

IDENTIFYING BEAVER FUR TRAPPERS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

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ABSTRACT

The beaver fur trade in Colorado occurred from about 1800 to 1840. The 27 fur trade posts in and around the state are a testament to the intensity of the trapping. However, beaver trapping camps have rarely been recorded due to a lack of criteria for their identification. Three items are proposed that may be used to identify beaver fur trappers in the archaeological record: gun flints, musket balls, and beaver traps and parts; however, site location may also be a very important clue. Horse tack with metal parts and kaolin tobacco pipes may be used to distinguish Euroamerican from Native American sites.

INTRODUCTION

The fur trade in North America was a major economic activity since the first colonies were established on the East Coast in the 1600s. Beaver, muskrat, otter, deer, and bison skins were sought for domestic use, but beaver skins were especially prized for the European markets. By the early 1800s there were at least 150 trading posts between Minnesota and the Oregon coast. Although the locations have been established and archaeological descriptions made for most of these major posts, few trapper camps have been identified in the archaeological record. In addition to the ephemeral nature of these camps, a major reason is a lack of criteria by which they can be identified in the archaeological record. This paper is intended to address this problem by reviewing the historic literature on the fur trade, in order to identify trapper habits, features and tools that can be converted to material culture correlates. By this means some criteria may be presented that can be used to identify fur trapper camps in the archaeological record. The specific focus of this paper is the beaver fur trade, as the trade in bison robes mainly involved Indians on the Plains. Readers are reminded that trapping is not the same as trading: Trapping is catching the critters and taking their pelts, while trading is the exchange of goods and services.

BACKGROUND

Seeking animal furs for human use has long been of major importance throughout the world, and became a major economic activity in North America after the first colonies were established on the East Coast in the 1600s. Almost all of the 150 fur trading posts located between Minnesota and the Oregon coast were owned and operated by fur trade companies operating out of St. Louis. For information about the fur trade in North America, the reader may consult Chittenden (1902), Dolin (2010), Hanson (2008), Robertson (1999), Sunder and Hedren (1965), Wishart (1979), and Wood and Thiessen (1985). It should be

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noted that none of these sources include the trade in Colorado despite the fact that there were no fewer than 20 fur trading posts in the state (Robertson does describe some of the trading posts). See Butler (2012) for information about the trade in Colorado along with information about these posts, trappers, trade goods, transportation, and the trade in general.

Fur trade historian David Wishart (1979) proposed two fur trade systems, with one involving trading posts where company trappers were paid a salary, and the other system using individual “free” trappers (the norm in Colorado) who sold their pelts wherever they could get the best price. Another form of trade was for the traders to take their goods directly to the Indian villages. This was the practice of the early Spanish trade in Colorado, and later by established posts seeking buffalo robes. Also included in the effort to obtain furs for the eastern markets were the Green River Rendezvous held between 1825 and 1842 in southwestern Wyoming (Gowan 1978). This paper focuses on the beaver trade in Colorado, as it is the state the author knows best (Butler 2012).

THE FUR TRADE IN COLORADO

The beaver fur trade in Colorado lasted from about 1800 to 1840. Beaver trapping ended in the late 1830s with a fashion change in Europe when the beaver felt hat declined in favor of silk hats. The trade in bison robes occurred from about 1840 to sometime in the late 1800s. The trade in deer skins, mainly with the Ute, began in the early 1600s by the Spanish in New Mexico and continued into the late 1800s (Butler 2012; Weber 1968). Note that the Spanish were traders, not trappers, and they were after the “coarse fur” (deer and elk) that could be put to immediate and practical use by the settlers in the Rio Grande Valley. The Euroamericans from the East were trapping “fine fur” (beaver, otter) for ornamental use. The trade for bison robes took place after about 1840 where the robes were obtained by the Indians on the Plains, and the finished hides were taken to the trading posts or exchanged directly with traders coming to their villages.

