

# Artifact Categories Potentially Represented at Sand Creek

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## Native American Artifact Categories

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Cheyenne, along with other High Plains tribes, had adopted many non-traditional items into their cultures. Objects and materials of non-indigenous origin were re-utilized in the performance of traditional tasks (e.g., wagon hardware used as hide scrapers), or needed for performing non-traditional activities (e.g., coffee grinders, to prepare coffee for brewing). Perhaps the best example of what types of items a Plains Indian village might contain during this period is found in the following inventories. These inventories list the items that were found within the Cheyenne and Sioux camps destroyed by order of Major General W.S. Hancock in April, 1867 (Outpost n.d.:7):

### Cheyenne Camp

132 lodges	70 coffee pots
396 buffalo robes	50 hoes
57 saddles	120 fleshing irons
120 travois	200 parfleche sacks
78 headmats	160 brass kettles
90 axes	40 hammers
58 kettles	15 sets lodge poles
125 fry pans	17 stew pans
200 tin cups	4 draw knives
130 wooden bowls	10 spades
116 tin pans	2 bridles
103 whetstones	93 hatchets
44 sacks paint	25 tea kettles
57 sacks medicine	250 spoons
63 water kegs	157 knives
14 ovens	4 pickaxes
117 rubbing horns	42 coffee mills
264 parfleches	100 chains

### Sioux Camp

140 lodges	82 hoes
420 buffalo robes	25 fleshing irons
226 saddles	40 horn spoons
150 travois	14 crow bars
140 headmats	54 brass kettles

142 axes	11 hammers
138 kettles	5 sets lodge poles
40 frying pans	4 stew pans
190 tin cups	9 drawing knives
146 tin pans	2 spades
140 whetstones	8 bridles
70 sacks paint	3 pitchforks
63 water kegs	3 tea kettles
6 ovens	280 spoons
160 rubbing horns	4 pickaxes
7 coffee mills	1 sword
280 rope lariats	1 extra scabbard
140 chains	1 bayonet
146 parfleches	1 mail bag
50 curry combs	-- stone mallets
58 coffee pots	1 lance

Items not noted in the above inventory and taken by soldiers include buffalo robes, dog skins, calumets, tomahawks, war clubs, beadwork, moccasins, arrows, and dolls.

As the above inventory indicates, favored domestic-related objects on non-traditional manufacture needed to be both portable and sturdy, reflecting the nomadic nature of Plains Indian culture. Black Kettle's band at Sand Creek would have had ready access to these items through trade, annuities, and raiding. Also, there probably would have been "heirloom" objects that had been initially acquired by an ancestor many years prior to 1864, e.g., a peace medal, a non-serviceable flintlock musket, a brass kettle originally acquired from a French-Canadian trader. The containers that held food annuities (e.g., hardtack, salted beef and salt pork, flour, and coffee beans) would have been re-used as containers, or recycled into other useful items, e.g., box nails sharpened into awls, segments of barrel hoops cut into arrow points.

During the spring and summer of 1864, members of Black Kettle's band conducted successful attacks on wagon trains, stage coaches, homesteads, and cavalry civilian livestock. These attacks provided a wide range on non-native items. Again, certain objects of non-native materials and functions would have been curated for uses other than what had been intended by the manufacturer. A most desired object of Indian raids was livestock. A portion of the livestock taken by Black Kettle's warriors in 1864 reportedly ended up as part of the camp herd as it existed on November 29, 1864. In his account of the massacre, Private Irving Howbert noted that horses and mules taken by the Cheyenne during the previous summer were part of the Indians' herd (Dunn 1985:29). It is possible, therefore, that horse and mule shoes associated with this herd exist within and in the vicinity of the village. Livestock tack of both military and civilian design might also be found within the village. It is less likely that ox shoes would be found within the village site since oxen would have slowed up the returning war party.

By the mid-nineteenth century firearms had become an integral part of the Plains Indian culture. Plains tribes, such as the Cheyenne, acquired firearms via agency traders, non-licensed/illicit firearms traders, from other tribes and bands, as annuity and treaty issues, and those firearms captured through raiding and battles. These sources resulted in a wide variety of muzzle- and breech-loading rifles and pistols. A typical, circa 1864 Plains Indian viillage probably contained a wide variety of arms that included obsolete flintlocks and percussion rifles made for the Indian trade, then-modern Civil War era rifle-muskets intended for military use, carbines, single-shot pistols and revolvers.

