardinghouse clearly indicate that a fire completely burned down the structure. Nevertheless, the ruins reveal specific interior areas of activity, including strewn remnants of a fallen brick chimney around which there was an obvious cooking area with burned, fragmented dishware and storage cabinets, as well as several concentrated areas of opium-smoking paraphernalia. An interior area of another structure revealed gaming activities in which coins, dice, poker chips, and Chinese gaming pieces were recovered.

A privy was located near the back of the boardinghouse. Temporal deposits of artifacts date the privy contents contemporary with the occupation of the boardinghouse and, most likely, occupation of a preceding and subsequent structure. There is evidence of the privy being moved to an adjacent spot, indicating satiation of the initial privy. Dissimilar in deposit and content, the relocated privy held fewer artifacts and far more botanical remains. Analysis of the privies' contents will contribute significant information about the daily diet of the local occupants as well as a representative sample of the available and utilized material culture. Distinctive food habits are recognized in numerous

ships' manifests, making it clear that traditional foodstuffs were being imported, distributed, and consumed by the Chinese population.

Much of the daily diet of the Chinese in Deadwood will be reconstructed through botanical and faunal remains recovered from site features. Initial identification of botanicals recovered within pit and privy features include peach pits, chokecherry pits, grape and melon seeds, and nutshells. Preliminary faunal analysis has identified large domestic mammals, such as pig, cow, and sheep; small mammals, including rabbit, ground squirrel, cat, and dog; fowl, such as chicken, turkey, duck, goose, pigeon, and dove; deer in the minimal wild-game category; reptiles, including turtle and lizard; and freshwater and marine fish. The predictable small-rodent collection included mice and rats. Butchering methods include both professional and home-industry techniques of using a handsaw or band saw. Frequency of tool marks varies according to meat type and element cut. Some clever marks have been observed, and additional marks will likely be observed as the analysis progresses.

At this time, little analysis has been completed on the contents and temporal deposition of the privies. Bottles form the largest group of artifacts recovered; Chinese and Euro-American dishware, clothing items from hats to boots and buttons, personal hygiene items, and coins have also been found. Bottle types consist of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage containers and pharmaceutical and patent medicine bottles. Although more thorough analysis of bottles is anticipated in the near future, numerous American-made bottles have been identified in the Chinese occupation deposits. Research indicates that most of the glass containers used by the Chinese were of American manufacture, including a variety of American beer bottles. Florence and Robert Lister, among others, proposed that drinking games were a well-established part of Chinese social life and "constitute one expression of the celebratory behavior for which . . . Chinese are particularly well known."²² Incontrovertible evidence exists that reuse and recycling of bottles by the Chinese residents was a common

22. Florence C. Lister and Robert H. Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson: Historic Archaeology from the Tucson Urban Renewal Project* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), p. 79.

practice.²³ Further analysis and research will reveal the number of alcohol bottles associated with the Chinese occupation and the possibility of primary consumption of the contents and subsequent reuse. Along with American-made alcoholic beverage containers, numerous complete and fragmented Chinese alcohol vessels have been recovered. These stoneware containers are known as spirit bottles, which contained a high-proof alcoholic beverage, usually made with a rice base. The number of these containers is minimal, however, compared to the American-made alcohol bottles.

One unique medicinal bottle that was recovered exhibits embossing of Chinese characters on the indented front panel. Various interpretations have been offered, but there is little doubt that the contents were

23. Edward Staski, "The Overseas Chinese in El Paso: Changing Goals, Changing Realities," in *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese*, ed. Priscilla Wegars (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood Publishing, 1993), p. 134.



Privy pit with alcoholic beverage bottles from late 1880s

expected to deliver a blissful cure following dosage. What archaeologists call single-dose medicine bottles, although they are locally and erroneously known as "opium bottles," have been collected throughout the site. These glass vials are comparable to numerous examples from other western frontier Chinese archaeological sites.²⁴ Two examples of this type of bottle with the cork and remaining contents have been recovered. Subsequent pharmaceutical laboratory examination will be conducted to analyze the contents, perhaps debunking the local myth. Chinese medicines and remedies were available through local Chinese druggists and physicians.