There were at least 27 fur trading posts in or near Colorado, indicating the level of trapping in the state (Table 1); virtually all the streams in Colorado with beaver were trapped, many several times. But, how many fur trapper camps might there be in Colorado? If the observations of trapper O. P. Wiggins (1901, 1902) and historian LeRoy Hafen (1965-1972) are any indication, there were *at least* 100 trappers in the field each year. It is estimated that between about 1810 (when trapping was firmly established) and 1840 there were over 3,000 trapping/camping “instances” in the state during these 30 years. If one estimates that a trapper moved his camp 10 times during the trapping season, then we can *conservatively* estimate that there may have been between 20,000 and 30,000 fur trapper camp sites in the state. This is a rough estimate, but it does indicate the magnitude of the fur trapping efforts in Colorado, and probably elsewhere in the West. The proposition that camps were moved some 10 times each season is an educated guess based on historical accounts (Inman 1897; Lavender 1954:77; Sage 1846) indicating that an area could be easily “trapped out” in a matter of days. The number is felt to be a reasonable estimate given that trappers were in the field for five or six months a year.

Table 1. Fur Trading Posts in or Related to the Trade in Colorado, Southern Wyoming, and Eastern Utah.

NAME	DATES	LOCATION	COMMENTS
Southern Wyoming			
<u>Fort Laramie</u> aka Fort William, Fort Lucien, Fort John	1834 – 1890	Laramie River, Wyoming	Began as Fort William (1834), Fort Lucien (1835), Fort John (1841), Fort Laramie (1849)
<u>Fort Platte</u>	1841 - 1845	North Platte River, Wyoming	Built by Lancaster P. Lupton
<u>Fraeb's Post</u>	1841	Little Snake River and Battle Creek, Wyoming	Built by Henry Fraeb and Jim Bridger; may not have been a post (See Pierce and Miller 2015)
South Platte River - Northeastern Colorado			
<u>"Old" Fort Vasquez</u> <u>Fort Convenience</u> <u>Fort Robert Campbell</u> (5AM124)	1832/1834 – 1842	East of the Front Range on Clear Creek near Denver	May have been three or four posts, or just one; Vasquez was built by French Canadian Louis Vasquez
<u>Fort Lupton</u> aka Fort Lancaster (5WL849)	1836 – 1845	South Platte River near modern town of Fort Lupton	May have been first post on the South Platte
<u>Fort Vasquez</u> (5WL568)	1835? or 1838 - 1842	South Platte River about 10 miles north of Fort Lupton	Built by Andrew Sublette and Louis Vasquez.
<u>Fort Jackson</u> aka Henry Fraeb's Post	1836 - 1838	South Platte River between Fort Lupton and Fort Vazquez.	Built by Peter A. Sarpy and Henry Fraeb
<u>Fort St. Vrain</u> aka Fort Lookout, Fort George (5WL814)	1838 - 1844	South Platte River north of Fort Vasquez	Built by Ceran St. Vrain and George Bent
Arkansas River - Southeastern Colorado			
<u>Colorado Springs Posts</u>	1726 and 1749	On either Monument, Fountain or Jimmy Camp Creek in the Colorado Springs area	French traders built posts probably for illegal trade with the Spanish; what was traded is unknown.
<u>Glenn & Fowler's House</u>	1821 – 1822	Arkansas River below and at junction with Fountain Creek	Three "posts" in different locations built mainly for housing and defense
<u>Bent's Stockade</u> aka Fort William	1826 - 1834	Established by Bent, St. Vrain and Company near the mouth of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas River	Abandoned in 1834 and operation moved further east to Bent's Old Fort
<u>Bent's Old Fort</u> aka Fort William (5OT149)	1834 - 1852	North (left) bank of Arkansas River near present town of Las Animas	Founded just after Gantt went out of business in 1834
<u>Bent's New Forts</u> (5BN394/395)	1849 – 1859	Big Timbers on Arkansas River	Sold to the U.S. Army in 1859 and renamed Fort Wise
<u>Fort Le Duc</u> aka Maurice's Fort or Buzzards' Roost (5CR11)	1830 – 1846?	Near present towns of Florence and Wetmore in Arkansas River Valley at junction of Adobe Creek and Mineral Creek	Founded by Frenchmen Maurice LeDuc, LaFontaine and Gagnier, and William LeBlanc

