UNCOVERING A CHINESE LEGACY: HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AT

Centerville, Idaho

ONCE THE "HANDSOMEST TOWN IN THE BASIN"

BY

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This publication has been made more “reader-friendly” by eliminating the manuscript’s numerous footnotes to source citations. Persons wanting specific references to information contained in the text are invited to contact the author at the Asian American Comparative Collection, Alfred W. Bowers Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-1111.

TITLE PAGE PHOTO:

BOISE BASIN MINER AND HIS DWELLING, ABOUT 1900. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 76-119.6.
John Morton "Jack" Young attended the University of Virginia and the University of Texas at El Paso, earning a BA in American and Latin Studies in 1967. He then obtained his MA in Anthropology in 1970 from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Jack served as archaeologist from 1977 to 1994 for the Bureau of Land Management’s Boise District. Those who knew Jack not only appreciated his professionalism in the field, but also the breadth of his character and his variety of interests.

He was fluent in Spanish, he taught anthropology and archaeology, he was an avid ham radio operator and collector of vintage equipment, he was a pilot, and he was a master classical guitar musician.

Jack passed away on February 22, 1995, after a long battle with prostate cancer, but his spirit lives on.

This publication is a celebration of Jack’s work — from the family, friends, co-workers, and fellow archaeologists whose lives he deeply touched.
It is my pleasure to write the foreword to this publication. The Bureau of Land Management manages about 12 million acres in Idaho, practicing multiple-use management decision-making every day. This report presents the findings of a cultural resource project undertaken to understand the historical values existing at the old Centerville town site, once a thriving frontier gold mining town. The project at Centerville is an example of a conflict that resource managers and their staff deal with. Ironically, the pursuit of gold is the activity that currently threatens the old townsite. Expanding mineral prospecting within the townsite (since it was initially spared from prospecting) conflicts with BLM’s management responsibilities to protect and preserve cultural resources, including historical properties and BLM’s administration of the 1872 mining law.

The project took several years to complete, but it was well worth the wait. The final outcome is a workable management plan. The project was a team effort that required consultation, patience, compromise, and hard work. The results represent a solution that allows the miner to continue working his claim as provided by the 1872 mining law, while cooperating with BLM to preserve and share information about Centerville’s history and contributions to Idaho’s settlement.

Centerville’s history has not ended, but continues under BLM’s management to provide our public land users a place to visit where you can imagine life in a 1860 mining camp, eat a picnic lunch, cross-country ski, hike, or hunt big game. I hope you enjoy reading and learning about Centerville’s colorful history in Uncovering a Chinese Legacy: Historical Archaeology at Centerville, Idaho – Once “The Handsomest Town in the Basin.”

John Fend
Area Manager, Bureau of Land Management
Cascade Resource Area
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PROJECT ASSISTANCE

Project Assistance......................................................... 211
Dr. Priscilla Wegars is a native of California who has made Idaho her home for more than twenty years. She is a self-employed historian and historical archaeologist, specializing in Chinese settlements in the West.

Dr. Wegars received her bachelor’s degree in German from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1961. She earned a master’s degree in scientific methods in archaeology from the University of Bradford, in Bradford, West Yorkshire, England, in 1977. She completed her formal education in 1991 by earning a doctorate from the University of Idaho in history/historical archaeology.

She is the founder and curator of the University of Idaho’s Asian American Comparative Collection. She is also on the Idaho Humanities Council Speakers’ Bureau and in their Scholars-in-the-Schools program.

A prolific researcher and writer, Dr. Wegars is a widely recognized authority on overseas Chinese history and archaeology in the western United States. Among her publication credits are:


Dr. Wegars has extensive field archaeological experience and has worked as the principal investigator at the Ah Hee Diggings, near Granite, Oregon. She has also worked on excavations of other Chinese sites at Arrowtown, New Zealand; Boise, Idaho; Pierce, Idaho; and Warren, Idaho.
enterville, Idaho, located northeast of Boise in the area known as the Boise Basin, was established in 1862 following gold discoveries on nearby Grimes Creek. Documentary sources indicate that Centerville had a Chinese laundryman by 1865, and Boise County deeds show that other Chinese residents of Centerville began to buy up placer mining claims in the vicinity as early as 1867. By 1870, more than half of Centerville's population was Chinese. Although census records show their numbers and percentages declined in later years, Chinese remained there at least through 1910.

Despite the long-standing presence of Chinese in the community, very little was known of them. Interestingly, Centerville also had two African-American residents in 1870, and one Japanese American resident in 1910. Once a bustling community, Centerville is no longer even a "ghost town;" all its buildings are now gone. Today, it is part of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Cascade Resource Area, which is within the Lower Snake River District. Major fires in 1870 and 1910 destroyed most of the early structures; those that did not burn have since collapsed. During the Depression, placer mining began in the old town site, disturbing and/or destroying once-intact subsurface deposits. In the 1960s and 1970s, bottle collectors and relic hunters discovered Centerville and ravaged areas of it. Both activities, placer mining and relic collecting, continue today; although the former is legal, the latter is not.

Continued placer mining by claim owners has presented BLM with a continuing administrative dilemma. In order to understand the extent of resource conflicts and resolve these difficulties, BLM contracted with a private firm for a cultural resource survey of Centerville. The resulting report was published in 1989. It documented 33 sites, either within the former town or its vicinity; identified their ethnic components, whether Euroamerican or Chinese, or both; and evaluated their potential for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Because placer mining would take place on federal land, federal law requires that archaeological work be done in advance of such mining, to mitigate any potential adverse effects that the mining might have on the historic property (i.e., the Centerville town site). BLM therefore developed a data recovery plan and research methodology. The data recovery plan detailed previous research and posed both primary and secondary research questions.

The research methodology provided for a controlled surface collection, archaeological test excavation of four sites (Figs. 1, 2), and compilation of a preliminary report. The initial research questions that were developed for the Centerville historic property focused on...
the Chinese occupation of the town site. For that reason, BLM selected University of Idaho Laboratory of Anthropology (UILA) personnel for the archaeological excavations because of their extensive experience in researching and excavating overseas Chinese sites.

The Centerville town site archaeological investigations took place from July 12 through 31, 1993. The work was carried out by 26 volunteers, four field school students, and several staff members. It was a cooperative effort involving three different agencies. BLM's Lower Snake River District provided financial and logistical support. The Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) loaned most of the equipment and organized the volunteers' participation, while the UILA conducted the field school and provided overall supervision for the investigations. The Archaeological Survey of Idaho-Western Repository in Boise houses the Centerville artifacts, field notes, and other project documentation.

The project investigated portions of 12 sites (Figs. 3, 4), recovered thousands of artifacts, and entered them into databases. Unfortunately, the 1993 Centerville archaeological investigations alone did not increase the knowledge of the Chinese in that community as much as had been anticipated. This was mainly due to the investigated sites falling into one of four categories: although Chinese, they were too disturbed to be of much value; they were Euroamerican, either overwhelmingly or completely; they were not “sites” as such; or they were found during exploratory trenching and have not yet been investigated.

The results of the archaeological investigations, however, began to enhance the knowledge about the Centerville Chinese and their way of life. Even more important, was the wealth of knowledge gained from contemporary newspapers and other primary sources during documentary research. This phase of the project, supported by a generous grant from the University of Idaho’s John Calhoun Smith Memorial Fund, enabled researchers to integrate archaeological and documentary research to provide a much fuller picture of the Chinese at Centerville.
It takes a small army of committed people to conduct and support an archaeological excavation of the scope of what occurred at Centerville. Perhaps it’s safe to say that no one person was essential to the excavation’s success, yet everyone was needed to fill a role and carry out important responsibilities.

The weight of those responsibilities did fall a little more heavily on some people. Special thanks and recognition need to go to Dr. Priscilla Wegars, volunteer curator of the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho, who served as the team leader of the excavation and is the author of this report.

Mention also needs to be made of the outstanding crew of field volunteers, who in many ways served as the backbone of the project. Any kind of acknowledgment would be far from complete without recognizing the efforts of the many people who work for the agencies and organizations involved in the Centerville work: the Bureau of Land Management; Idaho State Historical Society; and the University of Idaho.

A thank-you also needs to be extended to Ted Scharff. Without his support, cooperation, and patience, this excavation, research, and report could not have succeeded.

A list of many other people who helped on the project is included at the end of this report. Apologies go to anyone who was left out; our intention was to include anyone who helped in any way, but it was an imposing number and someone may have been inadvertently left off the list.

The participants were wonderful to work with and the results were of high quality, timely, and valuable. Thanks again to all who helped shed light on why Centerville once was “the handsomest town in the Basin.”

Centerville, Idaho
CHAPTER ONE
A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTERVILLE'S CAUCASIAN COMMUNITY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In August 1862, the Moses Splawn-George Grimes party discovered gold northeast of Boise, in the Boise Basin. As described by historian Annie Laurie Bird, the Boise Basin “is irregularly circular in outline and is fifteen miles in diameter. It is situated at the head of Moore’s Creek and its several branches, and contains about two hundred and fifty square miles of creeks, gulches and hills. Mountains separate it from the surrounding country. [This] celebrated mining locality...is about twenty-five miles northeast of the present city of Boise.” The initial find was actually made on Boston Bar, near where Centerville later stood, and is attributed to Dave Fogus, whose shovelful of dirt there yielded gold worth 15 cents. The group moved on, to the site of present-day Pioneerville, where local Indians indicated their resentment of the intruders by firing shots at them. Heedless of this warning, the gold seekers pursued their attackers, halting only when Grimes, in the lead, received a fatal bullet. The remainder of the party prudently left the Basin, obtained reinforcements, and returned in October to begin mining. A later eulogy portrayed Grimes not as an encroacher, but as a “brave pioneer who...gave up his life in conflict with the savage foes.” Grimes Creek honors his memory.

EARLY CENTERVILLE

The returning miners founded the town of Pioneer. Other prospectors soon joined them, but branched out to establish Centerville in November. As its name doubly implies, Centerville “was [not only] an important mining center, [but also] was nearly in the center of the Boise Basin” (Fig. 1.1). By December, the towns of Bannock City [soon called Idaho City], Buena Vista, and Placerville had emerged. Other towns followed shortly thereafter, including Boston, Gold Hill, Granite Creek, and Quartzburg.

Miners by the thousands flocked to the new placer diggings, hoping to be among the lucky ones such as those whose claims, near Idaho City, yielded “$6,000 to $8,000 [in] an ordinary week’s clean up.” Entrepreneur B. L. Warriner constructed a sawmill on Grimes Creek to feed the developing towns’ appetite for lumber, and Daily and Robinson pursued a similar enterprise at Centerville in early 1863.

The burgeoning population led to establishment of the Idaho Territory on March 4, 1863. Centerville itself swelled to 1,500 people by August 1863, and to 2,638 by September 1863 when a census counted the new territory’s population. In comparison, Idaho City’s population was 6,275 and Placerville’s was 3,254, while only 725 people resided in Boise.

Centerville then included 94 women and 56 children. The presence of women and children can be explained by the fact that only half the Basin’s population engaged in mining; the rest, according to author John Hailey, were “merchants, lumbermen, hotel and restaurant keepers, butchers, blacksmiths, saloon-keepers, gamblers, theatrical people, lawyers, ministers, ranchers, stockmen, and transportation companies.”

Centerville, Idaho
Fig. 1.1. Map of Boise Basin mining districts. Drawn by Yixian Xu from an Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology 1928 version.

Centerville, Idaho
In June and July of 1863, Aubrey Angelo, correspondent for the *Daily Alta California*, a San Francisco newspaper, wrote, *Centerville, on Grimes Creek, is five miles from Placerville, in the central part of a rich and extensive mining district. The whole creek, forty miles in length, has proved to be rich in gold and quartz, and at the present time is being extensively worked. The town, which has sprung up within the last two months, contains sixty-five houses, but is without either school or house of worship. Several respectable families who have recently crossed the plains, are here located, and the place bids fair to become a prosperous and flourishing town.*

Another correspondent added that “Grimes [C]reek affords an abundance of water, and the mines that command it are very rich;” the miners were all at work, so much so that “Centerville appear[ed] dead in the streets.” This was to be expected, since the miners who obtained supplies in that town were widely scattered throughout the surrounding area, more so than for any other Basin community.

By January 1864, the Boise Basin had its first post office, at Placerville, and “Centerville” apparently had one by late June of that same year. Also in 1864, Centerville’s population peaked at an estimated 4,000 persons. That year, the Collector of Internal Revenue reported that he obtained $1,187.87 at Centerville; this amount was second, in the Basin, only to Idaho City’s $6,082.72.

**Caucasian Centerville Between 1865 and 1897**

A business directory published in 1865 provides an idea of what Centerville must have been like in its heyday. The town boasted five saloons, four markets, four bakeries, three general merchandise stores, several livery stables, two restaurants, two boarding houses, a brewery, a hotel, a Wells Fargo office, a vegetable stand, and a Chinese laundry. Other occupations, held by men, included attorney, blacksmith, bookkeeper, boot and shoe maker, butcher, carpenter, clerk, druggist, hairdresser [barber], millwright, miner, and physician. The few women whose names appeared in the business directory included one who was a midwife and physician and several who had no occupation listed.

Since the Boise Basin boom years only lasted from 1863 to 1866, Centerville gradually declined, along with the rest of the region. By October 1865, according to an article in the *Idaho World* newspaper, “the crowds that once thronged the streets and gulches [had] nearly disappeared,” partly due to a lack of sufficient water for mining. A year later, the *Idaho World* reported that only 150 men were mining there, despite plentiful water and good pay. However, one astute visitor stated that Centerville “is very far from being exhausted as a mining camp” and predicted that “next year [it will] be one of the most prosperous mining localities” in the Basin.

The visitor’s prediction proved to be true. In early June 1866, the “little burg...presented a lively appearance” when it hosted Boise County’s Democratic convention. Centerville, listed in an Idaho Territory business directory, then included a livery stable; a saloon; six general merchandise stores; a hotel; the proprietor of the Pioneer City Toll Road; two physicians, one of whom was also a druggist; and three attorneys.

In 1867, mainly due to improved water delivery and ditch systems that allowed new ground to be worked, the *Idaho World* reported that “the diggings [paid] fully as well as in former seasons...yielding all the way from wages to big pay.” That year, the town’s population was about 1,100, but by the 1870 census, Centerville’s population was 515, of whom only 243
47.2 percent) were Caucasian. Centerville’s decline was mainly attributable to the exhaustion of the easily von streambed gold; at the time of Aubrey Angelo’s visit in 1863, claims in such deposits provided most miners with an income of $5 to $6 per day against food costs of about $9 per week. When their income declined, they left for richer sources elsewhere. In particular, 1869 saw merchants and independent miners depart in large numbers for new gold strikes at Loon Creek, in Lemhi County.

Other Caucasian miners remained, many working for mining companies that had sufficient capital to exploit gold found in hillside deposits or imbedded in quartz veins. For example, quartz or “hard rock” deposits required specialized crushing equipment, such as stamp mills, to remove the imbedded gold from its matrix, while hillside claims needed water-delivery ditches for hydraulic mining. A number of mining ditches in the vicinity of Centerville accessed water from Grimes Creek and its tributaries.

To process ore from the lode mines, a “Col. Raymond” erected a 10-stamp mill in the vicinity; however, by mid-October 1868, quartz mining had declined and the stamp mill was sold and converted into a sawmill producing lumber for flumes. Miners in the Centerville vicinity believed their gold was of better quality than that recovered from the Idaho City area. Idaho City gold dust was worth $14 per ounce, while that from Centerville was valued at $16 per ounce. In January 1867, Centerville’s citizens passed a resolution declaring that they would “not encourage the circulation” of Idaho City gold dust at any price, and inviting miners and other citizens of Placerville, Pioneer, Applejack, Muddy, and Boston to join in their resolve.

Despite the reduced population, Centerville’s entrepreneurs thrived. In May 1870, a local merchant received a very large supply of goods from the States.

Other Caucasian-owned businesses included Bourgeois Hotel; stores run by Duke & Company, S. Ridge, and Vantine & Company; several saloons; and a saloon and brewery belonging to Tincher & McDevitt. Centerville even had a resident physician, Dr. Freeman. According to Henry Knapp, an early pioneer, “Centerville [was] the prettiest town in [the] Boise Basin” and was “one of the best [gold mining] camps in the Basin.” The route between it and “Pioneer City” was “one of the best roads and most delightful drives to be found anywhere in the country.”

New arrival Anna Goldtrap, wife of mining entrepreneur Samuel K. Goldtrap, described Centerville as “a lively town...[with] three dry goods stores, three or four saloons, tinshops, drugstores...[and] two hotels.” When Centerville burned in late October 1870, the fire destroyed most of the Caucasian-owned businesses. Those burned included a barber shop, a blacksmith shop, a cabinet shop, a fruit store, the Bourgeois Hotel and Mrs. Neville’s hotel, a stage line’s stable, a livery stable, the Odd Fellows’ lodge, a market, an office, Tincher & McDevitt’s saloon, three other drinking establishments, an unspecified shop, Duke’s store, S. Ridge’s store and warehouse, Vantine & Co.’s store, and a tinshop, in addition to a number of dwellings.

Centerville recovered quickly, however. By late November 1870, L. O. Benedict reported in the Capital Chronicle newspaper that “[t]he citizens are now snugly ensconced in comfortable dwellings and stores.” On December 1st, an Idaho World report commented, “This town is being rapidly rebuilt, and presents a better appearance than it did before the fire. The houses are larger and more commodious, and are built in a substantial manner, with none of the little shanties and ‘deadfalls’ stuck in between larger houses, as was the case with the old town....

Centerville, Idaho
Mr. Goldtrap has [proposed] to supply the town with water...and...he will lay pipes throughout the town and put hydrants at the street corners, for use in case of fire.

By early 1872, Centerville’s business district had declined to about half its original size. The Caucasian community then contained a Masonic Hall as well as “two stores, one hotel, one livery stable, one tinshop, one blacksmithshop [sic], one saloon, [and] one drugstore;” in addition, besides some miners’ cabins, there were “perhaps half a dozen residences,” but these were “much costlier and more substantial than their more numerous predecessors,” according to the Idaho World. A visitor in May 1874 reported substantially the same businesses, except that there was only one store, no tinshop, and no drugstore. However, additional businesses included a brewery in conjunction with the saloon, a boot and shoe shop, a meat market, and a peanut stand.

In the spring of 1875, a “Centerville Business Directory” appeared in several issues of the Idaho World. Combining several such lists indicated the existence of the following businesses in Centerville: G. W. Crafts, dealer in general merchandise and Agent for the Wells, Fargo & Company Express office; Jerome Beardsley, fruit, cigars, and beer, as well as a blacksmith shop; Chris [C. C.] Meffert, hotel, brewery, and saloon; Stephen Dempsey, livery and feed stable; “French Joe” [Joseph Brousseau], boot and shoe maker; Fred Hooflein, cabinet shop; George Cartwright, hay and feed store; post office, with P. J. Moore, postmaster; Louis Perre, restaurant; Channel & Church, sawmill; B. F. Channell & Co., ditch; S. K. Goldtrap, ditch; A. Dobbs, later Hardin and Daly, butcher shop; and F. Harmon, doctor.

There were also five Chinese businesses, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Newspaper columns in the Idaho World between 1871 and 1877 also named some of these same businesses, as well as others, after Centerville's re-building. Additional businesses mentioned included a butcher shop/meat market, a shoemaker, a Literary and Debating Society, a Dancing Club, and a Centerville String Band. A monte [gambling] game indicated “that money is a little more flush there than in the other camps.”

An 1877 survey of Centerville businesses in the Idaho Statesman found “a good hotel, whose table is not excelled by any in the Territory.” C. C. Meffert ran it, and also kept a “neat and quiet saloon...well supplied with the best articles sought for in such establishments.” Other enterprises mentioned included M. F. Waldron’s store, Havird Brothers livery stable, David Murray’s meat market, W. H. Offord’s fruit and variety store, and J. B. Beardsley’s blacksmith shop.

Even in 1877, placer mining near Centerville still retained many signs of life. On April 14 of that year, the Idaho Statesman reported The placer mines about Centerville lie on either side of Grimes' Creek, which flows past the town, and are supplied with water by three principal ditches, which take the water from the creek several miles above. Doyle & Co. own the ditch on the east side, opposite the town. This ditch is about eight miles long, and cost about $75,000. Besides this, there is an annual cost of from $3,000 to $4,000 for tending and repairs. On the west side there are two ditches; the lower one belonging to S. K. Goldtrap, Esq., of about equal length with that of Doyle & Co; and the other belonging to Ben Willson Esq. of Pioncerville, which is several miles longer than either of the others.... The fact that these long ditches are kept in repair and cared for at so great an expense is sufficient evidence of the extent and value of the placers which they cover....

In May 1878, an Idaho Statesman account from a recent visitor lauded Centerville as “the handsomest town in the Basin,” and described it as “one of the old and prosperous camps of the Basin” and “the most
cleanly, healthy place you will find in Idaho.” However, a business directory for that year listed just three businesses in “Centerville.” They were C. C. Meffert, hotel; W. H. Offord, general merchandise; and M. F. Waldron, also general merchandise. The 1880 census recorded 217 people there, including 120 Caucasians (55.3 percent). By the fall of 1881, according to the Idaho Statesman, just “two score of houses... comprise[d] what was once the largest placer mining camp in America.” Local boosterism aside, the astute correspondent foreshadowed the dredge era by observing that “yet in the bed of Grimes’ creek there is wealth untold, buried under the accumulated tailings of the last eighteen years to a depth of nearly forty feet.”

Caucasian-owned businesses had also dwindled. In September 1881, the Idaho World reported that M. F. Waldron’s store continued, with “the largest and best selected stock of groceries;” James Young had converted his home into a store and saloon, where he “slings a very graceful corkscrew;” George Anderson had bought the meat market; and Mrs. C. C. Meffert managed the hotel, “the best house of the basin.” In the latter establishment, the “worthy landlady” provided, on each table, “a piece of pretty pink gauze for the exclusive use of bald-headed patrons, as a protection against the ravages of the infernal flies which are so troublesome at present.”

Despite these amenities, during the spring of 1882 the “mania for gambling...struck Centerville,” corrupting what the Idaho World described as its former “good morals as a town.” Soon, however, The History of Idaho Territory, published in 1884, observed that “there is at present but a moderate amount of business carried on,” mentioning only C. C. Meffert’s hotel, saloon, and store; Waldron and Church’s mercantile establishment, a Wells Fargo express office, and the Utah, Idaho, & Oregon Stage Company.

Centerville’s school was constructed during the winter of 1884-1885, and the 1886 city directory listed G. W. Anderson’s meat market, C. C. Charles’s livery stable, J. C. Hariod’s [sic] meat market, and C. C. Moffat’s [sic] hotel and general store, for a population estimated at only 30 people. According to the Idaho Statesman, a visitor in June 1886 only noted C. C. Meffert’s saloon and hotel and Haviard’s [sic] “livery and feed stable;” M. F. Waldron ran the post office. By 1889, according to the city directory, Centerville’s population was 100, and the town had a Catholic church; Mrs. G. W. Anderson’s meat market; G. S. Church’s general store; and C. C. Meffert’s hotel, saloon, and livery; while Joseph Bro[j]seau continued as a boot maker.

The 1890 manuscript census for most of the United States was destroyed in a 1921 fire in Washington, DC, so specific information is not available for that year. In October 1894, Norman Young had a new hall constructed on one corner of Main Street, which the Idaho World noted, “adds much to the beauty of our town.” It measured 28 by 52 feet, and “has been leased by the Centerville Christian Temperance Union for a term of years, thus putting a stop to that ungodly amusement — dancing — within its walls.”

A survey map made in 1895 shows ten buildings in Centerville. They clustered around the intersection of the Star Ranch road and the Placerville/Centerville/Idaho City road. The surveyors’ field notes regretfully do not identify the owners of these buildings. By early 1896, what the Idaho World described as the Centerville Christian Temperance Union’s “untiring zeal” led to the closure of all the town’s saloons. The Centerville Athletic Club was another local organization in the mid-1890s, and by 1897 the town once again had a literary club, which also boasted its own string band.

Few photographs exist of early Centerville. One, made in 1897 by J. H. Lawell of Caldwell, was repro-
duced in The Idaho Statesman in 1969. It was taken looking down what was probably Main Street, toward Grimes Creek, and shows a number of buildings on both sides of the street.

**CENTERVILLE REVITALIZED, 1898 TO LATE-1910**

Beginning in 1898, another mining boom brought renewed prosperity to Centerville. Mining companies used dredges to exploit placer gold deposits, operations that sometimes proved to be quite profitable. Other mining entrepreneurs recovered monazite on a commercial scale. This mineral yielded thorium, which was used in making mantles for incandescent gas lamps. However, Centerville’s new euphoria lasted only a few short years. A fire in September 1910 wiped out most of the business district as well as some of the mining operations.

**GOLD MINING**

Mining geologist Waldemar Lindgren visited the Boise Basin in the mid-1890s and subsequently produced a report that included a description of the region’s gold-bearing gravels and other minerals. He estimated that the region had produced gold worth $44,651,800 between 1863 and 1896. Lindgren characterized and evaluated the Centerville area’s prospects for further mining as follows:

A large amount of tailings lies nearly all along Grimes Creek. At Centerville they are 900 feet wide; farther up they narrow considerably, where the hills approach closer to the creek, to widen again near Pioneerville.... Concerning the gold content of these tailings,... [they] can doubtless be worked profitably in many places by means of hydraulic elevators or dredges. The difficulty is to obtain a sufficient water supply. The tailings are very sandy, being composed of almost 60 per cent sand and 40 per cent cobbles, and the maximum depth is 15 to 20 feet....

[G]ravel benches occur at different elevations all along Grimes Creek. The two most prominent benches are at elevations of 30 and 60 feet above the present creek bed, but scattered gravel occurs at higher elevations also.

Such is the thin gravel occurring near Centerville up to 150 feet above the creek. These bench gravels have been very extensively worked, and but little remains of them near Centerville. A short distance above Centerville, at a place called Bummer Hill, they were of unusual richness....

[There] a granitic sand...forms the bed rock.

A hundred years later, this “granitic sand” was particularly noticeable at one of the sites excavated in 1993 where it was indeed the “bed rock” underlying the excavation units. The Town Creek road leading to it, about one-half mile north and east of Centerville, climbed a hill past impressive sand formations remaining from previous mining. Although the United States Geological Survey quadrangle map does not show such a designation, that area was probably “Bummer Hill.”

By November 1898, dredge mining had come to the Centerville vicinity, bringing prosperity as well as excitement. According to the Idaho World:

Quite a number of visitors from all parts of the Basin were present...to witness the launching of the dredge company’s big boat, [the] S. K. Goldtrap. The dimensions of this boat, nautically speaking, are length...
over all, ninety-six feet; breadth of beam, thirty-six feet; depth of hold, twelve feet.

To launch the boat, workers created a pond 100 by 150 feet wide and 5 feet deep, and filled it with water from the creek. The Idaho World reported that the launch details “were so nicely arranged that not the slightest mistake of any kind occurred.”

Dredges typically could process 3,000 cubic yards of dirt and gravel every 24 hours. Those used in the Boise Basin were generally bucket dredges. Originally invented in New Zealand, they consisted of an “endless chain” of huge iron scoops, called buckets. This apparatus, weighing over 100 tons, was freighted to the desired location, and a boat was built to hold it. Then, as the Idaho World explained to readers,

[a] pond is made by digging and dam-

![Image](image-url)

Fig. 1.2. Centerville in 1899 or 1900. Placerville suffered destructive fires both of those years. Here, freight wagons loaded with relief supplies leave Centerville for Placerville after one of those events. Photo courtesy Idaho State Historical Society, No. 62-86.8.

ming to float the boat, and afterward the dredge makes a channel for itself. The plan of operation is very simple. The [buckets scoop up the] gravel [which] is hoisted into a hopper where the large boulders are removed. Then the material goes over a grizzley [sic]. The remaining gravel is dropped into a box where it is mixed with water that has been pumped for the purpose. The mixture is then hoisted by a centrifugal pump into a sluice where it is washed in the usual manner. As the boat eats its way along the pit behind is dammed off. That part of the pond behind is pumped out and men are then put to work cleaning bedrock in the ordinary way.... It has always been believed that the creek beds were valuable, but heretofore there has been no way to work them to advantage.

**CENTERVILLE’S INCREASED PROSPERITY**

Dredging operations, at two different places on Grimes Creek, contributed to an increase in population that caused quite a building boom for Centerville. By the end of September, the Idaho World reported:

thirty handsome new houses have been built in Centerville this summer. Since the coming of the Basic Dredge Co...our town has grown wonderfully. We have been visited
by all classes of humanity, from the wealthy business man and hard-fisted workers, a sprinkling of superannuated pugilists with noses spread all over their faces and minus a[n] ear or two, and skilled safe-crackers.... Among [the new buildings] are two hotels, a restaurant and meat market. All styles of architecture, Doric, Gothic, Ionic, Queen Annie [sic] and a host of others are visible, which of course adds a greater charm to our always pretty town....

Centerville also treated itself to a new town hall. On December 30, 1898, residents held a “Holiday Ball” there. Tickets cost $1.50, and Crofton’s Orchestra supplied the music. Supper, at either the Meffert Hotel or the Riggs Hotel, was 50 cents per plate. In 1899, a dancing club held another ball. Despite all the new construction that took place over an 18-month period, Centerville did not have a single house in town available for rent in late September 1899.

The 1900 census counted 257 people in Centerville, of whom 202 (78.6 percent) were Caucasian. Centerville’s dredging operations had not only spurred a population increase, but also had brought a renewed prosperity that briefly benefited at least two saloons in town. Shortly after the turn of the century, however, the revived Centerville Christian Temperance Association forced the Meffert saloon to close.

The initial dredging operations were short-lived. The two Grimes Creek dredges near Centerville proved too expensive to operate, and “were closed down after short runs and were later dismantled.”

It is not clear whether the ill-advised building boom ever extended to churches. In 1901, the Christian “Endeavorers” met in the town hall on Sunday evenings, while church services were held only twice a month, apparently in the same location.

Other social activities included the Odd Fellows, who gave a ball in early 1901 that was proclaimed “a grand success” by the Idaho World. Later that year, the citizens reorganized the defunct Centerville Literary Society, and scheduled debates, dialogues, recitations, and musical entertainments.

Another fire in April 1901 destroyed four of Centerville’s buildings. Starting in the Meffert’s Hotel, it burned the hotel, a store, and two houses. Only one of the houses was a residence; the other was used for storage. The Odd Fellows’ hall, on the corner opposite, “was badly scorched,” according to the Idaho World.

That August saw a placer mining revival, another boom phase in the boom-and-bust cycle characteristic of most, if not all, western mining towns. A Centerville resident described to the Idaho World how a placer mining boom has struck that town. The town site is badly disfigured, and the work still goes on. The earth is being torn in the extraction therefrom of the precious yellow metal. Hunter & Thoms have the site of the Meffert hotel, destroyed by fire a few months ago, nearly all mined out. Frank H. Cooper owned the lots below on which stood a store and residence, also destroyed by fire. He and Hunter & Thoms threw their interests together and are equal partners in all this ground. Jas. Smith furnished water, hose, etc., for an interest. No work has yet been done on the Cooper lots. Frank H. Cooper and Jas. Smith will work the ground on which their residences stand. Mr. Cooper has his about mined out. These are on the opposite side of the street from the ground mentioned above. Mr. Hunter has been placer mining back of his stable, also across from where the hotel stood. He made a clean up a
short time ago, obtaining somewhere between $500 and $1,000. The gravel of this Centerville ground averages about four feet in depth. As high as twenty-five cents to the pan has been obtained.... Hunter & Co. are working with a hydraulic chief, and also have a string of hose carrying water to the ground. They have fifty or sixty feet of pressure and are using 150 inches of water.

By the end of August, another Centerville resident reported in the *Idaho World* that “the burned district...is now about all mined out;” the entrepreneurs expected to realize between $2,500 and $3,000. Edward Hunter even moved his big barn off Main Street, in order to mine the ground underneath it.

In April 1902, the *Idaho World* reported that the Basic Dredge Company employed “a large force of men...on the boat a mile and a half below town.” This was on Grimes Creek, southwest of Centerville, between Garden Gulch and Boston Gulch. Work there was expected to finish in about 10 days, and The Bummer Hill boat was in Grimes Creek, opposite Bummer Hill, one-half mile northeast of Centerville. Since laborers were scarce, the men worked 12-hour shifts.

Centerville’s population was reportedly 256 in 1903. The town boasted a “Methodist Church,” William Carroll’s saloon, Frank Cooper’s hotel, J. S. Jaggers’ hotel, George T. Young’s store and post office, and Lewis Van Winkle’s livery stable, as well as a Chinese store. Five mining companies had offices in Centerville: the Bed Rock Dredge Company, the Colorado-Idaho Gold Mining Company, the Summitt Mine, the Twin Sisters Gold Mining Company, and the Union Dredge Company. The *Idaho World* reported:

Centerville Library opened in early February 1905, aided by a ‘large popular subscription’...to which the village Trustees gave a liberal donation. A building was repaired and fitted up, resulting in a cosy cheery library of three rooms, two of which are devoted to literature and the third to games. Upon its tables can be found five daily newspapers, eighteen weeklies, and thirty-one of the leading magazines.

Interest in the library gradually waned, however. In 1908, according to the *Idaho World*, the “reading room [was] newly papered and painted” for use as an office by a supervisor of work at Bummer Hill.

When the *Idaho World* editor visited Centerville mining operations in July 1909, he found several in the vicinity and reported on them. One was Homer Granger’s placer claim, two miles below Centerville, and another was the Hardwood-Glenn Company, on the west side of Grimes Creek, less than half a mile above town. The latter had just “made a good clean-up” of $6,000, and expected to realize between $15,000 and $20,000 for the season. On July 23, the editor reported:

This ground could not be worked in early days, being flat, and was covered with tailings from ground above before the days of dredges and elevators. The claim is equipped with an elevator, which is a very simple contrivance. The gravel is forced twelve or fifteen feet through an almost perpendicular pipe into a flume. The gravel is piped into a sump and is forced up through the perpendicular pipe by hydraulic pressure, the water passing through a nozzle at the lower end.

One man, James Terry, built an experimental dredge in Clay Gulch, one and a quarter miles from Centerville. By designing it himself, he did not need to make royalty payments to other dredge manufacturers. The *World* editor commented:

James Terry is a mechanical genius, which has been displayed in numerous ways,
but his crowning achievement is his dredge....” It works to perfection, but the power is not sufficient. He has a 10 horse power gasoline engine, which does the work where he started, the material to be handled being loose sand, but would not be sufficient for driving the dipper into gravel. In about a week Mr. Terry will be running by electric power from the Boston & Idaho Co.'s line, and expects to use 25-horse power.

Clay Gulch also contained ground that had not been worked previously because it was too flat. Earlier mining had covered it with tailings from workable ground. There, the Idaho World reported, “Mr. Terry expects to handle four hundred cubic yards of sand and gravel in 24 hours. The scoop, or dipper, holds a cubic yard of dirt.”

Centerville also had a monazite mining plant. Few other places in the world ever produced this interesting mineral.

MONAZITE MINING

When mining geologist Waldemar Lindgren toured the Boise Basin in the mid-1890s he observed:

In all parts of the [Boise B]asin a yellow or brownish-yellow mineral forms a considerable quantity of the heavy substances remaining with the gold. It is usually referred to as ‘yellow sand,’ and is also given the picturesque name of ‘Bummer Hill sand,’ from a locality near Centerville, where it was particularly abundant, but I am not aware that its true character has ever been investigated. The mineral has been shown to be monazite, this being the first time its occurrence has been noted from the Western States. As is well known, it occurs abundantly in the granite and gneissoid rocks and gold-placer mines of the Southern Appalachians, and in several of the North Atlantic States.... There is no doubt that it forms an original constituent of the granite of the Idaho Basin.

Since monazite was later mined commercially in the Centerville area, Lindgren’s comments on it are most interesting:

Monazite has, as is well known, a certain economic value, as the oxides of the rare earths contained in it are used for the preparation of the incandescent gaslights of the Welsbach and other burners.... The prices have varied from 3 to 25 cents per pound....