Preliminary analysis of one pit, which is unique to the site and frontier Chinese occupations in general because it is bark-lined, indicates a deposit of personal effects, possibly after the death of the owner. The pit measured approximately one meter in diameter and was filled with artifacts sixty centimeters (two feet) deep. Excavation revealed a strict, definite layering of matrix and artifacts, including a butchered immature pig. At the bottom were opium-related artifacts, including portions of opium tins, lamp parts, and pipe bowls; a bamboo pipe stem; and matches, all broken beyond possible use. Mixed with the opium-related articles and constituting the next layer above were a wide variety of fruit pits and seeds. Above the botanical layer was a Chinese cloak-like garment and a *sam*, or upper tunic. The upper portion of the feature, above the clothing, contained utilitarian personal items: a small leather purse, combs, a razor, medicinal bottles, and a toothbrush. The pit surface appeared to have been capped with human waste found in privy matrix.

Only the opium-related items were broken beyond use, plainly indicating intentional ruin. The remaining personal items, including garments, suggest that the purpose of the pit may have been the ceremonial disposal of an individual's possessions. The abundance of non-local domestic fruits and the cooked juvenile pig are all products associated with funerals and suggest a possible ceremonial disposal interpretation.

24. Comparable styles have been reported from Aptos, Donner Summit, Riverside, San Francisco, and Ventura in California and Virginia City in Nevada. Lister and Lister, *Chinese of Early Tucson*, p. 69.

In general, the material culture used and discarded by the Chinese community is amply distinctive to allow their separation from the additional goods discarded by Euro-American and other ethnic populations. There is a prevalent homogeneity of cultural material among Chinese archaeological sites; upon initial examination, it appears that Deadwood's Chinatown is no exception. According to preliminary analysis of the Chinese-manufactured cultural materials at Deadwood's Chinatown site, those that best correlate with ethnically distinct patterns of behavior are traditional tableware, clothing, and dress; items related to medicine and personal hygiene; architectural reflections; and artifacts relating to gaming and the consumption of alcohol and opium.

Ceramic tableware associated with the Chinese population recovered at the site are similar to samples that are known from research accomplished elsewhere.²⁵ Ceramic materials include porcelain, earthenware, and stoneware. The various vessel designs came into general use during the later quarter of the Qing (pronounced ching) Dynasty (1644–1911). Individuals typically used a teacup, rice bowl, soup spoon, and a saucer as eating dishes in a laboring-class home. A variety of these ceramic forms has been recovered at the site, a find also consistent with single men living in shared spaces or boardinghouses.

The early local import shops in Deadwood likely supplied the ceramic tableware samples recovered from the excavations, including numerous fragmented and complete hand-painted rice bowls and soup/serving bowls. A majority of these ceramic forms had common designs identified as Three Circles, Dragon Fly, Double Happiness, and Four Seasons. The Three Circles and Dragon Fly ceramics have a grayish finish with an underglazed, hand-painted, slate-blue stylized design with an informal, almost casual brush.²⁶ The design elements include a marsh scene with what appears to be a flying insect and, always, a three-circle panache. This ceramic type differs from the com-

25. Ibid., p. 79; Priscilla Wegars, *Chinese and Japanese Artifact Terminology* (Moscow: University of Idaho, 1988); David L. Felton, Frank Lorie, and Peter D. Schultz, "The Chinese Laundry on Second Street," *California Archaeological Reports* 24 (1984):1–120.

26. Three Circles and Dragon Fly ceramics have also been referred to as Blue Flower Ware and, more recently, Bamboo. Lister and Lister, *Chinese of Early Tucson*, p. 48.

mon porcelain in that it is coarse utilitarian stoneware. This ware is confined to a rice bowl's form and function and is rarely marked on the base. According to Florence and Robert Lister, it was generally a less expensive product "more apt to have been used by lower-class workers."²⁷

The Four Seasons design is an engraved, overglazed floral motif on a white glazed background. The individual flowers represent each of the four seasons and are emblematic of religious beliefs.²⁸ This design ranges in form and type from rice bowls to serving/soup bowls, ceramic spoons, and saucers. This vessel design is also mold-made and has been recovered within the Chinese context throughout the western United States.