<u>Gantts Fort</u> aka Ganti's Post, Fort Cass	1831 – 1833	Fountain Creek above Arkansas River	Founded by John Gantt and Jefferson Blackwell.
<u>Puebla de Leche</u> aka Milk Fort, Fort El Puebla, Fort Independence, Peebles' Fort	1839 – 1840?	West of Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River	May have been the first real settlement on the Arkansas
<u>Pueblo Fort</u> aka Fort Spaulding, El Pueblo, The Arkansas Pueblo, Pueblo Almagre, Fort Juana, Robert Fisher's Fort, Spaulding and Fisher's Fort, Pueblo de San Carlos, or Napesta Fort. (5PE303)	1840 – 1842 to 1854	Arkansas River and Fountain Creek	Settled by free trappers before 1806, but formal fort by several traders
<u>Adobe Creek Post</u>	1840 – 1846	On Adobe Creek just west of Pueblo	Founded by the Bents, Lucien Maxwell, Lancaster Lupton, Ceran St. Vrain, and Charles Baubien
<u>Hardscrabble</u> aka San Buenaventura de los Tres Arrollos.	1844 – 1848	Hardscrabble Creek south of the Arkansas River and west of Pueblo	Founded by George Simpson, Alexander Barclay, and Joseph Doyle; was more of a town than a trading post
<u>Greenhorn</u> aka Greenhorn Store	1845 – 1853	South of Pueblo on Greenhorn Creek; on Taos Trail over Sangre de Cristo Pass	Founded by John Brown and was more of a settlement with farming and stock than a trading post
<u>Wilson's Houses</u>	1843- 1844?	Big Timbers on Arkansas River	Founded by Albert G. Wilson
Western Colorado and Eastern Utah			
<u>Fort Davy Crockett</u> aka "Fort Misery" (5MF605)	1832 - 1840s	Browns Park in northwestern Colorado	Built by William Craig, Philip F. Thompson, and Prewett (Previtt) Fuller Sinclair
<u>Fort Carson</u> aka Carson's House	1833 – 1834	Green River and Uintah River, Utah	Cabins built by Kit Carson
<u>Fort Uncompahgre</u> aka Robidoux's Post, Fort Robidoux, Fort Campogera, or Fort Pogera (5DT746)	1828 - 1844	On the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Rivers in western Colorado	Built by Antoine Robidoux
<u>Fort Uintah</u> aka Fort Winte, Wintey, Tewinty, Uinta, Fort Robidoux	1832 - 1844	Uintah River, Utah	Built by Antoine Robidoux
<u>Robidoux's Fort</u> aka Fort Ouray	1837	Green River, Utah	Cabins built by Antoine Robidoux
<u>Hudson's Bay Company Store</u>	1838	Green River and Uintah River, Utah	Re-occupation of Fort Carson ?

Although it would seem that there should be a plethora of fur trapper sites, identifying them in the archaeological record is a major problem because of many factors. Many archaeologists have probably seen these sites but have been unable

to attribute them to fur trappers, or have recorded them simply as “protohistoric,” “historic Indian,” “historic Native American,” or “early historic.” Some useful clues to help identify fur trapper camp sites and their associated material culture can be gleaned from the historic observations of Rufus B. Sage, Osborn Russell, Henry Inman, and others.