Lindgren interviewed a Welsbach Light Company chemist regarding the possibility of commercial exploitation of the Boise Basin monazite deposits. That gentlemen responded, “The largest purchasers are the Welsbach Light Company of Vienna, supplying Europe, and the Welsbach Light Company of Philadelphia, which supplies America. I should hardly think that Western localities could compete with North Carolina and Brazil, unless the mineral is of a very superior quality or a by-product.”

Lindgren concurred with those observations, concluding, “The widespread occurrence of monazite in considerable quantities in the Idaho Basin raises the question whether the deposits can be profitably worked. The present low price and the high cost of transportation and labor make this very doubtful, unless it be saved as a by-product in the placer mines.”

Preparations for monazite mining began in 1908. In September, the Centerville Mining and Milling Company proposed to construct a nine-mile ditch. It needed 25 to 30 men to dig it, and offered wages, for “ordinary labor,” of $3 per nine-hour day; while “rock work” paid $3.50 per day, according to an article in the Idaho World. By June 1909, “more men [were] employed in and around Centerville than in any other
amp in the Basin," most by the Centerville Mining and Milling Company. The company had employed an average of 40 men for two months, in ditch and flume construction, "building a large and well-equipped concentrating plant, logging and hydraulic mining."

According to the Idaho World, Had it not been for the amount of work which Mr. Atkinson was able to furnish the laboring men who called on him for jobs, this place would be as dead as a smoked Labrador herring, and that is about as dead as anything gets. Sheridan Atkinson was the engineer for the Centerville Mining and Milling Company and later its superintendent. In July 1909, the Idaho World editor visited Centerville and reported on the three nearby mining enterprises then in business. The Centerville Mining and Milling Company was one of them.

The company that is mining for mon[a]zite across Grimes creek from Centerville and a little above, has the plant all in and the building nearly completed. Six concentrators are in place and a small quantity of ground has been worked. The company was not doing much, the water supply being limited, but expected to get water...in a very short time.... The gravel is carried in a flume and at the plant a grizzly [coarse screen, or iron plate with holes] permits only the sand to pass through.

From the sluice it pours into a sump and from there is carried by a string of buckets to another grizzly quite a distance above the floor of the building. This grizzly separates the coarse from the fine sand and the latter is carried to the concentrators where the mon[a]zite is saved. The metal extracted from mon[a]zite is thorium, from which the Welsbach mantles for gasoline lamps are made. The mon[a]zite, which is commonly known here as yellow, or Bummer Hill sand, contains about 5 per cent of thorium. The Placer ground the company owns contains about one ton of mon[a]zite in 150 tons of gravel.

In February 1910, continued affluence enabled Centerville’s citizens to purchase a new $300 piano in Boise, which they placed in the town hall. The sale of refreshments following a musical program netted $10 toward payments on the piano, according to an article in the Idaho World. Centerville’s population then numbered 149, including 131 Caucasians (87.9 percent).

Disaster struck in September 1910, when the Idaho World reported that a fire had once again destroyed most of Centerville. Beginning in the Basic Hotel, it burned the north side of Main Street, sparing the south side, which by then had only a few buildings left. Flying cinders even ignited the Centerville Mining and Milling Company’s monazite sand processing plant, one-half mile northeast and across Grimes Creek. It burned to the ground.

Total losses exceeded $88,500, with insurance covering less than half that amount. Buildings lost, according to the Idaho World, included the Basic Hotel; the Odd Fellows’ Hall; a stable; the Boston & Idaho Gold Dredging transformer houses, machinery, office, and stable; Ben Koppes’ grocery, the Episcopal Church; a blacksmith shop; two houses, one used as a warehouse by Charles Bedal; and an office, dynamited in a vain attempt to stop the fire.

After the fire, the Idaho World reported that Superintendent Atkinson received a telegram from the company which, in effect, said, “Don’t get discouraged. We will rebuild, and put up a larger and better plant than the one destroyed.” There is no evidence, however, that the plant was ever rebuilt.

Centerville, Idaho
DEPRESSION-ERA MINING AT CENTERVILLE

With the onset of the Depression, Centerville’s mining activities once again increased in scope and intensity. A photo of a gold dredge, captioned “Wealth Is Still Found in Boise Basin,” appeared in the Idaho Daily Statesman in February 1929. According to the article, the dredge, “owned and operated by the Idaho Gold Dredging corporation of Boise,” worked on Grimes Creek, near Centerville. In July 1931, the Idaho Daily Statesman reported that the dredge burned; valued at $100,000, it was a total loss.

By the early 1930s, placer miners had advanced on the remains of the old Centerville town site. Photographs published in the Boise Capital News in 1932 show “a power shovel scooping up the old ‘ghost city’ town-site at Old Centerville, Idaho; dumping the dirt into the hopper to be carried down the sluice; and the sluice itself, with its gold-laden pay dirt.”

Named the Alan-Doc placer mine, after two of its three owners, Al Ternan and Dr. A. L. Heine, this operation had a curious history. In 1912, Al Ternan and his father-in-law, Jack Hanley, realized that in all the early-day gold excitement, no one had ever filed a claim on the ground where the town of Centerville once was. Ternan and Hanley did so, but did not pursue the opportunity. Hanley later died. Twenty years afterwards, Ternan took Heine and Jim Hawley, Jr. into partnership. By then, according to an article in the Boise Capital News, the few remaining buildings were deserted, “with the exception of one gaunt old dwelling occupied by Mrs. Kopus” [actually, Koppes].

When news got out that the placer operation would begin, former Basin residents returned to help. They moved into the decrepit houses, 20 of which still stood, and evicted the packrats and ground squirrels that had taken up residence in the interim. Work began in 1931, but was soon halted, first due to extensive forest fires and then to a lack of sufficient water in Grimes Creek.

When operations resumed in 1932, a Boise Capital News report described them in detail:

The rich ‘dirt’ of the old townsite is from 10 to 15 feet down to bedrock. This dirt is scooped up with a power shovel, with a capacity of a thousand yards of dirt a day, hauled by truck up a short incline and dumped into a huge metal hopper. Here water pumped from the creek flows onto the dirt and washes it through a sluice box.

Daily operations extended over two, eight-hour shifts. Hired contractors employed six or seven men per shift to remove and dump the dirt, and the Alan-Doc paid another six or eight men to wash it. Laborers’ wages were 50 cents an hour, with gold yields estimated at $1,500 per week.

The 1933 placering posed a potential threat to Centerville’s two cemeteries, prompting a recording visit by Mrs. Ruth Ballard, a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, together with Mrs. C. W. Brassey of Placerville. The women located both the Odd Fellows and the Catholic cemeteries, and observed that all the wooden markers had burned during forest fires in 1931. They recorded the inscriptions on the stone markers, the same ones that are visible today, and commented, in an Idaho Sunday Statesman article:

We took the road past the site of the school house which has recently been removed, and followed the road into the charred remnants of what was once a beautiful stand of timber. We almost despaired of finding this second burial ground [the Catholic cemetery], so distant was it from the camp.... A turn now to the left brought us to what is left of this second cemetery [the Catholic cemetery].
By 1936, bucket dredges were back at Centerville, Placerville, and Idaho City, working 24 hours a day. Despite all the mining that had occurred in these areas, these ventures were still profitable. The dredges ran 22 buckets per minute, 24 hours a day; each bucket contained about four yards of dirt and gravel yielding about $1 worth of gold, of which 60 percent was profit. It is not known when the Centerville dredge shut down. The last Boise Basin dredge, at Idaho City, ceased operation in 1951.

No standing structures now remain from the Depression-period mining or earlier eras, and souvenir hunters have removed many of the Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts that were once found at Centerville in great abundance. The Centerville vicinity continues to interest modern gold miners, who regularly recover pieces of metal, glass, and ceramic articles from their sluices. Today, these battered objects only hint at Centerville’s past history; they are the last fragmentary reminders of “the handsomest town in the Basin.”

Centerville, Idaho
CHAPTER TWO
THE HISTORY OF THE CHINESE IN CENTERVILLE

THE CHINESE ENTER THE BOISE BASIN

As was typical for most newly discovered placer mining regions in the West, the Boise Basin’s Caucasian miners often voted to exclude the Chinese and, occasionally, African-Americans. For example, Article 2 of the mining laws for the Bannock Mining District, near Idaho City, adopted in December 1863, stated, “Chinese shall not be permitted to work in the mines of this district,” while Article 2 of the revised laws of the Moore’s Creek Third Mining District stated, “Chinese and Negroes shall not be permitted to work in the mines of this district.”

At Centerville, the most heavily mined area was within a two-mile radius of town. The Eureka Mining District was one name used in the vicinity, while the Centerville Mining District was another. Although both names appear in Boise County deeds and newspaper accounts, no mining laws were located for either district.

Even if mining laws did not mention Chinese by name, the regulations often implied their exclusion. Since all Chinese were prohibited from obtaining citizenship, any regulations that limited claim ownership to citizens effectively excluded the Chinese. They arrived in the area anyway and took up other occupations. Many ran laundries, dug ditches for Caucasian miners, grew vegetables, or provided other necessary services. From experience elsewhere, mainly in California and Oregon, the Chinese knew the placers would play out eventually, and they would be able to purchase and rework them.

Although the laws prohibiting Chinese miners in the Boise Basin mines were not repealed until 1867, Chinese miners worked near Idaho City beginning in 1865. Described as a “memorable event of the summer of 1865,” Billy Hy obtained permission to:
...purchase mining ground, and the privilege of peaceable mining granted by white miners to the Chinese. A company of this race of people accordingly commenced mining on a creek claim on Moore’s creek, below the Warm Springs, the latter part of August.

Previous to this time the few Chinese in the country had been engaged in laundry work, except one only, employed upon a vegetable ranch on Moore’s Creek, by I. N. Smith and Jim Heatherly....

That same year, large numbers of Chinese began to head for the Boise Basin mines. An item in the Idaho City newspaper in early May, copied from a Nevada paper, stated:

For Idaho. — The Chinese are flocking that way in force. The Humboldt Register... says a long procession of these dusky emigrants reached town Tuesday evening, on foot...and each day since the number at their camping ground has swelled...almost every one [has] a large bamboo pole over his shoulders with a heavy bundle of clothing, mining tools, provisions and cooking traps, at each end of the bamboo. These fellows will scratch about during the summer in claims worked out by the white men in the Boise Basin....

Centerville, Idaho
Their route did not necessarily take them through Boise, as these Chinese did not appear in Idaho until mid-September, when:

that interesting sight so familiar to old Californians, of long trains of celestials on the move...filed along Idaho street yesterday morning to the great amusement of lookers on....John [derogatory term for Chinese male] informed the curious crowd that he came from Washoe [Nevada] and was going to Bannock [Idaho City].

Not all the Chinese walked to the Boise Basin. Those who could afforid it often took the stage. For example, the Boise newspaper reported that:

the influx of Chinamen [derogatory term] continues unabated to...the delight of stage companies, for John is a great traveler and a good patron of the stages.

In early December 1865, there were about 150 Chinese in Idaho City and the vicinity. Chinese brothels opened, indicating that there were Chinese women there by that date. Chinese gambling establishments provided other forms of entertainment.

By December 1866, a Washington Territory correspondent to Montana’s Virginia City Post visited the Boise Basin and reported that Pioneer City, Centerville, and Placerville, had generally changed.

Where but one year ago the industrious white man used to swing the pick and shovel for the precious metal, there stands today for miles on all its gulches Hong Kon, Hab Wor, Song See and John Chinamen in general, to give the once glorious Territory of Idaho its final dead stroke.

Two groups welcomed the Chinese miners: the storekeepers, and the miners who wanted to sell them claims. In April 1867, Centerville’s merchants were looking for a good spring trade:

...our ‘speculators’ are all anxiously awaiting the arrival of our numerous ‘Celestial’ friends, from below.... Let ‘em come. We care not who, or how many, so [long as] they are on the work. We want no loafers in our midst.

Others who held anti-Chinese attitudes persisted in discriminating against them even after the Chinese were allowed to purchase mining ground. Newspaper articles and editorials sought their expulsion using the slogan, “The Chinese Must Go,” calling them “Chinamen,” “Celestials,” and “John Chinaman,” terms now considered racist. To give just one example, in 1867 the Idaho World, published in Idaho City, had this to say under the heading, “The Chinese Nuisance:"

Idaho has already more than enough of Chinamen. Our mines ought to be worked by white men. Coolies will ruin any mining country they flock too [sic], while white men will build up any mining country. Idaho ought not to be ruined.

In contrast, a later issue of this same newspaper held the Caucasian miners responsible for the local influx of Chinese miners.

Agreeably to the laws made by the miners themselves in, we believe, every district in the Basin, only white men, or at least no Chinamen, are permitted to take up and work new ground. As in many other mining localities, all over the Coast, however, the rule has been to allow the sale of exhausted claims, or claims which are deemed too poor for white men to work, to Chinamen. If there be any wrong or evil in this, the white miners themselves are responsible for it.

One of the criticisms often levied against the Chinese was that they sent “all their money back to China.” This was untrue, since the Chinese made
substantial contributions to local and territorial government in the form of taxes. For example, Idaho Chinese miners, and sometimes other Chinese who were not miners, had to pay a discriminatory tax of $5 per month.

The Chinese were also subject to non-discriminatory taxes. Both Chinese and Euroamerican names appear in the annual, monthly, and special lists of taxes collected in Idaho between 1867 and 1874 "under the Excise laws of the United States." These taxes on business and personal income, as well as on certain types of property, may have been levied by the federal government to help pay for the Civil War.

Although no other tax lists were located, newspaper announcements prior to 1867 and after 1874 indicate that local businesses paid internal revenue taxes beginning at least between 1863 and 1876. The law...requires every business man to take a license.... Three gallons is the line of demarcation between wholesale and retail in the liquor business, and one license will not cover both classes. Merchants selling original packages, are deemed wholesale dealers, those breaking packages, retailers, and one license will not cover both. Miners are not taxed as such, as had been falsely asserted, but, like all other kinds of business, they are liable to pay an income tax on all receipts above $600 and expenses.

Taxes on miners varied. In 1865 the law required that every individual miner or mining company, whose annual mining income exceeded $1,000, must obtain a $10 license. When the amount collected was insufficient, Congress might pass a surcharge, as happened in 1863:

Some of our readers who hold receipts in full for their Federal income tax for the year 1863, will be a little surprised when the Federal Tax Collector makes another demand upon them for an additional five per cent for the same year — but nevertheless, they will be compelled to pay it. Congress adopted a joint resolution last June, authorizing a tax of five per cent upon the incomes of that year in addition to the three per cent tax, making in all a total income tax of eight per cent for 1863.... This system of levying taxes is very convenient. If 'the Government' cannot raise enough by re-taxing 1863, it will probably go back to 1862, '61, '60, and with equal equity back to 1776.

Territorial taxes were also collected, for a variety of purposes. In 1865 property owners paid, for every $100 of assessed valuation, 70 cents for Territorial purposes; $1.50 for county expenditures; and 25 cents "for support of the indigent sick of the county." In addition, each "taxable inhabitant" paid a head tax of $2 "for the maintenance of the indigent sick."

**THE CHINESE IN CENTERVILLE FROM 1865 TO 1890**

The first Chinese person known to have lived in Centerville operated a laundry there at least by 1865. That year, a business directory for "the Principal Towns East of the Cascade Mountains" devoted four pages to Centerville and included "Sin, Lee" as the proprietor of a Chinese laundry. The occupations of two "colored" Centerville residents, Peter Lee and J. M. Whitefield, were each listed as "hairdressing saloon, Washington [Street]."

The federal census, taken every 10 years, provides a reasonably accurate indication of the numbers of Chinese in the Centerville area, even though it is likely that this group was undercounted. The first one to include the Boise Basin was that of 1870, when
Centerville’s population was 515, of whom 271 (52.6 percent) were Chinese, 243 (47.2 percent) were Caucasian, and one was African-American. The latter was a barber, but was a different person from the other two African-Americans with similar professions mentioned in the 1865 business directory. In 1870 there were 16 Chinese women, all listed as prostitutes.

The 1880 census recorded 217 people there, including 97 Chinese (44.7 percent) and 120 Caucasians (55.3 percent). Only two of the Chinese were women, and one was a nine-year-old boy. Neither woman was his mother. The boy’s father, a miner, was a widower. Both the women were listed as prostitutes.

**MINERS**

Once the Centerville-area placers began to decrease in production, the Caucasian miners sought buyers for those claims that no longer paid “white man’s wages,” i.e., at least $5 to $6 per day. They found that their Chinese neighbors eagerly seized the opportunity to purchase this “worked-out” mining ground. Although some Chinese miners reportedly bought claims near Centerville in 1866, a search of Boise County deeds did not find any record of them. However, in March 1867, Kum Kee, Ar [probably Ah] Fow, Ar [Ah?] How, “& Etc.” of Centerville purchased a water ditch and four bar claims in the Eureka Mining District, on the east side of Grimes Creek, together with “one log cabin and all tools belonging to said claims” for $3,000.

By June, 400 miners, both Caucasian and Chinese, were working in the Centerville vicinity. A visitor reported that “all are doing well, some very well, and a few are making big pay.” Another visitor to Centerville, on a Sunday, commented that the town “presented a very lively business appearance,” and noted that Sunday “is the day for trading, and for paying off water bills and for visits from the diggings all about the town — just as in other mining camps.”

“Trade and business were at full b[e]ight while we tarried there. McDevitt’s large public house was crowded with miners — white men and Chinese — who were having their accounts for water during the week adjusted.... The big Chinese headquarters on the corner opposite McDevitt & Thatcher’s was crammed with noisy, chattering celestials, who had evidently ‘catchee plentee’ gold dug from their claims for the week....

The Chinese were good customers for Caucasian businesses and enterprises. A group of fishermen in the Warren area, about 100 miles away from the Boise Basin, regularly caught salmon and salmon trout which they proceeded “to salt and pack away...for fall and winter consumption,” expecting “to find their principal trade from the Chinese in Boise Basin.”

By October 1868 the Chinese mining within a three-mile radius of Centerville outnumbered the more than 300 Caucasian miners. As many of the Caucasian miners moved on to better opportunities, the towns they left changed in character as their Chinese inhabitants increased. For example, a common remark about Idaho City was “the Chinamen have got it.” Although that is how some people perceived the community, the statement was actually unfounded. An August 1869 inventory of Idaho City’s 164 businesses showed that just 23, or 16.3 percent, had Chinese owners, although the total population was estimated at about 1,000 Caucasians and the same number of Chinese.

Chinese miners and mining companies prospered in the Boise Basin, and like their Caucasian counterparts, some achieved substantial rewards. One contemporary writer noted that certain claims that “do not yield fair wages for white miners...pay Chinamen well,
averaging $2.50 to $4 per day;” he estimated the Chinese miners’ proceeds in Boise County in 1868 at about four million dollars, about half the Caucasian miners’ take. Another observer estimated the Boise Basin’s total gold yield by mid-1896 at “no less than $100,000,000.” Chinese miners would have accounted for a respectable share of that amount.

In July 1869, Centerville residents Hung Dye, Hung Hang, Joe Dot, Ah Ty, and Ah Sing bought other mining property on Grimes Creek for $2,900. Their purchase also included “all tools, Slu[i]ces, Flumes[,] Cabin, and everything thereunto belonging.” A year later, when Centerville’s official census population included 237 Chinese miners and mining laborers, local residents Wang Yet, Ah Lang, and Mon Hay & Co. purchased other Grimes Creek claims for $1,800 from John Carroll and James Norton. They also obtained “the right to build a dam across said creek” and the “right to dump into said creek” as well as:

75 or 80 Slu[i]ce boxes Hydraulic
Telegraph about 400 yards of Hose 2 Pipes
and Nossels 1 whip Saw, 1 Cross Cut Saw,
3 Slu[i]ce Forks 5 Shovels 7 Picks 2 axes
2 Hammers, 2 augers 1 plain [plane] 1 Spirit
Level, two mining Hoes 1 Hand Saw 1 Square
3 Gold Pans about 3000 feet of Lumber, and
Four Cabins and Black Smith Shop on Said
Claims and all the Cooking Utensils and all
improvements, Tools and fixtures therewith
belonging....

In 1875 a Chinese company offered Lamme & Co. $30,000 for its placer mines. The newspaper reported that “the China Company wants to pay down $45,000 but it seems the payments do not suit Lamme & Co....”

Besides sales, the Chinese may have leased mining claims, although no Boise County records of them surfaced. For example, in 1877 a Chinese company leased “the old Tompkins claims” on Buena Vista Bar, near Idaho City, and was “working them successfully with a force of 15 men and a good hydraulic head.” That same year both Caucasian and Chinese miners still worked numerous claims on both sides of Grimes Creek for several miles below Centerville. One report commented,

Of the product of these claims no accurate account can be given; but the fact that they pay a high price for water in addition to other expenses, and that they work them year after year, shows that they are yet gold-producing.

By the 1880 census, actual numbers of Chinese miners and mining laborers had decreased to 76. The Idaho World occasionally mentioned Chinese miners at or near Centerville during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In March 1883 the Ah Gang Company, described as “Chinamen,” purchased a claim in the Centerville Mining District from a Dan Coughanour for $40 to be paid over two months, in two $20 installments. The sale, which was not recorded until August 1896 by N[orman] H. Young, also included a water ditch leading from Grimes Creek, a head dam on the ditch, and a drain race.

The following May, a Steve Dempsey was “supplying two Chinese companies with water from his Grimes’ creek ditch.” In April 1884, A. A. Spain “leased his ditch to a Chinese company [mining] below Henry creek,” while another Chinese company had been working in Henry creek since early that month.

In 1888 a Caucasian man was arrested after he ran 11 Chinese men off a claim whose ownership was in dispute. The Chinese had leased the claim from the other parties. It took two trials before a jury acquitted him.

In later years, former State Mine Inspector Robert M. Bell commented on the Chinese miners
as he knew them between 1884 and 1889:

The Chinese miners were very thorough in their work, generally well organized in their companies with administrative heads, and could make a living on ground upon which a white man would starve to death. Their operations included some ingenious bucket, belt, elevator, pumping devices for low-lying, wet ground and deep stripping operations handled by wheelbarrow. These [Chinese men], mostly of the hard-working... class, illustrated the potentialities of the race in foreign trade. When making money they would live as extravagantly as a white man and when in low pay, get along on a straight rice diet.

BUSINESSES

Various documents identify a number of Center­ville’s Chinese businesses. The first one known, in 1865, was Lee Sin’s laundry.

Although the directory did not identify the laundry’s street address, other Chinese businesses can be located more precisely. Centerville’s streets then included Washington, Second, Third, Federal Hill, Clark(e), and Broadway. There was also a Fourth Street, a Montgomery Street, a Main Street, and, later, a “China Street.”

Centerville’s Chinese residents begin to purchase property in town, or in the vicinity, at least by 1867, as indicated by transaction dates on deeds recorded at the Boise County courthouse in Idaho City. Some of the deeds, which mention specific blocks and lots in Centerville, indicated that an early town plat must once have existed. Despite research in a number of archives, it has not been found.

A similar situation exists with respect to Idaho City. Crow, Clark, and Company and J. Baird and Company surveyed and laid out that community, but during archaeological excavations in 1979 no town plat could be located. The investigators were able to reconstruct much of it from the early deeds, but time and funding constraints precluded a similar exercise for the Centerville project.

Some Centerville property sales may not have been recorded. Of those that were, the first sale to Chinese people took place on April 19, 1867, when Waw Ar [Ah?] Gar and Wan Siu Ham bought, for $450:

...a two story house in [C]enterville.

It and ground on which the same is built
being a portion of lot No. (5) Five in Block
(7) Seven, house being twenty feet front
and sixty feet deep being situated on South
side of Main street and on the corner of
Main and Clark street more particularly or
familiarly known as ‘Prices corner’ the
East line commencing at outside of said
house at the Junction of the said house and
Barber shop and running westwardly to
[C]lark street, also four (4) tables and
ten (10) Benches....

The seller, John W. Davis, promised to “protect the title” of the property to the buyers, who themselves agreed to pay $100 on May 3 and $250 on September 19 “in good clean gold dust at $16 per ounce.” All three men signed the deed, and the purchasers wrote their names in Chinese characters. Although Davis acknowledged receipt of $450, he probably got $100 down and the rest in the two payments mentioned in the deed.

On May 7, 1867, Lucinda Henkle of Centerville sold the Forrest [also Forest] Hotel to two Chinese men, Wau Hugh and Sing Gou. It was located on the North side of Washington street:

...being the lot known on the plat of lots
of said town as lot No. Five (5) Block No. ten

Centerville, Idaho
and being the South West corner lot on said Block, fronting twenty five feet on Main street...and eighty feet on [F]ourth street, 80 feet deep.

The sale also included the fixtures, outbuildings, and furniture. The hotel’s location is confusing since it is not clear how it can be the southwest corner “on the North side of Washington street” and at the same time have a 25-foot frontage on Main Street and an 80-foot frontage on Fourth Street. Since Main and Washington intersected, they cannot be the same street.

In February 1869, John A. Sullivan sold a furnished house and lot in Centerville for $270 to three Chinese, Ah Po Coo, Nou Sue Lee, and Ah Gan. It was situated “on North Side of Main Street... adjoining the Hotel of G. L Fuller being thirty feet (30) front by eighty feet deep.”

A deed dated in November 1869 records a sale by Wang How [also Wong Ah How] to Ah Soo of some property in Centerville’s Slaughterhouse Gulch. This property, which included a “house and all improvements,” sold for $100 and began “about 50 feet above the Slaughter House of Brown and Dobbs and [ran] up the Gulch 500 feet and [was] 200 feet in breadth...[and was] enclosed by a lawful fence.”

That same month Ah Ting [also Ah Tung] sold Tsuen Chen, for $160, a house and lot on the North side of Washington Street, opposite the Black Smith Shop belonging to Beardsley and Co. together with all the furniture cooking stove and appurtenances belonging thereunto[.] Also one small Log or Slab cabin adjoining said house and Lot of Ah Ting.

In Centerville, Caucasians blamed the Chinese for causing a disastrous fire in October 1870. According to the Idaho World, the conflagration reportedly began “in a China [Chinese] house near the corner of Main and Washington streets.” It destroyed Centerville’s entire business district for about three blocks on both sides of Main Street. Pioneer resident Anna Goldtrap was an eyewitness:

In the fall of 1870 the town was partly burned, 53 houses burning in an hour and 20 minutes. Several two-story log buildings made a very hot fire.

Among the Chinese losses were Loo Soo’s store and merchandise, valued at $3,000; another Chinese man’s house, worth $100; Ah Tang’s house and contents amounting to $250; and a “China gambling house.” A revised list published a week later included some of the same names, and, in addition, lowered Loo Soo’s loss to $1,600; added a “China wash house,” $300; the Chin Gum gambling house, $350; Ting Yon, $100; Ting Kow, goldsmith, $150; Yee Chung, $100; Wey San Lye, $400; Wong Yow, $100; and Sin Chung, $200.

One way that Centerville’s Chinese stores got their merchandise was via freight wagons. G. W. Samples, a local freighter, regularly made the 35-day journey from the railroad at Kelton, Utah, with numerous teams and wagons. In October 1876, he arrived in Idaho City with 89,000 pounds of freight, on his last trip from the railroad for the season. He brought 9,000 pounds for Centerville’s Chinese merchants and nearly 45,000 pounds for Idaho City’s Chinese merchants. This shipment was part of 220,000 pounds of “China goods” that Samples had brought into the Basin since the spring of that year.

During the 1880s at least one Chinese man in the Centerville area was a teamster, with 10 mules and two wagons. “China Jack,” a “supple, wiry-built young scamp, about 28 years of age, with a step as agile as a cat,” cracked a blacksnake whip over his animals and shouted encouragement, mixed with curses, at them.
Several Chinese gardeners supplied Centerville’s Chinese and Caucasian residents with a variety of fresh produce. In August 1885 the Centerville vicinity had three productive “ranches” belonging to “Ah Toy, Ah Yow and Long Bung, situated on the north foothills of Garden Gulch, [where] three crops of China cabbage have already been harvested and threshed. They say they are sure of two crops more and possibly three.”

Idaho City merchant Amos Di Sang apparently wrote letters in English for other Boise Basin Chinese residents as well as for himself and his relatives. In December 1887 he wrote to a Mr. A. Fenkhausen on behalf of fellow merchants Hung Wo Chong of Centerville, Wing Sing Chong of Pioneer, and Yee Chong of Placerville and Idaho City, ordering four barrels of whiskey, 500 pounds of coffee, 250 pounds of beans, 275 “Bbs” [bottles?] of port wine, 200 pounds of Japan tea, 50 cases of [pea?] nut oil, five cases of oysters, and 500 pounds of tobacco.

Chinese Women

Although there were few Chinese women in Centerville in proportion to the number of men, some information is available. Chinese women were in the Boise Basin at least by 1865, since there were Chinese brothels in Idaho City then. In Centerville, especially in the early years, most of the Chinese women there were probably prostitutes, since that business flourished in Centerville’s Chinese community. In 1870, for example, the federal census listed 16 Chinese women there, with the occupation of all of them recorded as “prostitute.”

At that time, however, Chinese women were the property of men, who could buy and sell them at will; therefore, most would have had little, if any, control over their own destinies. Also, it was then a common stereotype that all Chinese women were prostitutes, so the census taker may simply have listed them as such, without any real evidence, particularly if they could not speak English. Therefore, while it is likely most of them did practice that profession, they may not all have done so. Instead, some may have been concubines in accordance with Chinese custom.

Of those who were prostitutes, it is unlikely that any of them were individual entrepreneurs, although that is possible for 11 of them. Three of them lived alone, while eight resided in four households consisting of two women each. Of the remaining five women, three almost certainly had no autonomy. Two lived with a gambler, and one lived with two placer miners. Two additional, two-person, households each consisted of a woman and a man, in one case a gambler, and in the other, a placer miner. In the latter two cases, the women may have been wives or concubines, rather than prostitutes.

A Chinese woman named “Nancy” suffered from the October 1870 fire; she lost her house and contents worth $300. Although she might have been one of the three women listed in the census as prostitutes living alone, none of them had names similar to “Nancy.” However, Caucasian men who interacted with Chinese women, whether prostitutes or those in other occupations, often gave them names that were easier for the men to pronounce.

Chinese men from rival factions occasionally fought over Centerville’s few Chinese women. In February 1873, Ah Gowey, a Yung Wah member, became infatuated with Cun Cum, who unfortunately was the property, and prostitute, of Wee Chuck, a See Yup member. Cun Cum agreed to elope with Ah Gowey, so he obtained a sleigh and a driver, and the two lovers set off for Boise. When Wee Chuck realized what had happened, he hurried to Idaho City and awakened Justice Wickersham at 2:00 a.m. to obtain a warrant for Ah Gowey’s arrest. The deputy
sheriff pursued the couple, captured them before they reached Boise, and escorted them to Idaho City.

Chinatown was in a fever of excitement, and hundreds of wrangling Mongolians crowded around the Justice’s office. Desiring the aid of counsel, an attorney was sent for, who, after consulting with the affrighted Ah Gowey, and the weeping damsel, through the medium of an interpreter, learned that they were of lawful age, both unmarried, and were anxious to become two souls with but a single thought.

The attorney summoned a justice of the peace, and he, assisted by an interpreter, married the couple in an empty office. The attorney then showed the marriage certificate in court to Justice Wickersham, who dismissed the case and discharged the defendants.

In 1878, one of Centerville’s Chinese women nearly died from a beating administered by a Chinese man wielding a pick handle. After beating her about the shins, and breaking her arm, he escaped to nearby Boston, also on Grimes Creek. The deputy sheriff discovered him hiding under a sluice box, made the arrest, and took him to jail in Idaho City.

By the time of the 1880 census only two Chinese women resided in Centerville. Both lived alone and both were listed as prostitutes.

Because there were so few Chinese women in the Boise Basin, marriage was an important event. Chinese people sometimes attended Caucasian weddings, or at least gave gifts to the bridal pair. The Chinese also reciprocated by inviting Caucasians to Chinese weddings. For example, a “very pretty” Chinese wedding at Centerville received a lengthy mention in the Idaho World in November 1889.

...the affair was private, and very few were let into the secret. The happy pair are natives of the Flowery Kingdom. Miss Ah Loon and Mr. Ah Sam. The bride has resided here several years, the groom but a few months.

He is a merchant and agent for the See Yup Co., a Chinese mercantile firm of San Francisco. Several white guests were present and extended hearty congratulations. No kissing allowed. The dress of the bride was imported expressly for the occasion. The skirt was of marvelous beauty, a rich blue silk, cut V shape on one side and open front on the other, prettily embroidered at the shoulders with flowers of Oriental design, and hung in graceful folds down half-way below the knee. Her dr-dr [drawers] — pants or whichever you please to call them, were of lemon colored silk handsomely trimmed with a fluffy material bearing a striking resemblance to cotton batting. No maids of honor. The groom was a la American; black swallowfork coat, pants, white vest, &c. At midnight supper was announced, that ever welcome call on an occasion like this. Here wine flowed freely, and the table groaned under the weight of Chinese delicacies, such as bird’s nest pudding, shark’s fins, pulverized black beetle, all recommended as being ‘[very] good’ by our entertaining host and hostess. A large dish of nicely prepared angel food (bacon and beans) was soon disposed of by white guests. The Chinese band played excellent music of the kind. Several love songs were sung in chorus; invited guests sung a few inspirational and beautiful American songs.... About 2 a.m. we bade these ‘two souls with but’ — something a goodnight, wishing them all the happiness of this life and joys of the next. Our Justice of the Peace has reduced his fees for marrying a couple to six bits. He is a married man and dare not kiss the bride.
CENTERVILLE’S “CHINATOWN”

After the 1870 fire, local citizens attempted to prevent the Chinese from rebuilding within the main business district. In late October the Idaho City paper reported:

We understand that our neighbors have decided to prohibit all Chinamen from building houses or living within the limits of the new town now being built.... There is ample room for them to build their stores and houses outside of the town limits, and if our friends consult their own safety and their own interests, they will not allow a Chinaman to build a house or live within the precincts of their new town....

They succeeded; by late November the Chinese were “driven from the business and resident portion of the town.” A bill of sale dated November 23, 1870, is the first documentary reference to Centerville having a separate Chinese section, “what is known as China town a portion of Centerville.”

Other sources also mention or imply a Chinatown in Centerville. For example, in January 1872 the Idaho World editor described the rebuilt community, and mentioned its Chinatown, while an 1873 article in a Boise newspaper referred to “Chinatown, below Centerville.” In April 1875, the Idaho City newspaper published a “Centerville Business Directory” listing 21 establishments of which five were Chinese. These included three stores: Hung Wo Chung, Se Lung Co., and Chuc Kee Co.; a butcher shop, Chue Ke Co.; and a drug store run by Doctor Cheng. Although no specific locations were given for them, it is likely they were in Chinatown. In any case, by May 1878, as reported in Boise’s Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman, Centerville’s “Chinese buildings were] entirely on the outskirts, in a sort of hollow or low ground.”

By combining information from a number of different sources it is possible to reconstruct, to some extent, the business composition of Centerville’s Chinese community over the years. Retail establishments included butcher shops, a drug store, a hotel, laundries, restaurants, and gambling houses, and shops selling liquor, tobacco, lottery tickets, and other goods. Other Chinese were miners, or worked as butchers, cooks, gardeners, laborers, or prostitutes. One man was a doctor while another was a teamster.

Centerville had five Chinese butchers between 1867 and 1869, a considerable number. Although no information is available on meat consumption by Centerville’s Chinese residents, some Idaho City data are relevant in this context. For example, in the fall of 1869 a Boise paper reported that:

Idaho City’s consumption of beef, mutton, and veal totaled 2,000 pounds per day, on average, not counting pork, chicken, and wild game. For the Chinese, on the other hand, the principal meat diet is pork and chickens; of the former, the average daily consumption, purchased at the various meat markets, is 500 pounds, and of hogs slaughtered by themselves about 500 pounds more. Beef, mutton or veal are rarely used by the Celestials, never when they can buy pork or fowls.

ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE

Much of what we know about the Chinese in Centerville comes from newspaper accounts. Some Chinese were involved in altercations with Caucasians or other Chinese. One Idaho historical writer found no record of any Boise Basin Chinese murdering Caucasians, although at Buena Vista Bar a Chinese man did kill a Caucasian man, apparently in self-defense.
Centerville's Chinese residents occasionally had fatal altercations among themselves. In February 1870, Ah Buck reportedly stabbed a man named Loo Lee or Sue Lee and then fled to Boise. After the victim died in May, Centerville's deputy sheriff captured the accused and brought him back for an investigation, but the judge released him for lack of evidence. In another instance, three Chinese men, Ah Chung, Ah Kum, and Ah Fung, living near Centerville, attempted to hang a fourth in an effort to recover money they said he owed them; a Caucasian passerby caught two of the men and delivered them to the sheriff. Finally, during December 1882:

...the dead body of an old [Chinese man] was found in Grimes' Creek, two or three miles below Centerville.... It is the supposition that his partner murdered him for his money. The skull was mashed in. The Mongolian who is suspicioned [sic] of the murder has skipped the country.

A threatened “war” centered in Idaho City between rival factions of Chinese, the “Yung Wahs” and the “See Yups,” excited the entire Basin and involved some of Centerville’s Chinese residents. An unsolved murder, coupled with a boycott of Yung Wah stores, initiated the conflict in September 1872. In October, a shooting occurred, perhaps over a gambling debt. It badly wounded a Chinese woman whose home sheltered one of the combatants. By mid-November, however, the two groups had signed a peace treaty, negotiated by a committee of Idaho City Caucasians, the “Yen Wahs,” and two leading Chinese merchants, Pon Yam and Lee Pow, members of another company not involved in the feud. Despite the Idaho World’s announcement of peace, the Centerville Chinese disbelieved the “Melican men,” and continued to “prepare...for war” for several days afterward.

A Centerville man, Wong Howe, was one of three Chinese arrested and tried in 1869 for committing a burglary in Idaho City. Some of the stolen property was found in his possession. He could not post bail of $750, so was jailed. Several years later, in 1873, another Centerville resident, a member of “an organized gang of Chinese thieves and burglars,” broke into a cabin with an accomplice, but was surprised in the act. One man evaded capture, but the Caucasian pursuers shot and mortally wounded the other, Ah Chung, and took him to Centerville, where other Chinese recognized him as a “notorious thief,” and “his own company disclaim[ed] any knowledge of him further than that he was a bad Chinaman.”

For awhile some Chinese counterfeiters even operated in Centerville, manufacturing “bogus dust.” After they were apprehended in May 1870,

...the citizens demolished the China mint, and quite a number of our future citizens of Mongolian descent were furnished with close quarters in the county jail....

The accused were sentenced to five years in the penitentiary but later escaped. One, Ah Foan, was rearrested at Centerville in January 1871, where he was once again “passing bogus dust.”

While few Centerville Chinese were actually mistreated by their Caucasian neighbors, enough such events happened to make them wary. Besides the killing of Ah Chung in 1873, another Chinese was murdered near Centerville in early 1877 by an unknown person.

Centerville’s Chinese residents occasionally suffered other unpleasant incidents. On one occasion, a Chinese man was astride his mule, traveling down the steep hill to Centerville. The local stage came upon him in a narrow place, and pursued him unmercifully at a gallop, until he finally could pull over.
As the stage thundered past, one of the passengers observed, “we shall never forget the mingled glance of terror and malignity that the poor badgered Chinaman cast on us.” Several others were robbed while traveling between Centerville and Placerville; one forcibly parted with $22 and a silver watch.

Often, the Chinese became scapegoats for unsolved crimes and fires of unknown origin. During the summer of 1873, following a series of sluice box and cabin robberies near Centerville, the Caucasian miners threatened to demolish Centerville's Chinatown. Because Centerville's disastrous 1870 fire apparently started in a Chinese establishment, Centerville's Caucasian residents decided to prohibit the Chinese from rebuilding within the town limits. The Idaho City paper commented:

This is a wise and very proper precaution, and one that may save a repetition of such disastrous conflagrations. Chinamen are notoriously careless and negligent about using any precautions to properly secure their stove-pipes and arrange them so that they can be considered safe.

In contrast, some Caucasians and Chinese apparently got along well. In 1870 a blacksmith of Irish descent shared a household with his Chinese helper, while Norman Young and Lee Sue Tong owned, and sold, mining property together in 1899.

**CHINESE CUSTOMS AND INSTITUTIONS AT CENTERVILLE**

Centerville's Chinese population was large enough to support establishment and maintenance of some Chinese leisure pursuits, customs, traditions, and institutions. Among these were opium smoking and gambling, building a Chinese temple, and celebration of the Lunar New Year. Others, such as the formation of a Chinese "Masonic Lodge" and establishment of a Chinese cemetery, took place in the larger community of Idaho City.

**LEISURE PURSUITS**

Chinese engaged in various leisure activities. Since the archaeological excavations produced paraphernalia used in smoking opium, including fragments of opium cans, ceramic opium pipe bowls, metal pipe fittings, and glass opium lamp parts, it is apparent Centerville's Chinese residents indulged in that drug. Oral historical accounts also indicate that opium-smoking took place at Centerville. Evidence for gambling there came entirely from oral historical and documentary accounts; the archaeological investigations recovered no paraphernalia associated with gambling.

**OPIUM SMOKING**

Although Caucasians sometimes used opium, most of it was probably consumed by Centerville's Chinese residents. Opium smoking was not universally practiced by the Chinese in the United States. Opium use among the Chinese was probably comparable to the general population's use of alcohol and tobacco today. In the United States as a whole, opium for smoking could be legally imported until 1909, although individual communities or even states could and did outlaw its possession and/or use.

Rosie Wells Leighton recalled life in Centerville from about 1895 to 1898. She remembered Chuc Kee's store there. A few steps went up to an area in back,

...[a]nd there were always [Chinese men] lying on cots back there. And now as I look back I wonder, were they smoking opium? It always smelled like [that] but to me it was just Chinese. I was a kid...I'm sure now they must have been smoking opium, but I didn't know it then. It didn't bother me any.

...I think maybe they came in tired or some-
thing [and] just got them some opium and went up there. Maybe they were just sleeping. Now, I don’t know. As I look back now I just kind of wonder. ... If they wanted to smoke opium I guess they could smoke it. They were [Chinese men]. They weren’t bothering [anyone] by doing it. They weren’t giving it to the whites nor spreading it around....

Gertrude Koppes King arrived in Centerville about 1899, aged about eight. In an oral history interview, she talked about opium smoking in a Chinese store:

All the kids around town (mostly boys, but sometimes [we] girls would [go] down too) would stand around in the big China store because all around in the end of it they had bunks where these [Chinese men] would lay and smoke opium.... We used to get a lot of fun out of watching them smoke their opium. Big long pipes [that] had a little tiny bowl on them – great big long things, they smoked. They [lay]there and smoked that opium.

Rhoda Hallford Hall also knew about opium smoking in one of the Chinese stores after the turn of the century. She described how, in the afternoons: ...the door was locked for a certain length of time, and the Chinese had a room off of the store with...a kind of counter, it looked like. And they [would] all go up there and they’d smoke their opium. And you could see them from the store [if Wah admitted you before the others left]. And you could smell it....

Glenn Bedal, another former resident of Centerville, lived there from about 1914 through about 1920. He recalled that the Chinese buildings were “just old shacks,” and the men “went down in the basement [of the Chinese store] to smoke their opium.”

Gertrude Koppes King’s nephew, Herman Koppes, also visited some Chinese buildings in Centerville when he was a child. He, too, observed what he described as opium smoking:

And down...one side were all little cribs where they smoked opium. And you’d go in there and you could see the people would all be in there smoking opium.... Some of them were passed out completely and some of them weren’t.

By the time Herman Koppes observed it, in the late 1910s, the drug had been made illegal throughout the United States. Following its prohibition, law-enforcement authorities sometimes raided opium-smoking establishments (so-called opium “dens”), and confiscated both opium and its associated paraphernalia.

Gambling

Documentary sources provide indications for Chinese gambling in Centerville. Between 1867 and 1869 several men, each described as a “lottery ticket dealer” paid internal revenue taxes of $100 apiece for the privilege of engaging in that business.

The 1870 census records list three men as running gambling houses, and nine others as gamblers. In 1880 two Chinese gamblers were listed, and another man ran a gambling house. A “China gambling house” was one of the businesses that burned in the 1870 fire. Although forced to relocate, the Chinese evidently rebuilt the gambling house, since in November 1870, Ah Chip bought “Ah Ton’s gambling house in the China portion of...Centerville” for $300. The same property may be the one mentioned in a deed dated July 5th, 1871. Ah Chip, “residing near Centerville,” paid $305
for Ah Tong's lot. It was
...situated in what is known as China town a
portion of Centerville on the left-hand side of
the High way leading from Centerville to
Idaho City, said Lot or parcel of land lying
back of and a short Distance from said road
and being thirty feet front and running back
sixty feet of even and equal width with front
together with the house known as Ah Tong's
gambling house thereon....

Gertrude Koppes King knew that there was
gambling in the Chinese buildings. She stated that no
one ran the children off; “it was perfectly all right” for
them to be there.

They used to play cards down there.
My brothers used to go down at night and
play — well, I forget what they used to play —
Chinese lottery? The games they had, the
boys used to go down there and play and
gamble. It was a gambling game.

Herman Koppes’ later description of similar
activities in two semi-subterranean buildings cor­
roborated his aunt’s account. Because the structures
contained tables in a central area, they probably
served as social centers. Subsequently, Koppes
learned that they were really “gambling dens,”
where “some high class games” took place.

RECOMMENDED TEMPLATES

Idaho City and Centerville each had a Chinese
temple, and the Idaho World mentions both from
time to time. Centerville’s appears in an undated
photograph (Fig. 2.1).

In April 1878 the Idaho City Chinese community
swor[e] vengeance against their God,
— clay moulded into a human form —
because he did not drive away the evil
spirits that are creating sickness among them
when they instructed him to. Last Friday
several of the head men went to Centerville to
see what could be done for the sick by the
Joss at that place.

Gertrude Koppes King, who moved to Centerville
at about eight years of age, around 1899, related that
Once a year the Centerville Chinese had a
big Chinese day and [Chinese men] would
come from Placerville and Idaho city, and all
around there. They would have a big China
parade and the white people would join in
just like the [Chinese men] did, and they
enjoyed it just as well as they did the 4th of
July celebration. They had firecrackers and all
kinds of banners, and they...made a grave, a
mock grave, and filled [it] on top with food.
They used to feed their dead that way.
...they mound[ed] it up just like a grave,
and they put all kinds of rice and all kinds of
Chinese food on top of it, in dishes. They said
that the [Chinese men] that were dead would
come up and eat, have a feast. That was their
belief. [After] their celebration they would
take [the] food. I suppose take it into their
Chinese places and eat it. I don’t know.
It’s all good food.

Since Placerville did not have a temple, the
Chinese from that community used the one at
Centerville. According to former Placerville resident
Mabel Fitzhugh, whose grandparents there employed
a Chinese cook for their hotel, the Placerville Chinese
went to the Centerville temple especially during the
Lunar New Year festival:
...the Chinese men — I never knew of the
women going — would hire teams from the
livery stable...[for] sleds, because by that time
[usually February] there was plenty of snow.
And they would drive around — perhaps
there would be three teams with perhaps six to eight [Chinese men] in each wagon, and someone from the livery stable driving the teams... And whether they fired firecrackers the four miles to Centerville, I never knew...but they had these drums—which were kegs with the heavy leather pulled over them... And they had their festivities in a joss house in Centerville... it was red and gold inside the joss house and quite ornamental structured which was their—I don't know whether they called it an altar or what they called it.

In front of the temple was a flagpole. It fell down, so in January 1893 Centerville's Chinese replaced it. The new pole, 79 feet tall, was made from a fir tree. It is mentioned in an 1895 survey of Centerville.

A photograph, from a private collection, depicts the interior of the “Centerville josh house,” or temple (Fig. 2.2). The word “josh,” or “joss,” comes from the Portuguese word “deos,” meaning “a god.” “Temple” is a more accurate designation, however, since it is the English translation for the Chinese word for these structures.

The field notes from an 1898 mineral survey mention Centerville’s “Chinese Joss house.” It was located “at the foot of Main Street” and the surveyors took bearings from it.

By early 1903 the Idaho World reported that “Centerville has the only Joss House in the Basin.” According to former resident Rhoda Hallford Hall, Centerville’s temple burned down during the 1910 fire that destroyed three blocks on one side of Main Street.
LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

No holiday was more important to the Boise Basin Chinese than the Lunar New Year. They customarily held the opening festivities in Idaho City and the closing ceremonies in Centerville nearly two weeks later. Chinese from as far away as Boise attended either or both events, and large numbers of them came to the closing ceremonies from Idaho City, only an hour away by stage. An 1872 report described Idaho City’s characteristic Lunar New Year events:

The Joss House was visited by large numbers of them at midnight on the coming in of their New Year.... Thousands of packs of fire-crackers were exploded to exorcise the evil spirits, and their continual popping was kept up until morning. All of the Chinese merchants and heads of companies kept open house, and their tables, uniquely decorated, were covered with sweetmeats, nuts, and confections generally, of Chinese production. Some of them, upon receiving calls from their American friends, produced other refreshments, including champagne and cigars, and appeared much pleased at receiving visits from their Caucasian acquaintances... instead of receiving presents on New Year’s Day, they take pleasure in presenting their friends among the Whites with boxes of tea, cigars, silk handkerchiefs, China nuts, baskets, etc., and are very liberal in their gifts to those with whom they have business relations, and in whom they have confidence.”

The Idaho World might mention each year’s holiday several times. Occasionally there was an “added attraction,” such as in 1876 when a Centerville Chinese man added “éclat to the finale of the New Year’s festivities” by expiring “very accommodatingly” at that time.

Centerville’s Caucasian residents soon tired of the yearly event. Most had no appreciation whatsoever for anything Chinese, whether music or customs. One, who called himself “Pop,” hoped that it would soon be over, and also commented on the recently deceased gentleman. He observed that the eternal din created by their gongs, cymbals and “satanic” melodies (?) make it quite easy for one to imagine that we are dwelling in the suburbs of Pandemonium. There is one, however, who will vex our slumbers never more with his bang-it. I did not hear how he passed away, but think it was from sheer [sic] exhaustion from being compelled to listen to this Chinese music. He died sometime during the last week, but owing to their peculiar way...
of saying nothing, we cannot ascertain the
date, or else we are so well satisfied to know
that he is dead, that we will not bother about
the details.

This may be the same Chinese brass band that
Centerville had from 1876 until at least 1882. According
to Caucasian listeners, the tunes it played, “in the
celebration of one of their numerous national holi-
days,” were “soul-harrowing.”

The celebrations from mid- to late February 1877
prompted the following, marginally more tolerant,
response:

The rattle and bang of rockets and
fire-crackers keep us constantly reminded
that China New Year is upon us with all its
tinibulating [tintinabulating] nuisances and
roasted monstro[si]ties; but if they will only
quit breaking our doors and windows and
carrying off our valuables we will try and bear
with their temporary pandemonium.

Every year, Chinese from all over the Basin,
including women, congregated at Centerville to
celebrate the last day of the Lunar New Year,
characterized by “mirth, music and rice, also roast
pig.” The 1877 festivities were especially thrilling.
Another Chinese band came over from Idaho City
for that year’s celebrations. They played something
“resembling the clarionet [sic], cymbals, and one
or two other instruments;” drums were also
usually included.

A lengthy account appeared in the Idaho World.

Last Tuesday was the grandest celebration
day of the year by the Chinese. On that day
they must pay their Priest for his services in
procuring for them homes in the happy land
above, even if they are forced to steal the
money. Their celebrations are heathenism
complete, and must be witnessed to be

thoroughly understood, as they cannot be
fully described. At half-past nine o’clock on
the ‘heap big day,’ four wagons started from
Pon Yam’s store, on Montgomery street [in
Idaho City], for Centerville.

The first wagon contained the grand
musicians...and a young Chinaman, who is a
nephew of Pon Yam, holding a beautiful and
elegantly finished painting, which is said to
have cost $500 in China, and was to be
contested for at Centerville in an exceedingly
strange manner. A large cylinder, surrounded
by rockets, is placed on a level scope of
ground, and at dusk they are sent up. One
contains a ring, to which is tied a small stone.
This is the one they eagerly watch for, and the
heathen that delivers it to the Joss [figure of a
god in a Chinese temple] gets the painting.
They believe the ‘company’ — tribe — that
procures it will have extraordinary good luck
in this world and his claims at the gates of
heaven cannot be denied.

In the second wagon was an altar near
which was a large va[s]e filled with burn[i]ng
punks, two upright poles with red and white
strips of paper, several small va[s]es containing
beautiful bo[u]quets, and a roasted pig. Third
wagon — Musicians. On the fourth wagon,
which was the last, was a resemblance of a
bo[u]quet made with dough balls highly
painted, held by two men. On the hind seat
were three or four men lighting and dropping
in the street bunches of fire-crackers. The
object of this is to frighten the devil and keep
him at his distance. The party returned the
same evening, and had a grand time firing
rockets, fire-crackers, and pounding the gongs.
By this we presume one of that tribe succeeded
in procuring the first prize.

Drums were “the favorite instrument of the Chinese,” and were “used primarily in temple rites, in theaters, in festivals and processions.” In a newspaper interview, Mrs. Clara Thomas Whiteside recalled that the barrel drummer sat in the first sleigh leading the New Year’s procession to the Centerville [temple].

Players of the other instruments, flutes, cymbals, gongs, the small drum with ivory sticks and the stringed instruments, also attended the candle-and-incense ceremonies of the New Year, and at the end of it, helped set off the firecrackers.

On February 24, 1880, the Idaho World reported:

Chinese New Year ends to-day, and they intend to have a cracking time at Centerville.

The 1882 holiday occurred in March. One mean-spirited observer commented that China new years passed off without the usual turbulence, and, beyond the parading of a few monstrosities and the tintinnabulating [sic] of their big brass band there was nothing of interest to look upon or listen to. There were several hundred Chinamen here from different parts of the Basin, and the Placerville fellows bore off the big banner as proud as a boy who has found a quarter. The more they lag in their enthusiasm for this new year business the better it sits us, for of all the disgusting nuisances that ever cursed a town these Chinese demonstrations are the worst.

In late February 1888 “five sleigh loads of noisy Celestials” journeyed from Idaho City to Centerville to wind up their New Year’s festivities with their brethren of that burg. Firecrackers and China music of the high-squealing order split the air as the procession moved out of town. The closing day of the 1890 festivities brought “a big crowd” of Idaho City Chinese to Centerville. On the last day, a ringing is fired into the air amid a pyrotechnic display, and the Chinaman that gets the ring has good luck assured him and the members of his company for the ensuing year and is presented with an image of a Joss. Pon Yam, a merchant of this place [Idaho City], was the lucky man this year.

In 1891 three sleighs made a similar journey to conclude the Lunar New Year. That year the “pageant” featured: gaudy banners, and the keen crack of billions...of fire crackers harmonized beautifully with the...ringing tones of loud-voiced gongs, the mellow notes of a little drum and other very musical instruments. They returned [to Idaho City] at five o’clock yesterday evening and paraded around town, to the great edification of the small kid.

Centerville’s Lunar New Year observance was an “important event” in 1897.

It attracted quite a number of citizens from different sections of the Basin [who] were present to witness the, to us, strange, though somewhat interesting proceedings. The interior of the Joss house [temple] was elaborately decorated with blue and red silk, artificial flowers, peacock feathers, &c. The most interesting feature in connection with the celebration is the scramble for prizes. Numbers representing prizes are enclosed in a rocket which is ignited, soon explodes and flies into the air to a height of fifty or sixty feet. Its descent is closely watched. As it falls to the ground a rush is made and a genuine...
knockdown and drag out takes place. The [Chinese man] fortunate enough to secure the lucky number pulls out of the scrap appearing somewhat like a defeated pugilist.

Fifty Boise Chinese attended the 1898 festivities. They arrived two days before the closing celebration, in “[f]our, four-horse sleigh loads...[and] were wedged in the sleighs like sardines in a can.”

The *Idaho World* reported they:

had a big time...The Boise Chinese secured first prize, and Pon Yam, of [Idaho City] second, so for the coming year those of Boise are to have the biggest luck and Pon Yam’s company comes in for second best. The prizes are in the form of rings, shot up into the air by an explosion of powder in a cylindrical shaped structure made of paper. When the ring drops the Chinese scramble to secure the prize.

Rosie Wells Leighton recalled “one big celebration” when she lived in Centerville from about 1895 to 1898.

All the Chinese came over from Idaho City, and they were dressed [up], the women and all. Of course, Idaho City, those Chinese over there, they were pretty well Americanized.... But they all came over and oh, they were dressed just fit to kill. ...And that’s the only big Chinese celebration I could remember the few years we were there. Oh, the firecrackers they had...they shot them off and, oh, they had quite a time.

Even before the turn of the century, Centerville’s Caucasian residents were taking advantage of the Lunar New Year celebrations in their own way. A photograph captioned, “Chinese New Year’s Parade in Centerville in pioneer days...” shows a number of Caucasians, but no Chinese, posing with American flags, Chinese musical instruments, Chinese banners, paper lanterns, and other regalia. This photograph was probably taken between 1895 and 1898, about the time Rosie Wells Leighton lived in Centerville. The *Idaho Sunday Statesman* published it in 1963. Although Leighton, then Rosie Wells, is named as one of the children in the photo, she stated emphatically, “I know that one isn’t me by any means.” She did, however, recognize some of the other unidentified children.

In February 1901, it was observed:

[a] dance will be given in Centerville next Tuesday night. This is the China big day, which always attracts a large number of white folks to see the circus. The ball was “a grand success...[s]ilks and satins were many.”

In 1902 15 Idaho City boys, walked over to Centerville...to see the Chinese celebration. They started out at the same time the [Chinese] did and got over ahead of them, and with an even start on the return the boys got in fifteen minutes ahead Saturday evening. The distance to Centerville is eight miles. Pretty good walk for small boys through mud and slush.

A dwindling Chinese population in the Basin meant fewer attendees for the Centerville New Year observances. In 1902 the Idaho City delegation of “[f]our loads” was “the smallest...since the first celebration...in Centerville many years ago,” and only a few attended from Boise. However, at the start of the Lunar New Year in 1903, Centerville expected “a large visitation from other towns” for the “Big Day” on February 12th.

Lewis Van Winkle, our enterprising liveryman, has been trying to break his teams for use on Chinese New Years, and Saturday afternoon invited a number of the young folks to take a drive with him, which was to be with
firecracker accompaniment. They reached the Twin Sisters mine in safety, but as they came down the hill on their return the fusillade of fireworks stimulated the horses to such an extent that they got beyond control. Striking a chuck-hole in the road, the rack of the sleigh skewed around, and the passengers performed some acrobatic feats and high dives which were unlooked for, but unfortunately for some of the gentle excursionists[,] not altogether unlooked at. When a round-up was made all answered to their names except Ralph Kopp[e]s, a young man of short stature who was lost in a drift. He was extricated and the party finally reached town not much the worse for the catastrophe.

Even though “three loads of Celestials” attended from Placerville, the actual turnout was disappointing. The Idaho World observed:

The Chinese celebration in Centerville today — the last day of their New Years festivities — was very tame compared with their ‘big days’ of former years. Only two loads of Chinese went over from this place [Idaho City]. In other years they engaged every rig that could be procured, and then the supply was not equal to the demand. Only two [Chinese men] came up from Boise. This is a big decrease, to use a paradoxical phrase. The number that come up from the capital in former years to capture the big Joss and the good luck that goes with him, was quite large.

Between about 1907 and 1916, when Rhoda Hallford Hall lived in Centerville, she didn’t see the Chinese very often “except when they had their celebration” for the Lunar New Year.

[W]e could see the back of their houses from where we lived. And when they had their celebration, why, the dragon was always in the joss house [temple], and then they’d take it out and they’d parade over to the other buildings and it would just scare us to death. Had a great big old long dragon. Man, there was Chinese after Chinese to carry it over there. Oh my, we just thought sure they were going to come and get us, I guess [but] they didn’t pay attention to us.

Besides the dragon, “they had some kind of meetings, but I don’t know what kind they were. No one else was allowed to go. But it lasted a day or...maybe two days.”

A photograph taken about 1905 shows a group of Chinese preparing to celebrate the Lunar New Year at Centerville. Musical instruments that can be identified in it include drum, cymbals, and flute (Fig. 2.3).

Throughout the Basin, the Chinese population lessened year by year. By 1909, many had returned to China while others died, “mowed down” by “the scythe of time,” and “[n]o new ones have come to take their places; “[m]ost of those who [remain] are very old.”

**FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND “TONGS”**

While it is possible that Centerville once had a Chinese men’s fraternal organization, there is so far no evidence of it. Idaho City, however, had “Chinese Masons,” and an 1888 initiation ceremony attracted Chinese “from all parts of the Basin.” Because some of the members probably included men from Centerville, the few details we know of this organization help in understanding it.

Each new initiate paid a $15 fee to join, and initiation rites, featuring “changing scenes of archaeological mysteries,” lasted for 24 hours. A Caucasian observer reported that members claimed...
similarity with the American Masons, while believing
the Chinese organization to be "a little higher grade
more ancient, grand and mystical, and richer in the
lore and magnificent teachings of antiquity."
The reporter interviewed one Chinese man about
the nature of the group, and learned that the
Chinese Masons also considered their organization
to be superior because the Chinese members were
more like brothers who had the same mother. They
did not quarrel or fight among themselves, and if one
fought another Chinese who was not a member, all
the rest would help him. When they observed a fight
between men who were not Masons, they did not
rush in to break it up.

The word "tong," in Chinese, means a society
or association. Many organizations had this word
in their names. Because some of these groups warred
with one another over control of illegal activities,
unsavory connotations became attached to the term.
However, most "tongs" existed mainly to provide
benevolent services to their members.

CHINESE CEMETERIES AND BURIAL PRACTICES
No record exists of a Chinese cemetery at
Centerville, and the informants either did not recall
one being there, or did not mention one. We know,
however, that at least some of the Chinese who died
in the Centerville and Placerville vicinities were
buried in the Chinese section of Idaho City's ce-
metery. Chinese could also be buried in a section of
Placerville's cemetery. In January 1876, "an elegant-
toned, nobby" Chinese man "from the other side of
the Basin" died and "his friends, chartering a train of
sleighs, chucked him in and came whizzing over [to
Idaho City] on a grave-yard excursion." In April 1871,
some of Idaho City's Chinese women visited the
cemetery on the occasion of the Qingming [Ching
Ming] festival, also called the "Chinese Memorial
Day," when people visit the graves to honor the
dead. The Idaho World reported on the rites they
performed there, obviously without any understand-
ing of, or sympathy for, Chinese customs:

We...witnessed a strange scene, enacted
there by a half dozen China women, who were
engaged in the ceremony of furnishing
provisions to the dead Celestials. Baked
pork, fruits, apples and rice, were placed
at the foot of one of the graves, and a
large number of wax tapers, joss sticks,
&c, were lighted and placed around it.
Cups of tea were then poured upon the
ground, and an immense quantity of
fancy paper was burnt. The women were
laughing and apparently joking during
this time, and occasionally they would
prostrate themselves at the foot of the
grave and bow their heads to the ground
three or four times in succession. After

going through with these performances
one of them deliberately pulled out her

Fig. 2.3. Chinese celebrating the Lunar New Year at Centerville, about 1905. Photograph
courtesy Idaho State Historical Society, No. 76-138-59.
handkerchief and, selecting a good seat on a box, she commenced singing, at the same time covering her face with her ban-dan[n]a. The song changed to wailing and crying, in which all of them joined finally and they kept up an unearthly din for about half an hour. One of them, who appeared to be 'boss of ceremonies,' finally stopped, put her handkerchief in her pocket, replenished the fire with more joss paper, and commenced thumping her companions to make them suspend operations.... They all indulged in a few more genuflections and prostrations, which wound up their curious ceremonies. We can hardly believe that their exhibitions of grief were genuine, as we could see no traces of tears; and their demonstrations were accompanied with a little too much levity for it to be other than simulated grief. They may have been hired mourners; and if so, that accounts for the business-like manner in which they went at it.

At another such occasion, several years later, an observer noted:

The Chinese went out in large crowds to the graveyard on Sunday to give their dead and buried countrymen a good spring feed. They took there the carcasses of several hogs and all other kinds of good China grub, with plenty of hell-fire whisky to wash it down. [Afterwards they] brought all the food back to town with them. Formerly...they scattered the good things upon and about the graves in the greatest profusion, leaving them there for the hungry defunct to absorb at leisure.

The ceremonies performed at the Qingming festival were similar to those practiced at the time of death. During a Chinese funeral, musicians often accompanied the procession to the cemetery.

...a lengthy ceremony included a table... spread with a roast pig, a roast chicken, roast heart, boiled rice, tea, etc. Wax candles were lighted, and various kinds of reeds and sticks were kept burning. A priest dressed in a saffron-colored robe that came nearly to his heels, with a scarlet scarf wound round his head, first stood up and addressed a short speech...after which he kneeled and bowed a great many times, continuing to repeat invocations accompanied with various gesticulations.... Then several other Chinese joined in and went through with certain maneuvers... after which the whole audience (of men) bowed and kneeled and rose again.

The priest after this had each article of food on the table presented to him, over which he went through with a ceremony that looked as if he were blessing it. After this the men came forward by twos and bowed several times, kneeled down, rose up and bowed again before the table. More invocations or incantations followed; after which three small torpedoes were lighted, thrown in the air and exploded over the graves. Burning of firecrackers followed and then all the men took a drink of brandy, poured from a demijohn, which closed the ceremony. During the whole of this ceremony the wife of deceased was in a crouching position on a mat near the coffin, with head bowed to the ground, and kept up a most piteous lamentation. The deceased belonged to a secret society.... All the males wore badges made of strips of red and strips of white cotton entwined. Most of them had them tied around the left arm; but a few, probably officers, made them into sashes.
After the ceremony was over the edibles were brought back to town and eaten by the survivors.

One custom, still observed today, is to give money to people who attend the funeral. In 1876:

A quantity of gold dust was weighed into twelve-and-a-half cent lots and done up into separate packages of paper. After the funeral was over, and as they turned to come back to town, one of these packages containing a bit in gold was given to each man that was there. This sum was intended to buy some little token in remembrance of [the] deceased.”

In the early part of the twentieth century, funeral attendess, including children, received a dime. By the 1990s the amount had risen to $1, with the money intended to buy ice cream or candy, to “sweeten the pain of departure.”

The body of one man, who died at Centerville during the Lunar New Year celebrations in 1876, was taken to Idaho City before being returned to China.

[T]o make things more interesting and provide company for him in making the voyage, his surviving friends went to the graveyard and disinterred the bodies of two more. The three departed were then laid in state in some backyard and on Saturday the Chinese held a sort of a ‘wake’ over them by letting off three or four barrels of fire-crackers in close proximity to their remains. A large crowd of Chinamen had assembled and the rites or festivities seemed to be greatly enjoyed by them.

Chinese who died abroad felt that their spirits would not rest unless their bones were buried in their homeland. Therefore, in accordance with Chinese custom, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Society officials regularly visited Chinese graveyards, even in remote mining regions, in order to disinter burials, clean the bones, and package them for shipment. This custom was greatly misunderstood by Caucasian observers:

A party of Chinamen raised two stiffs from their God’s acre last week and they were several days in peeling off and burning the meat and preparing the bones for shipment to the Flowery Kingdom. The bodies were quite ripe, and the effluvi[e]m emanating from them and permeating the air was not suggestive of a bed of sweet thyme. The meat of the Chinese dying in this country ascends to heaven in nauseating smoke, while the bones are carefully sent to their native land. If the old resurrection doctrine be correct there will be a terrible commotion on the Last Great Day when these distributed and scattered scraps adhere and again assume a natural form.

As far as can be determined, only two Chinese people were ever buried in the Centerville vicinity. They shared a marble gravestone that was visible in 1933.

CENTREVILLE’S ASIAN COMMUNITY AFTER 1890

Since the 1890 manuscript census for most of the United States was destroyed in a 1921 Washington DC fire, specific information is not available for that year, so other sources must be relied upon for that approximate time period. In an oral history interview, former Centerville resident Rosie Wells Leighton remembered the town as it was between 1895 and 1898. She recalled that there were 12 or 15 Caucasian families, and “as many Chinese as white people.”

Centerville, Idaho

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Centerville then had a Chinese gardener, a Chinese merchant, a Chinese laundry, and a bakery run by a Chinese man. The other Chinese men there were miners. Centerville also had two Chinese women, but no children, and a “joss house.”

There was even a Japanese man. In 1897 Mrs. C. C. Meffert of Meffert’s Hotel employed a Japanese cook. He produced, for a wedding, a cake that “was a marvel of beauty — an artistic piece of work that would command praise anywhere.” He may be the same person that the 1910 census listed as a servant named Harry Noguchi, who lived and worked in a boarding house on the south side of Main Street. In 1900, 257 people lived in Centerville, of whom 55 (21.4 percent) were Chinese; three were women. This figure equates well with the memory of Gertrude Koppes King, who moved to Centerville about 1899 and remembered that “there must have been fifty [Chinese men] and seven or eight [Chinese women] there.”

Centerville continued to have Asian residents until at least 1910; that year’s census enumerated 17 of them (11.4 percent); only one was a woman. Newspapers in Idaho City and elsewhere occasionally mentioned their homes, businesses, and personalities. Even with declining numbers and percentages, the Chinese obviously were numerous enough to make continuing contributions to the economy of Centerville and surrounding area. Although no Chinese names appear in the 1920 Centerville census, some Chinese men may have lived there intermittently into the early 1920s.

**MINERS**

The Lung Yam Chinese Mining Company purchased water rights and placer ground in June 1891. It subsequently repaired the Grimes Creek ditch, and although the owners only worked their claim for a short time in summer, they took out over $1,000.

Of the 20 placer claims in the Centerville vicinity during the spring of 1896, the Chinese ran eight and Caucasians ran 12. A mineral survey performed in 1898 mentioned “the China Placer claim near the confluence of Grimes and Granite creeks.”

Although Chinese and Caucasians rarely owned property together, a sale in September 1899 confirms that they did so in Centerville. Notary Public Norman H. Young and Lee Sue Tong sold to the Boise Developing Company, for $100,

all that certain ditch and water right of eight cubic feet per second taken out of Grimes Creek [j]ust below the mouth of Clay Gulch located July 13th 1897....

The sale also included another ditch, three-fourths of a mile long, on the west side of Grimes Creek “to a point on the Pearl Knob Claim about one thousand feet below the wharehouse [sic] of the Boise Dredging Company.”

According to the 1900 census, 38 Chinese miners remained in the Centerville area. In 1902 some of them leased “a block of ground in the Keller claim,” and were “making extensive preparations for the season’s work.”
A former resident of Placerville, Mabel Fitzhugh, recalled a Chinese man who looked after a ditch that brought water to a Centerville placer claim.

He had a cabin about half way between the head of the ditch and Centerville. And he...walked the upper half one day, and the lower half the next day. And I think that was twenty miles each day.

Once, during a cloudburst, he struggled up to the headgate to make sure that the storm did not damage it or the ditch. This person was probably Ah Lip, who “took care of the ditch from Elk Creek [near Idaho City] to old Centerville for forty years.” (Fig. 2.4).

In 1906 Centerville’s Chow Yuen Lee Company leased the Reid placer claim at Placerville, where it employed 16 men. The 1910 Centerville census showed that 14 Chinese miners still remained there.

Herman Koppes described some of the occupations that the Chinese men he knew pursued during the early 1900s:

[A]ll of them had been miners at one time or another, and they were very hard working people...they’d go in and they’d make more money off the claim that the [previous] American [owner] ever thought of making...they were so meticulous and such hard workers, and they were there [at] day light in the morning and they were still there at dark....

BUSINESSES

As mentioned earlier, from 1895 on, at various times, Centerville had a bakery run by a Chinese man, as well as a Chinese gardener, a Chinese laundry, and a Chinese merchant. While no additional information is available on the laundry, oral historical accounts describe the other three businesses, often in some detail.