Several teacups and wine cups exhibit an unadorned exterior glaze of winter green or celadon green with a creamy white interior glaze.²⁹ These light, greenish-blue ceramics, molded and moderately thin, appear to have a mass-produced quality and were perhaps used as a utilitarian type of ware.³⁰ Some have a variety of marks on the central base painted in blue prior to firing. These seals or marks either indicate dates, marks of commendation, "hall" marks, or potters' marks.³¹ This type of form and color is commonly found in later nineteenth-century Chinese sites in the West.³² Continued research on the manufacturer's marks will no doubt contribute information on Chinese ceramic manufactures, perhaps to identify place of manufacture and export availability.

Another significant vessel type recovered from the site was the wine pot or wine warmer. Several lids, handles, spouts, and body fragments

27. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

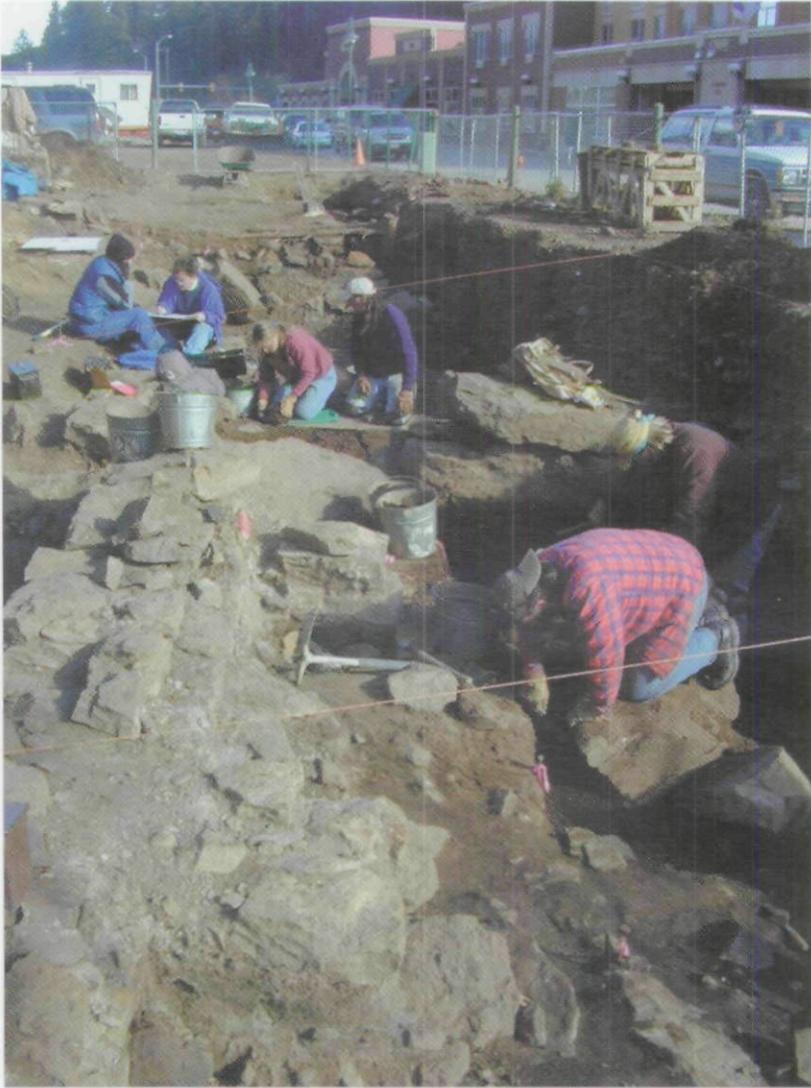
28. The peony of the Four Seasons design represents spring and symbolizes good fortune; the chrysanthemum represents fall and is emblematic of pleasure; summer is represented by the lotus flower, a symbol of purity; the plum stands for winter and represents courage. The centerpiece is a flower medallion or peach. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

29. The ceramic tableware is referred to as celadon in the archaeological record and is so called for its close resemblance in color to the icy, jade-like celadon of the Song Dynasty (A.D. 960–1279).