Before proceeding further, readers are reminded that the following is a *model* intended to help identify the fur trade in the archaeological record; that is, it is not perfect and many areas and topics need further research. Indeed, many problems are currently unsolvable given the nature of the trade. Many of these problems are recognized, but it is felt that we must start somewhere to define and refine our understanding of this important part of western history.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

Trapper Camps

Historian Henry Inman (1897:258-259) wrote in 1897 that:

A trapper’s camp in the old days was quite a picture, as were all its surroundings. He did not always take the trouble to build a shelter, unless in the winter. A couple of deer skins stretched over a willow frame was considered sufficient to protect him from the storm. Sometimes he contented himself with a mere “breakwind,” the rocky wall of a canyon, or large ravine. Near at hand he set up two poles, in the crotch of which another was laid, where he kept, out of the reach of the hungry wolf and coyote, his meat, consisting of every variety afforded by the region in which he had pitched his camp. Under the cover of the skins of the animals he had killed hung his old-fashioned powder-horn and bullet pouch, while his trusty rifle, carefully defended from the damp, was always within reach of his hand. Round his blazing fire at night his companions, if he had any, were other trappers on the same stream; and, while engaged in cleaning their arms, making and mending moccasins, running bullets, they told long yarns, until the lateness of the hour warned them to crawl under their blankets.

Not far from the camp, his animals, well hobbled, fed in sight; for nothing did a hunter dread more than a visit from horse-stealing Indians, and to be afoot was the acme of misery . . . Some hunters who had married squaws carried about with them regular buffalo-skin lodges, which their wives took care of, according to Indian etiquette.

The winter camp was more elaborate, and one of the better descriptions of a trapper’s winter camp comes from Rufus B. Sage during his sojourn on the Soublet’s Creek (St. Vrain River) in the foothills west of Longmont, Colorado, in 1843-44 (Sage 1846:348):

The winter camp of a hunter of the Rocky Mountains would doubtless

prove an object of interest to the unsophisticated. It is usually located in some spot sheltered by hills or rocks, for the double purpose of securing the full warmth of the sun's rays, and screening it from the notice of strolling Indians that may happen by in its vicinity. Within a convenient proximity to it stands some grove, from which an abundance of dry fuel is procurable when needed; and equally close the ripplings of a watercourse salutes the ear with their music.

His shantee faces a huge fire, and is formed of skins carefully extended over an arched frame-work of slender poles, which are bent in the form of a semicircle and kept to the places by inserting their extremities in the ground. Near this [camp] is his "graining block," planted aslope, for the ease of the operative in preparing his skins for the finishing process in the art of dressing; and not far removed is a stout frame, contrived from four pieces of timber, so tied together as to leave a square of sufficient dimensions for the required purpose, in which, perchance, a skin is stretched to its fullest extension, and the hardy mountaineer is busily engaged in rubbing it with a rout stone or "scraper," to fit it for the manufacture of clothing.

Facing his shantee upon the opposite side of the fire, a pole is reared upon the crotches five or six feet high, across which reposes a choice selection of the dainties of his range, to wit: the "side ribs," shoulders, heads, and "rump-cuts" of deer and sheep, or the "depouille" and "fleeces" of buffalo [fleece fat from the back of bison]. The camp-fire finds busy employ in fitting for the demands of appetite such dainty bits of hissing roast as *en appolas* [on a stick] may grace its sides, while, at brief intervals, the hearty attendant, enchaired upon the head of a mountain sheep, (whose huge horns furnish legs and arms for the convenience of sitting), partakes of his tempting lunch.

Carefully hung in some fitting place, are seen his "riding" and "pack saddles," with his halters, "cavraces" [horse hair rope], "larrietts" [ropes], "apishamores" [saddle blankets], and all the needed material for camp and traveling service; and, adjoining him at no great distance, his animals are allowed to graze, or, if suitable nourishment of other kind be lacking, are fed from the bark of cottonwood trees leveled for that propose [sic]; and, leaning close at hand, his rifle awaits his use, and by its his powder-horn, bullet-pouch, and tomahawk.