BAKING

Rosie Wells Leighton was the only informant who mentioned the bakery in Centerville that was run by a Chinese man. It would have operated some time between 1895 and 1898. She stated that the same man ran the laundry and the bakery, and “he used to bake for anybody that wanted it.” Although she didn’t know whether to believe them or not, the local boys said that when the baker took the bread out of the oven he would “take a [mouthful] of water and [spray it] over the top,” to make it shine. The bakery portion of the business may have ceased by 1899 as no other informant remarked on it.

GARDENING

In August 1895, Jung Yue Yuen charged Gong Chit $400 for a half interest in a store building and cellar situated on China Street on corner and known as the Hung Wo Chung Store together with sheds out buildings connected therewith all possessing right to ground covered by same also two [C]hina houses and land adjoining used as a garden.

Rosie Wells Leighton recalled that the Chinese gardener’s name was Hu Yong. Although he had a queue, he wore ordinary work clothes, just like the Caucasians. He would bring the vegetables around to the houses, carrying them in baskets suspended from a pole across his shoulders. As a child, she went to his house once:

Mama sent me over there for something and he was hacking up a chicken...on kind of a block with...a cleaver, and I said, ‘What [are] you doing, Hu Yong?’ And...he told me what he was doing and I said, ‘Well, take all the feathers off.’ ‘Oh,’ he says, ‘eat them all.’ I think he was just [teasing me].
Hu Yong had an interesting sideline. When the Caucasians had removed the “colors” from their gold pans, they would clean up the material that was left. They’d put them in a little bottle and give them to us kids, and we’d take them over to Hu Yong, and... put them on the...fire shovel and put them in his stove...and burn everything off but the gold. Then he’d weigh that and pay us for it. And he would figure it up on...[an abacus].”

Rosie Leighton stated that Hu Yong grew the vegetables and other things he sold. They included radishes, green onions, lettuce, and possibly rhubarb; she didn’t recall whether or not he grew potatoes. This garden may be the one that Gertrude Koppes King remembered in 1899 and somewhat later. She stated that the Chinese “had a great big garden” in Centerville. “You could always buy fresh vegetables from them. They always had nice gardens.”

In later years, Centerville no longer had a Chinese gardener. Herman Koppes, who was born in Centerville in 1911 and lived there until he was 10 years old, recalled that there were no Chinese gardens in Centerville then. Instead,

from the spring on ‘til late fall, the [Chinese men] from...Garden City [near Boise] used to come by with groceries all the time. Most of them had an old truck, but sometimes they had just wagons or horses. Usually when they’d come by, everybody would be out and have gunny sacks and buy [a] gunny sack full of [produce] to last awhile.... They had potatoes and they had beets and they had all kinds of greens and sometimes they had fruit. If it was the right time of the year they had fruit and berries and things like that.

Laundering

Oral interviews from the only two informants who recalled Centerville before the turn of the century both mention a Chinese laundry. Rosie Leighton said that the same man ran both the laundry and the bakery, while Gertrude Koppes King referred to only what she called the “China laundry.” Neither woman provided any details of its operation. It must have gone out of business shortly after the turn of the century, since none of the “younger” informants referred to it.

Storekeeping

Rosie Wells Leighton remembered that merchant Chue Kee dressed in a black outfit that came about halfway to [his] knees, [with] pants below that. He didn’t have a wife, at least not one at Centerville.

Chue Kee wore this queue and in it he braided a long tassel, and he always kept it wrapped around his head... And...he had kind of a store there.... Mom would send us over. We could always get lard and sugar there...[w]hen we couldn’t get it at the other store. Anyway, we kids used to go over there [and] just ask him for candy and he’d give it to us. And...he’d write our names for us if we wanted him to on a piece of red paper.... There was always a teapot there in a padded case on the table. He was always behind this counter kind of up high...and... [t]he teapot was in this padded thing on the table out in front and the little cup [was] there, with no handle on it or anything. Every [Chinese man], I think, [who] came in took a drink out of it. We kids did.

In later years, former Centerville resident Gertrude Koppes King described Centerville’s Chinatown. Born
in 1891, she moved to Centerville when she was about eight years old. She recalled:

We had one Chinese storekeeper. His name was Chew Kee [elsewhere, Chue Kee]. He was the big storekeeper there. He had all kinds of things in his store. Like fancy Chinese dishes, silk handkerchiefs, fans, and all that sort of thing to sell. People used to buy them for their Christmas presents and special birthday gifts. He also had a small grocery store. There was another China store there which wasn’t quite as nice — Yoo Yung’s store.

In January 1902, a “Chow Kee” of Centerville applied to the U.S. immigration authorities for a “certificate of departure,” presumably because he wished to return to China. His case was handled by Major George Cook, “Chinese Inspector for Montana and Idaho,” who visited the Basin for that purpose. This person was the same as Chue, or Chew, Kee. Gertrude Koppes King remembered that Chew Kee, the big storekeeper, “left...[when I was] about 10 or 12 years old [1901 to 1903]. He went back to China.”

Since neither Chew Kee nor Yoo Yung appears in the 1900 or 1910 census, those names may have belonged to the stores rather than to their proprietors.

Centerville merchant “Choo” Kee apparently returned from China, because in 1908 he purchased a Columbia phonograph and 24 records while in Boise.

He gave his countrymen of this place [Idaho City] an entertainment Wednesday night in the Chinese laundry. The records were made in Canton, China, and are classic Chinese music. The music is vocal with orchestra accompaniment, and is from Chinese operas. The singers have flexible voices and the range of other opera singers, but the

music is oriental in every feature, and all two-four time.

Boise resident Harry Elkington described spending a summer vacation in Centerville with a friend, Norman Thomas. Although Elkington does not give a date for his Centerville vacation, it would have been some time after 1907, the year he first started working for a wholesale grocery in Boise. He commented that at the time of his visit, Centerville, Idaho City, Quartzburg, and Placerville all had “quite a few Chinese up there working over the old placer mines that the whites had abandoned.”

In Centerville, Elkington befriended a Chinese man, “War” Kee (probably Wah Kee), who “lived a couple of hundred yards up the street from where [Elkington] was staying.” When War Kee’s place caught fire, Elkington “rushed up there and helped War save what we could from the store and his living quarters.” War Kee “rebuilt his store and still continued his business because there were still quite a few Chinese working around there.” Later, on War Kee’s visits to Boise, he would call at Elkington’s place of employment, and when War Kee moved back to China, he sent Elkington a Chinese tobacco pipe.

Rhoda Hallford Hall’s memories of Centerville date from about 1907 through about 1916. She remembered that a man named “Wah” ran the Chinese store.

...the Chinatown was...on the edge of town...they had a store and Wah was the Chinese [man who ran it]. He was a real intelligent Chinese, young fellow. And there used to be a...number of Chinese [who] lived right there...[The Chinese store] had canned food, canned groceries. If you went there to get something, sometime they’d be eating and they’d be five or six sitting around a table.... After Wah left, they had a Chinese by the
name of Su. Su wasn’t an intelligent Chinese man, and he didn’t stay very long. And one by one the Chinese all moved out.

The 1910 census shows that Wong Wah Kee was indeed a Centerville merchant. He had been born in California, so was a United States citizen.

Glenn Bedal, who was born in 1908, remembered Centerville from about 1914 to about 1920. He recalled that Centerville’s Chinese store was “for everybody... they had Chinese candy...[and] roasted peanuts,” but, apparently, very little else that he remembered.

Some confusion still exists regarding the names of Centerville’s Chinese merchants, that is, whether these are store names or personal names. For example, in June 1895, a Chow Yuen Lee died. The Idaho World described him as “an old time Chinese merchant of Centerville.” Later, there was another man with the same name or same business name, since a different Chow Yuen Lee encountered legal difficulties in 1908. Although his wholesale liquor license prohibited him from selling at retail, he did so anyway. Caught, he pled guilty and paid a fine of $100. He then put up a sign reading, “Those who buy liquor at this store must not drink it on the premises.”

Chu’en Lee, another Centerville merchant, had a store there at an unknown date, until he sold it and moved to Boise. Described as a “skilled musician,” Chu'en Lee was known for his Hsientze playing “a three-stringed, long-necked guitar,” and “Chinese musicians often congregated at Ah Shin’s store and then music of all descriptions could be heard.”

The Chinese firm of Chen Yuen Lee, who in 1902 “presented the town with a string of firecrackers valued at $25,” is possibly the same business.

WOMEN

Between 1895 and 1898 two Chinese women lived in Centerville. One, who lived with her husband, was the only Chinese women most of the local children knew about. However, the local boys found out that there was a second woman:

living there right in this China set-up... by the name of Old Whitey. So they got them some eggs and they would rotten egg her until she came out. And boy did she come out. She came out with a butcher knife. Of course the kids were barefooted, and she had on...Chinese slippers. And they took off and she took out after them, just all of this Chinese talk.

The boys escaped by running through a sandbur patch into Grimes Creek, but the woman, whose feet were softer, had to turn back.

Rosie Leighton recalled that the first woman had a kindly nature. When Rosie’s baby sister died, about 1898, the woman “called to me one day and she said, ‘What[’s the] matter? ... Don’t hear baby over there anymore.’ She knew what happened. So she gave me a pair of earrings. Just trying to be nice to me.”

That woman dressed in the traditional manner. She wore “a black outfit that came about halfway to her knees...[and] pants below that.”

Chinese women occasionally visited Centerville from other communities, particularly at the time of Centerville’s Lunar New Year celebrations. In 1897, for example,

the female celestials who came to take part in the festivities were two sisters, Misses Sling Bangs, from the other side [probably Idaho City], chaperoned by a portly old lady, Mrs. Bung Fung. The girls were rather pretty, dark, almond-shaped eyes, cheeks painted rose tinted and a deep olive complexion, caused many to gaze upon them with admiration. They were neatly attired in pale orange colored silk.
In 1900 Centerville had three Chinese women residents. The census gave no occupations for any of them. Ah How, aged 42, lived alone; Gem Toy, aged 73, lived with a miner and was listed as his “partner.” Poo Toy, aged 35, lived with a 68-year-old cook, and was also referred to as the cook’s “partner.” The latter couple figured prominently in a 1902 newspaper article:

Last Wednesday night Mah Hong, a Chinese cook at Centerville, came to grief. Di Toy, his wife, eloped with Wong Yick, a handsome man, that night while Mr. Hong was engaged in cooking a supper for dancers who were gaily tripping their light fantastic pedals. The loss of Di Toy was not the worst of it. They took $900 of his hard-earned cash besides an assortment of high-priced jewelry. … Mah Hong first offered a reward of $150 for the capture of the couple, but soon raised to $250, and dropped to $50 when he received news by telephone that they had been seen on the Boise road.

Sheriff Mills captured the couple that evening. On interrogating them, he learned that the woman left Hong because he fought too much all the time, and she did not like him. She liked Yick very much because he was a “good man.” The sheriff insisted on taking them both back to Centerville, despite Yick’s fear that Hong “would surely shoot” Di Toy. Hong reclaimed “possession of his wife, money and jewels,” and Yick left town in the morning on the stage.

According to Rhoda Hall, during the time she lived at Centerville, from about 1907 to about 1914, there were no Chinese women or children there. Although the 1910 census did show one Chinese woman who lived alone and had no occupation listed, she may have stayed primarily indoors, and perhaps moved away shortly after the census was taken.

CHINATOWN

Between 1895 and 1898 Centerville’s “Chinatown” was on two blocks. It may have contracted a bit by the time Gertrude Koppes King remembered it. At that time, Centerville had “just board buildings;” none were painted, and there were some floors and partly boarded up and then tents over that, until they got houses built. There was a large Chinatown, one whole street of Chinatown...

The advent of dredging in Centerville brought increasing prosperity to the Chinese living in “the lower end of town.” They also participated in the 1898 building boom.

[They] became imbued with the idea that it was really necessary for them to follow in the wake of their white brethren and construct in that quarter several buildings. The edifice of Mr. and Mrs. Slung Bung is indeed attractive through its extremely odd appearance. The octagon front represents to a certain degree an Asiatic pagoda. It is constructed chiefly of slabs which seem to lend unto the whole building a rustic, woodland air.

Gertrude King did not remember any Chinese children in Centerville. She recalled the Chinese people dressed in the Chinese costumes [traditional clothing]. This old Chew Kee that ran the store always had beautiful hand-embroidered jackets — black with all colored embroideries on the jacket and the pants, black satin or whatever it was they made them out of — silk, China silk. And the women wore...regular Chinese [traditional clothing], too. They never dressed in American [clothing], or, there were a few Chinese... there who used to wear overalls and shirts, but most of them dressed...
in regular Chinese [ traditional clothing].
The remaining Chinese just drifted away.
Not all at once. They just kept drifting away.
Then when Centerville burned [in 1910] an awful lot of their buildings burned.

**DAILY LIFE**

Centerville was sometimes enlivened by the visits of itinerant Chinese entrepreneurs. One was "a Chinese medicine man" named Sling Gum. He visited both Idaho City and Centerville in 1891. A report of his visit to Idaho City stated that he "gave a Chinese spear drill" which succeeded in drawing "quite a crowd."

He is a powerful, well-muscled man, and performed the feat of bending an iron bar by the force of a blow on the muscles of the arm. This was done to produce a bruise, which immediately disappeared under the soothing influence of his medicine. The bruising of his arm was undoubtedly a trick that his unsuspecting countrymen never caught on to. He claims that his medicine cures bruises, sprains, sore eyes, broken limbs, etc., and by convincing the Chinese of the merits of his medicine did a rushing business.

His subsequent performance at Centerville was similar. There he gave a "sword or spear exercise" that was well enough, but the iron bar business was a base delusion. He applies a black substance of some kind to the bar before using, and when he strikes his arm a blow with it, it very naturally leaves a black mark. His medicine being a liquid, of course the black mark washes off with very little rubbing.

In 1895 a Centerville Chinese man was brought to Idaho City "to be examined for insanity." The examining physician was not certain whether his condition was "a genuine case of insanity or the result of too much opium." The Chinese man "will be kept in jail for a few days, and if there is no change for the better in his mental machinery he will be taken to the asylum."

Some of the information we have about Centerville's Chinese residents comes from delinquent tax lists. Although Caucasian residents also had delinquencies, the Chinese entries are of greater interest because they show conclusively that Centerville's Chinese residents owned property and paid taxes like everyone else. For example, the list for 1882 shows that Ah Yam owned a "house and lot in China Town, Centerville" valued at $50, together with property worth $390; his tax was $8.65. That same year, Wah Kee owned "two small houses and lots," worth $100; his property was "formerly used as a store by Wau Kee & Co."

The 1893 list included only Pay Juog, who had a mining ditch worth $100, and the list for 1895 included Centerville's Chow Yuen Lee, whose property was worth $1,825. However, since Chow Yuen Lee had died in June of that year, it is not surprising that he had not paid his property taxes.

Delinquent tax lists for subsequent years continued to include occasional Chinese from the Centerville vicinity. For 1896, both Ah Jin and Sin Foo neglected to pay taxes of $1.88 each on property worth $50 apiece. In addition, the Lin Yeck Tong Company, probably mining on nearby Henry Creek, owned property worth $100 with taxes of $3.75.

The 1898 delinquent tax list contained the names of Chang Fook and the Chong Sing and Shin Kee companies, all of Centerville. They owned property valued at $35, $100, and $600, respectively. Ah Hang, with property worth $50, was the only Centerville Chinese on the 1899 list.
The 1900 list, printed in 1901, contained the names of China Jack, Ah Hang, and Chung Low of Centerville. China Jack had property worth $30, Chung Low’s was worth $50, and Ah Hang’s was assessed at only $25. Sing We, on the 1901 list, owned property valued at $75. On the 1904 list, Ah Joe had a house and lot of unstated value for which taxes, costs, and penalties totaled $2.18; Chow Yuen Lee owed $75.28 on a store and merchandise; Hung Li Sue owed $4.10 on mining ditches; and Lee Kee owed $4.10 on a house and lot. The Chou Yuen Lee Company, general store, also appears in the 1903 Centerville city directory.

In 1905 Centerville’s Chinese tax delinquencies included Ah How, house and lot, $2.23; Ah Jack, the same; Chow Yuen Lee, store, barn, and lots, $67.22; and Hung Li Sue, mining ditches, $4.15. The same names appeared on the 1906 list, with one addition: the Man Lee Company owed $4.91 on a mining ditch. A 1905 Idaho business directory listed Chou Yuen Lee Company, General Store, as one of only three businesses there. The 1907 delinquent tax list contained just two names, Ah How, whose taxes were $2.56 on his house and lot, and Chaw [sic] Yuen Lee, who owed $58.09 for his store, merchandise, and lot. Ah Jack’s name reappeared on the 1910 list, when he owed $1.99.

Several other oral historical accounts contain detailed information about Centerville’s Chinese and other residents. For example, Rhoda Hallford Hall, born in Boise in 1901, lived in Centerville and attended school there through the eighth grade. Her memories of that community therefore date from about 1907 through about 1916. The map she drew of the community shows it before the 1910 fire that destroyed most of the buildings on the north side of the street (Fig. 2.5).

Because they did not have running water at their

**Fig. 2.5.** Centerville before the 1910 fire. Drawn by Yixian Xu from a sketch by Rhoda Hallford Hall. The 1910 fire destroyed most of the buildings on the north side of Main Street.

Centerville, Idaho
a man she called “Chinese John” brought water to their home on laundry day.

We had a tub and a washboard. The [Chinese man] always carried our wash water. We called him ‘John, the Wash Man,’ and when Mother was going to wash, she had John carry the water for her to put in the tubs.

The water came from a well down below our house. We had to go down quite a hill. Not very far, but it was pretty steep.

The same man also picked huckleberries and sold them. He would carry them in two big cans, at least five gallons apiece, on a stick across his shoulders. And he’d go huckleberrying and... fill up those buckets in a day, and then he’d carry them into town and everybody that couldn’t get their own huckleberries, they bought [them] from him.

Rhoda Hall did not know what the other Centerville Chinese did for a living, “except a little placer mining.”

Except for harrassment from boys, who teased and tormented them, Centerville’s Chinese and Caucasians usually got along very well. Rosie Leighton stated emphatically that there was no racial discrimination, but that “[t]hey kept their place...as far as their social life was concerned...everything was separate.”

Rhoda Hall agreed, stating that “in town, the Chinese men kept to themselves and we kept to ourselves. They didn’t associate in any way...But they were all friendly, nice Chinese.”

Centerville’s Caucasian former residents obviously had good memories of the Chinese who once lived there also. However, despite the apparent good feelings between the two races, no informant ever saw a Chinese person at a Centerville dance, party, or any other social event.

Glenn Bedal remembered “old China John” as well as a few other Chinese there, but no women. His map (Fig. 2.6) shows a Chinese store, “China John’s” house, several other houses where Chinese people lived, and “what they call a joss house. That’s where they worshipped, the old [Chinese men]...” To subsist, most of the Chinese who were not merchants did “a little placer mining.”

Although Bedal recalled that the Chinese were treated pretty well, he recounted how “the kids” sometimes behaved badly toward them:

...they used to carry their water with a pole over their shoulder [from which two five-gallon cans hung by ropes] and carry them about half full of water. And the kids used to go up and cut the rope, down the water would come.

After the Chinese left Centerville for good, Bedal and his friends obtained black powder from the powderhouse in Placerville. They put a box of it into an abandoned building “and would shoot into this box of powder and watch them China houses blow up.”

Herman Koppes was born in Centerville in 1911 and lived there until he was 10 years old. Although he then moved to Idaho City, he often visited his Centerville relatives. He remembered that there may have been as many as 100 to 150 Chinese in the old and new Centerville vicinities at the time of his earliest memories. These numbers dwindled rapidly until there were only 15 to 20 Chinese left in Centerville itself, in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and finally just one called “Gypsy John.” There were some women and children, but “very few of either; the women did not go out much.” Koppes remembered that the Centerville-area Chinese wore “very traditional” clothing. He remembered that the Chinese people were very kind to him.
When I was very young, just a while after my father died [1915], we used to get out and wander around and get lost. And this one Gypsy John...what everybody called him would pick us up and take us home. Always had some Chinese candy in his pocket, [he would] give us a piece of Chinese candy and take us home. We were in pretty good hands. All the Chinese were very, very wonderful to the people and also to the children.

Herman Koppes visited Gypsy John’s home “lots of times;” when John’s pockets were empty of candy, he would take the children home to get more. His house was about 12 feet long and 8 or 10 feet wide, with only one door and no windows. He had a bunk; a single stove, across from the bed, used for both cooking and heating; a little table; and one chair; “some of the others had more elaborate things...but that was about everything he had.”

Other Chinese also lived by themselves, while some lived in what Koppes called the “joss houses” or in groups of perhaps four or five. The so-called

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**Fig. 2.6. Centerville, probably about 1920. Drawn by Tixian Xu from a sketch by Glenn Bedal.**

**KEY**

1. Cemetery
2. House, unidentified
3. School
4. Chinese House
5. Jim Blair Hotel
6. Jim Blair Bar/Saloon
7. Houses, unidentified
8. “China John’s” House
9. “Joss House”
“joss houses” had men who were leaders, who seemed to take care of everything, particularly if a crisis occurred. The buildings were about the same size, perhaps 40 feet wide by 70 or 80 feet long, and were dug down and then the sod and stuff put right over the top of the roof...and you had to go downstairs to go in.... And then they had a long kind of a bar place over on the other side, and...usually on the back of it there was a place for one or two people to live...the center had tables and things like that.

The interior walls were made of lumber, and the roof was framed in with the sod over it. Herman Koppes’ description of the two semi-subterranean “joss houses” makes it clear that they were more for socialization, rather than places for worship. In later life he learned that they were really used for gambling. His detailed drawing of Centerville shows the location of these two buildings, as well as many other structures there at the time (Fig. 2.7).

Once mining returns dwindled, or at times when mining was not possible, the Centerville Chinese did other things to earn money.

...they started cutting trees and sawing wood for the population...[I watched them] saw logs.... [T]hey’d have a team bring them in and drop them off on a big flat area they had there [below his grandmother’s, near the creek and] they’d have a long saw and on each end they’d put a rope, and they’d probably have anywhere from 10 to 15 or 20 people on each end of the rope, and you couldn’t hear a thing, all of them talking at the same time. And they’d pull that saw back and forth with all those people...they did an awful lot of work that way.

[W]hen they were sawing logs...one bunch would saw for a while and then another...20 or 30 more would take over and the first ones would rest for a while and drink some tea....

The Chinese also did snow removal. During winter, they helped keep the trail open to the schoolhouse up on the hill. Koppes recalled that “quite a few of them” spoke a sort of pidgin English. Although “some of them were kind of hard to understand,” Gypsy John was very intelligible and made himself understood quite well. Although Koppes didn’t know for sure how they got their supplies, he suspected that the Chinese who supplied garden produce from Garden City brought other things with them for the local Chinese community.

Gypsy John died sometime in the 1920s, and was buried near Centerville’s Catholic cemetery. After his death his home was torn down and the remains burned. Koppes believed that Gypsy John’s bones were not exhumed and returned to China probably because “he felt like he was more American than Chinese,” and stated that everybody loved him.

“Of course when the kids were growing up...he was taking care of all of us, when you got older you just had a lot of respect for him.”

After Gypsy John’s death, to honor the memory of a Chinese man who had befriended two small fatherless boys, Koppes installed a monument over Gypsy John’s grave in the late 1920s. He put rock chips over the grave site, bought a stone marker, and had a Chinese man in Boise inscribe it in Chinese. Two women mentioned seeing it when they were locating and recording Centerville’s two cemeteries in 1933.

Finally, two mounds at the right of the trail caught our eye. Closer approach revealed one marker of marble unusually white and glistening. The Chinese characters written thereon told us that these were the graves of
Fig. 2.7. Centerville between 1918 and 1924. Sand Creek was also then known as Town Creek, its present name. Drawn by Tixian Xu from a sketch by Herman Koppes.

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two Celestials, doubtless placer miners, of whom there were [once] many in the B[asin].

The author and her associates tried, unsuccessfully, to relocate the grave marker in 1993. Koppes also searched for it without success the following year; unfortunately, the marker has probably been stolen.

**DISCUSSION**

Centerville’s Chinese residents were economically successful, both as miners and as community businessmen. This is apparent from the amount and kind of taxes they paid. As mentioned, they were subject to the same federal and county taxation rates as levied upon their Caucasian counterparts. For example, between 1867 and 1869 a Chinese wholesale liquor dealer and several Chinese lottery ticket dealers in Centerville each paid business taxes of $100, while from 1867 through 1870, 14 Centerville Chinese residents had incomes ranging from $200 to $1,000 and totaling $6,500.

Chinese with the lowest incomes were probably laborers, or miners working for wages. Both groups typically received $1 per day, but were not employed year-round. Cooks received $30 to $40 per month, depending upon skill, while store owners and other businessmen earned more. Of the 14 incomes reported, only one person received the lowest amount, $200; the rest were $300 (4), $400 (4), $4,500 (3), and $1,000 (2).

From 1867 through 1872 the Chinese at Centerville paid $1,452.50 in business and income taxes, an average of just over $242 per year. While time did not permit a similar calculation for Euroamericans for the same period, it is apparent that both groups made substantial contributions to territorial coffers.

Census records provide another measure of the wealth of individual Chinese residents of Centerville. For example, of 231 men listed as placer miners in 1870, 42 of them (18.2 percent) owned real estate ranging in value from $100 to $500, with a total worth of $9,600. Individual ownership amounts were $100 (6), $150 (7), $200 (4), $250 (11), $300 (11), $400 (2), and $500 (6). In comparison, of the 92 Caucasians listed as miners, only 12 (13.0 percent) owned real estate, ranging in value from $100 to $16,000; however, 50 (54.3 percent) owned personal property worth between $100 and $10,000.

Additionally, in the 1870 census, all three Chinese gamblers owned real estate, valued at $200 (1) and $250 (2), while the laundryman’s real estate was worth $250. One Chinese miner, with $150 in real estate, also owned personal property worth $200, and the two Chinese merchants each had $500 in personal property. The 1870 census did not list any property values for Chinese women. However, one of them, as mentioned earlier, reportedly lost her house and its contents worth $300 in Centerville’s October 1870 fire.

Over the years the Boise Basin’s Chinese residents, and their Caucasian counterparts, had coexisted relatively peacefully. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese even began to be defended by local Caucasians. In 1893, for example, the Idaho World commented, in reference to an anti-Chinese incident in Owyhee County:

[S]uch lawlessness as some white men practice on the Chinese — white men, if such an adjective as white is admissible in reference to them — who falsely consider themselves effective anti-Chinese agitators — turns the sympathies of the better class of people toward the Chinese. It is invariably the case that the Chinese are far above these shot gun

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agitators, who, with no cause whatever, maltreat and rob them. The people of the western country... desire to see Chinese immigration stopped, and a lessening of the number already here, but the big majority want to see this done without harming the Chinese. Those who use violence injure the cause they pretend to espouse.... For such characters to talk about the evil ways of the Chinese is enough to make one realize that the Chinese are not the first the country ought to rid itself of.... Don’t you think the people of Owyhee would rather be rid of such scum than of these [Chinese men]?

This moderation in anti-Chinese attitudes surely contributed toward creating a climate of mutual esteem in the early twentieth century. When interviewed, former Caucasian residents of Centerville, who had once known Chinese people in that community, almost invariably spoke of them with fondness and respect.
CHAPTER THREE
THE 1993 EXCAVATIONS AND SURFACE COLLECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The former town of Centerville is located northeast of Boise, Idaho, in the Boise Basin (Fig. 3.1). To reach it from Boise most efficiently, follow State Highway 21 to Idaho City, a 38-mile trip. Once there, turn left onto the main street and continue through town. Cross Elk Creek and travel northwest on the Centerville road. At New Centerville turn northeast toward Pioneerville; Centerville is situated near the junction of Grimes Creek and Town Creek, about 9.5 miles from Idaho City.

Centerville was established in 1862 following gold discoveries on nearby Grimes Creek. Once a bustling community, it is no longer even a “ghost town;” all its buildings are now gone. Fires destroyed most of the early structures and much of the original town site was placered during the Depression. Today, although cellar holes and lumber from long-collapsed buildings are the primary visual remains of Centerville’s former homes and business establishments, other historical evidence is beneath the ground surface, hidden from view.

The Centerville town site archaeological excavations and surface collections took place from July 13-31, 1993. During that time portions of 13 sites were investigated. The work was carried out by 26 volunteers, 4 field school students, and several staff members. It was a cooperative effort involving three different agencies. BLM’s Lower Snake River District provided financial and logistical support; Idaho State Historical Society loaned most of the equipment and organized the volunteers’ participation; and the University of Idaho Laboratory of Anthropology conducted the field school and provided overall supervision for the investigations.

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

The topography of the project area reflects the extensive mining activity that has taken place there over the past century and a half. Because placer mining requires an abundant water supply for washing gold-bearing dirt and gravel, the miners dug numerous and lengthy ditches to access creeks that could deliver it for sluicing. The sluicing, however, removed most of the topsoil and vegetation, leading to extensive erosion.

The remaining flora is consequently sparse, as is the fauna that feeds on it or is sheltered by it. Previous researchers have noted bitterbrush (Purshia tridentata), sagebrush (Artemisia sp.), serviceberry (Amelanchier sp.), and willow (Salix sp.) in the project area, with ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa) the dominant tree species, followed by Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii) and aspen (Populus tremuloides). Fauna earlier observed in the nearby Boise National Forest has included elk and mule deer, as well as unspecified “predators, fur-bearing animals, birds, and fish.” Numerous species of flowers and other small plants were identified on several of the individual sites.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Centerville town site is located in an area near Boise County, Idaho.

Centerville, Idaho
The site area is administered by the Bureau of Land Management in a largely forested setting of Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. When the Boise National Forest was established in 1934, the Centerville town site was excluded along with other unpatented mining town sites such as Placerville and Quartzburg.

During 1989, Archaeological Consulting Services (ACS) located, listed, and described numerous historic sites within Section 29. The ACS team relocated three, previously documented sites, and its archaeologists also found and recorded an additional 30 sites. All ranged in date from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, and were categorized as Euroamerican, Chinese, or a mixture of both.
Beginning in the fall of 1992, the BLM Boise District archaeologist began discussions about conducting archaeological test excavations at some of the Centerville sites, particularly those that had been identified as Chinese. The proposed work was necessitated by the mining claim owner's desire to test certain portions of the town site for their gold values, an activity that would involve using a front-end loader to dig the soil and remove it to his sluicing operations some distance away. Because no archaeologists had ever conducted subsurface excavations at Centerville, it was important to do so prior to the impending mining.

The BLM archaeologist prepared a Data Recovery Plan as a guide for what the project hoped to accomplish. The plan posed research questions to be answered, and described the work that would be undertaken. Work objectives included a controlled surface collection over portions of the site, archaeological excavation of four sites, a backhoe trench in an area of suspected residences adjacent to the Placerville road, and production of a report.

The sites to be excavated included 10BO328, a late nineteenth to early twentieth century Chinese mining/habitation site, with a rock foundation; 10BO496, a Chinese habitation site, with a possible foundation; and 10BO501, a late nineteenth to early twentieth century Chinese mining/habitation site, with a depression suggestive of a well or privy. An additional area to be investigated was a shallow depression with associated Chinese artifacts, later called 10BO774.

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Research design as well as primary and secondary research questions formed part of the Data Recovery Plan. The Data Recovery Plan proposed five primary, theoretical, research questions. To answer them successfully, the features needed to be intact, both physically and chronologically, with their ethnic identity capable of being determined. The questions were:

1. What do the habitation sites associated with Chinese placer operations tell us regarding the assimilation, acculturation, or adaptation of the Asian miners?

2. Where nontraditional goods/structures were used, did their utilization reflect newly homogenized preferences and cognitive changes requisite for true acculturation, or just temporary adoptions necessitated by distance and circumstance? If acculturation appears to have taken place, how does this articulate with the "sojourner thesis?"

3. If neither assimilation nor acculturation appears to have taken place, to what do we attribute the cultural continuity? Given Hardesty's (1980) hypothesis that resource competition promotes the heterogeneity of cultural patterns, resulting in the reaffirmation of cultural traditions and identities, is there any evidence that either inter- or intra-ethnic competition in Centerville fostered analogous entrenchment(s)?

4. Does the location of Chinese habitations demonstrate a purposeful strategy of ethnic boundary maintenance? Does this vary through the "boom-bust" cycle of occupation at the Centerville site?

5. What materials were used to construct Chinese habitations? Do these reflect the temporary nature of Chinese residence? Do these change through time, and if so, do these changes reflect the process of assimilation or acculturation? Is there any relationship between the form of these structures and those constructed by nineteenth century yeomen in China?

In the event that the features proved incapable of providing sufficient information to answer the primary research questions, the Data Recovery Plan...
proposed that an additional four secondary, less theoretical, research questions be addressed instead. They were:

1. Some features have both Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts in association. Is this mixing a result of the disturbed nature of the site, or is it due to successive occupations by Euroamericans and Chinese?

2. Besides Chinese mining sites, can other specific Chinese activity areas be identified? These might include dwellings, stores, gambling houses, restaurants, and/or a temple.

3. What archaeological and/or historical evidence is there for the presence of Chinese women and children in Centerville? What were their activities?

4. Can the artifacts be used to differentiate between different social classes, for example, laborers and merchants? What specific occupations can be identified?

RESEARCH, EXCAVATION, AND SURFACE COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

In the plan, research at the Centerville townsite was to proceed in three phases. Phase One called for a controlled surface collection of sites 10BO502 and 10BO503, while Phase Two involved controlled excavations of sites 10BO328, 10BO496, and 10BO774 within established grids, as well as a backhoe trench at 10BO501 and another, exploratory trench parallel to the Placerville road. Phase Three would be the report and the artifact curation.

All the artifacts were inventoried and entered into data bases. Although all objects were retained from the controlled excavations, most items from the surface collections and backhoe trenches were returned to the grid square or trench where they were found.

The surface collection activities and the trench excavations both produced additional artifacts that were retained. Site numbers were assigned to those locations. Where relevant, these sites received previously assigned numbers, while others have newly assigned ones.

PHASE ONE, SURFACE COLLECTION OF SITES 10BO502 AND 10BO503

Phase One of the research methodology called for establishing a grid over portions of the Centerville site, as well as a controlled surface collection of diagnostic artifacts within it. On May 13, 1993, Boise District Archaeologist Jack Young supervised a controlled surface collection of most of the grid area as part of his training program for BLM archaeological assistants. All Chinese objects were collected. All Euroamerican diagnostic items were gathered up, plus any differently colored, but non-diagnostic, glass and ceramic. The artifacts were bagged by grid square and removed to Boise for storage. In July, during the excavation portion of the project, they were returned to Centerville for examination and inventory.

PHASE TWO, EXCAVATION

Archaeological excavations began on July 13, 1993, at both 10BO328 and 10BO496. The field school students and volunteers were primarily assigned to one of the two sites, but some worked on both sites to gain a variety of experiences. Each day after work the entire crew visited one of the sites, so the people who had worked there could describe to the others what they had accomplished. Visits alternated between all the sites as they were excavated.

On July 24 mining claim owner Ted Scharff, monitored by field school student Catherine Dickson, excavated a backhoe trench across 10BO501 in the

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location of the suspected well or privy. Later that day, Scharff began the segmented backhoe trench parallel to the Placerville road, monitored in turn by various crew members and volunteers. On July 27, excavation began at 10BO774, the supposed Chinese dugout near Scharff’s cabin. Michael Striker was the field assistant for that portion of the project.