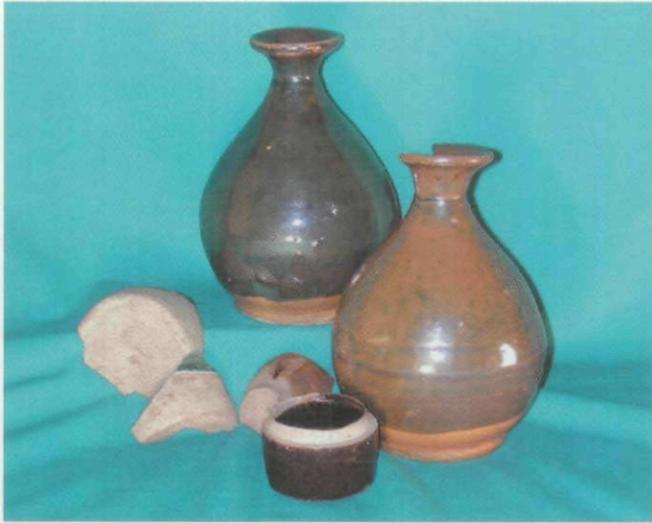
30. Lister and Lister, *Chinese of Early Tucson*, p. 50.

31. William Chaffers, *Marks & Monograms on European and Oriental Pottery and Porcelain* (Los Angeles: Borden Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 326–76.

32. Lister and Lister, *Chinese of Early Tucson*, p. 50.



Archaeologists excavating remains of stone foundations in Deadwood's Chinatown, 2002



Stoneware wine jars or liquor bottles, with storage-jar fragments



Patent medicine bottle embossed with Chinese characters (back, center), with assorted vials, pill bottles, and single-dose bottles



Ceramic tea or liquor pot



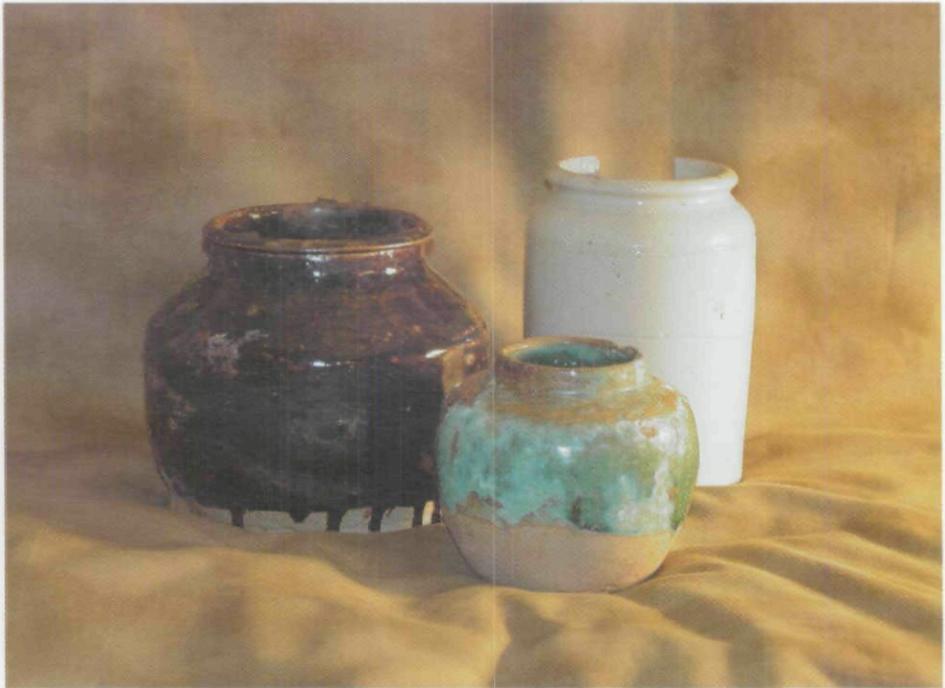
Fragments from porcelain serving, soup, and rice bowls, hand-painted in Four Seasons design