Material Culture - Gear and Equipment

An extensive study of tools of the mountain men can be found in Woodward (1970) and in the journal of trapper Osborn Russell who was trapping in the Rocky Mountains between 1834 and 1843 (Haines 1955; Russell 1914). Osborne Russell said that:

A Trappers equipment . . . is generally one Animal upon which is placed one or two Epishemores [saddle blankets], a riding Saddle and bridle a sack containing six Beaver traps a blanket with an extra pair of Moccasins his powder horn and bullet pouch with a belt to which is attached a butcher Knife a small wooden box containing bait [castorum] for Beaver a Tobacco sack with a pipe and implements for making fire with sometimes a hatchet fastened to the Pommel of his saddle his personal dress is flannel or cotton shirt (if he is fortunate enough to obtain one, if not Antelope skin answers the purpose of over and under shirt) a pair of leather breeches with Blanket or smoked Buffaloe skin, leggings, a coat made of Blanket or Buffaloe robe a hat or Cap of wool, Buffaloe or Otter skin his hose [socks] are pieces of Blanket lapped round his feet which are covered with a pair of Moccasins made of Dressed Deer Elk or Buffaloe skins with his long hair falling loosely over his shoulders completes his uniform. He then mounts and places his rifle before him on his Saddle (Haines 1955:82).

Tools used by the trappers are also included in a historical description of a party of 24 trappers when they were leaving Taos, New Mexico, to trap in South and North Parks in Colorado in 1827:

On a pack horse each man carried the furs he had caught, his buffalo bed robes, and a heavy skin sack (which could be boiled and eaten in an emergency) loaded with six five-pound traps costing from twelve to sixteen dollars in St. Louis, the traps' three-pound chains, spare springs, and tools for repair. On the rider's own mount was a "possibles sack" bulky with powder, galena lead [to make musket balls], flints [for a flintlock rifle], tobacco, sewing materials, occasionally a book or two, and dressed deerskin for replacing his moccasins, which wore out rapidly. About his person hung a skinning knife, whetstone, pipe case, awl holder, perhaps a tomahawk, scent [castoreum] container, bullet pouch and a powder carrier of black buffalo horn scraped as thin as isinglass and stoppered with a wooden plug. Always in hand was his gun – generally a heavy one, eleven to twelve pounds, with a forty-inch barrel, .50-caliber, firing a half-ounce slug with impact enough to drop a grizzly or buffalo. A man loved his gun, named it (Ceran [St. Vrain] called his Silver Heels), and had it rebored again and again to repair damage from water and dust, until it looked as huge as a tunnel. His wiping stick was carried in the bore and served in addition to its intended function, as a rest on which the hunter could lean the ponderous muzzle when he knelt to take aim. In spite of affection for the gun, however, the men were not above using bows and arrows; the weapons conserved ammunition, gave no telltale report, and in the sightless night could be aimed by hunch better than a rifle (Lavender 1954:76-77).

One of the more overlooked, but basic, items carried by trappers was a tin cup that held about a half pint. It not only served as a drinking cup, but also was a standard unit of measure for gunpowder, sugar, coffee, tea, salt, flour, and especially whiskey. Steel awls used to make moccasins were also important parts of the trapper's field kit (see Sage 1846:154-155). Because these were cherished items, it is very doubtful that they would be found on an archaeological site.

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Historical Observations and Considerations

From the above historical information, we note that:

- Trapping parties included anywhere from 1 to 30 or more trappers, but...
- Because a large party of trappers could trap out all the animals in a large area fairly quickly, camps were moved every couple of days (Inman 1897; Lavender 1954; Sage 1846). These short-term camps would leave few remains in the archaeological record.
- Lean-tos, conical or domed wickiups, or tents (i.e., "shantees"), and racks for processing skins, etc. would leave little or no archaeological evidence, and we would expect little permanent soil disturbance.
- It would be very difficult to identify soil stains from skin processing today after the passage of some 150 years.
- Overall, the tools used by the trappers are generally non-definitive; that is, the items are the same as those found among Indians and early settlers: gun flints, percussion caps, pots/pans, beads, knives, axes, etc. It is important to note that trappers often used the bow and arrow, with metal or stone points like those of the Indians. Lithic flakes are often found at the sites of known trading posts, and may show up at a trapper's camp.

