

"Fort Ellsworth, Kansas Dig"

Kanopolis, Kansas

"June 2000"

On June 3-18, 2000 the Kansas Archeology Training Program held a dig at 14EW26 Locality 5, sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District, The Kansas State Historical Society, and the Kansas Anthropological Association. Locality 5 is situated along the bank of the Smoky Hill River and the primary goal of that year's work was to recover archeological data from two dugout features and another feature of unknown function before such data is lost to stream bank erosion and unauthorized artifact collecting.

Locality 5 is the probable location of the Page and Lehman Ranch, abandoned in 1864, but later that year reoccupied by Company H of the 7th Iowa Cavalry under the command of Lieutenant Allen Ellsworth. It was anticipated the archeological data from Locality 5 will contribute to the poor understanding of the establishment of the fort. Furthermore this new information will enable us to make comparisons between the two localities to determine possible temporal or functional differences. And finally, it was expected that this new data will provide additional insights regarding military activities, diet, and everyday life at the fort

The artifacts represent a range of functions, including military supplies, construction materials, clothing, food, and recreation-related items. A wide selection of military items was recovered, including a variety of bullets, cartridge cases, primer caps, and other items related to ammunition, as well as many Army service buttons and fragments of insignias for hats and/or uniforms.

A handmade identification tag has the numeral "7" placed above three letters, possibly "LPW." The "7" may represent Company H of the 7th Iowa Cavalry, which was stationed at the fort and the letters may be the initials of a soldier in that company. Soldiers in the West often feared dying anonymously, so handmade ID tags helped ensure identification in the event of death.

Several handmade wooden objects may have been parts of furniture or containers. Most nails were of the machine-cut type. Some were horseshoe nails, and two or three such nails remained in a horseshoe. Some of the many buckles may have been worn on clothing, but some, especially a particularly large one, may have been an element of horse harness. Some of the many metal rivets also may have attached pieces of leather harness. Numerous leather fragments undoubtedly had many different uses, such as harness, belts, shoes and/or boots. The numerous buttons are made of metal mother-of-pearl, glass, bone, and possibly wood.

The physical presence of women was confirmed by this year's work. Numerous small mother-of-pearl buttons, many with tiny decorative carvings, probably came from the clothing of women or children. A few jewelry fragments, as well as an intact pin with yellow-colored stones, most likely belonged to a woman. A possible turquoise bead was found during the flotation process. A metal object with a fine chain may be the back of woman's watch. A thimble may have belonged to a woman, although the darning of holes in socks was not an uncommon practice for a nineteenth-century soldier.

Bottles and fragments of bottles and jars indicate a wide use of glass containers for such items as medicine, alcoholic beverages, condiments, food and possibly perfume. Numerous complete or nearly complete hole-in-top tin cans were found. Two or three may have remnants of their painted or paper labels

still intact. The interiors of the cans were not cleaned in hopes that chemical tests can determine the types of food that they held.

Fragments of dishes ranged from crockery and plain whiteware to a few pieces of decorated china. One curved china shard displays the head of a man on the outside, while the inside is glazed white. This artifact was the subject of much discussion. Some thought that the cameo-style design was a small dish or cup fragment, while others speculated that it was a part of a fancy pipe. Observers wondered if the portrait represented a generic male or a specific man of fame.

Eating utensils were represented by a fork and spoon, and a butcher knife probably was used for food preparation. Bones, many with butchering marks, were plentiful. An analysis of the bones will determine the quantities of the various animals. The most plentiful types recovered in 1996 were cattle, swine, chicken, and cottontail rabbit. Egg shells, fish bones and scales were abundant this year, as they were four years ago.

A single die from a dice set hints at recreation. Many fragments of pipe stems and bowls show the popularity of pipe smoking. The presence of fancy German pipes is indicated by a complete and a partial metal covering for such pipe bowls. The complete top has four small openings shaped like crosses for the escape of smoke. A flip-top latch allowed for ease in placing tobacco in the bowl. A couple of the metal cans may be tobacco tins. Some crude bone carvings may hint at recreational whittling. Two coins were recovered; an 1864 two-cent piece and an 1865 penny.



Santa Fe Trail Research Site
["E-Mail & Home Page"](#)
Larry & Carolyn
St. John, Ks.
© "Forever"