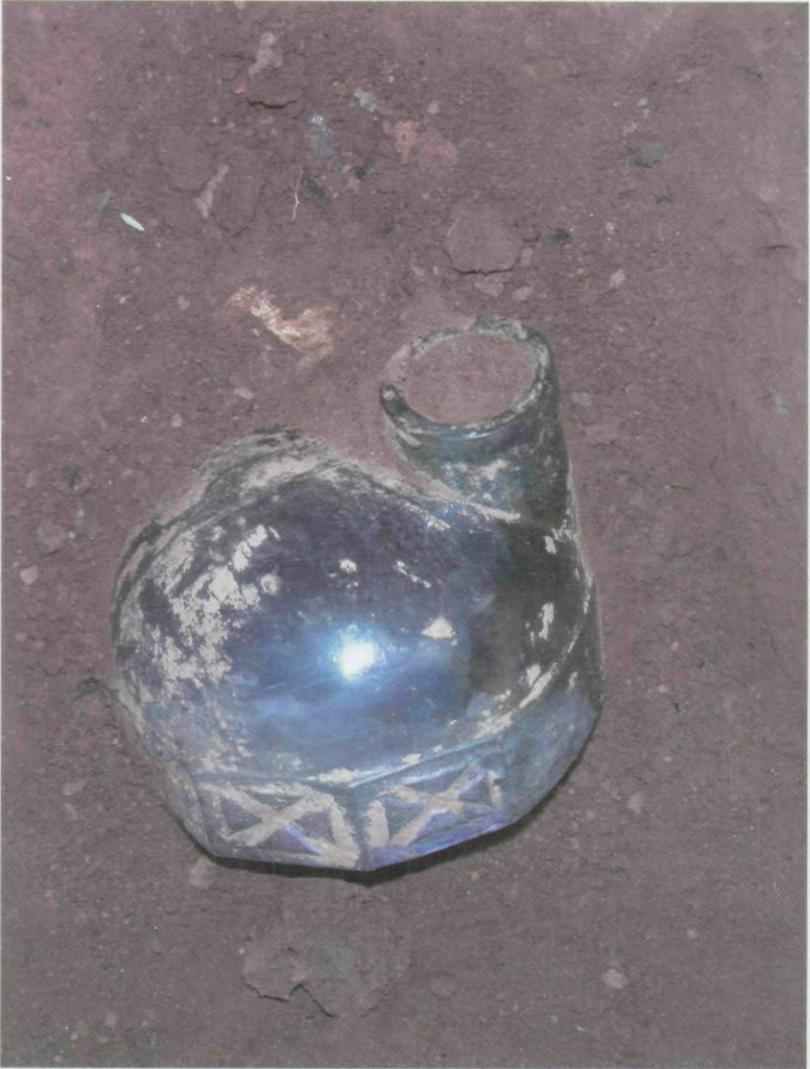
Tops from wine or tea pots, Sweet Pea design (center), and fragments from hand-painted porcelain dishes, design unidentified



Assorted porcelain cups used for tea, wine, or liquor



Ceramic bean pot, ginger jar, and crockery storage vessels (left to right)



Igloo-style ceramic ink bottle *in situ*



Assorted clothing buttons, with coin purse and bone awl



Bone toothbrush handles (center and left), with hair combs, hairpin, and earring



Assorted gaming pieces, including clay poker chips, glass fan-tan counters, ivory die, glass and ceramic marbles, and Chinese coins



Opium pipe bowls, glazed ceramic

of this vessel form, also called a liquor warmer, sauce pot, and teapot, have been found. Representing a communal-use vessel form, the hand-painted, blue-on-white design is a curved vine with leaf and blossom motif, which has been interpreted as sweet pea or prunus.³³

Also recovered at the site were several complete stoneware shipping and storage containers and numerous fragments of such.³⁴ The majority of these stoneware vessels have a dark brown, glossy glaze, and some have an unglazed base and heel. Liquor vessels most likely contained a wide range of fermented and distilled alcoholic beverages. These vessels have a globular body with a lesser base and an extremely constricting neck immediately flaring to an open orifice and rim. Other containers include globular spouted jars, often called soy pots, that held soy sauce and a variety of other liquids. Smaller, cylindrical, wide-mouthed jars contained dried seasonings and medicinal preparations.

Dissimilar in form, the American and English earthenware recovered included plates, cups, saucers, platters, soap dishes, and figu-

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 40.