Criteria for Site Identification

In spite of these problems the historical record provides some clues that may help identify trappers in the archaeological record:

- Gun flints (Figure 1) used in flintlock rifles were replaced by percussion caps beginning in 1829, and the caps had replaced the flintlock among the trappers in the West by about 1840 (Miller 2007). Note that Native Americans, and probably trappers, had the skills to make gun flints out of locally available material. An English gun flint was found at the Lykins Valley site (5LR263) in the foothills of the Front Range west of Fort Collins (Ohr et al. 1979). Radiocarbon dates indicate occupations at about A.D. 1700; the locality has been interpreted as most likely a Native American site. Because settlers did not come into the Colorado area until much later, gun flints may therefore suggest trappers before about 1840. Indeed, Indians may also have had flintlock weapons (see below for ideas on how to separate protohistoric Indians sites from

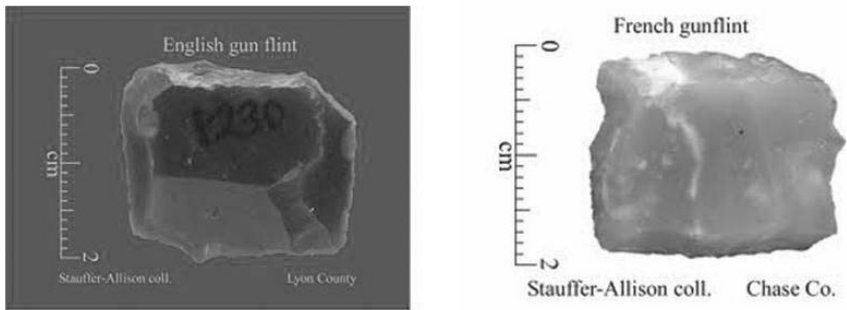


Figure 1. English and French gun flints.

- trapper camps).
- Musket balls from muzzle loading rifles. Cartridges with the cone-shaped Minie balls (Figure 2) were in use after about 1847. As trapping had effectively ended in Colorado before this time, it is suggested that Minie balls are not representative of fur trappers. However, it is cautioned that “heritage” flintlocks with musket balls might have been kept by early ranchers and farmers well beyond the most popular time range for flintlock use.
- Beaver traps (also called leg traps), including broken or replacement parts such as springs, base plates, pan, jaws, bolts, chains, and hooks, may be the most telling items indicating the presence of fur trappers. The author has yet to come across any literature indicating that the Indians in Colorado were trapping with such equipment.
- Trapper camp site locations may not mirror locations seen prehistorically or in early historic times. That is, they may have been located near beaver dams for efficiency and security, and not in more “ideal” or “comfortable” locations. For example, we know of many prehistoric and historic sites that are clearly defensive in nature, and their locations are often noted as being “outliers” to the normal settlement pattern. It may be suggested that the locations of trapper camps might also be outliers. See the above comments by Sage (1846) and Inman (1897) for possible differences in material culture between summer and winter camps. GIS modeling of the observations of Sage and Inman may provide an important clue as to where such sites can be found.
- No manos or metates. These are temporary camps and trappers often carried prepared (ground) flour or corn meal.
- Stone scrapers for preparing skins might be present at the camps. Such scrapers would probably differ little, if at all, from those used by Native American groups for the same purpose.
- Women are rarely reported to be trapping with the men. Thus, no evidence of women or children should be found at a trapper’s camp. However, it is cautioned that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, as there are some reported instances of women and families



Figure 2. Pointed Minie balls and round musket balls.

accompanying trappers in the field. For example, Rufus B. Sage, while traveling along the Trappers Trail from the South Platte to the Arkansas River in 1842, camped with a party of free trappers and hunters on Cherry Creek just south of what is now Denver. He said that one of the trappers may have been John Smith and his Blackfoot wife. Also, Sage noted that “Some hunters who had married squaws carried about with them regular buffalo-skin lodges, which their wives took care of, according to Indian etiquette” (Sage 1846:348).