10BO328

This site consists of historic building foundation and an associated artifact scatter presumed to be indicative of a more permanent settlement, but at the time of excavation, of unknown function. It consists of a cobble foundation measuring about five m by six m (Feature 1), surrounded by a large refuse scatter (Feature 2), and placer mine tailings (Feature 3). Relic-collecting activities had greatly disturbed the ground both inside and outside the foundation, and piles of broken and/or unwanted artifacts lay nearby in several places. Research objectives included ascertaining the depth and composition of the foundation; the form of the building that occupied it; who built the structure; and what it was used for.
Excavations there began July 13. Five 1 x 1 m square excavation units were laid out, four inside and one outside the foundation. These were Units 1 through 5. Excavation (troweling by 10 cm arbitrary levels) began in the afternoon of July 13 on Feature 1 (Fig. 3.3). All soil was screened through 1/4 in. mesh, and artifacts were kept together by their grid square and level. Following excavation of each level within a particular unit, the excavators brought their finds to the field laboratory, where they cleaned and catalogued them. The laboratory director, assisted by the field school students, entered the artifacts into a computer data base. Objects mentioned later have numbers such as 328.3.1.6, meaning 10BO328, Unit 3, Level 1, Number 6.

In all, 16 1 x 1 m units were excavated either inside or immediately outside the foundation, or on top of its walls. They were Units 1 through 15, and Unit 18. Two additional 1 x 1 m units, Units 16 and 17, were laid out in a seemingly intact area of Feature 2 near where relic collector disturbance had left a number of opium pipe bowl fragments on the surface. Because Unit 16 was not archaeologically productive, Unit 17 was not excavated.

Excavation finished on July 24. Crew members took photographs and completed plan and profile drawings. On July 30 other crew members backfilled the site. Table 3.1 shows the units laid out at 10BO328, their coordinates, size, depth attained in excavation, and the numbers of artifacts found in each.

A second partial foundation noted during a previous archaeological survey in 1984 was not located by ACS in 1989, although it was sketched on its plan of 10BO328 and labeled “F-6.” It was not found in 1993 and it was concluded that a fortuitously shaped tailings pile must have been originally mistaken for a “partial foundation.”

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**Fig. 3.3. Plan of 10BO328, Feature 1, showing excavation units.**

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Note: Units 1 through 15 and Unit 18 were in Feature 1; Units 16 and 17 were in Feature 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Numbers</th>
<th>Unit Coordinates</th>
<th>Unit Size</th>
<th>Maximum Depth</th>
<th>Artifact Totals</th>
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<td>20 cm</td>
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Table 3.1. Details of excavation units at 10BO328.

10BO496

This site is situated in an area that has been heavily mined and contains several features related to occupation and use by Euroamerican and/or Chinese miners. 10BO496 consists of numerous elements. First, several parallel ditches follow the land contours. Second, down the slope beyond the ditches is a flat oval depression, lined on all but the south side by mounds of rocks; these are tailings piles from placer mining. The depression probably was a dugout, used as a habitation. Third, an extensive scatter of Euroamerican domestic and mining refuse (stove parts, patent medicine glass, shovel pieces), as well as a few Chinese artifacts (ceramics, opium can metal) continue down the slope where it is halted at the bottom by tailing piles on a bench above a creek. Fourth, there are additional tailing piles further below the site along the creek, indicating mining of the benches and creek beds in this area.

Research objectives at 10BO496 involved establishing whether or not there had been a habitation; discovering the nature of its foundation, if any; learning who had built and/or occupied the dwelling; conducting an inventory of the surface artifacts; and mapping the ditches above the feature as well as the stacked rock tailings below it, adjacent to Town Creek. Excavations began on July 13.

Once again, all soil was screened through 1/4 in. mesh, and artifacts were kept together by their grid square and level. At regular intervals, the excavators cleaned and catalogued their finds in the field laboratory, and the artifacts were entered into a computer data-base. Objects mentioned later have numbers such as 496.4.72, meaning 10BO496, Unit 4, Level 7, Number 2.

Ultimately, seven units were laid out at this site, ranging in size from 50 x 50 cm to 1 x 2 m (Fig. 3.4). Only six of them were excavated, more than seven times the area required by the contract. Because Unit 1 was not archaeologically productive, the adjacent Unit 2 was left intact. In addition, 27 3-inch auger holes were placed north, south, and southeast of Feature 1.

The surface artifact scatter was mapped and inventoried in 10 m square units, and only two objects were collected. The rest were left in place. Surface artifacts from this site received numbers such as 496.80/90.101, meaning 10BO496, grid square North 80/East 90, number 101.

Excavation of 10BO496 was finished on July 27. Excavators took photographs of the excavation units, completed plan and profile drawings, and made a map showing the ditches above the feature and the tailing piles below it, adjacent to Town Creek. On July 30, crew members backfilled the site.

Table 3.2 shows the units laid out at 10BO496. It presents their coordinates, size, depth attained in excavation, and the numbers of artifacts found in each.
On July 24 a datum line was established, centered on magnetic north over a large depression at 10BO501. Prior to excavation, artifacts on the surface both inside and outside the depression were recorded. Three marked surface artifacts were collected. Research objectives at this site involved determining the nature of the depression, whether privy, well, or something else.

The claim owner dug a backhoe trench 3 m long through the feature’s longest axis, from the center out to the rim (Fig. 3.5). Called Unit 1, for convenience, it was 60 cm wide, the width of the backhoe bucket. He removed the soil in two levels, and archaeologists separated the artifacts from each. The backhoe work was monitored, with artifacts recovered as they appeared. They were inventoried in the field lab, and entered into a computer database. Objects from this site received numbers such as 501.1.0.3, meaning 10BO501, Unit 1, Surface, Number 3.

**10BO0774**

Work on this site began on July 27 with the objective of investigating a suspected Chinese dugout structure. Excavation, in two, 1 x 2 meter units (Fig. 3.6), consisted of troweling by arbitrary 10 cm levels within stratigraphic layers. All soil was screened through 1/4 in. mesh. The few recovered artifacts were kept together by their grid square and layer and removed to the field laboratory where they were cleaned, catalogued, and entered into a computer database. They received numbers according to their level rather than layer, to correspond with the information from the other Centerville sites. Artifacts mentioned later therefore have numbers such as 774.2.6.1, meaning 10BO774, Unit 2, Level 6, Number 1.

Six 3-inch auger holes were also placed in the vicinity. They showed that a 10 to 15 cm layer of soil was deposited on top of rock tailings. The same was characteristic of the units themselves. When that became apparent, excavation was concluded. The excavators took photographs and completed plan and profile drawings. Crew members backfilled 10BO774 on July 30.

Table 3.3 shows the units laid out at 10BO774. It presents their coordinates, size, depth attained in excavation, and the number of artifacts found in each.
segments was placed in one portion of the site in order to verify “that this section consists of Euroamerican residences.” It was not intended to address any of the specific primary or secondary research questions. A line 150 m long was laid out southwest of and parallel to the Centerville/Placerville road, and a number of individual or contiguous backhoe trench segments were excavated along its length. Surface indications dictated where each segment was placed, and subsurface conditions were used to determine the depth and length of the individual segments. Length, for example, ranged from 2.5 m to 22.5 m (Fig. 3.7). Although the depths varied, all artifacts from each segment were kept together as one level.

Artifacts from the individual trench segments were removed to the field laboratory where crew members inventoried them and entered them into a computer database. Objects mentioned later have numbers such as TR85.1.2, meaning the second artifact found within the excavation of a trench segment that was 85 m from trench origin. Crew members drew and photographed at least one wall of each trench. A few of the objects were retained for study, but most were bagged and returned to the segments where they were found.

All trench segments yielded buried cultural remains. A few even encountered features. The recovered artifacts were inventoried and most of them were returned to their respective trench segments; only a few objects were retained for further study. Where artifacts were kept, the trench segment

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received a site number, either a new one, or one that related to a previously designated, adjacent site. The following numbers were assigned (original trench segment numbers, in meters west of trench origin, are in parentheses): 10BO340 (TR10), 10BO781 (TR25), 10BO505 (TR85, TR90-TR100), 10BO773 (TR60), and 10BO780 (TR140).

10BO340 (TR10)

The trench segment at 10 m northwest of the line’s origin produced numerous Chinese artifacts. Just across the Centerville/Placerville Road is Site 10BO340, another location with equally extensive Chinese artifacts on the surface. Because the road separating the two areas is relatively new, and does not appear on the relevant quad map, this trench segment received the same site number as the one previously assigned to the site across the road from it.

10BO505 (TR85, TR90-TR100)

Two trench segments were placed at this site to find a foundation associated with the Koppes house that was in the vicinity until it burned about 1926 or 1928. Although the foundation was not located, numerous domestic objects were recovered, so the site number for the Koppes residence was assigned.
One trench segment was placed in a depression with nearby surface artifacts. Although no feature was found to justify the depression, one artifact was retained, so this segment received a site number.

**10B0780 (TR140)**

This trench segment was placed into a large depression that turned out to be a buried dump containing mostly cans, as well as a few miscellaneous artifacts. Some objects were retained, so this area received its own site number.

**10B0781 (TR25)**

Here, the trench segment encountered a trash pit about 1 m deep, and we obtained several objects that were kept. Since the trash pit could not be associated with any other site in the vicinity, it received a new site number.

**OTHER SURFACE COLLECTIONS: 10BO340, 10BO504, AND 10BO688**

At 10BO340 and 10BO504 a few surface artifacts of diagnostic interest or importance were collected. Because these sites are so disturbed, no attempt was made to record the exact proveniences of the collected objects. At 10BO688, however, a stake marks the spot where a single artifact was collected.

*Centerville, Idaho*
CONCLUDING REMARKS

All materials relating to the 1993 archaeological investigations at Centerville are housed at the Western Repository, Archaeological Survey of Idaho, Idaho State Historical Society, in Boise. These include artifacts and faunal remains; field and laboratory forms and field notebooks; maps and plans; photographic materials; the final report; and this published version of it. Originals or photocopies of most of the references that were cited, as well as duplicates of some of the documentation generated by the project, are housed in the Asian American Comparative Collection at the Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow.
CHAPTER FOUR
ARTIFACTS AND ARTIFACT ANALYSES

THE RECOVERED ARTIFACTS

During the work at Centerville in 1993 a total of 10,053 artifacts were recovered. They came from the surface collections, excavation units, and backhoe trenches. All artifacts were retained from the excavation units, while most of those from the surface collections or trenches were examined, inventoried, and returned to their original location. Although both Chinese and Euroamerican objects were represented, Chinese artifacts were not always found in excavation units even when they were present on the surface of a particular site.

This chapter contains a descriptive and functional analysis of the recovered objects. Their interpretation, included in the following chapter, enables a better understanding of them, the people who used them, and the activities that took place on the investigated sites.

ARTIFACT PROCESSING AND CATALOGING

A field laboratory was established at Centerville. Once the excavators had finished a particular task, they brought their artifacts to the laboratory to process them. Objects were first sorted, either as individual items or as groups of analytically identical artifacts, called "lots." Examples of the lots include such things as cut nails that were all the same size, small metal fragments with no distinguishing features, or unmarked body sherds from glass vessels. Next, volunteers or field school students cleaned the artifacts. Some were washed, and others, such as those made of metal, were simply dry-brushed.

The excavators then catalogued the objects by completing artifact cards for them that provided information such as provenience, description, and material. They also sketched each object. Once the catalogue card was complete, it and the artifact were placed into a zipper-seal plastic bag. The crew member or the laboratory director then entered information about the object into a computer data base. Each artifact received an individual number.

Artifacts from the surface collections were handled somewhat differently. While they were all entered into a database, and therefore have individual numbers, only a few of the examined objects were retained. The rest were returned to the areas where they were collected. Catalogue numbers assigned to objects from other sites, and from the trenches, are similarly informative.

In a departure from the usual practice, the food bone from Centerville did not receive special analysis. Two main reasons contributed to that decision. First, the quantity of samples recovered from the various sites was not large enough for meaningful results, and second, most of the faunal material came from disturbed contexts.

METAL CONSERVATION

Any of the metal artifacts recovered at Centerville underwent cleaning and preservation at the Laboratory of Anthropology’s conservation laboratory. Items
selected for treatment were unique, or fairly well preserved examples of a particular category, or that might yield marks or other diagnostic information.

The Laboratory of Anthropology's metals conservator uses a number of techniques depending upon the metals from which the artifacts are made. Iron objects, for example, are first cleaned manually with abrasives or electrolysis to remove all rust. The smaller objects are usually then dipped in a browning solution to restore their excavated appearance.

Color variations in the conserved iron objects are due mainly to differential drying of the browning solution, or occasionally, to the impossibility of removing all the rust without destroying the artifact. For copper or brass objects, retention of the original patina is desirable, so most of them are treated in an electrolysis bath.

ARTIFACT INVENTORY DATABASES

Recovered objects were entered into several computer databases, depending upon where they were from. The recovered artifacts are first briefly mentioned by their provenience, that is, the location where they were found. Later in this chapter more detail about the artifacts is given, with particular reference to their functional categories.

ARTIFACT SUMMARIES

The recovered objects from the Phase One surface collection, the site and trench excavations, the surface inventory of one site, and the surface collections of other sites are discussed within those categories and then in order by site number. Although some sites produced thousands of objects, many were only miscellaneous, nondiagnostic metal or glass fragments; that is, they were not characteristic of a specific artifact.

The following section summarizes the major classes of objects from each site.

PHASE ONE SURFACE COLLECTION: 10BO502 AND 10BO503

The Phase One surface collection at these two adjacent sites produced 3,015 artifacts — 1,167 from site 10BO502 and 1,848 from site 10BO503. They were examined and inventoried, and entered into a computer data base. While a few were retained for study, most were returned to the grid squares from which they had come. Categories included Chinese and Euroamerican utilitarian and table ceramics; opium paraphernalia; part of a Chinese medicine bottle; insulators; glass fragments from a variety of bottles and jars that once held products such as medicines, cosmetics, food, and alcoholic beverages; tobacco and food cans and can fragments; cut animal bone; stove, cookware, and utensil parts; a wide range of hardware, particularly lock parts; leather and metal from boots and shoes; lamp parts, fragments of decorative objects; and many more miscellaneous artifacts.

SITE EXCAVATIONS AND SURFACE INVENTORY: 10BO328

This site produced 3,723 artifacts. Of these, 3,657 were from the 16 excavation units in and around Feature 1, 49 were from the single Feature 2 unit, and 17 were collected from the surface following the conclusion of excavations. Euroamerican artifact types represented included sheet metal fragments, cut and wire nails, tools, barrel hoops, clothing, hardware, shoes and boots, window and vessel glass, milled lumber, chinking, household hardware, kitchen cookware and utensils, ceramic tablewares, and stove parts. Chinese ceramic tablewares and utilitarian wares, opium paraphernalia, and a Chinese button were also present.

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SITE EXCAVATIONS AND SURFACE INVENTORY:
10BO496

Although there were a few Chinese artifacts on
the slope among the abundant Euroamerican ones,
no Chinese objects were found in the excavation
units. The six units excavated here yielded 190 arti­
facts. The artifact types represented in this assemblage
were vessel and window glass, cut and wire nails,
Euroamerican ceramics, metal containers, tools,
household objects such as lamp and stove parts,
burned milled lumber, food bone, and sheet metal
fragments.

In addition, a complete inventory was made of
the 902 artifacts on the surface at 10BO496. This
number is not precise, since the total numbers in
concentrations of metal, glass, and other small
fragments were simply estimated. Two of the surface
inventoried objects were collected for further study,
496.80/90.75 and -101.

SITE EXCAVATIONS AND SURFACE INVENTORY:
10BO501

The backhoe trench placed into Feature 3 at this
site yielded 262 artifacts from two levels. An addi­
tional 164 objects were recorded on the surface in the
vicinity, bringing the total to 426. Recovered artifacts
included window and vessel glass, a marble,
Euroamerican table ceramics, electrical fittings,
buttons, cans and can fragments, cut and wire nails,
hardware, kitchen utensils and other household
goods, horse trappings, tools, and miscellaneous
metal objects and fragments.

SITE EXCAVATIONS AND SURFACE INVENTORY:
10BO774

This site produced 92 artifacts, of which 57 came
from Unit 1, and 35 from Unit 2. The total is decep­
tive, since 48 (52%) were only small fragments of
rubber, probably from boots. Glass, primarily from
bottles, was the next most common category, at 28
fragments (30%). The remaining 16 objects (17%)
included 11 made of metal, two of which were com­
plete cans, as well as four pieces of bone and one
ceramic fragment from a Chinese brown-glazed
utilitarian ware vessel.

BACKHOE TRENCH EXCAVATIONS

Twelve segments of trench were excavated along
the 150 m line, totalling 1,433 artifacts. All were
listed, with only a few retained for further study.
Some of the trench segments could be related to
previously numbered sites, while others received new
site numbers. Still other portions of the trench
produced no artifacts that were retained, so site
numbers were not assigned. The portions of the
trench without site numbers are discussed together as
a group following the segments having site numbers.

10BO340 (TR10)

This trench segment, 10 m west of the trench
origin, produced 175 objects, including Chinese and
Euroamerican ceramics, vessel and window glass,
buttons, cut and wire nails, tobacco cans, food can
fragments, an opium can fragment, animal bone, and
miscellaneous metal. Because it was directly across the
Centerville/Placerville road from site 10BO340, and
appeared related to it, it received the same number.

10BO505 (TR85, TR90-100)

This site is associated with the former residence
of the Koppes family, which burned in 1926 or 1928.
Only a few of the 526 artifacts recovered were
retained. In the 1950s, the Koppes family scraped
dirt in to cover up the remains of the foundation,
bringing it from flat areas nearby. One short trench
segment, 85 m west of trench origin, was probably
associated with the latter activity. Objects recovered

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from the short segment included Chinese, Japanese, and Euroamerican table ceramics; a button; opium-smoking paraphernalia; a sharpening stone fragment; vessel and window glass; mirror sherds; tool and hardware fragments; cut and wire nails; household utensils; wire; and miscellaneous metal objects.

A longer trench segment, from 90 to 100 m west, associated with the burned Koppes dwelling, did not reveal a foundation from this building. Artifacts found here included accordion reeds, Chinese and Euroamerican table ceramics, vessel glass, insulators, a pot rim with bail handle, charred wood, opium smoking paraphernalia, cut and wire nails, and bone fragments.

10B0773 (TR60)
Only one object from this depression was collected. It was the base of a Chinese rice bowl with a pecked character on its interior.

10B0780 (TR140)
This trench segment, 140 m west of origin, encountered a large dump from which 271 artifacts were collected, with only a few retained. The assemblage included tobacco, sardine, and key-opening cans; bottles and jars from food, cleaning products, medicines and other items; household objects such as table ceramics, egg beaters, light bulb bases, stove parts, nails, a horseshoe, and miscellaneous metal; food bone; and numerous other items, including those made of paper, plastic, leather, and cork.

10B0781 (TR25)
The 121 objects found here, 25 m west of trench origin, included some Chinese ceramics, a Chinese medicine bottle base fragment, vessel and window glass, animal bone, a rim lock, fabricated metal, wire, other miscellaneous metal, can fragments, cut and wire nails, rubber, and canvas. This area appeared to have a shallow pit 1 m deep, perhaps a low spot that was filled in by subsequent dumping.

MISCELLANEOUS TRENCH SEGMENTS
Even though some trench segments contained features, they did not receive site numbers because no artifacts from them were retained. They are designated TR20 (originally, W20M) and so on, indicating that this segment of the trench was 20 m west of the trench's origin near the Grimes Creek/Pioneerville road. Numbers in parentheses indicate how many artifacts were found in each individual trench segment. All were reburied there after being inventoried. TR20 (2) only contained a cut nail fragment and a piece from a barrel hoop, while TR30 (4) had a "bamboo" pattern rim sherd and some can fragments. TR35 (25) had vessel glass and table glassware, opaque white or "milk" glass, food bone, sheet metal, cut nails, and a fragment of an automobile license plate. TR65 (145) produced Chinese utilitarian and table ceramics, Euroamerican tablewares, vessel glass, opium paraphernalia, food bone, shoe fragments, a brick fragment, a possible stove part, a cut nail and cut nail fragments, food can fragments, and miscellaneous metal. TR115 (96) contained milled lumber and wood fragments, most charred; a slip-lid can; food bone; a piece of Chinese utilitarian ware; vessel glass; cut and wire nails; and miscellaneous metal. TR125 (7) yielded a brick fragment, can fragments, part of a barrel hoop, Chinese table ceramics, and vessel glass, while TR130 (2) only contained vessel glass. TR135 (21) produced Euroamerican tablewares, a kerosene lamp base, can fragments, vessel glass, and miscellaneous metal objects. TR145 (43) yielded vessel and window glass, a clay tobacco pipe bowl, wood and metal fragments, and food bone; TR150 (1) just had a shoe for a mule or pony.
OTHER SURFACE ARTIFACTS

A few important objects were found from the surface of other sites in the vicinity. These included both Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts.

10BO340

This site is located near the Placerville Road junction. Because there are many Chinese objects on the surface, it was used as a demonstration area to help volunteers learn to recognize Chinese artifacts in the field. Before leaving Centerville, nine objects of particular interest were collected. However, a tenth artifact, a metal opium pipe bowl connector found by one of the volunteers, was missing when workers went to collect it. Someone probably illegally removed it, as has happened with so many other Centerville artifacts over the years. The items collected included Chinese table and utilitarian ceramics, a probable Japanese tableware sherd, and a Chinese medicine can.

10BO504

Site 10BO504 is a pit and bulldozed area near the Placerville Road. The five objects collected here included Japanese and Chinese table ceramics and a marked Euroamerican crock fragment.

10BO688

This site is near the Catholic Cemetery, about one-half mile from Centerville itself. Only one object was collected here, a rim sherd from an unusual blue-on-white Chinese porcelain bowl.

ADDITIONAL AREA

Another location, designated 10BOC, was a large can dump south and east of Slaughterhouse Gulch. It produced a rim fragment from a blue-on-beige Chinese ginger jar. This object disappeared before the excavations concluded, and no site number was obtained.

ARTIFACT DISCUSSION

The artifacts recovered at Centerville during the 1993 excavations and surface collections included both Asian [Chinese and Japanese] and Euroamerican objects. Each of these groups will be discussed in turn below, using, with a few minor modifications, the artifact classification system developed by historical archaeologist Roderick Sprague, wherein objects are classified, and therefore discussed, according to their function rather than their material of manufacture. The functional categories represented by the artifact assemblage from the 1993 investigations at Centerville include personal objects, domestic items, architectural objects, transportation-related artifacts, and commerce/industry objects. In addition, a few items are unknown or unidentified, while the functions of others remain ambiguous.

Unlike Euroamerican or Japanese artifacts, which could have been used by either Euroamerican or Chinese people, the Chinese artifacts point to ownership and use only by Chinese persons. Except for a few unusual, well-documented circumstances, Chinese artifacts were not used by American Indians or Euroamericans, so their presence on an archaeological site indicates either a Chinese occupation or a Chinese presence in the vicinity.

When Chinese people used Euroamerican objects, it was most often out of necessity rather than choice. They were objects that either had no Chinese equivalents, or were bought as substitutes for Chinese items that were not available locally. Store inventories from other communities indicate that the Chinese...
frequently shopped in Euroamerican stores, probably surmounting considerable language barriers to do so.

Euroamericans, however, very rarely used Chinese objects. There are several reasons why they did not. First, the dominant Euroamerican culture meant that there were sufficient stores well-supplied with everything they required in their daily lives, so they did not need to look elsewhere for alternatives or substitutes. Second, even though there were Chinese stores selling Chinese food, clothing, tablewares, smoking products, and other items, Euroamericans disregarded these “foreign” objects, which had not yet become “exotic curiosities” for the adventurous to try. Third, anti-Chinese prejudice would have kept people from using Chinese objects, for fear of being thought unconventional or even taunted as a “China lover.” Fourth, Euroamericans apparently did not start patronizing Chinese stores until the very late nineteenth or early twentieth century. By then, store proprietors knew some English and a local Chinese presence had become more acceptable. Euroamerican men and boys, brave enough to venture into a Chinese store to purchase Fourth of July fireworks, could thrill to unusual sights and smells and later boast about their adventure to their friends. Those Euroamericans who smoked opium mainly did so at Chinese opium-smoking establishments; they did not normally own their own “outfit.”

Some of the artifacts from the excavations and surface collections had partial or complete manufacturers’ or other marks on them. Most were noticed during field work, and others were identified during the conservation process. Marked artifacts included items of Chinese, Japanese, and Euroamerican manufacture. Research into such markings has provided information that is helpful for identifying particular products that were used by Centerville’s inhabitants. In certain cases marks can even be used to provide a date range for availability of the product or object, while other items can be dated through stylistic attributes or manufacturing techniques.

The discussion following includes catalogue numbers for the objects mentioned. The form of the catalogue numbers varies depending upon whether the artifact was found during surface collection, in the excavations, or in the trenches. The earlier section, “Artifact Processing and Cataloging,” discusses how to interpret them.

CHINESE ARTIFACTS

The Chinese artifacts probably were all manufactured in China. Some were undoubtedly brought here by Chinese immigrants, while others were imported, by either Chinese or non-Chinese merchants, and sold in stores catering to a Chinese clientele. Most of the Chinese artifacts at Centerville are similar to those found on other Chinese archaeological sites in the West and elsewhere. In general, personal items, domestic objects, and articles of unknown use are the main functional categories of Chinese artifacts on such sites, and this assemblage is no exception.

Chinese artifacts were recovered from the controlled excavations of 10BO328 and 10BO774; in the trench sites 10BO340, 10BO505, and 10BO781; and in the trench segments TR30, TR65, TR115, and TR125. All the surface collections produced Chinese objects. None were found at 10BO501 and 10BO780 or in trench segments TR20, TR35, TR130, TR135, TR145, and TR150.

FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

The Chinese artifacts that comprise the personal items category can be placed within the subcategories...
of clothing, indulgences, and medical/health. Chinese domestic items include only those related to the preparation, storage, serving and consumption of food. Commerce and industry artifacts comprised store goods and entertainment items. There were a few objects of unknown function.

**MARKED OBJECTS**
A few of the Chinese artifacts were marked. These included a brand name or manufacturer’s name on several opium can lids, and ownership marks on ceramic fragments. The marks are discussed within the various functional categories where they occur.

**PERSONAL ITEMS: CLOTHING**
One Chinese button was recovered (Fig. 4.1). It is ball-shaped, with a loop shank, measures 1.3 cm long by 0.7 cm in diameter. When found, it still had a few threads of fabric attached. It lacked decoration, indicating that it was from a cotton work shirt rather than from a silk garment. Although numerous shoe and boot parts were found, some of which might have been worn by Chinese people, they were of Euroamerican manufacture, so will be discussed elsewhere.

**PERSONAL ITEMS: INDULGENCES**
Activities such as drinking and opium smoking were well-represented in the Chinese artifact assemblage. These objects indicate that the people on this site had some available leisure time for indulging in pleasurable and entertaining activities. Although the Centerville Chinese may have consumed Euroamerican alcoholic products, they are included in a later discussion of other Euroamerican goods.

Chinese objects associated with drinking included sherds from Chinese ceramic stoneware liquor bottles, pieces of the tiny porcelain cups used for drinking the liquor, and fragments of a vessel used to warm the beverage. The Centerville Chinese ceramic liquor bottles had a rounded body and a flared lip, and stood an average of 17 cm high. They contained a highly alcoholic Chinese “tonic” consumed mostly on festive or ceremonial occasions, and perhaps sometimes for health reasons. Although this preparation is often called “wine,” it is not wine in the true sense, since it is not fermented. Instead, it is distilled, so is more properly called liquor. The liquor bottle fragments recovered included a flat-topped lip (Fig. 4.2), a base with what may be an abbreviated “eternal knot” mark (Fig. 4.3), and an unusual, “footed,” base fragment (Fig. 4.4). Red, and shaped like an endless knot, the “eternal knot” symbolizes immortality.

The liquor cups were in pale green celadon, also known as “Winter Green,” and the “Four Flowers”/“Four Seasons” pattern, while the vessel used to warm the liquor had a blue-on-white “Sweet Pea” pattern. Typical celadon liquor cups were only 2.25 cm tall with a rim diameter of about 4.5 cm; the “Four Flowers” liquor cups are slightly larger, measuring an average of 2.5 cm tall and with a 4.75 cm rim diameter. The “Four Flowers” pattern is named for its overglaze enamels with four floral designs representing the flowers associated with each of the four seasons: spring, peony; summer, lotus; fall, chrysanthemum; and winter, plum blossom.

At least one “Sweet Pea” liquor warmer is represented in the Centerville assemblage (Fig. 4.5). The vessel represented by these sherds would have measured about 12.0 cm tall, not counting the lid, with a base about 6.8 cm in diameter, and is the larger of two sizes that are known for this container. It would have had a pouring spout and a handle; no pieces of them were recovered. Although no lid fragments were found, a lid would have measured about 2.5 cm tall, with a knob for lifting it off the vessel.
Opium smoking was another activity indulged in at Centerville. Opium smoking required much paraphernalia, some of which was found at Centerville. Related artifacts included ceramic opium pipe bowl fragments; metal connectors used to join the pipe bowl to the pipe stem; a piece of a possible tool called an opium “needle;” parts of opium lamps; metal opium can lids, bases, and sealing strips; and pieces cut or broken from opium cans.

The Centerville ceramic opium pipe bowl fragments came in red (Fig. 4.6), dark gray (Fig. 4.7), and gray-brown (Fig. 4.8). The red sherds look similar to some with an elaborate smoking surface, identified elsewhere. The dark gray sherd is from a pipe bowl with an octagonal smoking surface, while the gray-brown sherd has a circular smoking surface.

Opium pipe bowls were hollow, but almost completely enclosed. There was only a tiny hole in the top surface and a larger hole in the base where the bowl joined the pipe. When smoked, opium was not placed into the pipe bowl, but rather on top of it, around the small hole in the smoking surface. Various metal connectors (Figs. 4.9; 4.10) and other fittings were used to hold the opium pipe bowl onto a bamboo stem two feet long.

The pellet of opium adhered to the top of the pipe bowl and the smoker leaned over a small oil lamp, heating the opium until it gave off fumes. As the smoker inhaled, the fumes collected in the hollow pipe bowl. The smoke then traveled through the long pipe stem and into the lungs.

Certain tools are associated with the opium smoking process. One, called an opium “needle,” was about 20 cm long, had a spatulate end for conveying the opium from the can onto the ceramic pipe bowl, and a pointed end to pierce through the opium pellet into the small hole on top of the smoking surface. One site at Centerville produced a fragmentary object that may well be an opium needle (Fig. 4.11). Other tools, such as knives to clean inside the pipe bowls, were not present at Centerville.

A small lamp, usually glass, with an oil font, a glass chimney, a metal wick holder, and a glass base helped light the opium. Although the Chinese often made opium lamp chimneys from cut-down Euroamerican liquor bottles, no such objects were positively identified at Centerville. A fragmentary and fire-distorted glass opium lamp base (Fig. 4.12) was recognized by its single remaining oval hole, one of four that provided draft to keep the lamp burning. It also would have had a central circular hole, to hold an oil font’s glass peg.

Metal tubes supported opium lamp wicks to keep them upright, and had a cut-out slot to admit air. Several objects from Centerville were probably wick holders. Some appear to have been handmade out of scrap metal (Fig. 4.13) or pieces of reused opium can metal (Fig. 4.14).

The opium itself came in rectangular metal cans. Numerous fragments of these cans came from the Centerville excavations and surface collections. They are made of “paktong,” an alloy of nickel, zinc, and copper, but often called “brass” because of its similar appearance and composition to that alloy. The cans typically measure about 6.5 cm wide by 4 cm deep by 9 to 10 cm tall. A sealing strip soldered onto the top of the can was thicker gauge metal than a similar strip forming the edge of the can lid, thus assuring a tight seal.

As just mentioned, opium can metal was occasionally reused for other purposes, sometimes to make other items of opium-smoking paraphernalia. In an earlier visit to Centerville, the author found, but did not collect, another object related to opium smoking at 10BO340. A Chinese coin with a square hole in its center had a rolled tube of recycled opium can metal.

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placed through the hole. The coin and tube combination would have been used in an opium lamp oil font to keep the wick upright. Although covered with a board, the homemade artifact was not relocated in 1993.

The recovered opium can lids were stamped with Chinese characters denoting brand names or manufacturers’ marks. Three complete or partial lids were embossed with some or all of the legend Shāng Huán Lì Yuán. The Lì Yuán (“Source of Beauty”) brand is the one most commonly mentioned in inventory records from a Chinese store in California. One complete lid measures 4.2 by 6.6 cm and is 1.4 cm tall (Fig. 4.15). One lid and another base also had cross-hatched marks on them (Fig. 4.16), indicating that they were legally imported. Using a metal tool, the customs inspector cut deep parallel scratches through the tax stamp and into the lid. In this way, the tax stamp was cut into tiny diamond-shaped pieces, thus canceling it and making sure that it could not be reused.

Marks on opium can lids are believed to be brand names, similar to “Winston” or “Marlboro.” Although the can bases are mostly plain, sometimes they are also marked. Opium can base marks may give the name of the manufacturer, but whether that is the manufacturer of the can, or of the smoking opium contained in it, is not yet known.

Oversensationalized by the dominant Euroamerican culture, opium-smoking by the Chinese is still imperfectly understood. Evidence now indicates that of those Chinese who used the drug, most did so in moderation, to socialize, much as today many people enjoy “happy hour,” with a beer or a drink after work. Many Caucasians also smoked opium, a fact that is now largely ignored. Opium was also used medicinally.

Opium could be legally imported into this country until 1909, although an 1880 treaty with China, reinforced by an 1887 United States law, dictated that Chinese subjects could not themselves import it. Legal importation also meant that opium, prepared for smoking, was heavily taxed; such taxes reached $12 per pound by October 1890. As a result, a brisk smuggling trade grew, centered in the two British Columbia cities of Vancouver and Victoria, where opium for smoking was manufactured for the Canadian and American markets.

PERSONAL ITEMS: MEDICAL/HEALTH

Items related to medical and health concerns included the base from a small rectangular Chinese medicine bottle and a medicine can with a sliding lid. Hand blown and about 6 cm tall, the medicine bottles are often erroneously called “opium bottles,” from a belief that they contained opium for smoking. Instead, they held a single dose of medicine, in pill, powder, or liquid form. Although a few of these preparations might have contained opium, most did not. Apart from the fact that opium is too gummy to get in or out of the small aperture, many such bottles in museums have intact paper labels whose Chinese characters, when translated, invariably indicate that medicinal products were contained in the bottles.

Although now crushed, the can with the sliding lid measures about 3 by 6 cm at the base, and is 11.5 cm tall (Fig. 4.17). It is much heavier than one would suspect from its size, so its metal alloy probably has a high lead content. The can is believed to contain medicine, because similar cans at the Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day, Oregon, still have paper labels stating their medicinal contents. Of the four translated, for example, one “contains tortoise and
deer” and is used for “nourishing the kidneys;” another is “for curing seminal emission at night,” a third is “a traditional Chinese tonic,” and a fourth is taken “to relieve cough and aid expectoration.” Archaeologist Neville Ritchie illustrated a can with a similar sliding closure, and described it, from informant testimony, as a possible “opium antidote” container.

Opium-related items were discussed earlier. While they were mainly related to opium smoking, the opium itself also could have been used medicinally.

DOMESTIC ITEMS: FOOD PREPARATION/STORAGE

Some of the most common artifacts found on overseas Chinese sites are brown-glazed stoneware sherds from utilitarian ceramic food containers. Similar sherds, representing several different types of vessels, were found at Centerville. One is a squat jug with a pouring spout and a narrow filler opening. Since this object could have contained a variety of liquids, such as soy sauce, vinegar, or molasses, it is most accurately termed a spouted jar. However, because most of these vessels probably contained soy sauce, they are often called soy sauce pots. Similarly shaped modern vessels, that do contain soy sauce, can still be purchased in some Chinese markets. Excavated examples most frequently average about 13 cm in height. The Centerville surface collections produced one fragment of a soy sauce pot rim; no spouts were recovered.

Other food containers came in a variety of shapes and sizes. The most common are wide-mouthed jars, previously called shouldered food jars. They are about the same shape and height as the soy sauce pot, but with a wider mouth opening for filling the vessel with the product. Wide-mouthed jars usually contained various kinds of preserved or pickled food-stuffs, most often vegetables. Several wide-mouthed jar rim fragments were identified at Centerville (Fig. 4.18). These typically have a rim diameter of 9 to 10 cm.