Stoneware "bean pot" storage jar

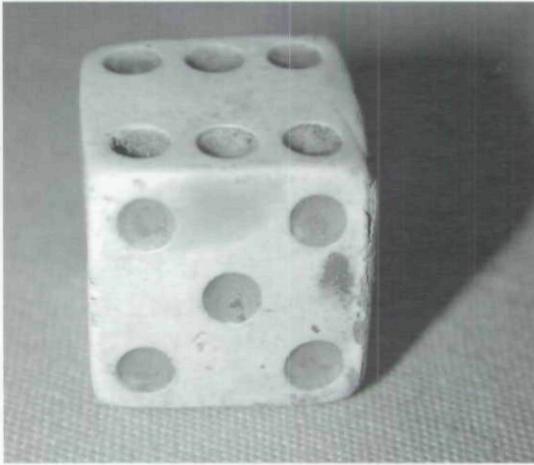
rines. Various manufacturing marks on a variety of ceramic forms indicate dates ranging from the 1880s through the 1920s. Research and analysis remains to examine evidence of increasing use of American goods through time.

The Chinese costume is only vaguely represented in the Deadwood assemblage of artifacts. Photographs of Chinese immigrants arriving in Deadwood in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offer a frame of reference for the customary ethnic clothing, ornamentation, and costume designs of men, women, and children. As previously mentioned, Chinese garments in the archaeological record include one partial cotton *sam*, or upper tunic garment, which has been conservatively stabilized, and a cloak-like form, which has not yet been conserved. One miner's felt hat was recovered from a privy along with one-half of the front of a western-style vest. Other clothing items, such as skullcaps and trousers, may be identified after further cleaning and analysis. The distinctly Chinese footwear uncovered consists of one leather-like shoe sole, five inches in length, which appears to be from a shoe made for a woman's bound foot, and one other incomplete shoe sole made of an unidentified woven fabric unlike any Euro-American footwear.³⁵ There are numerous pieces of various fabrics and many Euro-American leather shoe and boot parts represented in the collection. Artifacts associated with personal hygiene include ivory toothbrush handles, of both Euro-American and Chinese manufacture, and various types of combs used for grooming and adornment of hair.

Mark Twain once remarked that "about every third Chinamen runs a lottery."³⁶ Gaming indeed was a familiar vice and recreational outlet for the Chinese. Early newspaper accounts verify the Chinese fondness for games of chance and gambling, as in the headline in the *Black Hills Daily Times* for 29 November 1882 that read "Chinaman Most Successful Gambler in City." The archaeological record substantiates this cultural record with the recovery of numerous gaming

35. Terri Holts, "Chinese Women in Deadwood: Evidence of Traditional Footbinding" (paper presented at the Island in the Plains Symposium, Spearfish, S.Dak., 3 May 2003).

36. Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America* (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 41.



Ivory die, with bored hole on lower left dot of top face

pieces and associated artifacts. Most common are spherical disks made of black or white glass used as counters in the Chinese gambling game of fantan.³⁷ Ivory dice and laminated poker chips are also included in the gaming collection. On one die, the face bearing the single dot has a bored or drilled cavity, and one of the dots on the face with six has a similar hole, suggesting that it was “loaded,” or weighted to allow cheating.

One of the artifacts commonly associated with gambling is currency. Numerous Chinese coins and United States minted coins, along with dice and poker chips have been recovered in small confined areas inside structural remnants. In addition to fantan, other popular games of chance known to amuse and occupy gamblers were dominoes, elephant checkers, mahjonn, poker, and lottery games such as *pak kop piu*, *tsi-fa* or character flower, and white pigeon ticket.³⁸

Chinese coins also functioned in a variety of other roles within the community. Primarily, they were a traditional medium of exchange for purchasing native goods from local Chinese merchants. To the su-

37. See Lister and Lister, *Chinese of Early Tucson*, p. 75.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

perstitious, coins from certain periods were considered lucky and were used to ward off evil spirits. Coins were also used as charms and given as gifts. If one strictly adhered to custom, it was obligatory to have and use Chinese currency in certain traditional ceremonies.³⁹

The traditional practice of opium smoking was a widespread phenomenon in American society throughout the late nineteenth century in both the Chinese and Euro-American communities. Regular opium shipments from China kept the opium dens in Chinatowns throughout the western frontier supplied with the popular drug. Often perceived as contraband, opium was a legal medicinal and recreational supplement in early Deadwood. Investigations indicate that the Deadwood Chinese population brought their drug culture with them.