- Trapper horse tack and saddles used by the trappers were commercially made with metal fixtures, whereas Native Americans would (usually) have non-metal homemade saddles and bridles. Although such remains may not indicate fur trappers, they may help separate an Indian site from one occupied by Europeans. Also, Native Americans were known to decorate or modify their horse gear which might make some separation difficult, but on the other hand, these modifications may identify Indian rather than trapper gear (H. Sage 2012).
- White kaolin clay tobacco pipes stems and fragments, like horse tack, are more likely to be found at fur trapper sites than Native American sites. However, kaolin pipe fragments were recovered from the ca. A.D. 1700 Native American Lykins Valley site (Ohr et al. 1979).
- If most of the material culture defined above is found on a site that cannot be assigned to any other time or function, then it should be considered a fur trapper camp.

TESTING THE MODEL

The author is very aware that many Indian groups in the plains and mountains had flintlocks firing musket balls beginning in the late 1700s (see Hamilton 1960; Russell 1977), and that it could be very easy to confuse an Indian camp site with a fur trapper’s camp. Be that as it may, the author believes it is possible to identify and separate trapper camp sites from Indian sites; however, there is no sure-fire recipe for identifying such sites. Although the presence of a single item may identify such sites, more confidence is gained when there is a *constellation* of material culture traits – *but not necessarily all items* – including

location, which may prove to be a very important factor in identifying such sites. The finding of a flint from a flintlock, musket balls, and trap parts together in a location that mimics the historic information of Inman and Sage would suggest that the remains are those of a trapper. Such a co-occurrence would constitute a *preponderance of evidence*.

An attempt was made to determine if these criteria stand up against recorded sites. A search of the computerized cultural resource databases at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History Colorado, resulted in only 13 sites and isolated finds (IFs) (out of a total of 108,525 sites and 49,961 IFs) noted as having the above items or fur trapper terms listed on the site forms (Table 2). Clearly, if a site form did not include such references, then the site could not be found in the database search. As noted in the “Comments” column in Table 2, most of these recorded sites are probably not associated with the fur trade. However, two finds suggest a direct association with early beaver fur trappers based on artifact content, while two others may be associated with the early trade on the basis of the historical record. Isolated find 5MN8300 was a Newhouse #1 leg-trap. This trap was patented in 1802, and the trap recorded is consistent with those used by trappers. Site 5ME18426 was a cache of three Newhouse #4 leg-hold traps. Manufacturing of this item began in 1823. Newhouse merged with the Oneida Company and the words “Newhouse Oneida Community” were stamped on the pan after 1848, with “Victor” stamped on the pan after 1886; these traps most likely date to before 1848. Sites 5AH215 (Trappers Trail) and 5EP6806 (Jimmy Camp) are known through the historic record to have associations with the early beaver fur trade.

The other traps listed in the table for 5CN1016-IF, 5LR1351-IF and 5ME18426 were manufactured after the beaver trade had ended in Colorado. The information available for trap 5BL4241-IF is insufficient to say whether or not it is associated with early beaver trapping. Although it is a multicomponent site, 5GF132 produced a gun flint, axe head, points, biface, flakes, and a mano. This site is probably not associated with the fur trade, but rather is an early historic Native American site as based on the presence of numerous flakes, lithic tools, and the mano.

One reviewer of this article commented that more sites needed to be included in the analysis. The author agrees with this statement, but what we have is what we have. As noted above, if the words “fur trapping” or “fur trade” were never entered into a database, then there is no way that more sites would be identified in the search. It should be noted that the database search only identified Fort Davy Crockett, but not the other known and recorded fur trading posts in the state (see Table 1). A similar problem lies with the misidentification of gun flints in a given site collection that may have been categorized as “chunks,” “irregular flakes,” “shatter,” etc. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the model; problems lie with field identification and with the entries in the database itself.