Numerous other base and body sherds were found that could not be assigned to either the spouted jar or the wide-mouthed jar, because those portions of the two types are nearly identical (Fig. 4.19a, b). One of these ambiguous sherds was the base of a small-sized vessel; they typically measure 11 cm tall, with a base diameter of 10.3 cm. Other base sherds came from a larger vessel.

Wide-mouthed jar lids are unglazed earthenware or stoneware, and a few pieces were found at Centerville. A complete lid measured 6.5 cm in diameter (Fig. 4.20), while a partial, burned example measured 7.5 cm in diameter (Fig. 4.21). For transport they would have been held onto the jars with a clay-like substance; occasionally traces of it still adhere to these lids, such as on examples in the University of Idaho’s Asian American Comparative Collection.

Ginger jars at Centerville are represented by fragments with traces of overglaze blue and white enamels (Fig. 4.22), and by another, green-glazed one (Fig. 4.23). These vessels held preserved ginger, used in cooking. Larger jars, for bulk quantities of food, were also found at Centerville. They are discussed later with other objects related to commercial activities.

Although other archaeological sites have produced Chinese cans that once held cooking oil and tea or bean paste, no complete Chinese cans were found in any collected or excavated contexts at Centerville. However, they may be represented among the many can fragments observed or excavated, such as one rectangular lid measuring 7.5 by 18.1 cm with a 2.2 cm square patch over a round hole (Fig. 4.24). Two similar lids came from the claim owner’s sluice discards, so were unprovenienced.

An object that is probably a cleaver was found on
the surface at site 10BO328 (Fig. 4.25). It was small, measuring only 17.5 cm long. Much of the blade was missing, so its size can only be estimated.

**DOMESTIC ITEMS: FOOD SERVING/CONSUMPTION**

Dishes for serving and eating were usually made of porcelain or porcellaneous stoneware. The “Bamboo” pattern is the one most often encountered archaeologically, on nearly every Chinese site examined in the western United States. It is blue, and is handpainted on whitish porcellaneous stoneware. A rice bowl is the only form known for this design, elements of which include three circles, a longevity character or dragonfly motif, and floral decorations with both round leaves and thinner, pointed leaves.

This pattern is presumed to date from at least 1850 to about 1890. The beginning date is indicated by its presence in the cargo of the *Frolic*, a China trade vessel that foundered off California’s Mendocino Coast in 1850. “Bamboo’s” ending date is determined by its absence on late Chinese sites at both Pierce, Idaho, and German Gulch, Montana.

A few sherds from “Bamboo” pattern rice bowls were found in the Centerville excavations (Fig. 4.26) and the trenches while other pieces were recovered from the surface collections. One base had a blue character painted on its interior; it translates as rén “people” (Fig. 4.27). Next to that mark it also had another that was pecked into the glaze. It transliterated as *shèn* meaning “treasure” or “valuable.” It was probably an ownership mark, but whether for an individual or a company is not known.

The blue-on-white porcellaneous stoneware “Double Happiness” pattern was also present at Centerville on fragments of rice bowls (Fig. 4.28). One motif of this pattern is the character for “joy.” Two such characters appear side-by-side in several places on the vessels, giving rise to the pattern’s name. Although it is contemporary with the “Bamboo” pattern, it is generally found only on sites established before 1870.

Porcelain vessels with the polychrome enamel “Four Flowers” or “Four Seasons” pattern have been found at nearly every Chinese site excavated in the western United States. As mentioned, its design elements represent the flowers of the four seasons. This pattern occurs commonly in a large variety of shapes and sizes, on liquor cups, tea cups, rice bowls, spoons, shallow dishes, and especially, serving bowls.

Pieces of several “Four Flowers” forms were found at Centerville, including plates, rice bowls, serving bowls, parts of several shallow sauce dishes, and a teapot rim fragment.

One plate would have measured 17.5 cm in diameter if complete (Fig. 4.29), while the diameters of two others were estimated at about 13.0 cm. The latter two vessels each had an “eternal knot” basemark (Fig. 4.30a, b).

A serving bowl rim sherd was from a vessel approximately 20.5 cm in diameter (Fig. 4.31). Besides the colorful enamels characteristic of the “Four Flowers” pattern, it also had an orange line on its rim. Occasionally serving bowls are found with a bamboo clump in place of one of the other plants (Fig. 4.32). This vessel had a footring diameter estimated at 9.1 cm.

Three of the sauce dishes each had an “eternal knot” mark on the base. They also had pecked characters on the interior, denoting ownership by an individual or company. One was marked *xiàn*, “immortal,” (Fig. 4.33), a second was inscribed *yuè xīn*, “pleasant to the heart,”(Fig. 4.34), while a third bore the name *mào*, “rich, dense, or flourishing” (Fig. 4.35). Rim diameters for these vessels are estimated at 8.4, 8.6, and 9.8 cm respectively.

Finally, a rim sherd from a “Four Flowers”
A teapot measured about 8.0 cm in diameter (Fig. 4.36). The complete teapot would have had an inset lid. Although the sherd is burned, so the colors are no longer apparent, it appears to be the “Four Flowers” pattern.

Pale green celadon, or “Winter Green,” is another type of Chinese porcelain that is frequently recovered. While it does not come in quite so many shapes and sizes as the “Four Flowers” pattern, it is perhaps equally as common, particularly as liquor cups, rice bowls, spoons, and tea cups. Several celadon forms came from Centerville. They included liquor cups, mentioned earlier; rice bowl sherds (Fig. 4.37); and possible spoon fragments. A celadon tea cup base was also found.

Work at Centerville produced several other types of Chinese porcelain table ceramics. They included spoon fragments with a floral decoration in pink, green, and brown (Fig. 4.38); a plate fragment with a multicolored leaf-like design (Fig. 4.39); half of an elaborately decorated multicolored teacup with a “Double Happiness” motif (Fig. 4.40), having a rim diameter of 7.5 cm and height 4.6 cm; part of a blue-on-white dragon design from a bowl (Fig. 4.41); pieces of a blue-on-white teapot lid (Fig. 4.42), with a height of 2.4 cm and estimated rim diameter of 11.0 cm; and several teapot fragments. Of the latter, one white rim fragment, measuring 6 cm in diameter, still had a two-holed “ear” used to hold the teapot’s handle (Fig. 4.43). Several other teapot fragments, all blue-on-white, included two body sherds (Fig. 4.44a, b) and one base fragment (Fig. 4.45).

**COMMERCIAL SERVICES: STORE GOODS**

A few Chinese ceramics used for shipping bulk foodstuffs were found at Centerville. They included rim and base fragments from barrel jars, but no lid fragments (Fig. 4.46). If these sherds came from the same vessel, it would have measured 37.0 cm at the rim and about 39.0 cm at the base.

There was also one fragment from the body of a globular jar. Lids for these were similar to the wide-mouthed jar lids; those with larger diameters, about 10.0 cm, may belong to globular jars (Fig. 4.47). One ridged sherd came from a large jar of unknown form (Fig. 4.48).

Also included here are two bent-head cut nails and a fragment of a third. One report called them “Chinese packing crate nails.” Of the complete nails, one was 3.1 cm, or equivalent to a 3d nail, while the other, 3.8 cm long, was equivalent to a 4d nail (Fig. 4.49). The nails “resemble brads; the shanks are thin and the heads are rounded so that the overall nail has an ‘L-shaped’ profile.”

Historical archaeologist Eugene Hattori stated that he saw similar nails inside the cook house for a Chinese temple at Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii. There, a portion of a packing crate bearing Chinese characters, with similar nails still in it, was incorporated into the construction of a wall. Hattori has also seen such nails at Chinese sites in Cortez, Nevada, and possibly used in construction of a box from the loft of a Chinese building at Lovelock, Nevada. Unfortunately, for comparative purposes, the one Chinese wooden box in the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho is joined with glue and dovetails; it has no nails at all.

Thirty-eight of these nails were recovered at a Chinese cabin site in Nevada County, California. It was thought that they might have been “reused for very light-weight nailing,” perhaps of cloth or canvas, or that the original crates “were incorporated into interior cabin furnishings” such as “stools, tables, storage bins,” and so on. Sixty-one similar nails were found during the 1992 and 1993 Ah Hee Diggings excavations in northeastern Oregon.

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COMMERCIAL SERVICES: ENTERTAINMENT

Chinese inhabitants of Centerville enjoyed occasional gambling, since documentary sources refer to Chinese gambling houses and gamblers there. However, there are no artifacts in the assemblage that are associated with this activity. The objects most often found are small glass hemispheres about 1.3 cm in diameter and about 0.6 cm thick. These gaming pieces come in two colors, white and “black,” that is, the black ones look black when seen in reflected light, but they were actually made out of blue, green, or brown glass. Because the white ones had a lesser value than the black ones, the white gaming pieces are found more often on archaeological sites. Coins, discussed later, may also have been related to gambling.

UNKNOWN ITEMS

This category addresses objects that may be known, but whose function is ambiguous. Chinese “cash” coins are included here because it is impossible to determine the specific category in which to place them. For example, if they were personal items, the coins could have had several different functions at Centerville. They might have been used in gambling, or could have been carried in a pocket. Coins also are included in the Chinese pharmacopoeia; they can be rubbed on a part of the body or boiled in water which is then consumed. Not considered here are other functions that Chinese coins served, but that probably were not pertinent to the Centerville miners, such as the custom of stringing coins into coin swords to hang over the bed of an infant, to protect it from evil spirits.

Although one coin was recovered during the Centerville Phase I surface collection, it disappeared before the collected objects were inventoried. This coin was brass or brass-like and had a square hole in the center; unfortunately, the marks on it were not recorded. Chinese coins are not very helpful for dating sites. In China, coins minted during an emperor’s reign were not withdrawn after his death, continuing in circulation. The coins most commonly found on archaeological sites in the West were minted during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (Ch’ien Lung), who ruled from 1736 to 1796, well before any Chinese began coming to the Boise Basin. Since Qianlong was the longest-reigning emperor in the Qing dynasty, more coins were produced during his reign than during any other, so it is not surprising that they are most frequently found.

One intriguing porcellaneous stoneware bowl rim sherd with a blue-on-white design is an object of uncertain function (Fig. 4.50). Unlike bowls for table use, which are glazed on the interior, this specimen has an unglazed interior. The Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day, Oregon, has a similar vessel that is said to have been used for grinding medicinal herbs. Another such bowl, at the Smithsonian Institution’s Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, was used in gambling; dice were cast into it.

The Chinese at Centerville and elsewhere often reused scrap metal. They cut pieces from large cans and used them to make other objects. Opium can metal was also recycled for various purposes, some of which have already been mentioned. One fragment was rolled into a cone or funnel whose function is unknown (Fig. 4.51); other small, cut fragments are even more enigmatic.

Metal artifacts sometimes contain punched nail holes at regular intervals. Such objects probably indicate that a food or oil can was recycled to serve another purpose. Where the cans are still intact, the new object’s function is usually easy to identify. Fragments of sheet metal, with punched holes, are often ambiguous in function because the complete
object might have been a strainer, sifter, steamer, noodle-maker, watering can, or bean-sprout rinsing device.

**JAPANESE ARTIFACTS**

Only a few Japanese artifacts were found at Centerville; all were ceramics. A Japanese man was mentioned in an 1897 newspaper article, and one was also named in the 1910 census. The Japanese objects could have been used by him, or by any of Centerville's Chinese or Euroamerican inhabitants. For example, both Chinese and Caucasians gave Japanese giftware items as wedding presents.

**FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY**

The Japanese artifacts represented only one functional category. All were domestic objects.

**MARKED OBJECTS**

The bases of two Japanese artifacts had all or parts of the words “Made in Japan” printed on them. While United States law required that this mark be used after 1921 on items exported from Japan, it was apparently used voluntarily a decade or more prior to that date.

**DOMESTIC ITEMS: FOOD SERVING/CONSUMPTION**

Japanese tableware patterns and forms included blue-on-white body sherds, one in thin-walled porcelain with a handpainted blue-on-white design, possibly the base from a ginger jar (Fig. 4.52); a rim fragment from a small plate with a portion of the blue-on-white “Phoenix Bird” design (Fig. 4.53); an elaborately decorated polychrome sherd from a small bowl (Fig. 4.54); a small plate with a mottled, iridescent, pink, green, violet, and pale-yellow design surrounded by a plain orange border set off by brick-red bands (Fig. 4.55); and a saucer sherd, with cobalt blue bands, marked “MADE IN JAPAN” on the base (Fig. 4.56). Another porcelain sherd, with a stamped or stenciled blue-and-orange floral design, has a blue luster border set off by a black hairline. This vessel’s base is marked “MADE IN JAPAN” (Fig. 4.57).

**ASIAN ARTIFACT OF UNKNOWN FUNCTION**

One intriguing artifact is almost certainly associated with former Chinese residents in Centerville since it came from the trench at 10BO340 where numerous other Chinese objects were recovered. It is a brass or bronze disk, 2.8 cm in diameter, with one plain side and one decorated side (Fig. 4.58). It has a square hole in the center, so is reminiscent of a Chinese or Japanese coin. The decoration on the front, in the shape of flower petals, resembles a chrysanthemum. Its origin and function are unknown.

**EUROAMERICAN ARTIFACTS**

The Euroamerican artifacts were manufactured in the United States or Europe; they were especially abundant at Centerville. The general functional categories represented by the Euroamerican artifact assemblage include personal articles, domestic objects, architectural items, transportation-related artifacts, and commerce/industry objects.

It is helpful to keep in mind that Euroamerican objects, if manufactured before the turn of the century, could have had either Euroamerican or Chinese owners. Surviving store ledgers from other communities demonstrate that Chinese people frequently patronized Euroamerican stores. This was probably also true for Centerville.

**FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES**

The Euroamerican artifacts in the personal items category include clothing/footwear/accessories, indulgences, pastimes/recreation, and medical/health, grooming. Euroamerican domestic items included
ones related to the preparation, storage and serving/consumption of food, and to household furnishings. All architectural items were from construction materials or tools/hardware, and transportation was represented by horse trappings. Commerce and industry artifacts included the categories of agriculture/husbandry, blacksmithing, hunting, mining, and saloonkeeping. There were also some items of unknown function.

**MARKED OBJECTS AND DATING**

Many of the Euroamerican objects had marks indicating who manufactured the item, or, if vessels, the container and/or its contents. Some of these marks enable artifacts in the assemblage to be dated, sometimes quite precisely. Numerous modern marked Euroamerican artifacts were observed during the surface collections, but time did not permit researching their marks in any detail.

In the descriptions that follow, marks on artifacts are written out. The symbol “/” separates different lines of text, while brackets enclosing text indicate probable letters or words that are missing or indecipherable.

Other artifacts, while not marked, could be dated by means of manufacturing characteristics or technologies. For example, solarized (“sun-colored amethyst”) glass dates between about 1880 and 1914.

**PERSONAL ITEMS: CLOTHING/FOOTWEAR/ACCESSORIES**

Numerous clothing- and footwear-related artifacts were found during the Centerville excavations and surface collections. They included leather and rubber from boot and shoe parts, rubberized fabric, and cloth fragments. Footwear hardware consisted of eyelets, nails, screws, and miscellaneous pieces, while clothing hardware included buttons, buckles, and rivets.

Clothing-related artifacts probably included some of the rubberized fabric, as well as some of the cloth fragments. Additionally, threads of cloth sometimes still adhered to clothing hardware. Shoe and boot parts included leather and rubber from soles and uppers, pieces of hobnailed rubber boots, and rubberized fabric, possibly from footwear.

Of the shoe and boot hardware, the brass eyelets typically measured about 7 mm in diameter (Fig. 4.59); some were still attached to leather. There was one lace hook (Fig. 4.60); some screws from a caulked boot; a steel-toed leather boot with brads; a shoe fragment with brads; and a marked shoe cleat or heel tap with the lettering “P4,” probably a part or stock number.

Clothing hardware was abundant. There were iron overall buttons, some of which had manufacturers’ names, while others had embossed designs (Fig. 4.61); ceramic buttons; a cloth-covered button, and several mother-of-pearl buttons.

The marked clothing hardware from the 10BO328 excavation units included two jeans buttons embossed “LEVI STRAUSS & CO./ SF CAL” (Fig. 4.62). This well-known firm was established in 1850. One of the buttons still had scraps of fabric attached. Of five jeans rivets excavated, at least four were from this same manufacturer. One was marked “PAT. MAY 1873/L. S. & CO. S. F.” top and bottom (Fig. 4.63). On May 20, 1873, Jacob W. Davis of Reno, “assignor to himself and Levi Strauss & Co., San Francisco,” received patent number 139,121 for a “fastening [for] pocket openings,” described as a “pair of pantaloons having the pocket-openings secured at each edge by means of rivets...whereby the seams at the points named are prevented from ripping.”

Three other clothing rivets had “L.S.& CO./S. F.” top and bottom (Fig. 4.64). On the fifth rivet, only “...Co.” could be discerned.
Most of the overall buttons were iron, while a few were brass. An iron one was stamped “BOSS OF THE ROAD” (Fig. 4.65), and a rivet from the same company was marked “B OF R” (Fig. 4.66). These buttons were made by the Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut, from 1900 to 1908, and two of them were found during excavations of the Joso Trestle Construction Camp site in eastern Washington.

Some of the overall buttons had embossed patterns, while one had an animal head, possibly a boar, in relief (Fig. 4.67). The latter button is 2.2 cm in diameter and has a shank for attaching it to clothing.

The ceramic buttons were made by the Prosser method. All were four-hole, either 1.1 cm. in diameter (Fig. 4.68), or 1.2 cm in diameter (Fig. 4.69). Curiously, one of the latter buttons lacks the dimpled indentations that are characteristic of this process.

Some of the buckles and buckle fragments might have come from belts or suspenders (Fig. 4.70). One triangular piece of folded metal might be the tip from the end of a leather belt (Fig. 4.71).

**PERSONAL ITEMS: INDULGENCES**

Items related to indulgences came from smoking products and alcoholic beverages. Several tobacco cans and can parts were found at Centerville, mainly in the trenches and during the surface collections. These would date no earlier than 1907 or 1908, depending on the brand.

An interesting artifact from 10BO328 was a circular sheet iron object 1.5 cm in diameter. It had two prongs, so is probably a tobacco tag. Before tobacco came in cans it was sold in cloth bags or as a “plug” cut off a brick of compressed tobacco. The brand name could be identified on the bags but not on the plugs, until tobacco tags were developed. These were small, flat, metal objects with two prongs, and came in as many shapes and designs as there were brands of tobacco. When a customer bought a plug of tobacco, the seller would press a tag into the cut plug and the prongs held it in place. The tag would identify it should the customer forget what brand he had purchased. Although the tags were collectible, since they could be saved and exchanged for premiums, they were sometimes lost, so are occasionally found on archaeological sites. Tobacco tags date from 1870 to about 1930.

Another tobacco-related object was found in one of the trenches. It was an unmarked ball clay tobacco pipe bowl with a mushroom-shaped spur.

Artifacts associated with alcoholic beverages included pieces from numerous glass liquor bottles and one ceramic jug. The assemblage also contained a few fragments of saloon glassware; these are discussed with artifacts related to commerce and industry. Often a bottle’s shape or its finish (lip) indicates that it originally contained beer, wine, or hard liquor. The color of the glass can often provide an additional clue to the vessel’s contents. For example, the earliest glass alcoholic beverage bottles were mainly “black” (dark olive green), olive green, or brown.

Liquor bottles are often marked. In general, information identifying the manufacturer of the bottle’s contents appears on the body of the bottle; initials or names appearing on the base of the bottle usually indicate the firm that manufactured the glass vessel. Although it is possible to have marks of both firms on the same bottle, none of the Centerville examples exhibited both characteristics.

“R & CO,” plus a mold number, appeared on the bases of several bottles. In a departure from the more customary practice, those letters stand not for the bottle’s manufacturer, but rather for Roth and Company, who were liquor dealers in San Francisco. That
particular mark dates from 1879 to 1888, although the firm itself dates between 1878 and 1917. Roth & Company were manufacturers and sellers of liquor; they did not manufacture the bottle itself, which might have been made by the San Francisco & Pacific Glass Works, the only glassmaker in San Francisco at that time. One of the bottles has a stopper finish, so would have held liquor (Fig. 4.72), while the other, with a crown finish, probably contained beer (Fig. 4.73).

A “black” glass bottle base, diameter 7.5 cm. had the legend “[BREME]N / H. HEYE / HAMBURG,” impressed into its base, over a fainter, “ghost” impression of “H. HEYE” (Fig. 4.74). This mark is from the Hennann Heye Glasfabrik, Bremen, Germany, and the bottle probably once contained an alcoholic beverage. Hermann Heye and Company’s Bremen plant is known to have made bottles for E. & J. Burke of Dublin, Ireland, and Liverpool, England, “one of some 24 companies [that] bottled and exported Guinness Stout and Bass Ale;” Heye’s Hamburg plant apparently also made such bottles. Although that particular mark may date as early as 1880 and as late as 1936, the “black” color of the glass would argue for the earlier date, as would the fact that a similarly marked artifact was found at the last Fort Union army post in New Mexico, which dates from 1863 to 1891.

The letters “S B & G Co / E” appeared on an amber bottle base (Fig. 4.75). The first group of letters stand for Streator Bottle & Glass Company, of Streator, Illinois; this firm dates between 1881 and 1905. Since that company sold bottles to Adolphus Busch, the Centerville bottle probably contained beer. The “E” probably designates that particular mold, or identifies the plant where that bottle was manufactured.

An aqua bottle base was embossed “A B G M Co / B13” (Fig. 4.76). This bottle, which probably also contained beer, was made by the Adolphus Busch Glass Manufacturing Company, which operated in Belleville, Illinois, between 1886 and 1907, and in St. Louis, Missouri between 1904 and 1928. Busch made beer bottles for Anheuser Busch Brewing Associates and other brewers, as well as bottles for soda, mineral water, and bitters. The “B13” is either a mold number or a factory designation.

Another probable beer bottle was embossed “RG Co” on the base (Fig. 4.77). This mark is from the Renton Glass Company of Renton, Washington. It operated from 1907 to 1911, but only used this mark in 1911.

Some amber beer bottles had the lettering ‘W F & S” and “MIL” together with a mold number (Fig. 4.78). These bottles were made by William Franzen and Sons, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and date between 1900 and 1929.

An amber crown finish was identified as coming from a beer bottle. It had a metal closure and rubber stopper (Fig. 4.79).

One of the few artifacts collected from the surface of 10BO504 was a body sherd from a Euroamerican stoneware jug (Fig. 4.80). It had a white exterior and a brown-glazed interior, and would have measured 12.5 cm in diameter. It is marked, in blue letters, “B. H. Co... / LIQU[OR].”

Site 10BO496 had more recent self-indulgent visitors. Two “Budweiser” beer cans were recorded during surface mapping there.

**PERSONAL ITEMS: PASTIMES/RECREATION**

Part of a harmonica was embossed “M. HOHNER’S NEWEST & BEST FULL CONCERT HARMONIKA MADE IN GERMANY” (Fig. 4.81). This same object, with virtually identical markings, is illustrated in the
1902 Sears, Roebuck catalogue, where it is described as “A Special Hohner Harmonica, with ten double holes, forty excellent reeds, brass reed plates and nickel covers.” It cost 35 cents plus 7 cents postage. Beginning in the mid-1800s, Hohner harmonicas led “the market as the best mouth organs made.”

Other Centerville metal artifacts that were related to music included two accordion reeds. One was embossed “D#” and the other “G#.”

**PERSONAL ITEMS: MEDICAL/HEALTH/GROOMING**

Artifacts in this category were mostly glass vessels, often embossed with manufacturers’ names. The contents included medicines or ointments, bitters, and cosmetics and other grooming aids. Some were marked, while others were not. Silvered mirror glass is also grooming-related.

Marked medicinal containers included a colorless machine-blown, four-ounce capacity bottle with a metal screw cap which has lettering on the front reading “[apothecary’s symbol for ounce] iv” and numbers designating contents remaining (Fig. 4.82). Its base mark reads “OWENS 67” with a square around the “O.” This mark is from the Owens Bottle Company of Toledo, Ohio, and dates from 1911 to 1929.

A solarized [“sun-colored amethyst”] jar, lacking its cork stopper, had “CHESEBROUGH MFG CO. / VASELINE” on the front (Fig. 4.83), while a colorless one with a screw cap had “TRADE MARK VASELINE CHESEBROUCH [sic] NEW YORK” on the front, and “236” on the base (Fig. 4.84). Although Robert A. Chesebrough, the developer of Vaseline, first introduced his product in the 1860s, the Chesebrough Manufacturing Company was not founded until 1880. In 1908, jars with threaded metal caps replaced the earlier cork-sealed ones.

Several opaque white or “milk” glass jars had embossed bases reading “MENTHOLATUM / REG / TRADE / MARK” (Fig. 4.85) and “MUSTEROLE / CLEVELAND” (Fig. 4.86). The Yucca Company of Wichita, Kansas, began to market Mentholatum about 1889; it incorporated as the Mentholatum Company in 1906, the same year the Musterole Company of Cleveland, Ohio, was established. Musterole jars had paper labels reading “More than a Mustard Plaster, A Counter-Irritant. Try it for colds, congestion....”

Numerous embossed glass fragments were inventoried from bitters bottles, including some having various portions of the legend, “DR. J. HOSTETTER’S/STOMACH BITTERS.” Although the firm dates from 1853 and the bottles began to be embossed in 1858, those from site 10BO496 are, of course, later because they would surely postdate Centerville’s founding in 1862.

Bitters were sold as medicinal preparations, but may also have been consumed by persons who appreciated their high alcohol content. The name derives from a practice started in England. Because alcoholic beverages were taxed, certain persons there began adding bitter flavoring to alcohol. The resulting potions were classified as medicines, which were tax-free. The alcoholic content of Hostetter’s Bitters, for example, was 43 percent in 1906, and 25 percent in 1920. The recommended “daily dose” of this product, six tablespoonsful, reportedly contained as much alcohol as nearly two bottles of beer or more than one ounce of whiskey.

Other marked jars were related to cosmetics or grooming, and a few of these were retained. One was marked on the base with “DAGGETT & RAMSDELL’S / PERFECT / COLD CREAM / TRADE MARX / 6 / CHEMISTS” (Fig. 4.87). New York’s Daggett and Ramsdell began manufacturing cosmet-
ics in 1890. About 1912 the firm made cold cream improved with mineral oil and packed it into four sizes of glass jars.

An opaque white glass jar, threaded for a metal cap, read “POND’S” in two vertical panels (Fig. 4.88). The Pond’s Extract Company of Clinton, Connecticut, was established in 1846 and made “Toilet and Vanishing Creams, Dentifrice, and Lip Salve.” Excavations at Silcott, Washington, produced a portion of a Pond’s cold cream jar that would have been identical to the Centerville example. Other, unmarked, opaque white glass jars might also have held facial cream (Fig. 4.89a, b).

A blue jar with a metal screw cap read “INGRAM’S SHAVING CREAM” on the shoulder, and “BOTTLE PAT’D/NO. 481953” on the base (Fig. 4.90). Frederick F. Ingram established his firm in 1885, and received this patent on September 6, 1892.

A complete colorless bottle was embossed with “Rubifoam/FOR THE/TEETH/PUT UP BY/E. W. HOYT & Co./LOWELL, MASS.” (Fig. 4.91). It also has the mold number “28” on the base. A label for a sample of this product, advertised in 1889, read, “Liquid Dentifrice Alcohol 45%, Contains No Grit, No Acid or Anything Injurious....” E. W. Hoyt and Company made Rubifoam and other products from 1875 to about 1915.

DOMESTIC ITEMS: FOOD PREPARATION/STORAGE

Objects in this category are implements and utensils used to prepare food, containers for foodstuffs used in food preparation, and other containers used for canning or storage of preserved foods in the home. One example is a portion of a small frying pan that had been used frequently. Someone had even mended it (Fig. 4.92).

Outside of some aqua and solarized (amethyst) glass that might have been from canning jars, there was little evidence that the Centerville inhabitants had access to home-canned goods. One sherd, from a fruit jar, had embossed lettering reading in script, “[Schra]m,” above a ribbon containing “[FRUIT] JAR” (Fig. 4.93). The Schram Glass Manufacturing Company of St. Louis, Missouri, was in business from about 1905 to 1925.

Other artifacts related to food preparation included a can lid from “PIONEER BAKING POWDER 16 ounces NET WEIGHT GUARANTEED PURE.” This product may have evolved from Pioneer Yeast Powder, advertised in 1860 by New York’s Taylor and Young company, or, more probably, be the Pioneer Baking Powder of San Francisco that was listed in a table illustrating “Comparative Worth of Baking Powders” in an 1886 advertisement for a competing brand.

A sheet metal fragment marked “...OPER/PACKERS/OMAHA” was probably from a lard pail (Fig. 4.94). Although the name on it may have been “Cooper” or “Hooper,” no such lard manufacturer was located.

DOMESTIC ITEMS: FOOD SERVING/CONSUMPTION

This category includes food remains, containers that once held foodstuffs, and tablewares. The few food bones recovered were mostly from disturbed contexts, so are not suitable for faunal analysis. The food product containers were both metal and glass, while the tablewares were ceramic.

Centerville’s residents utilized store-bought products in cans, jars, and bottles. Cans were particularly frequent on the surface at 10BO496. Although mapped and inventoried, time did not permit their being measured, and only one was collected. When found, it was painted with “SARDINES QUALITÉ SUPÉRIEUR” and the outline of an anchor (Fig. 4.95). Unfortunately, the lettering did not survive metal conservation treatment.

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Excavations at 10BO774 yielded a few cans and can fragments. Only two cans were in good enough condition to measure. They both probably once contained food. One was a crushed solder seal can lacking its lid. A second crushed can was a hole-in-cap example. The 10BO496 excavations produced a slip lid can that might have contained baking powder, cocoa, or other powdered product (Fig. 4.96), and a hole-in-cap can that probably once contained food (Fig. 4.97).

Fragments of a nearly complete round, ribbed, aqua vessel were found during the excavations at 10BO496 (Fig. 4.98). It is almost identical to one illustrated elsewhere that has a paper label reading “Peppersauce in Vinegar.” Other writing on the label attributes the product to James C. Doughty, a Red Bank, New Jersey, pickle manufacturer, who operated between at least 1902 and 1915. The base of the Centerville vessel is marked “G C O / & / CO.” This mark is attributed to George C. Ovens, who obtained Design Patent No. 8666 on September 28, 1875, for a square peppersauce bottle “having horizontal ribs and grooves, forming rings extending partly around the lower portion, and wholly around the upper portion of the body....”

Fragments of an unmarked octagonal, round-necked, aqua bottle came from the same site (Fig. 4.99). The two side panels are flat, and the other six are curved. The vessel is similar to one described elsewhere as an “octagonal peppersauce/spice.”

Other bottles or jars once contained food products. One solarized [amethyst] base read “[“Ar]mour’s /[TO]PNOTCH BRAND/CHICAGA [sic] (Fig. 4.100). Philip D. Armour founded Armour and Company in 1867. The Centerville example is probably not that old, but not enough of it was recovered to make an age estimate based on technological considerations. Numerous small bottles, similarly but correctly embossed, came from excavations at Silcott, Washington.

An opaque white glass jar was embossed “LIBBY MCNEILL & LIBBY / CHICAGO” on the base (Fig. 4.101). The firm of A. A. Libby began in 1868, changing its name by 1874 to Libby, McNeill, and Libby.

A colorless glass lid, 6 cm in diameter, had the legend, “FARRELL & CO. / OMAHA,” surrounding an elaborate logo combining “F & CO.” (Fig. 4.102). It probably came from a potted meat product, perhaps chipped beef. Nothing has yet been learned about this company.

Numerous Euroamerican ceramic tablewares, mostly plain white earthenwares, were recorded on, or recovered from, the various sites. The fragments represented many forms, including plates, platters, bowls, baking dishes, cups, saucers, and a redware teapot (Fig. 4.103). Some of the sherds had base marks indicating the name of their English or American manufacturer.

English marks included “GREEN [& CLAY]/TRADE MARK/ENGLAND” (Fig. 4.104); these letters surrounded a world globe held up by a hand rising from waves. This mark stands for Green and Clay of Longton, Staffordshire, England, and dates between 1888 and 1891. A piece of a platter base was marked “IRONSTONE CHINA /J & G. MEAKIN /EASTWOOD WORKS/HANLEY ENGLAND” (Fig. 4.105). The firm was established in 1851, and this mark dates to between 1890 and, probably, the early 1900s. The complete vessel would have been 2.2 cm tall.

Another English ceramic fragment was from a 15.5 cm diameter by 2.3 cm high earthenware bowl with a scalloped rim, molded decoration, and a green and pink decal design. Its base read, “ETRURIA / MELL[OR & CO.]” (Fig. 4.106). Of two possible
companies, Mellor, Verables, dating 1834 to 1851, and Mellor, Taylor, dating 1880 to 1904, the Centerville example is probably from the later factory, since pink and green decal-decorated ceramics were not produced in the early period but were highly typical of the early years of the twentieth century.

One marked object was a white earthenware base fragment bearing a printed British registration mark. Such marks were used on British ceramics between 1842 and 1883. Registering one’s design in this way meant that it was “protected from piracy by other manufacturers for an initial period of three years.” Each corner of the diamond-shaped motif contains a letter or a number, and there are two possible arrangements of these, depending upon date of manufacture. The Centerville fragment is an example of the earlier manifestation, dating between 1842 and 1867. On the Centerville example (Fig. 4.107), the letter “L” is at the top point of the diamond, with “A” on the left point, “18” on the right point, and “2” in the bottom point. A convenient table allows these cryptic notations to be translated as follows: “L” corresponds to 1856, “A” to December, and “18” to the 18th day of the month, meaning that the pattern was registered with the Patent Office in London on December 18, 1856, although the vessel’s manufacturing date is probably somewhat later. An additional mark, consisting of two numbers, is impressed into the base of this artifact. These probably refer to the person who made or decorated it, or to a mold number.

A fragment from an unmarked saucer was probably of British manufacture. Its decoration, known as “copper tea leaf” ironstone, is named from a leaf motif that usually appears on such vessels. Although the leaf decoration was not present on the Centerville sherd, it had a brown, lustrous line applied near the rim that is also characteristic of this pattern.

American-made table ceramics included a 2.9 cm tall oval baking or serving dish fragment marked “THE BELL POTTERY CO./FINDLAY, OHIO” (Fig 4.108). This firm began there by early 1889 but moved to Columbus in 1903.

A bowl half, marked with an [American] eagle devouring a [British] lion above “[L]aughlin” in script (Fig. 4.109), was a product of the Homer Laughlin China Company of East Liverpool, Ohio. The mark dates from 1877 to about 1900. The rim diameter of this vessel was approximately 12.5 cm and its height was 6.3 cm.

DOMESTIC ITEMS: HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS

Numerous artifacts might have been from household furnishings. They included decorative objects, stove parts, buckets, and lighting devices, both portable and fixed.

Among the decorative items were fragments of cut or engraved glassware. One vessel, represented by two joining pieces, was a colorless bowl or vase (Fig. 4.110). It is “flint” glass or “lead crystal,” so-called because lead has been added to the glass to make the object especially brilliant. Flint glass is easily identified because the lead in it appears blue under fluorescent light.

Another decorative object was a fragment of ruby flashed or stained glass, perhaps from a vase (Fig. 4.111). This type of glassware is also known as “cranberry” glass. A layer of colored glass is applied over colorless glass, and is then cut away in decorative patterns. It dates “from the Victorian era well into the 20th century” and was popular for souvenir items. Often the buyer’s name was engraved onto the piece at the time of purchase.

Some cast iron stove fragments were also recovered from the excavations. Most of them were

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unmarked (Fig. 4.112). Although it is not possible to tell whether all these fragments were from stoves used for heating or cooking, they are included because they are all household furnishings. Numerous other stove parts were recorded on the surface of 10BO496, however, none of them were collected. Site 10BO328 produced a circular piece of sheet metal with a 14.5 cm diameter hole, probably for a stove pipe to fit through.