There were many different reasons for smoking opium and just as wide a variety of effects on the user. Historical accounts demonstrate that Chinese both benefited and suffered from regular use of the drug, whose effects depended upon a number of cultural, technological, and physiological factors. Medicinally, it was an effective treatment for pain, spasm, inflammation, nervous disorders, and insom-

39. *Ibid.*, p. 76.



Opium-smoking paraphernalia

nia. Recreational use, usually in a social setting, provided a means of relaxation or coping with stress and was the most common reason for consumption. The addiction rate was high, but not all opium smokers became addicted. While smoking opium was a calculated risk, some physical and psychological effects may have been beneficial.⁴⁰

Abundant paraphernalia associated with opium-smoking has been recovered from Deadwood's Chinatown, including complete and fragmented ceramic pipe bowls, one bamboo stem, opium lamp parts, opium tins, bottles that contained opiate derivatives, and preparation and pipe-cleaning tools. Pipe-bowl fragments, the opium-related artifacts most frequently recovered from the site, exhibit various ceramic shapes, colors, embellishments, and manufacturing techniques. The complete pipe bowls, however, exhibit certain common characteristics, including a convex smoking surface, smoking hole, base, and flange for connecting to the stem. Chinese marks or stamps occur on some of the bowls in the form of characters, symbols, or designs. Analysis and interpretation of these stamps will provide common factory or geographical connections. Careful contextual analysis of the specific areas of recovery will provide a spatial pattern of opium-smoking activities throughout the archaeological site.

Census records, photographs, and early newspaper articles indicate the presence of Chinese women and children in early Deadwood. Because they were far outnumbered by men, it is not surprising that there is so little trace of either group in the archaeological record. Artifacts from the site most likely associated with women are partial jewelry items, hair ornaments, cosmetic items, personal hygiene items, and, as mentioned above, a sole from a very small shoe. Artifacts that could be associated with the few Chinese- or American-born children include several porcelain doll parts, a bird whistle and a penny whistle, a partial cast-iron toy pistol, and numerous marbles.

Current investigations at the site include excavation of a Chinese temple, a Chinese laundry, and a hay barn.⁴¹ Historical documents in-

40. Jerry Wylie and Richard E. Fike, "Chinese Opium Smoking Techniques and Paraphernalia," in *Hidden Heritage*, p. 134.

41. This building is commonly referred to as the Joss House, with the word "Joss" a misinterpretation of the Latin word *Deos*, or God. According to Asia experts, it is proper to refer

dicade that there were two temples located in Chinatown; the first was burned in the fire of 1879 and a second temple was constructed at a different location.⁴² A temple served as a multipurpose cultural and community center and played an important role in the social life of the Chinese inhabitants. Cultural custom demanded that geomancy or *feng shui*—divination from signs of the earth—be considered in the siting and planning of Chinese temples. As a result, the builders adjusted the location, size of rooms, ornaments, color, and time of construction to be favorable to features of the cultural landscape. It is anticipated that significant data will be recovered from these excavations, adding to knowledge of traditional religious and social practices of the Deadwood Chinese community.

Today, Deadwood's Chinatown exists in more than just memories and legends. It has not vanished. The discoveries being made in the National Historic Landmark city not only lend significance to the pattern of events of the westward movement and the gold rush but also contribute to the knowledge of life in a small western city rich with a variety of ethnic populations. Deadwood has chosen to uncover its local history, preserving its colorful past before the color fades away. A combination of historical research and archaeological excavations is providing a glimpse into the Chinese way of life, ethnically separate, yet interacting daily with the dominant non-Chinese society on the western frontier.

to a religious building as a temple. Priscilla Wegars, "Asian American Comparative Collection: Sensitivity Issues," <http://www.uidaho.edu/LS/AACC/sensitive.htm>.

42. Sulentic, "Deadwood Gulch," p. 433.

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