Ammunition for trade flintlocks and percussion longarms would have required loose black powder and round ball, the latter ranging anywhere between .36 and .71 caliber. Accouterments for both flintlock and percussion firearms would have included a powder horn or metal flask, lead bar, bullet molds, gun worms and vent pricks. Flintlocks specifically required gunflints, flint caps or grips, and gunpowder pan brushes. Percussion firearms required percussion caps. Some of the ammunition in Black Kettle's village probably included metallic cartridges of a variety of caliber, the result of successful recent attacks on military and civilian wagon trains, stagecoaches, and homesteads. Other ammunition may have included .58, .69, and .71 caliber Minié bullets, taken from military stores and from soldiers that had been killed. Even if the Indians did not have the correct firearms needed to fire Minié bullets metallic cartridges, such ammunition—along with the black powder found within the paper and metallic cartridges—would have been curated, with the lead later to be re-cast into appropriate ball caliber for muzzle loaders.

### **First and Third Colorado Cavalry Accouterments, Firearms, and Artillery**

Apparel—Two former members of the Third Cavalry stated that this unit had been issued regular uniforms and accouterments just prior to the Sand Creek massacre (M.H. Coffin, In Werner 1993:34-35; Irving Howbert, In Dunn 1985:21). The Civil War-era cavalry uniform consisted of a jacket that had twelve, cuff-size brass general service buttons (early style), and two smaller collar buttons. The trousers had four-hole buttons made of tinned iron or tin, used as fly and suspender buttons. Waist cinch buckles were needed since belts were not used as part of the uniform. The cavalry hat had a crossed-saber insignia, and a unit number or letter, or both. The 'Jeff Davis'-style cavalry hat plate might also have been worn by the volunteers. Metal parts of an infantry forage cap (which might have been issued to at least some of the troopers in lieu of a regulation cavalry hat) sported two sleeve-size general service buttons with one on either side of the chin strap, and a chin strap buckle.

The 1854 Uniform Regulations required that officers' buttons be gilded, and that each of these buttons indicate the branch of service by a letter, i.e., "C" for cavalry; "I", infantry; "D", dragoons (not regulation after 1861); "R", rifleman; and "A", artillery. These are the so-called "line eagle" buttons. However, if the volunteers were issued uniforms manufactured prior to 1854, it is likely that all of the buttons used on such uniforms were of the line eagle type, regardless of rank. It is also possible that some, if not all, of the

volunteers wore the infantry sack coat. This coat had four general service buttons of a larger diameter than those buttons found on cavalry jackets.

Although the volunteers were cavalry troopers, it is possible that “I”, “A” “D” and “R” line eagle buttons could have been used on their uniforms, as well as any of a variety of volunteer uniform buttons of the Civil War era. Also, the forage cap insignia used to signify infantry, i.e., the bugle or hunt horn, might also be present at the site. This is because the volunteers may well have been outfitted with whatever was available at Forts Leavenworth and Lyons, regardless as to what was stipulate by uniform regulations. Some of the volunteers may have worn a few articles of non-regulation civilian clothing underneath their uniforms, e.g., shirts, underwear. Shirts of the period used buttons made of a variety of materials, with white glass and shell being the most common. Vulcanized rubber buttons might also be present at the site, as well as decorative, non-military types made of brass or silver.

Accouterments—While not actually parts of apparel, accouterments would have been issued to the volunteers and were thus as much a part of the uniform as shirts and trousers. Items in this category include a canteen (Pattern 1861), haversack, rubberized poncho, saber and related hardware, i.e., the pre-1874 saber belt adjustment hook, D-ring, and rectangular belt loop; cavalry-issue spurs, and boots. The presence of certain military accouterments at Sand Creek could be identified by their associated, distinctive metal fittings: a Pattern 1861 canteen by its stopper chain, a rubberized poncho by its brass grommets, a brass rowel from a Civil War-era regulation spur, and so forth.

As per regulations, each trooper would have been issued a variety of horse equipment: a regulation saddle (probably a Model 1859 McClellan saddle), saddle blanket, bridle, bridle bit, feed bag, saddle bags, a Model 1859 picket pin (one was discovered during the 1997 survey of the Dawson property), and horse grooming tools, e.g., curry comb, hoof pick. Once again, the use of these items by the volunteers might be determined by the presence of distinctive metal fittings, e.g., a saddlestrap guard plate, seven of which were used on a McClellan saddle. Each trooper also would have had one or two spare horse shoes and horse shoe nails. There might have been one or more farriers attached to the cavalry column; this individual(s) would have had specialized tools of the farrier’s trade. Evidence of horseshoes having been replaced would include the branches of broken or worn-out shoes, and the clipped-off ends of horseshoe nails. (Question: Is it possible that Plains Indians at least occasionally shod their horses?)