SUMMARY

Beaver fur trapping was an important economic activity in the Colorado mountains in the early 1800s with thousands of trappers and the establishment

Table 2. Sites Possibly Related to the Fur Trade in the History Colorado Site Database.

SITE NO.	ITEMS	DATES	COMMENTS
5AH215	Trappers Trail	? to 1900s	Trail in Denver area; trail runs from Canada to Mexico. This trail has been errantly named the "Cherokee Trail"
5BL4241-IF*	Leg-hold trap	Unknown	Isolated find
5CN1016-IF*	Leg-hold trap/ Oneida Victor #3	"Victor" stamped on pan after 1886	Isolated find; found with tin cans; company established in 1852 and is still in business
5DV3182*	Recreational shooting range	Recent	.50 cal musket (?) ball with other lead balls and modern ammunition
5EP6806	Jimmy Camp (for trader James Daugherty)	Daugherty's camp ca. 1842	Camp on Trapper's Trail (prehistoric to historic era) and on Jimmy Camp Creek; location only (see Lecompte 1986)
5GF132*	Gun flint, axe head, points, biface, flakes, mano	Prehistoric and early historic	Multicomponent
5LA5385*	Bobcat trap	Modern	Isolated find
5LP7101-IF*	Bobcat trap	1920-1934	Isolated find
5LR712*	Cabin	1859-1860	Log cabin built by French Pete and G. Weary; association with fur trade questionable
5LR1351-IF*	Leg-hold trap / Oneida Victor #4	"Victor" stamped on pan after 1886	Isolated find; chain is welded, not forged
5ME18426	Leg-hold trap / Newhouse #4	1823 to ?	Found as a cache of three traps
5MN8300-IF	Leg trap/ Newhouse #1	Patented 1802	Isolated find; trap style consistent with those used by trappers
5RN388*	Barlow-Sanderson Stage Stop	1870s to 1900	Erroneous computer selection based on text referring to a trading post to west of station

of 27 trading posts in the region. Despite the intensity of the trade, beaver trapping camps have yet to be recorded due to several factors, including a lack of knowledge as to what to look for archaeologically. This paper has reviewed the historical literature for the purpose of identifying some items that may be related to trapping, along with a discussion of activities involved with trapping. Acknowledging several difficulties involved in identifying the camps, this paper has presented some ideas and criteria for archaeologists to consider when evaluating a site's function and cultural association as possibly being related to the fur trade.

Table 3 presents a list of 10 items that might be used to identify beaver fur trappers in the archaeological record. Gun flints, musket balls, and beaver traps are seen as major indicators. Site location may also be suggestive of these specialty camps. Horse tack and kaolin pipes may be used to separate Indians sites from Euroamerican sites. The absence of manos/metates, tin cans, or evidence of the presence of women and children are also considerations in identifying such camps. Rather than one or two items being seen as conclusive evidence of a

Table 3. Summary of Items that Might be Found in Beaver Fur Trapper Camps.

ITEM	PRESENT or ABSENT	COMMENT
Gun Flints	Yes	To ca. 1830 – 1840
Musket Balls	Yes	To ca. 1847
Beaver Traps	Yes	To ca. 1840
Location	Associated with beaver ponds	Not necessarily at the most convenient location; camps are outliers
Stone Scrapers	Perhaps	Indistinguishable from Native American
Manos/Metates	Absent	Flour/corn pre-prepared, not processed at camps
Tin Cans	Absent	Not available until after ca. 1850
Women/Children	Perhaps	Rarely at field trapping camps
Horse Tack	Commercially made with metal fixtures	Indian tack is usually home-made at this time
Kaolin Pipes	Perhaps	Mostly found with Euroamerican sites

trapping camp, it is suggested that archaeologists consider the preponderance of the evidence in the evaluation any remains as possibly being associated with these rarely identified camps.

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