

Recovered artifacts include broken peavy handles, shoe polish and farrier tools

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says, sloshing the liquid back and forth. “I don’t know what this is in here, but I like to think it might be brandy inside, although it could be just muddy water. People tell me, ‘Open it up,’ but I’d rather not, because I might be disappointed.”

Many of the bottles found at the logging site bear raised letters that identify the contents they once held. The loggers must have suffered from aching muscles, since one reads “Minard’s Linament,” another, “Sloan’s Linament.” A tall, long-necked brown bottle was produced by the Silver Springs Brewery of Victoria, while other beer bottles found at the site came from B.C. Brewery, Phoenix Brewery, or Dai Nippon brewery.

Pulling out what at first glance looks like a mottled brown hockey puck, Muckle points out the still-legible writing on the lid of what turns out to be a rusted tin of shoe polish. According to instructions on the tin, the paste inside could be applied to corduroy or dry leathers. Other finds from the area around the logging camp include an old coffee pot and a silver spoon—a rather incongruous item in a rough-and-ready logging camp. Muckle speculates it might have been part of a picnic lunch carried out to the men working in the forest.

One of the artifacts from the logging camp baffled students at first. The excavation kept turning up half-metre-long chunks of pole that were broken at one end and sharpened to a point at the other end. One enterprising student identified them as the broken handles of peavys—tools used to apply leverage in order



Old beer bottles found at the site.

to roll logs—by fitting the sharpened end of one handle into a peavey’s hollow spiked point.

NO BUILDINGS REMAIN at the site, but Muckle has tentatively identified what appears to be a foundation as either a stable or black-

smith shop, based on the horseshoes, farrier’s tools and pieces of leather harnesses and horse collars found in and around it. Another foundation was likely a kitchen, based on the proximity of food-related trash nearby. A third was probably a bunkhouse, judging by the window glass, chimney flashing and pieces of a wood-burning stove that would have served as a space heater.

“It was a pretty big camp,” says Muckle. “I’m guessing there were 30 to 40 men working at it, which I think is probably a pretty good-sized camp for that time period.”

While the entire site has been surveyed, only about two per cent of it has been excavated.

“The first thing we had to do was make sure we had a really good map of the site, a really detailed overview,” says Muckle. “We had to know where everything was—we had to map every stump, every fern, every fallen log. It takes a long time to make sure you get everything right. With archaeology you don’t get a second chance, because archaeology is destructive.”

While the field school is in operation, Grade 5 and 6 students visit it and learn about the history of logging on the North Shore. The students get to make their own maps of the site and talk to the archaeologists about their work. This past September, Muckle organized a one-day excavation for the public, something he hopes to repeat next summer. About 20 people participated under the watchful eyes of six former field school students.

While education remains the primary focus

of the dig, Muckle says the excavations are adding to our knowledge of the Lower Mainland’s history. “We’re trying to determine whether this was a Japanese camp or a segregated camp, whether there were women at the camp, were there children at the camp? What kind of life did the loggers lead? What were they eating? That kind of stuff’s just not available with documents. Logging company records aren’t that accurate—they don’t give the full picture.

“Archaeology can give a different picture of the past. It complements history.”

The fun of doing historic archaeology, adds Muckle, is that the sites yield so many artifacts. Recalling his own days as a field school student, excavating a First Nations site on the central coast of B.C., Muckle says it took him 10 days to find his first artifact.

“Here, students are finding their first artifact in 10 minutes.”

Muckle expects the Seymour Valley Archaeology Project to continue for several years. He has published his findings in *The Midden*, a newsletter of the Archaeological Society of B.C., but a full report on the dig has yet to be drafted.

In the meantime, between teaching classes at Capilano College, he’s preparing for another summer of sifting through an 80-year-old refuse dump.

“One of the really interesting things about historic archaeology is that it often gives us quite a different picture than the historical records tell us,” says Muckle. “We look at the garbage, and garbage doesn’t lie.”