Food Storage and Preparation—Food cans in use during the Civil War era were of the hole-in-cap technology. Cans encountered on Civil War sites may include both canned rations issued by the commissary department, and commercial canned foods obtained from sutlers or other sources. It is possible, therefore, that non-Army issue luxury items, such as canned fruit, were obtained by the volunteers prior to their leaving Denver. probably the most common food items taken by the volunteers were non-packaged hardtack and fatback or bacon. (Interestingly, hardtack has been found on a few Civil War sites, a sort of non-gustatory tribute to this material’s longevity).

During the Civil War enlisted soldiers on campaign were expected to prepare and cook their own rations. Officers usually had orderlies do this task for them. It was also expected that soldiers supply the necessary cooking equipment. It is unlikely that the volunteers, being without supply wagons, would have burdened themselves with bulky cooking equipment. What rations that needed cooking, such as bacon, was probably cooked before their leaving Fort Lyons, and was eaten only slightly warm or even cold. Nonetheless, each volunteer probably would have possessed eating utensils in addition to the ubiquitous tin cup.

Personal Possessions—Just about anything that could be carried in a pocket, haversack or bed roll could be in this category. Objects typically carried by soldiers during the Civil War include a “housewife”, which was a cloth packet containing such clothing repair items as needles and straight pins; a straightedge razor; pocket knife, tobacco pouch or tin, match saver, smoking pipe (made of ceramic, wood, meershaum), jewelry (wedding ring, picture locket), pocket watch, and money.

Firearms—Mr. William Dawson has written a useful manuscript that itemizes the types of firearms used by the troopers. Specifically, Dawson notes that the volunteers were largely armed with Austrian and Belgian muzzle-loaders that fired a .71 caliber, Minié-type bullet. Other shoulder arms models included Sharps and Starr carbines, both firing a .54 caliber bullet; the Model 1841 Harpers Ferry “Mississippi” percussion rifle that fired a .525 caliber ball; various models of Harpers Ferry rifle muskets that fired .69 and .58 calibers of Minié-type bullets; and a few Colt repeating rifles that used .44 caliber bullets. Sidearms included Colt Army .44 caliber revolvers, Starr revolvers of both .44 and .36 calibers, and .36 caliber Whitney revolvers.

Several of the volunteers apparently used privately purchased weapons: M.H. Coffin, for instance, brought to Sand Creek his Smith & Wesson carbine. This weapon used a cartridge made of rubber, chemically treated linen or heavy foil, and fired a .50 caliber bullet. A Wesson .44 caliber rifle, using rimfire metal cartridges, might also have been a private purchase that was used at Sand Creek. Mr. Dawson makes a good point that the great majority of firearms used by both sides at Sand Creek would have used paper or linen cartridges, and that metal cartridge cases should be a relatively scarce artifact type at the site.

Artillery—Two, 12-pounder mountain howitzers were used by the volunteers. This type of fieldpiece could fire round shot, spherical case, common shell, and canister. Round shot is simply a solid, cast iron ball; a 12-pounder round shot has a diameter of 4.52 inches. Common shell has a wall thickness of .75 inches; spherical case, .50 inches. A spherical case round contained forty, .64 caliber lead balls. Thus, if such balls are found at Sand Creek, it should not be assumed that they were intended for a musket, as has sometimes been assumed when found on a period battlefield.

Most likely, the spherical case and common shell used at Sand Creek had Bormann fuses, which might be found intact or in fragment form. Canister for 12-pounder howitzers contained cast iron balls, either 1.08 or 1.05 inches in diameter. Fragments of the tin

canister might also be found at Sand Creek, as well as iron or tin strips used to fix canister or roundshot to the wooden sabot. These strips would be in fragments, but it might still have its distinctive crimping where it was secured in close contact with the grooves of the sabot. Several 1 ½ inch-long cut nails were used to secure the metal strips to the sabot, and might also be found on the site. Friction primers were used to ignite the howitzers, the primers appearing in fragmented form, i.e., twisted and looped wire and copper tube. Their discovery on the site would indicate the vicinity where the howitzers had been placed.

One should keep in mind that, if a military-related artifact is found at Sand Creek, its last owner may have been an Indian warrior. An unknown amount and variety of military items was acquired, via raids, by Black Kettle's band during the summer and fall of 1864. Thus, the discovery of a military button, an unfired .58 caliber Minié bullet, or handle to a tin cup should not be deemed conclusive evidence as to where a volunteer once stood.