Three cast iron fragments, probably from a stove, came from three contiguous units both inside and outside the foundation. When fitted together, the fragments read “TROY, N.Y.” (Fig. 4.113). Without more pieces from the same stove, it is not possible to identify the firm that manufactured it, since many stove manufacturing firms were located there. For example, Troy had 12 stove manufacturers in 1896, and nine in 1892.

Buckets and bucket parts occurred frequently, particularly on the surface. An “ear,” that held the handle onto the bucket, was found in one of the excavation units at site 10BO328 (Fig. 4.114).

Lighting devices included both portable and fixed examples. The latter are discussed under architecture, in a section that follows. Portable illumination was represented by fragments of kerosene lamp bases, chimneys, a burner, lantern glass fragments, and other objects. Excavators recovered a brass, vertical wick, kerosene lamp burner assembly marked on the end of the thumb wheel “E. F. JONES / BOSTON / PATENT / JANUARY 11 1859” (Fig. 4.115). This artifact is also marked inside the wick holder with “R. S. MERRILL’S PATENT JUNE 14, 1859.”

A few miscellaneous household objects were also found. One was a metal top with a slot in it. It was probably from a piggy bank, and was marked “PROPERTY OF...” (Fig. 4.116).

ARCHITECTURAL ITEMS: CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

In comparing construction materials only from sites 10BO328 and 10BO496, there are some similarities and some differences. First, both sites contained milled lumber. Although it could represent uses other than construction, some of it at site 10BO328, was almost certainly flooring. Second, both sites contained abundant window glass. However, only site 10BO328 contained chinking, which would have been used both inside and outside a log cabin, to seal the cracks between logs.

ARCHITECTURAL ITEMS: CONSTRUCTION TOOLS/HARDWARE

Although tools and hardware could be used for other construction/carpentry purposes besides dwellings, items that could be associated with structures have been placed into this category. Among the tools were pieces of various files and saws, as well as a few miscellaneous items. Nails, door hardware, and miscellaneous hardware were other categories recovered.

The files included fragments of flat ones, one with a rounded back, triangular ones, and a round one (Fig. 4.117). Saw fragments included several from hacksaw blades, one from a carpentry saw, and part of a crosscut saw with a handle bracket. Miscellaneous tools included a splitting wedge and a possible screwdriver blade fragment (Fig. 4.118).

Building hardware was comprised mainly of numerous nails, both cut [“square”] and wire [“round”] ones, as well as door hardware. Of the complete nails, excavations at site 10BO328 produced some 820 (76%) cut and 255 (24%) wire ones, while excavations at site 10BO496 yielded only 12 cut nails and one wire one. Since wire nails were not readily available until the 1890s, most of the structural components at the two sites would therefore date before then.

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Nail sizes are an indication of the use to which they were put. Logs or thicker boards require heavier nails, 20d (4 in.) or larger. Heavier framing requires 12d to 16d nails (3-1/4 to 3-1/2 in.), with 8d to 10d nails (2-1/2 to 3 in.) used for such purposes as medium framing, floors, and shelves; 4d to 6d nails were used for finishing (Lindstrom 1993:31). At site 10BO328, cut nail sizes ranged from 2d to 40d, with most being 8d (419) or 10d (234); wire nails ranged from 2d to 60d, and most were 4d (124). At site 10BO496, cut nail sizes ranged from 4d to 20d, with most nails being 4d (4) or 6d (3), while the single wire nail was 10d.

There was a variety of door hardware represented, especially at site 10BO328. It included hinges, a door spindle, a knob, and a lock. Two hinges came from two separate excavation units (Fig. 4.119). The first of these had one wood screw associated with it, while the other one had five screws, in three different sizes: #10 (1-1/2 in., 1); #9 (1-1/4 in., 2); and #8 (1 in., 2). Two pieces of a white porcelain doorknob were found in Unit 13 (Fig. 4.120), and a door spindle came from Unit 9 (Fig. 4.121). Also recovered were a key (Fig. 4.122), a keyhole plate (Fig. 4.123) and a metal fragment that may be from a rim lock (Fig. 4.124). Two additional interesting pieces of hardware possibly came from doors. One was a cast iron object with two countersunk holes, through which 12d cut nails were inserted (Fig. 4.125), while the other was a fragment of a plate or band with two beveled-edge screw holes, and two flat head #9 wood screws.

The surface collection of sites 10BO502 and 10BO503 produced an abundance of hinges, an expected occurrence considering the number of structures that must once have been in those locations. Excavators also found a hinge at site 10BO496 during the surface mapping. Other door hardware found at Centerville included a rim lock with the patent date “[M]A[R]CH 1 1870” (Fig. 4.126) and part of what may be another (Fig. 4.127). On the date stated, W. T. Munger received patent number 100, for a “reversible latch,” a patent then assigned to P. and F. Corbin of New Britain, Connecticut.

One intriguing metal object had a wedge-shaped point attached to a rectangular base with two holes (Fig. 4.128). This artifact is possibly the tip of a lightning rod.

**ARCHITECTURAL ITEMS: FIXED ILLUMINATION AND POWER**

Examples of fixed illumination included two insulators, a possible switch base or rosette, a fuse, and one light bulb fragment. One solid knob insulator marked “BRUNT” (Fig. 4.129) would date no earlier than 1891, when the G. F. Brunt Porcelain Company of East Liverpool, Ohio, began making electrical porcelain. Although the firm became Brunt & Thompson in 1895, and part of General Porcelain Company in 1911, the BRUNT dies continued to be used. A second insulator was part of a split-knob type; it was similarly marked “B[RUN]T” (Fig. 4.130). This kind of insulator was most popular from 1907 to about 1923. Finally, a fragment of a third, round, object, perhaps from a switch base or rosette, was marked just “B” in a circle (Fig. 4.131).

The fuse, made of mica, ceramic, and glass, is marked “PYROTITE”/TRADE MARK/ PAT 4-27-09 /10A BRYANT-125V; it also had “10” on the base (Fig. 4.132). On April 27, 1909, Harry U. Badeau and Frederick P. Poole of Bridgeport, Connecticut, assignors to the Bryant Electric Company, also of Bridgeport, received patent number 920,005 for a “plug-fuse” with a flexible covering disk and flanged retaining ring.
A tiny piece of glass came from the inside of a light bulb (Fig. 4.133). Letters and numbers on it read “2/B 5.”

**TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ITEMS:**
**HORSE, MULE, AND WAGON TRAPPINGS**

The surface mapping at site 10BO496 inventoried two horseshoe fragments. No other horse trappings were recovered at 10BO496. Numerous horseshoes were inventoried at sites 10BO502 and 10BO503, and others were found in the trench segments. A small shoe, from a donkey or pony, was also recovered, as was a carriage bolt. Some leather fragments may be from a harness, while a folded, triangular piece of metal, discussed earlier under clothing hardware, might instead be the tip from the end of harness leather.

**TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ITEMS:**
**AUTOMOBILE PARTS**

Only two automobile-related items were discovered. One may be a carburetor part, while the other, a fragment numbered “1757,” came from an automobile license plate.

**COMMERCE/INDUSTRY ITEMS:**
**AGRICULTURE/HUSBANDRY**

A “mower tooth” was the single item assigned to this category (Fig. 4.134). It is a smooth cutting section from the knife of a mowing machine. In 1908, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold mower knives in four and one-half, five, and six-foot lengths. A customer could also purchase replacement sections that came as a box of 20 for 73 cents plus 50 cents postage.

**COMMERCE/INDUSTRY ITEMS:**
**HUNTING**

Three bullet cartridges were recovered at Centerville, two from trench segments and one from the Phase I surface collection. Although these items could have been used for self-defense or target practice, they are more likely to have been used in hunting game for food, so were arbitrarily assigned to this category.

One empty .38 caliber centerfire cartridge case was stamped, “WRA CO .38 LONG” on the base. The .38 Long centerfire cartridge “was introduced about 1875-76...[but] was obsolete by 1900.” The initials stand for Winchester Repeating Arms Company, New Haven, Connecticut, a firm established in 1866.

Another marked cartridge was a rimfire .22 caliber extra long, stamped “U” on the base (Fig. 4.135). This mark was used by the Union Metallic Cartridge Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and its successors. The original company dates from 1867 to 1910.

One gun accessory was found at site 10BO501. Called a ball puller or worm, it resembles a corkscrew (Fig. 4.136). It was used for removing a lead ball that became stuck in the barrel of a black powder pistol.

**COMMERCE/INDUSTRY ITEMS:**
**MINING**

Since mining was the primary reason for people being at Centerville, it was not surprising to find a variety of mining tools and equipment in the vicinity. Shovels, picks, and miscellaneous other tools were represented in the assemblage. Some came from the excavations, while others were observed on, or collected from, the surface. Although shovels might have had other uses than mining, they were all assigned to the mining group. Similarly, although black powder could also have been used for hunting, it was more likely to have been mining-related at Centerville.

Several shovel heads and other shovel parts were found. One fragment was embossed “R. C. PATRICK CALIFORNIA CAST STEEL WB.” The “WB” was in a square with an arrow through both the box and the two letters. Research produced no information about this manufacturer.

Picks and related objects included a pickaxe head,
as well as a pickaxe head keeper and handle reinforce-
ment (Fig. 4.137), a rock pick, and a spike or rock
chisel that was possibly a mining tool (Fig. 4.138).
Other mining paraphernalia included gold pans,
either whole or fragments, and a possible “gold
blowing tray” for separating very fine gold.

Two metal screw caps from black powder canis-
ters were recovered. Pewter was the metal commonly
used for such caps, and cans with similar caps have
been dated mostly from the “Civil War era
thr[ou]gh} about 1915.” Of the Centerville examples,
one with exterior screw threads was field-sketched as
“HAZARD POWDER” (Fig. 4.139), while the
other, cap-type one, was marked “HAZARD’S
POWDER” (Fig. 4.140).

Although dates of operation have not yet been
ascertained for this firm, powder manufacturer
Hazard and Loomis was founded in 1843, and
the Hazard Powder Company of Hazardville,
Connecticut, held two patents issued in 1862. The
firm was mentioned in the 1895 Montgomery Ward
catalogue as well as the 1897 Sears, Roebuck cata-
logue as “Hazard Powder same price as Dupont.”
The German Gulch site in Montana produced a
“dispenser top” from “Hazards [sic] Powder,” a
product described as “a mining powder made by
The Hazard Powder Co. of New York;” it was
available in Montana in 1872.

**COMMERCE/INDUSTRY ITEMS: MISCELLANEOUS**

A fragment of lead printing type was found
during the Phase I surface collection. This object is
surprising, since Centerville is not known to have had
either a newspaper or a printing business. The piece
of type bears the letter “A” (Fig. 4.142).

**ITEMS OF UNKNOWN FUNCTION**

Other objects could be identified, but a single
function could not always be assigned to them. A
sharpening stone, in fragments, is a good example of
this difficulty (Fig. 4.143). It might have been used
for sharpening kitchen knives and cleavers, or tools
related to building construction or mining. Sherds
of glass were not always classifiable either. Without
marks, finishes, or complete examples, glass can come
from vessels that once held alcoholic and non-
alcoholic beverages, medicines, foodstuffs, and other
products. Other artifacts had marks that were
incomplete, so the product could not be identified.

Miscellaneous hardware might represent
carpentry, dwelling or mining construction or other
activities. Such items include a variety of spikes; rods;
bolts; nuts; fasteners; machinery parts, including a step
for some type of machinery (Fig. 4.144); wire rope; and
miscellaneous iron objects such as straps, strips, and
barrel hoop fragments. Wire formed additional artifacts,
including S-shaped hooks (Fig. 4.145), D-rings,
(Fig. 4.146) and handles (Fig. 4.147).

Other metal objects of undetermined function
included an unusual washer-like object (Fig. 4.148),
as well as short metal cylinders (Fig. 4.149a, b), a
possible pull-off cap or lid (Fig. 4.150), a sheet metal
band with a small square rod riveted across one end
(Fig. 4.151), a bi-metallic flange (Fig. 4.152), an iron
object fabricated with a point and two handle-like
projections (Fig. 4.153), and an intriguing iron can
or box (Fig. 4.154).
Several barrel hoop widths were represented, from narrow to wide. Kegs or barrels of different sizes contained many different products, such as nails, flour, and whiskey, so the hoops themselves are not usually indicative of the barrels’ contents. Related objects included a possible barrel stave and a crushed barrel with a wire rim.

Pieces of glass carboys were also found. These may have originally contained distilled water or mining chemicals, but could later have been reused for home winemaking. The contents of other bottles and jars were enigmatic. One tiny vessel, 3.2 cm. tall, was marked “RO[BE]RTS/OS...ART” (Fig. 4.155). It originally may have held a small quantity of paint, for hobbies, or perhaps cosmetics.

ARTIFACTS OF CHINESE OR EUROAMERICAN ETHNICITY

Pieces of wood, charcoal, clinker, and slag may have been from either Euroamerican or Chinese activities. Some of the wood was milled, so it could have come from a nearby sawmill.

ARTIFACTS ASSOCIATED WITH RELIC COLLECTORS’ ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

Other objects provided evidence for illegal excavation activities, or “pothunting,” at Centerville. At site 10BO328, they included pieces of chinking found in the lowest levels of Unit 14, and the three joining stove parts marked “TROY, N. Y.” found in Units 10, 11, and 13, (Fig. 4.113). At site 10BO496 they comprised pieces of an octagonal food bottle (Fig. 4.99), found in non-contiguous units 1 and 6.

SUMMARY

The excavations at Centerville produced a wide variety of Asian and Euroamerican objects. In particular, the Chinese artifact assemblage included items typically found on Chinese mining sites in the West, as well as fragments of more costly objects that might have been used by Chinese merchants and their families.
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Fig. 4.1. Chinese button, 328.9.1.10.

Fig. 4.2. Chinese liquor bottle top, 505.TR95.1.1.

Fig. 4.3. Chinese liquor bottle base, 328.0.0.8.
Fig. 4.4. Chinese liquor bottle base, 503.1.0.48.

Fig. 4.5. "Sweet Pea" liquor warmer sherds, 328.2.1.1, 13.1.1, 15.1.8, 18.1.2

Fig. 4.6. Opium pipe bowl fragments, 328.0.0.10, 115.1.1.

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Fig. 4.7. Opium pipe bowl sherd, 502.1.0.83.

Fig. 4.8. Opium pipe bowl sherd, 328.0.0.4.

Fig. 4.9. Metal opium pipe bowl connector, 328.0.0.5.
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Fig. 4.10. Metal opium pipe bowl connector, 328.10.1.51.

Fig. 4.11. Opium "needle," 328.10.1.16.

Fig. 4.12. Reconstruction of fire-distorted opium lamp base, 328.10.1.33.

Fig. 4.13. Wick holder for opium lamp, 328.9.1.8.

Fig. 4.14. Homemade wick holder for opium lamp, 328.5.2.15.
Fig. 4.15. Marked opium can lid, 328.0.0.2, 505.TR90.1.17.

Fig. 4.16. Crosshatched opium can lid or base, 505.TR85.1.73.

Fig. 4.17. Reconstructed Chinese medicine container, 340.0.0.4.
Fig. 4.18. Chinese wide-mouthed jar fragments, 328.6.1.1.
Fig. 4.19a. Base from a Chinese spouted jar or wide-mouthed jar, 340.0.0.1.

Fig. 4.19b. Base from a Chinese spouted jar or wide-mouthed jar, 340.0.0.1.

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Fig. 4.20. Lid for a Chinese wide-mouthed jar, 505.TR85.1.2.
Fig. 4.21. Lid for a Chinese wide-mouthed jar, 328.6.1.12.
Fig. 4.22. Ginger jar rim sherd, 505.TR85.1.1.

Fig. 4.23. Green-glazed ginger jar fragments, 328.0.0.9.
Fig. 4.24. Can lid, probably Chinese, 328.0.0.3.

Fig. 4.25. Cleaver, 328.0.0.6.
Fig. 4.26. “Bamboo” pattern rice bowl rim fragments, 328.6.2.8, -18.1.4.
Fig. 4.27. Marked "Bamboo" pattern rice bowl base, 773.TR60.1.1.

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Fig. 4.28. "Double Happiness" pattern rice bowl base, 781.TR25.11.
Fig. 4.29. "Four Flowers" plate rim sherds, 340.TR10.1.37.
Fig. 4.30a. "Four Flowers" plate base fragment with "eternal knot" marks, 340.0.0.7.

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Fig. 4.30b. "Four Flowers" plate base fragments with "eternal knot" marks, 340.0.0.7.
**Fig. 4.31.** "Four Flowers" serving bowl rim sherd, 502.2.0.1.

**Fig. 4.32.** "Four Flowers" serving bowl base sherd, bamboo clump motif, 328.0.0.7.
Fig. 4.33. Marked "Four Flowers" sauce dish base fragment, 781.TR25.1.2.

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Fig. 4.34. Marked “Four Flowers” sauce dish base fragment, 503.0.0.4.

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Fig. 4.35. Marked "Four Flowers" sauce dish rim fragment, 340.TR10.1.1.
Fig. 4.36. "Four Flowers" teapot rim fragment, 505.TR90.1.1.
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Fig. 4.37. Celadon rice bowl rim sherd, 328.18.1.3.

Fig. 4.38. Spoon fragments with polychrome floral decoration, 340.0.0.2.

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Fig. 4.39. Plate fragment with polychrome leaf decoration, 503.2.0.22.

Fig. 4.40. Teacup fragment with polychrome "Double Happiness" motif, 502.2.0.3.

Fig. 4.41. Bowl sherd with blue-on-white dragon design, 340.0.0.5.
Fig. 4.42. Blue-on-white teapot lid fragment, 504.0.0.2.
Fig. 4.43. White teapot rim sherd with "ear" for handle, 503.0.0.1.
Fig. 4.44a. Blue-on-white teapot body sherds, 503.0.0.2.
Fig. 4.44b. Blue-on-white teapot body sherds, 781.TR25.1.6.
Fig. 4.45. Blue-on-white teapot base sherd, 503.0.0.3.
Fig. 4.46. Barrel jar rim and base fragments, 340.0.0.0, -3.
Fig. 4.47. Lid fragment from globular jar, 328.10.4.4.

Fig. 4.48. Body sherd from jar of unknown shape, 503.2.0.14.
Fig. 4.49. Bent-head nail, possibly from Chinese packing crate, 328.8.1.5.

Fig. 4.50. Bowl fragment, unknown function, with blue-on-white design, 688.0.0.1.

Fig. 4.51. Metal cone or funnel, function unknown, 328.10.1.52.

Fig. 4.52. Japanese blue-on-white base sherd, 780.TR140.1.85.
Fig. 4.53. Japanese blue-on-white plate fragment, 504.0.0.1.
Fig. 4.54. Japanese polychrome bowl sherd, 505.TR85.1.3.
Fig. 4.55. Japanese plate fragment with iridescent design, 780.TR140.1.83.
Fig. 4.56. Marked Japanese saucer fragment, 780.TR140.1.84.

Fig. 4.57. Marked Japanese plate sherd, 504.0.0.4.

Fig. 4.58. Metal disk of unknown function, 340.TR10.0.1.

Fig. 4.59. Boot or shoe eyelet, 328.5.2.9, .15.1.7.

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Fig. 4.69. Ceramic buttons, 328.10.1.47, .14.1.4.

Fig. 4.70. Suspender buckle, 328.13.2.9.

Fig. 4.71. Possible belt tip, 501.1.2.10.

Fig. 4.72. Marked amber liquor bottle, stopper finish, 502.3.0.45.

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Fig. 4.73. Marked amber liquor bottle, crown finish, 502.3.0.47.

Fig. 4.74. Marked "black" glass liquor bottle base fragment, 502.6.0.16.

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Fig. 4.75. Marked amber beer bottle base fragment, 774.2.6.1.

Fig. 4.76. Marked aqua beer bottle base fragments, 774.2.0.2.

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Fig. 4.77. Marked pale green beer bottle, 502.3.0.56.

Fig. 4.78. Marked amber beer bottle, 502.3.0.48.

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Fig. 4.79. Amber beer bottle crown finish with stopper, 502.3.0.76.

Fig. 4.80. Stoneware liquor jug fragment, 504.0.0.3.
Fig. 4.81. Harmonica part, 503.9.0.36.

Fig. 4.82. Marked medicine bottle, 502.3.0.74.

Fig. 4.83. Vaseline jar, 502.3.0.77.
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Fig. 4.84. Vaseline jar, 502.3.0.87.

Fig. 4.85. Mentholatum jar, 502.3.0.100.

Fig. 4.86. Mustertol jar, 502.3.0.101.

Fig. 4.87. Dagget & Ramsdell cold cream jar, 502.3.0.63.
Fig. 4.88. Pond's cold cream jar, 502.3.0.103.

Fig. 4.89a. Possible facial cream jar, 502.3.0.102.
Fig. 4.89b. Possible facial cream jar, 502.3.0.104.

Fig. 4.90. Ingram's Shaving Cream jar, 502.3.0.80.
Fig. 4.91. Rubifoam liquid dentifrice bottle, 503.10.0.22.

Fig. 4.92. Mended frying pan fragment, 328.11.0.1.

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Fig. 4.93. Schram fruit jar fragment, 501.1.0.1.
Fig. 4.94. Marked lard pail fragment, 502.11.0.2.

Fig. 4.95. Sardine can, 496.80/90.101.
Fig. 4.96. Slip-lid can base, 496.4.7.5.

Fig. 4.97. Hole-in-cap can, 496.4.7.6.
Fig. 4.98. Ribbed condiment bottle, marked, 496.4.5.1, -6.8.1.

Fig. 4.99. Condiment bottle fragments, 496.1.5.5, -6.3.1.
Fig. 4.100. Armour's jar base, 502.1.0.31.

Fig. 4.101. Libby, McNeil & Libby jar, 502.3.0.99.
Fig. 4.102. Ferrell & Co. jar lid, 502.8.0.23.

Fig. 4.103. Redware teapot fragment, 501.1.1.7.
Fig. 4.104. Green & Clay base sherd, 502.2.0.13.

Fig. 4.105. Meakin base sherd, 502.2.0.16.

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Fig. 4.106. Mellor & Co. base sherd, 503.5.0.55.
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Fig. 4.107. British registration mark, 503.3.0.39.

Fig. 4.108. Bell Pottery Co. base sherd, 502.2.0.11.
Fig. 4.109. Laughlin bowl fragment, 502.2.0.15.
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Fig. 4.110. Cut glass bowl fragment, 328.10.1.35.

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Fig. 4.111. Cranberry glass fragment, 505.TR85.14.

Fig. 4.112. Cast iron stove fragment, 501.1.1.14.

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Fig. 4.113. Marked cast iron stove fragment, 328.10.1.42, -11.1.12, -13.1.8.

Fig. 4.114. Bucket fragment, 328.8.1.6.

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Fig. 4.115. Marked kerosene lamp burner assembly, 496.4.7.2.

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Fig. 4.116. Metal piggy bank top, 502.2.0.30.

Fig. 4.117. Triangular file, 328.6.1.1.

Fig. 4.118. Splitting wedge, 328.14.4.10.
Fig. 4.119. Hinge, 328.13.2.1, -.18.2.5.

Fig. 4.120. Ceramic doorknob, 328.13.2.3, -.3.1.
Fig. 4.121. Door spindle, 328.9.1.11.

Fig. 4.122. Key, 328.14.3.2.

Fig. 4.123. Keyhole plate, 328.18.1.9.

Fig. 4.124. Possible rim lock fragment, 328.9.1.12.
Fig. 4.125. Cast iron object with cut nails, 328.13.1.9.
Fig. 4.126. Rim lock with patent date, 781.TR25.1.16.

Fig. 4.127. Possible rim lock fragment, 501.1.1.16.
Fig. 4.128. Possible lightning rod tip, 501.0.0.63.

Fig. 4.129. Solid knob insulator, 501.1.0.3.

Fig. 4.130. Portion of split knob insulator, 501.1.0.2.

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CHAPTER FIVE
RESULTS OF THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH,
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION, AND ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

In 1865 business directory shows that Centerville had at least one Chinese male resident. Chinese people continued to live there throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century. At times, they comprised the majority population. They remained in Centerville into the twentieth century, at least until 1910, when the census states that 17 people of Chinese descent still resided in the community. Other documentary records provide details of their occupations and daily lives during those 45 years.

Ideally, information from archival sources would be combined with those obtained from intact archaeological deposits. Together, both would present a more complete picture than either could provide alone. In the case of Centerville, however, the archaeological excavations furnished little in the way of undisturbed Chinese cultural remains, so knowledge is based primarily on the documentary materials. Nevertheless, the recovered artifacts helped answer at least some questions regarding the Chinese at Centerville.

The following section first presents the results of the site and backhoe trench excavations and the surface collections. Next, because any intact Chinese deposits were so minimal or uncertain, the documentary evidence is combined with the artifactual data to answer, where possible, the primary and secondary research questions posed in Chapter 3. Then, since the documentary research also revealed details on other topics related to Centerville that were not covered by the research questions, these additional findings are presented. Finally, certain observations are made regarding researchers’ encounters with Centerville’s Depression-era mining component.

RESULTS OF THE 1993 EXCAVATIONS

Sites 10BO328, 10BO496, and 10BO774 were subject to controlled excavations within established grids. In contrast site 10BO501 was excavated with a backhoe.

10BO328

Past relic collector activities heavily impacted this site. Extensive disturbance characterized the ground both inside and outside the immediate area of Feature 1, a buried rectangular cobblestone foundation. Outside the foundation, a relic scatter in the vicinity, called Feature 2, had several areas containing piles of unwanted, mostly fragmentary, Chinese and Euroamerican artifacts.

The present mining claim owner commented that the previous claim owner, Lewis Elmer, had a great deal of trouble with weekend bottle collectors, who became numerous in the 1960s and 1970s. This statement is confirmed by a copy of a letter to Elmer contained in BLM’s files on Centerville. The letter was written in response to Elmer’s request for information regarding his “right to exclude bottle and relic diggers” from his mining claim. The letter stated:

...you do maintain the right to manage the surface of your mining claim including the right to exclude the public....

In the use of public lands for recreational purposes no one may remove any object of antiquity, historic, or scientific interest unless such removal is authorized by law.... Therefore, digging and collecting bottles and relics is not a ‘recreational purpose.’
Archaeological excavation in and adjacent to Feature 1 confirmed the extensive relic collector disturbance, epitomized by three joining stove fragments from three widely separated 1 m-square excavation units. Elsewhere, it was difficult to determine how deep the disturbance extended within a particular excavation unit.

Sixteen 1 by 1 m excavation units, Units 1 through 15 and 18, examined portions of the areas inside, outside, and on top of the foundation, revealing that Feature 1, the foundation itself, was still virtually intact and undisturbed. However, as will be shown, the same was not true for the soil inside and outside the foundation.

All but two of the units contained Chinese artifacts, although not in all levels. Neither Unit 12 nor Unit 14 produced any Chinese artifacts. While this could mean that there were very few Chinese artifacts to begin with, it more likely indicates that the relic collectors removed so many of them that disturbed levels ended up with no Chinese material at all. Therefore, the presence or absence of Chinese artifacts in a particular level cannot be used to indicate that the level was disturbed or intact.

Such results make it impossible to actually determine whether Chinese or Euroamericans built the foundation. If Euroamericans had built it, and Chinese people later lived in it, there would likely be only Euroamerican artifacts in the lowest levels, and a mixed Euroamerican/Chinese assemblage in the upper levels. That configuration did exist in six of the excavation units, and therefore it could be concluded that they are intact, but those units are offset by an equal number of units containing mixed deposits. Perhaps some areas were disturbed disproportionately.

The two units that seemed most intact were 13 and 18, one of which had some charred milled lumber remaining, probably from wood flooring. Both, together with the disturbed Unit 14, were apparently in the vicinity of the structure’s doorway. Unit 13 produced a hinge that still contained a flat-head wood screw, as well as two joining doorknob fragments. Unit 14 yielded two skeleton-type door keys, while Unit 18 contained a keyhole plate and another hinge, this one with five flat-head wood screws.

Both cut and wire nails came from the lowest levels. If these deposits were intact, they would date construction to about the mid-1890s, a time when both types of nails were in use. Therefore, if the building was constructed by Euro-americans, then the Chinese occupation was even later. The large number of cut nails, 820, as opposed to wire nails, 255, may indicate a greater availability of the former, or else the greater use of the latter for later repairs and additions.

Another argument for late construction is the fact that the structure had a substantial stone foundation. Early mining town buildings were typically flimsy, reflecting the haste in which they were erected. Structures usually lacked foundations; instead, a wooden sill beam sufficed to support the superstructure, both of which needed to last only as long as the “boom and bust” economy. A stone foundation implies a more permanent settlement, one where prosperity is expected to endure.

While it was ascertained that the foundation was 40 cm deep, the disturbed conditions outside it meant that researchers were unable to locate the structure’s drip line, which would have helped in interpreting the configuration of its roof. There were no interior foundations that might have provided clues to room divisions, and no evidence existed for a stairway, a fireplace, or a cellar.

Lacking those features, it could not be definitely determined whether the structure was a store or
a dwelling, or something else, or whether it served various functions at different times. However, the absence of certain types of artifacts indicates, for example, that it was neither a blacksmith shop nor a livery stable, while the presence of others, such as flat glass, indicates that the building had windows. Although its superstructure was completely gone, it may well have been built of logs that were removed for other uses.

If logs, there would have been chinking between them to keep out the elements. If the logs were removed after the building was abandoned, pieces of chinking on or just beneath the ground surface would be expected. Although pieces of chinking did come from five of the excavation units, some were as much as 30 to 40 cm below ground level, providing further evidence of the extensive disturbance of this site by relic collectors.

10BO496

Because of the extensive scatter of artifacts down the slope at this site, excavation objectives concentrated on trying to identify any structure from which they might have come. Midway up the slope was a flat oval depression, defined on all but its south side by mounds of rocks; it might have been a dugout. Early in the excavation of Unit 1, however, it became apparent that the area that looked like a dugout was actually only a depression surrounded by tailings piles. Unit 2 was not excavated because of its surface similarity to Unit 1.

Excavation moved down the slope, to Unit 3, placed over a small portion of an apparent relic collector’s hole. Examination of this area was helped by placing of Unit 4 diagonally and adjoining, to the southwest, and by Unit 6 immediately west of Unit 3 and north of Unit 4, revealing an enigmatic, previously excavated hole or pit. Although artifacts were found 80 cm below unit datum, they were few in number. The pit contained no evidence of a structure, but seemed too deep to simply be a relic collector’s hole. Perhaps the relic collector had explored a hole from a former privy or storage pit, expanding it in the process, and then filling it in. Evidence for illegal excavation activity at this site was demonstrated by two joining bottle sherds from the mid- to lower levels of two non-contiguous units.

Neither the other excavation units nor the 28 auger holes indicated that 10BO496 had intact structural remains. The artifacts scattered down the slope may have come from something more ephemeral, such as a tent (Fig. 5.1). Even if a tent were once there, the amount of window glass argues for the later presence of a more substantial, if foundationless, log or frame building whose structural components were themselves subsequently removed.

Although there were a few Chinese artifacts in the large scatter down the slope, none were found in the excavation units. This indicates that any Chinese use of
this site was ephemeral and transitory. While Chinese people certainly utilized 10BO496, it probably never served as a primary habitation area for them.

10BO501

The backhoe trench into this feature yielded numerous artifacts, but revealed no evidence to suggest that the depression was from a former privy, and it did not contain enough rubbish to be a dump. It appeared to be an old prospect pit that was later partly filled in, or slumped in. Over time, artifacts migrated into it. A few may have been deliberately discarded there.

No Chinese artifacts were found here, either in the trench or on the surface. Considering the ubiquity of Chinese objects elsewhere at Centerville, their absence here is conclusive proof that Chinese people never inhabited this portion of town.

10BO774

During the course of excavation it became apparent that what was hoped to be a Chinese dugout, was in fact, merely a depression within surrounding tailings piles. Because it was oval, flat in the center, and appeared to have mounded earth on three sides, it gave the impression of being a dugout habitation of the sort that is common on Chinese mining sites elsewhere. The Chinese artifacts on the surface nearby were thus unrelated to any former structure in this area.

To confirm these findings, a field assistant investigated a nearby tailings pile. He found that it had a similar composition to what the excavators had encountered, namely, loam giving way to rocks.

BACKHOE TRENCH

A line 150 m long was laid out on the south side of the Centerville/Placerville Road, and parallel to it, and a number of individual or contiguous backhoe trench segments were excavated along its length. They were designated TR10, TR25, and so on, the figures representing the distance in meters from west of the trench’s origin near the Centerville/Pioneerville Road. All of the trench segments yielded buried artifacts, and a few even encountered features. The recovered objects were inventoried and most of them were returned to their respective trench segments. Only a few items were retained for further study.

When artifacts were kept, the trench segment received a site number, either a new one, or one that related to a previously designated, adjacent site. These were 10BO340, 10BO505, 10BO773, 10BO780, and 10BO781. Where all artifacts were reburied within the trench, each segment retained its designation in meters west of its origin, namely TR20, TR30, TR35, TR65, TR115, TR125, TR130, TR135, TR45 and TR150; no site number was assigned to any of these.

10BO340 (TR10)

The trench segment at 10 m from the line’s origin produced extensive debris from a former Chinese occupation. This site is apparently related to site 10BO340, just across the Centerville/Placerville Road, where there is an extensive surface scatter of Chinese artifacts. A Chinese man’s cabin apparently was once located where the trench was excavated. It reportedly was about 12 feet long and only 8 or 10 feet wide. Although numerous Chinese artifacts were recovered, there was no above- or below-ground evidence for any former structure here.

A few Chinese artifacts from the other portion of this site were collected, across the road. Because Chinese artifacts are so common in these two adjacent locations, it is apparent that the Chinese occupation here was of long duration. Since this area is lower in elevation than the rest of Centerville, it may well be where Centerville’s Chinatown was established following the October 1870 fire. A Boise newspaper...
reported in May 1878 that the Chinese structures in Centerville were “entirely on the outskirts, in a sort of hollow or low ground.”

10BO505 (TR85, TR90-100)
The two trench segments here produced large amounts of debris from the burned Koppes dwelling. Its foundation was apparently visible into the 1950s, when members of the Koppes family scraped dirt over it to cover it up. No remains were found.

10BO773 (TR60)
One trench segment was placed in a depression where nearby surface artifacts included brick halves, a shovel head, and a stove part. Although no feature was found to justify the depression, several artifacts were retained, so this segment received a site number.

10BO780 (TR140)
This site, a large depression, is a buried dump containing mostly cans, as well as a few miscellaneous artifacts. Since the most recent material from this feature dated to the 1930s, this dump was probably used by people living at Centerville during the period of Depression-era mining.

10BO781 (TR25)
The 1-m deep trash pit uncovered by this trench segment contained mostly metal debris. The pit was perhaps a low spot that got filled in.

MISCELLANEOUS TRENCH SEGMENTS
Trench segment TR20 encountered the characteristic “bedrock” granitic sand immediately below the surface. In TR30, the bedrock appeared about 30 cm below the surface. Reddish-brown soil, apparently undisturbed, characterized TR35, while TR65 had a pit containing metal and glass.

In trench segment TR115 massive amounts of burned wood were found. It was level, as if it had been a floor. At approximately 117.5 m northwest of the trench origin, a hollow cobble foundation was cut across the trench. One course of cobbles was visible, as was one floor joist running perpendicular to it, parallel with the trench. More burned flooring lay above the joist. No artifacts were retained from this site, so it was not given a number. It does not appear to be related to an above-ground, unnumbered site just to the west, which appears to be a building foundation and possible cellar. The trench did not cut through this latter feature.

The remainder of the trench segments, TR125, TR130, TR135, TR145, and TR150, were almost continuous. Artifacts found there were assigned to the closest linear peg. None of the segments encountered any features, and only a few artifacts were found. Once inventoried, all objects were replaced in the trench and reburied.

THE SURFACE COLLECTIONS
A few significant, diagnostic artifacts from the surface of several other sites were collected at Centerville. These sites were 10BO502, 10BO503, 10BO504, and 10BO688.

10BO502
This site adjoins 10BO503 and merges into it. Although its cultural affiliation was previously designated as “Euro-American,” considerable numbers of Chinese artifacts were collected and inventoried. Only a few Chinese and Euroamerican objects were retained for further study. The quantities of objects remaining on the surface, and the early dates of some of them, indicate that this site, together with 10BO503, was in the core area of the original Centerville town site. Until the fire of October 1870, nothing prevented Chinese entrepreneurs from...
establishing businesses anywhere in Centerville. In fact, Boise County deeds show that on several occasions Euroamericans sold property within the platted part of town to Chinese purchasers.

Bulldozing, apparently associated with legal mining, has compromised the integrity of this site. The old Centerville town site was mined in the 1930s, and some of the destruction may date to that time. Other damage is more recent. For example, the present mining claim owner pointed out two places where he had removed dirt, washed it in his sluice, and found numerous artifacts. Many Chinese objects came from what he called the “joss house,” the location of Centerville’s former Chinese temple, while the other was a “saloon,” judging from the number of liquor bottles recovered.

A large safe still rests between the locations of the “saloon” and the “joss house.” The latter was outside the area that was collected during Phase One. West of it, and northeast of the location of the presumed “saloon,” there is a stone-lined well. Although it also was not included in the Phase One surface collections, a number of artifacts were inventoried that the claim owner had found in his sluice, ones he knew had come from this vicinity.

**10BO503**

Site 10BO503 is similar in character to the adjacent site 10BO502. Also described as “Euro-American,” it, too, contains abundant Chinese cultural material, most of which was collected, inventoried, and then returned to the site. Again only a few Chinese and Euroamerican items were retained for further study. Because of its location, some early artifact dates, and the frequency of Chinese artifacts, this site can also be included in Centerville’s early core area. It undoubtedly once housed Chinese businesses, at least until 1870. It also has been bulldozed, probably first in the 1930s, and certainly more recently. A hand-dug well is the one relatively intact feature that is still visible on the surface.

**OTHER SITES**

Godfrey Sperling’s 1912 mineral survey identified a number of mining-related features at Centerville, including several open cuts, reservoirs, ditches, and flumes. Although some of these can still be identified on the ground, they were not specifically investigated during 1993. Sperling also listed and illustrated various buildings that were then present. Although now collapsed, some are still identifiable today. A few were discussed earlier.

During surface examination of several other areas near the Centerville town site, two significant Chinese artifacts at two other places were discovered. One, a bowl rim fragment, was found at 10BO688. The other, a ginger jar sherd, was collected at an unnumbered site complex west of Slaughterhouse Gulch. However, it disappeared soon after it was collected.

**10BO688**

Site 10BO688 is a south-facing slope and possible terraced garden area containing a light scatter of Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts. This site is located near the Catholic Cemetery.

**UNNUMBERED SITE COMPLEX**

The second site is an extensive circa 1930s can dump, one of several northwest of the Grimes Creek Road and southwest of Slaughterhouse Creek. Associated with these dumps are several collapsed structures, tailings piles, and scatters of Chinese and Euroamerican artifacts. Although this site was “evaluated by the BLM at an earlier date and [was] considered ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places,” present-day perceptions now support its eligibility.
As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Data Recovery Plan posed five primary, theoretical, research questions. To answer them successfully, the features needed to be intact, both physically and chronologically, with their ethnic identity capable of being determined. In the event that the features proved incapable of providing sufficient information to answer the primary research questions, the Data Recovery Plan proposed that an additional four secondary, less theoretical, research questions be addressed instead.

The Primary Research Questions

Only one of the excavated sites, 10BO328, produced Chinese artifacts, and only two of its 16 units may be undisturbed contexts. Although 10BO496 contained Chinese artifacts on the surface, none were in any excavation units. Site 10BO501 yielded no Chinese artifacts, either on the surface or in the backhoe trench that was excavated in one of its features. While 10BO774 received a site number, and even though the excavation units as well as the adjacent surface area contained Chinese artifacts, this “site” was, in fact, merely a depression amidst placer tailings and was not actually an archaeological site as such. Therefore, site 10BO328, a foundation that was probably built by Euro-Americans in the 1890s, with subsequent use by some of the Chinese residents who remained at Centerville at least until 1910, is the only location that can provide even peripheral answers to the first group of questions.

1. What do the habitation sites associated with Chinese placer operations tell us regarding the assimilation, acculturation, or adaptation of the Asian miners?

Centerville’s Chinese miners were adapting to Euroamerican culture more than they were becoming assimilated into it. The possibly undisturbed portions of 10BO328 contained both Euroamerican and Chinese objects in their uppermost level, Level 1, showing that the Centerville Chinese were utilizing goods from both cultures. This was apparently a common practice in mining communities where both Chinese and EuroAmericans lived, even in communities that apparently had Chinese stores at the same time.

For example, surviving store ledgers from towns such as Auburn and Granite, in Oregon, show that Euro-American stores had both Euroamerican and Chinese customers at least by 1868, in the first instance, and into 1903 in the second. Although Chinese use of familiar Chinese products depended upon whether or not these imports were readily available locally, Chinese use of Euroamerican items was more for practical reasons: the Euroamerican stores apparently stocked useful items that the Chinese stores did not carry, such as American-made rubber boots and patent medicines.

2. Where nontraditional goods/structures were used, did their utilization reflect newly homogenized preferences and cognitive changes requisite for true acculturation, or just temporary adoptions necessitated by distance and circumstance? If acculturation appears to have taken place, how does this articulate with the “sojourner thesis?”

Although researchers are often tempted to attribute uses of non-traditional goods to assimilation or acculturation, those processes may not be relevant in the context of Centerville and other mining communities. There, the Chinese came for a specific reason, whether it was to mine or provide support services. When the mining finished, so did their reasons for being there, and they left. Their use of Euroamerican goods, then, may simply mean that Chinese equivalents did not exist or were not available for purchase. As Roberta Greenwood has pointed out,
it is important not to mistake temporary accommodations for behavioral transformations.

3. If neither assimilation nor acculturation appears to have taken place, to what do we attribute the cultural continuity? Given Donald Hardesty’s hypothesis that resource competition promotes the heterogeneity of cultural patterns, resulting in the reaffirmation of cultural traditions and identities, is there any evidence that either inter- or intra-ethnic competition in Centerville fostered analogous entrenchment(s)?

Documentary research established that there were Chinese stores in Centerville from the 1870s until the early 1900s. There, the Chinese could purchase familiar foods, beverages, and other items, much as today’s Americans seek out Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald’s, and Coca-Cola in China and Taiwan. There were also Euroamerican stores, where Chinese may have shopped, but no store ledgers were found. After the turn of the century, Euroamericans are known to have shopped for food items and giftwares in Centerville’s Chinese stores. There is no evidence that inter- or intra-ethnic competition in Centerville fostered cultural entrenchment.

4. Does the location of Chinese habitations demonstrate a purposeful strategy of ethnic boundary maintenance? Does this vary through the “boom-bust” cycle of occupation at the Centerville site?

No habitation remains were located that were built by the Chinese in Centerville. Instead, documentary evidence from contemporary newspapers suggests that until the fall of 1870, the Chinese bought and occupied buildings purchased from former Euroamerican owners, mostly within the town proper. The Chinese may also have built structures within this same area. After a disastrous fire in 1870, however, the Euroamericans compelled the Chinese to rebuild away from the town center. By May 1878, Centerville’s “Chinese buildings [were] entirely on the outskirts, in a sort of hollow or low ground.”

5. What materials were used to construct Chinese habitations? Do these reflect the temporary nature of Chinese residence? Do these change through time, and if so, do these changes reflect the process of assimilation or acculturation? Is there any relationship between the form of these structures and those constructed by 19th century yeomen in China?

No Chinese habitations were found that would enable this question to be answered. It is expected the habitations were constructed with locally available materials, such as cobblestones and timber.

THE SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Because the excavated sites provided insufficient information to answer the primary research questions in detail, the additional four secondary, less theoretical, research questions are also addressed. Their answers depend more upon documentary and oral historical sources rather than archaeological evidence.

1. Some features have both Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts in association. Is this mixing a result of the disturbed nature of the site, or is it due to successive occupations by Euroamericans and Chinese?

Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts may occur in association for several reasons. One is that the Chinese purchased and used both Euroamerican and Chinese articles, either when Chinese equivalents were unavailable or when they deliberately chose to buy Euroamerican goods. No Chinese site, whether in the United States or elsewhere, probably has only Chinese artifacts. Euroamericans, on the other hand, almost never purchased or used articles of Asian
manufacture until the advent of late nineteenth and early twentieth century giftwares made in China and Japan. Therefore, an artifact assemblage from a Chinese occupation is expected to contain both Chinese and Euroamerican objects, and that from a Euroamerican occupation to contain only Euroamerican artifacts.

The presence of both Chinese and Euroamerican objects can thus be from a strictly Chinese component or from a Euroamerican component mixed with a Chinese one. Successive occupations involving EuroAmericans followed by Chinese should show only Euroamerican objects in the lowest levels, with both Chinese and Euroamerican artifacts in the levels above. For site 10BO328 neither Unit 12 nor Unit 14 produced any Chinese artifacts even in their uppermost levels. It cannot be determined if this means that: (1) units with no Chinese artifacts at their lowest levels are undisturbed at that depth, and are thus Euroamerican; or (2) relic collectors removed many Chinese artifacts, leaving so few that the lowest levels, though mixed, received no Chinese objects.

2. Besides Chinese mining sites, can other specific Chinese activity areas be identified? These might include dwellings, stores, gambling houses, restaurants, and/or a temple.

Although the documentary records tell a great deal about specific Chinese activity areas, locating them proved difficult. Before 1870, most were located within the Centerville business district. From the quantity and quality of surface Chinese artifacts, it is apparent that this was in the area of sites 10BO502 and 10BO503. Those sites, however, now are too heavily bulldozed to enable most specific locations to be identified.

Newspaper stories and oral history accounts confirm that Centerville had a Chinese temple, or “joss house.” Idaho State Historical Society files contain an undated photograph of “Centerville, Idaho - Streets” that, from left to right, reportedly shows the temple, Norman Young’s store, and Chris Meffert’s hotel. If those designations are correct, the photograph could not date much earlier than 1890, since Norman Young was only 11 years old when the 1880 census was taken, nor later than 1901, when several buildings destroyed by fire included both the Meffert hotel and a store “formerly owned by Norman H. Young.”

Similarly, although there are numerous surface artifacts at site 10BO340’s two locations, on the northeast and northwest corners of the intersection of the Centerville/Placerville road with the Grimes Creek/Pioneerville road, it cannot be said with certainty what activity areas they represent, or whether they remained consistent over time. Clearly too, the road and street configurations have changed over time. On Glen Bedal’s map there is a house belonging to “China John” on the northwest corner of the main intersection, with a “Jouse [joss] House” on the northeast corner (both 10BO340) and a Chinese store on the southwest corner (i.e., 10BO513). Herman Koppes’ map shows an additional street dead-ending at the Grimes Creek/Pioneerville road; here, there is a structure labeled “Chinese Gypsy John home” on the northwest corner, and “a Koppes garage” on the northeast corner, and two structures labeled “Chinese Josh House” are across the road. Rhoda Hall’s map more or less agrees with Bedal’s in the placement of the “Joss House.”
3. What archaeological and/or historical evidence is there for the presence of Chinese women and children in Centerville? What were their activities?

The archaeology work recovered no evidence that establishes the presence of Chinese women and children at Centerville, or provides details on the women’s occupations or activities. The documentary sources were more helpful. Chinese women lived in Centerville between at least 1870 and as late as 1910. According to the U.S. census for various years, in 1860 there were 16; in 1880, two, in 1900, three; and in 1910, one. In 1870 and 1880 they all were reportedly prostitutes, although some might have been wives or concubines. No occupations were provided for the Chinese women who lived there in 1900 or 1910.

The oral historical accounts also mention Chinese women in Centerville. Although one informant indicated that she remembered no Chinese women, that statement contradicted an earlier one mentioning two, perhaps about 1895. Since she had a detailed story about boys tormenting one of the two women, she must have been recalling two different time periods. One of the women was a wife, while the other’s status or occupation was not provided. Another informant, who arrived in Centerville about 1900, remembered “seven or eight” Chinese women there but gave no details. A third woman, born in 1901, moved to Centerville a few years later, so her memories of the Chinese there date to just before 1910; she remembered no women or children.

The only Chinese child known to have lived in Centerville was a nine-year-old boy who was there in 1880; his father, a miner, was a widower. None of the oral histories mention Chinese children there, and two women said that either there were none or that they did not remember any.

4. Can the artifacts be used to differentiate between different social classes, for example, laborers and merchants? What specific occupations can be identified?

Chinese artifacts from undisturbed contexts can, in general, be used to distinguish the socio-economic levels of a site’s occupants. This is done mostly with respect to the table ceramics recovered. Those used by laborers on the lower end of the economic scale tend to be inexpensive, mass-produced wares such as the “Double Happiness” and “Bamboo” patterns, both available only as rice bowls. The more expensive but higher quality “Four Flowers” or celadon (“Winter Green”) ceramics would appeal to people with more disposable income, while merchants could afford to indulge their tastes for fine hand-painted porcelains. Similarly, ceramic opium pipe bowls range from undecorated, inexpensive ones to highly elaborate, costly examples.

Identifying what socio-economic group occupied a particular site, then, requires that (1) the site is in a discrete area, with no possibility of horizontal mixing from other, nearby sites to contaminate the surface assemblage; and (2) even if relic collector disturbance has occurred, some sherds must still remain, from all the relevant ceramic types once present, before a reasonably accurate economic or social class determination can be made.

Site 10BO328 is distant enough from other former Chinese habitations so that no inter-site mixing occurred. However, it has been badly vandalized by “pothunters,” who may have compromised its intra-site integrity by removing, or “high-grading,” the better-quality ceramics. Since the Chinese table ceramics that remain include celadon, “Bamboo” pattern, and a few tiny fragments of a “Sweet Pea” design liquor warmer, the available evidence suggests
that the Chinese occupants of 10BO328 were “middle class.” The opium pipe bowl sherds from this site are neither severely plain nor highly elaborate, thus supporting this hypothesis.

Sites 10BO502 and 10BO503, on the other hand, produced artifacts whose quality indicates the presence of higher-status individuals, perhaps merchants. However, the extensive mixing on these sites, due to the bulldozer disturbance, means that inter- and intra-site integrity is lacking. The same can be said for site 10BO340, although there the assemblage was more indicative of middle-class occupants.

The Chinese at Centerville ran a variety of businesses and performed a number of specific occupations. Businesses included butcher shop, drug store, restaurant, gambling establishment, hotel, laundry, and mining company, while occupations were cook, blacksmith’s laborer, doctor, gardener, miscellaneous laborer, liquor dealer, lottery ticket dealer, merchant, miner, prostitute, store clerk, teamster, and tobacco dealer, as well as the 1880 census’ enigmatic “Jop Chin Chin Man.”

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH RESULTS

This section includes topics that were tangential to the main purpose, that of studying the Chinese at Centerville, but for which useful information was located. These include establishing the town’s original location, observing unrecorded sites at Centerville, learning details about the Masonic/Odd Fellows Hall and the Centerville School, and identifying site 10BO512 as the Goldtrap house.

ORIGINAL CENTERVILLE

Since some visitors to the excavations suggested that Centerville was once east of the Grimes Creek/Pioneerville Road, closer to the creek, and that its site was dredged in more recent times, verification at the original location in the vicinity of sites 10BO502 and 10BO503, north of the mining claim owner’s cabin was needed. Despite the lack of an 1860s town plat, there is sufficient evidence establishing Centerville’s original location.

First, an article in an 1877 Boise newspaper stated that “the placer mines about Centerville lie on either side of Grimes’ creek, which flows past the town...”, implying that placer mines separated the town from the creek even at that early date. Later, in 1912, A. F. Hanley and A. L. Ternan had their Centerville Placer claim platted. It was their intention to claim the old Centerville town site, and their claim boundaries do not include any portion of Grimes Creek. Finally, photographs in a 1932 Boise newspaper show an area in the vicinity of sites 10BO502 and 10BO503, where there was:

a power shovel scooping up the old ‘ghost city’ townsite at Old Centerville, Idaho; [and] dumping the dirt into the hopper to be carried down the sluice.

UNRECORDED DWELLING SITE

During the fieldwork at Centerville, and the later research on the Chinese there, the researchers occasionally also located relevant information on Euro-american sites in that community. While relocating most of the sites that ACS inventoried in 1989, others not described in that report were found, which do not yet have site numbers. One was an area that appears to be a rectangular dwelling foundation and possible cellar, west of and perpendicular to trench segment TR115. It was probably one of the structures shown on the 1912 plat map.
MASONIC/ODD FELLOWS HALL

Another site was a building foundation near the Centerville/Placerville Road. The structure that was once there appears on the 1912 plat of Centerville, where text in the accompanying “Field Notes” lists it as “(6) A frame building.... I. O. O. F., No. 4, Idaho, claimant.”

That Odd Fellows building seems to be in the same location as Centerville’s Masonic Hall, first mentioned in the Idaho World in August 1869:

The Masonic Fraternity of Centerville have commenced the erection of a Masonic Hall. The site is admirably chosen — it being upon the high knoll just above the town... from which a fine view is afforded of the surrounding country. The frame is thirty feet front by sixty feet depth, and the main corner posts are twenty eight feet high. ... The ground story will be fitted up as a great public hall, for meetings, concerts, balls, &c. A capacious front porch and upper large balcony, supported by pillars, will complete the front adornment of the building. When finished the new Masonic Hall of Centerville will be the handsomest public edifice in Boise County.

The Centerville Masonic Lodge received its charter in October 1869, as “Coe Lodge No. 8, F. and A. M.,” later known as the “Centerville Lodge A. F. & A. M.” [Ancient Free and Accepted Masons]. It was officially opened in mid-October with an installation of officers followed by a “splendid repast,” which met the Idaho World editor’s approval by substituting coffee for the more usual wines and spirits seen at such functions.

By mid-November the Masonic Hall was entirely completed, except for the “ornamental painting which has been deferred until Spring.” The Idaho World commented that Mr. A. G. Mason of Centerville, “the architect who erected the building, is entitled to great credit for the manner in which he completed the work.”

In 1870 the Idaho World editor reported that Centerville’s Masonic Fraternity “have the most elegant and commodious Hall in the Basin.” The building, “on the hill above and overlooking the town,” was “the chief ornament of the place.” Besides housing the fraternal order, it also served as a community hall. In January 1873, for example, “a sociable,” hosted by Centerville’s Dancing Club, took place there. The group of about 70 people “tripped the light fantastic” until 3 a.m., following which they enjoyed an “excellent collation.”

An undetermined event seems to have put an end to Centerville’s Masonic Hall by the fall of 1874. On September 28, a fire destroyed Placerville’s business district, including the International Hotel. Apparently, the hotel “was rebuilt...with lumber taken from the Masonic hall of Centerville, as new lumber was costly.”

The reported measurements of the Masonic Hall, 30 by 60 ft., are close to the dimensions recorded in the text accompanying the 1912 plat, 22 by 56 feet. Today, its exact outline is difficult to discern. However, measurements show that its east and west ends measure between 23 and 24 ft., and its north and south sides measure 47 ft.

It appears that the building first served the Masons and later the Odd Fellows. Anna Goldtrap, whose home was below the Masonic/Odd Fellows hall, conducted Sunday School in another Odd Fellows Hall in 1870. From her description, it is
certain that building was in a different place from
where the foundation is now. She described how
“four men would carry the organ from my home
down the hill” to the hall. That Odd
Fellows Hall burned in the October 1870 fire.

Perhaps lodge members rebuilt it, since the 1910
fire burned only the porch of the “old” Odd Fellows
hall on the south side of Main Street, while a more
recent Odd Fellows building, presumably on the
north side of Main Street, the side most affected by
the fire, was totally destroyed. After the fire the Odd
Fellows held a meeting “for the purpose of taking
steps to rebuild their hall.”

The hall that burned was probably the one
constructed in early 1905. It had two stories, and
measured 30 by 62 feet. It had a 13 by 30 ft. stage on
the lower floor, which was “separate from the main
hall, giving 30 x 62 feet for a dance floor.” In July
1905 an Idaho World account of a ball reported:

the dance hall is large, the walls and ceiling
handsomely papered and the floor is perfect.
The music was furnished by the Idaho City
Orchestra.

Research did not establish whether members
instead moved into the previous Masonic Hall, if the
latter lodge had disbanded. When former Centerville
resident Herman Koppes was asked about the founda-
tion, he replied that it was the location of the Odd
Fellows lodge, adding that “many called it the
Masonic Hall.” None of the three maps drawn by
former residents of Centerville showed this building.

THE GOLDFRAPP HOUSE, 10BO512

Entrepreneur Samuel K. Goldtrap owned one of
the Centerville Mining District’s important ditch
systems as well as other enterprises. His importance
to the community’s economic development was
paralleled by his wife Anna’s contributions to its
cultural enhancement. Their former home, now
collapsed, is definitely the site recorded as 10BO512.

In describing the 1870 fire, Anna Goldtrap recalled
that their home, “situated near the top of the hill and
above the business district, escaped although the glass
in the windows became quite hot.”

The Goldtrap home appears on the 1912 plat map
and is described in the accompanying field notes as
“(4) A frame building.... Mrs. S. K. Goldtrap, claim-
ant;” it measured 20 by 24 feet. The house was still
standing in the 1920s, “opposite the old pine tree
near the top of the hill.” Two of the informants
showed the Goldtrap home on the maps they drew
of Centerville.

THE CENTERVILLE SCHOOL

The final area of particular interest was the site of
the former Centerville School, farther up the hill,
above and past the Masonic Hall. Constructed during
the winter of 1884-1885, it was “an ornament to the
town — 20x32 feet — 12 feet from floor to ceiling —
neat and commodious, and cost the small sum of five
hundred dollars.”

In August 1885 the teacher was “Miss Lizzie
Redway, of Boise City.” The parents were “delighted
at the progress their children [were] making under the
supervision of this young lady.” A photograph taken
about 1890 shows the school as it must have looked
about that time (Fig. 5.2).

Other teachers over the years included Miss Wood-
ward, in early 1896; she seemed “to have some magical
influence over small children.” In early 1897 there were
17 pupils; Miss Ruth Peterson “instructed the little ones
and proved to be an excellent teacher.” By 1898
the enrollment had increased to 22 children, with
Miss Kiggins as teacher, and in early 1901, Miss Rae
Harnett taught the 30 children, who “speak highly”
of her and who were “making rapid progress in their
various studies under her tuition." "Prof." H. P. Lee took over the school in the fall of 1902. By spring he had "organized a boys' reading circle, the object of which is to inculcate a taste for good literature among the lads of school age."

Miss Seamans taught during the 1904-1905 school year. Following tradition, when school closed in the spring, the children presented "a very pleasing entertainment" in the evening, under her "able direction." In the summer of 1908 a new school house was scheduled to be built at Centerville, but nothing appeared in the Idaho City newspaper to indicate that it actually was constructed. Teachers who would have taught there include Miss Vella Perkhiser, fall of 1910; Miss Sarah Stacy, fall of 1912; Miss Helen Robb, spring of 1914; and Miss Ethel Zapp, 1915-1916 term (Fig. 5.3).

Although the Centerville school appears in the field notes for the 1912 map as "(5) A frame building... School Dist. No. 3, Boise, claimant," measuring 21 by 36 ft., nothing remains of it today. Herman Koppes remembered that it was a two-story building, with a bell tower in front, located on the highest point above town. In the 1890 photograph, the upper story is just visible. While Herman Koppes did not include the school on his map of Centerville, the other two informants both placed it in about the same location.

The school was,

just an ordinary small town school. One teacher...went early in the morning and started the fires and shoveled the trail around to the 'little house' [outdoor toilet].

We all went home for lunch except in the middle of the winter. [W]hen [the] snow got deep, my father would bring our hot lunch up
He used to take us to the school in the morning to break trail for us. We'd walk behind him, soaked way up above our knees before we got there.

Herman Koppes described the school building in more detail. A “pretty well-built building,” it was, tall and...had a belfry and [the teacher] used to ring the bell every morning when school took up, and after recess and things like that.

Entrance was through a small vestibule, also used to store the winter wood supply. That area led into the only other room, a large one containing the pupils’ desks.

The Centerville school went out of use about 1933. Two women who recorded Centerville’s cemeteries that year “took the road past the site of the school house which has recently been removed.”

**CENTERVILLE’S DEPRESSION-ERA MINING REMAINS**

During the 1930s, placer miners began exploiting the Centerville Placer claim that was platted over the old town site in 1912. Employees of the Alan-Doc placer mine worked in two, eight-hour shifts; they and their families reoccupied Centerville’s 20 or so remaining, dilapidated, dwellings. The placering resumed sporadically in 1931, and continued into 1932, and perhaps longer. By 1936 bucket dredges operated 24 hours a day in the Centerville vicinity.

Today much remains of this Depression-era mining activity, including collapsed buildings, house cellars and foundations, large can and refuse dumps, and scattered, discarded equipment. Many of the structural features also appear on the 1912 plat and/or on the maps of Centerville made by Bedal, Hall, and Koppes. While time did not permit an extensive analysis of the Depression-era mining components, it is clear that they provide Centerville with another significant historic context. Prior to 1989, BLM evaluated some of them and concluded that they were not eligible to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. However, times and perceptions change, and Centerville’s Depression-era mining remains are worthy of reconsideration, particularly with the recent appearance of a National Register of Historic Places’ bulletin containing “guidelines for identifying, evaluating, and registering historic mining properties.”

**SUMMARY**

Although the archaeological excavations at Centerville did not provide the hoped-for answers to the primary research questions posed prior to the project, the documentary research and oral historical interviews satisfactorily answered the secondary research questions. In addition, analysis of the Asian and Euro-American artifact assemblages added to the knowledge of Centerville’s early inhabitants and their lifeways. Research on the Masonic/Odd Fellows Hall, the Goldtrap House, the Centerville School, and the community’s Depression-era mining has identified other potentially significant avenues that would profit from further investigation.

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he former town site of Centerville has presented BLM with a continuing dilemma lasting well over 20 years. The dilemma centers on a conflict between the mining claim owners and the need to protect Centerville's remaining cultural resources. Numerous letters in BLM files, and documents such as the 1988 Resource Management Plan (RMP), attest to BLM's recognition of Centerville's importance to the Boise Basin as well as to the state of Idaho.

In late 1992 or early 1993, BLM's state director sought an opinion from the regional solicitor regarding the conflict between mining operations and cultural resource protection. The regional solicitor wrote:

[the law] does not address any time limit for the responsibility of an operator to not knowingly disturb, alter, injure, or destroy any scientifically important...historical or archaeological site, structure, building or object on Federal lands.

The regional solicitor also stated that the applicable laws provide “no specific time frame” in which BLM must investigate and salvage the cultural resources. Additionally, there are “no specific time limits” under which the mining claim operator bears “the responsibility of avoiding adverse impacts on...cultural resources.” Furthermore, the RMP clearly states:

The Bureau of Land Management is required to identify, evaluate, protect and wisely manage cultural resources on public lands under its jurisdiction and to ensure that Bureau-initiated or Bureau-authorized actions do not inadvertently harm or destroy non-federal cultural resources.

Although these seem to be straightforward expressions of responsibility, more recent statements contradict their intent. For example, prior to the 1993 excavations at Centerville, BLM stated that “the completion of the data recovery will conclude the BLM consideration of the historic property at Centerville.” The phrasing of this statement was unfortunate, since it implied that archaeological data recovery would be completed, in 1993.

Far from it. Although the 1993 investigations are finished, they raised additional questions and concerns, resulting in the need to continue investigating and interpreting the Centerville town site and vicinity. The 1993 work demonstrated both the existence of intact Euroamerican subsurface deposits as well as the potential for Chinese deposits, and the need to document other unrecorded historic remains still visible on the surface.

Centerville’s importance to the early history of Idaho cannot be overstated. The initial Boise Basin gold discovery was made at Boston Bar, adjacent to Centerville. The town was “in the central part of a rich and extensive mining district,” and was known as the “prettiest” or “handsomest” community in the Basin. Besides being “prosperous,” it was “the most cleanly, healthy place...in Idaho.” Both Chinese and Euroamerican miners and mining companies flourished there, as did businesses and other entrepren-
curial activities. Some of Centerville’s Chinese residents owned property and merchandise valued at up to $3,000, while many paid taxes into territorial coffers. Centerville’s Chinese community even built and supported a Chinese temple, which attracted worshippers from other nearby communities such as Placerville, four miles away, and from Idaho City and even Boise, on special occasions.

The Centerville town site still has enormous potential for contributing to the ongoing research of a number of topics. These include early mining in the Boise Basin, community formation and dynamics, Centerville’s Chinese and Euroamerican populations, and Depression-era mining. The following conclusions are derived from the results of documentary research, archaeological excavation, and artifact analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

The 1993 archaeological excavations were designed to examine the role of the Chinese at Centerville. The aim was to have sufficient “intact features, chronological control, [and] ethnic differentiation” to answer the primary research questions posed by the Data Recovery Plan. In the event that the features were incapable of “providing the optimum information desired,” the plan proposed several secondary, less theoretical, research questions.

In recapitulating the results of the 1993 excavations, it is clear that the particular sites that were examined either no longer contained, or never did incorporate, components whose investigation and interpretation would enable the primary research questions to be addressed in a meaningful manner. Despite that disappointment, the wealth of information found in documentary sources allowed the secondary research questions to be answered in detail.

The main focus of work to date has been to obtain a better understanding of the Chinese and their contributions to both Centerville and the Boise Basin, including their relationships with the Euroamerican population. Unfortunately, the 1993 archaeological investigations at Centerville did little to increase knowledge of the Chinese in that community. This was mainly because the investigated sites fell into one of four categories:

1. Although they had a major Chinese component, they were too disturbed to be of much value (10BO328).
2. They were Euroamerican, either overwhelmingly (10BO496) or completely (10BO501).
3. They were not sites at all (10BO774).
4. They were found in the exploratory trench and have not yet been investigated.

However, historical archaeologists have long known that documentary and oral historical research are essential components of a historical archaeological excavation project. Information obtained from such research, together with the excavation data, combine to give a more complete picture of a particular site than any one method alone can.

For Centerville, documentary research proved fruitful. Among the available records, newspapers are particularly important sources because they provide cumulative details, available nowhere else, on the daily lives of Centerville’s residents. Idaho City’s Idaho World, the newspaper published closest to Centerville, was a rich resource for primary source material about the Chinese in Centerville and the Boise Basin. It was learned, for example, that although the Chinese were discriminated against, they were never “run out”
as they were in many other western communities. They interacted with Euroamericans, with both groups increasing in understanding and tolerance. Such conclusions can be applicable today in communities seeking to defuse racial tensions heightened by the arrival of immigrant groups with their own culture, customs, and language.

Oral historical accounts were also a rich source of information, particularly for Centerville during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Several former residents shared their memories of the Chinese in that community. The details they provided supplemented and confirmed the available documentary sources.

### 10BO328

A previous survey of historic cultural resources in the Centerville vicinity identified this site as “A Late 19th - Early 20th C. Chinese Mining/Habitation site,” presumably on the basis of the abundant Chinese artifacts visible on the surface. However, because of the general nature of mining activity in the Boise Basin, where the Chinese were allowed to mine for themselves only after an area became unproductive for Euroamericans, it is entirely probable that the structure was built by Euroamerican miners and later used by the Chinese.

Although the cobble foundation at this site was virtually intact, the extensive relic-collector disturbance both inside and outside it has already been described. While no drip line was uncovered, which would have been helpful for interpreting the roof line of the building, the door location was found. There were no interior foundations to provide clues to divisions into rooms, nor was there any evidence for a stairway, a fireplace, or a cellar. Therefore, the purpose of the structure could not definitely be determined, whether it was a store or a dwelling, or whether it served various functions at different times. The absence of certain classes of artifacts, however, does tell us that it was not, for example, a blacksmith shop or a livery stable, and the presence of others, such as flat glass, indicates that the building had windows.

Besides disturbing the ground by digging, relic collectors also removed an unknown quantity and variety of objects and displaced many more from their original locations. While Chinese people in the West used Euroamerican objects, the Euroamericans did not use Chinese objects. If intact layers of strictly Euroamerican objects existed, the structure would have been built by Euroamericans. While both Euroamerican and Chinese artifacts were recovered, stratigraphic provenience was absent for most of them, meaning it was not possible to determine who built the structure. Since the objects are unfortunately so mixed, it can only be said that Chinese people certainly occupied the structure, but whether they or the Euroamericans built it could not be determined archaeologically. Still, it probably was built by Euroamericans before or during the early 1890s.

### 10BO496

The extensive refuse scatter down the slope at this site consisted principally of Euroamerican artifacts, and included very few Chinese objects. Because there were so many domestic items, such as stove parts and medicine bottle fragments, they must have come from a structure. However, no intact subsurface structural remains were found in the excavation units. Therefore, any structure either must lie elsewhere, or was archaeologically ephemeral, such as a frame building with no foundation, or perhaps even a tent. Although either could have been removed without leaving any trace of its original presence, window glass and milled lumber at 10BO496 argue for a frame building at some period of the site’s use.
An area that looked like it might be a collapsed foundation or a dugout was, instead, a tailings pile. A pit feature excavated down the slope from it contained very few artifacts, none of which were Chinese, and provided no evidence to determine whether it was merely a relic collector’s excavation, of which there were several at the site, or whether it was perhaps a storage pit or former privy.

**10BO501**

A trench was placed across a depression at this site to determine if it was a well or privy. It was neither. It may have been a miner’s prospect pit that gradually slumped in, or perhaps a cellar, and over time, some artifacts either were deposited into it or had washed into it. Prior to excavating the trench, the surface inventory there revealed no Chinese artifacts. None were found in the trench itself.

A 1912 plat map shows several buildings in the vicinity of 10BO501 (Fig. 6.1); the accompanying field notes list names of owners and/or occupants, and provide the buildings’ dimensions. For example, one, measuring 33 by 36 ft., was owned and/or occupied by H. D. Richardson; another, 21 by 43 ft., by F. H. Cooper, and a third, 18 by 44 ft., by Mrs. Sarah Cunningham. Informant Herman Koppes also included these names on his map. Since abundant structural debris is present on the site, measurements of the remains might indicate their relationship to the structures that were mapped in 1912.

**10BO774**

Some time after the 1989 survey this site was identified as a possible Chinese dugout. That hypothesis was based upon the observations: (1) it was a depression adjacent on three sides to mounds; (2) its appearance was similar to Chinese dugouts on mining sites elsewhere; and (3) it had more Chinese than Euroamerican artifacts in the immediate vicinity. Even though excavation established that the “dugout” was merely a depression amidst tailings piles, it still received a site number.

**BACKHOE TRENCH**

The backhoe trench parallel to the Placerville Road was placed there for the purpose of verifying “that this section consists of Euroamerican residences,” and was not intended to address any of the specific primary or secondary research questions. The major feature located by this trench included extensive Chinese occupation debris at 10BO340 [TR10], probably the location of a small Chinese residence described by Herman Koppes. Also discovered were extensive household rubbish at 10BO505 [TR85; TR90-100], from the Koppes house that burned in the late 1920s; a possible foundation and floor joists from an unrecorded and unnumbered Euroamerican structure in TR115; and a circa 1930s dump at 10BO780 [TR14].
Fig. 6.1. Godfrey Sperling’s 1912 plat of Centerville. Redrawn by Yixian Xu.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

If these structures and features are not threatened with destruction, additional archaeological excavation is neither desirable nor necessary. It is more important to provide for a comprehensive reevaluation of the present above-ground features, ensure a full recording of them to Idaho State Historic Preservation Office standards, and continue to conduct interviews with Centerville “old timers” while they are capable of remembering details of that community.

Results of the 1993 archaeological investigations, combined with the related documentary and oral historical research, has enabled interested individuals to replace their previous limited awareness of Centerville with a detailed understanding of its significance. This report provides readers with a view of what was once “the handsomest town in the Basin.”
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Xu, Yixian

Zhu, Liping

Zumwalt, Betty
PROJECT ASSISTANCE

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MEDIA
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Hank Nystrom
KTVB, Channel 7: David Mills,
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Craig Araquistain
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Verna and Harold McConnell
Boots and Bert Otto
Herman Koppes
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