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August 21, 2014

Alta Historical Society
c/o Town of Alta
P.O. Box 8016
Alta, Utah 84092-8016

RE: Alta Historic Town Site Documentation - FINAL

Dear Alta Historical Society Members,

This letter summarizes the results of cultural resource documentation for the ca. 1875 Alta, Utah, town site. The work was conducted by SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) under authority of Public Lands Policy Coordination Office permit number 96 (issued to Dr. Mike Cannon of SWCA) and under Utah state project number U14ST0788 f. The project area is located in Salt Lake County, in Section 5, Township 3 South, Range 3 East, Salt Lake Meridian. It is shown on the Dromedary Peak (2001) and Brighton (2001), Utah, USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles, and is on Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest (UWCNF) lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Figure 1). The general location of the historic Alta town site has been the subject of previous cultural resource surveys and has been assigned Smithsonian site number 42SL000052.

INTRODUCTION

The first substantial mining settlement at the head of Little Cottonwood Canyon was Galena City (soon renamed Central City), located at the far west end of the flat where the present town of Alta is located. By 1871, due to lack of space and the fact that most mines were located farther east, it was largely abandoned in favor of the new community of Alta, which was established near the confluence of the North Branch (emerging from Grizzly Gulch) and the South Fork of Little Cottonwood Creek, adjacent to Samuel Woolley's steam sawmill (Keller 2001:138-139).

> The principal street on which most business houses were being built was named Walker Street, certainly a tribute to the Walker brothers, who managed the [Emma] mine…. The presence of a named street may suggest planning and orderly growth, but that was not the case, at least not so far. The first structures were randomly located, and some of them now found themselves in the middle of the new street. (Keller 2001:139)

Order had more or less prevailed by 1873 when Standish Rood, writing for the *Salt Lake Herald* under the pen name Archibald, provided a detailed description of Alta's two-block business district. Starting at the corner of 300 West and Walker Street, he walked up the north side of Walker to 100 West, then crossed and walked back down the south side, "describing every business along the way" (Keller 2001:141). Saloons, billiard halls, and boardinghouses predominated, interspersed with several general stores, groceries, two butchers, restaurants, and, finally, a Chinese laundry that Rood failed to mention but that appears in a historic photograph from the period (Keller 2001:144) (Figures 2 and 3).

While it appears that the early buildings had been removed, four tall spruce trees remained in the middle of Walker Street between 300 and 200 West. Other photographs clearly show additional buildings straggling up the hill to the north, as well as east and west along Walker Street (see Figure 2).[1] Most of the commercial buildings were one-and-a-half or two stories tall, front-gabled, wood-framed, and clad in vertical or horizontal wood siding; several were reported to have basements. At least one building, Street and Ralph's general merchandise store, was built of stone (Keller 2001:140); it was the fifth building on the north side of Walker Street, between 300 and 200 West (see Figure 3).

The town was first platted in combination with Central City in 1871, information that was incorporated in an 1873 map of the Little Cottonwood Mining District published by B.A.M. Froiseth (Appendix A). This scaled map also notes the location of the creek confluence, Woolley's mill, U.S. Mineral Monuments 1 and 3, township/range/section lines, and other important landmarks of the past and present day. Other less-detailed historic maps incorporate some of the same landmarks, including A.L. Bancroft's ca. 1871 map, C. Kolter's undated map of the Little Cottonwood Canyon Mining District, and an 1871 General Land Office (GLO) survey map (see Appendix A).[2]

Lumber for construction and mining works was a valuable commodity, and historic photographs document that nearly all of the trees had been removed from the hillsides above Alta by the early 1870s. In combination with heavy snows, this led to tragic consequences in the winter of 1875 when a series of avalanches partially destroyed the town and killed nearly 20 people. Residents and storeowners quickly rebuilt, but on a windy day in August 1878, a fire began in the Swan Hotel. "Within forty minutes the entire town was a boiling mass of flame…. Out of about 140 buildings that stood that morning, only fifteen remained [and] of the trees that had graced center of town there remained only stumps" (Keller 2001:166). This marked the end of the original town.

> Before anyone could start to rebuild, the citizens held a meeting at which they discussed changing the site of Alta…. It was then resolved that the new Alta should have its main streets running north and south instead of east and west; that the principal business street should be no farther east than Third West Street on the old plat, that being the lower end of the burnt-out town; and that there should be a space of at least twenty-five feet between buildings. The new location also was thought to be much safer from snowslides. (Keller 2001:167)

The purpose of SWCA's project was to identify the location of the ca. 1873–1878 Alta town site, in particular the two-block section of Walker Street described by Rood and documented in historic photographs, which includes Blocks 35, 36, 53, and 54, as drawn on the Froiseth map. This was accomplished by 1) geo-referencing historic maps in an attempt to correlate historic maps with present-day landmarks and landscape features and 2) conducting an archaeological survey of the likely town site to identify extant surface remains that might assist in confirming the original street grid and locations of buildings. The viewpoints of historic photographs were also reconstructed using prominent landscape features as reference points to confirm the location of the early town within the present landscape.

SWCA and Alta Historical Society representative Brian Jones convened at SWCA's Salt Lake City office for an initial meeting to discuss the project and review all research materials collected by the Alta Historical Society and Mr. Jones, in particular, regarding the mid-1870s town. Mr. Jones and SWCA Project Manager Anne Oliver then met with UWCNF archaeologists Tom Flanigan and Rachelle Handley to discuss the project, Forest Service records pertaining to the site, permitting and access requirements, and potential agency involvement in future phases of the project. SWCA then conducted limited additional research in local and on-line repositories

[1] Due to copyright issues, most historic photographs located during project research could not be reproduced in this report. However, additional historic photographs of the early Alta town site (or copies thereof) are available on the Alta Historical Society website at: http://www.centralpt.com/pageview.aspx?id=19463&edit=1 and in Shrontz 1989:4 and Keller 2001:Figure 16). See also Photograph No. P0378 n 1_01_04 in the J. Willard Marriott Library, Special Collections, Multimedia Archives.

[2] The Bancroft map is available on the Alta Historical Society website at: http://www.centralpt.com/pageview.aspx?id=19463&edit=1. Copies of the other three maps are contained in Appendix A.

to further pinpoint the location and appearance of the early town site, with a particular emphasis on locating additional historic maps and photographs.

MAPPING

Using current aerial imagery as a baseline, SWCA geo-referenced four historic maps (the Froiseth, Bancroft, Kolter, and GLO maps) to the extent possible, using commonly occurring features such as the junction of the North Branch and the South Fork of Little Cottonwood Creek, Woolley's sawmill, township/range/section lines, and more general landscape features as reference points. Only the Froiseth map was scaled, but the other three maps were useful in corroborating the locations of common features and the spatial relationships between them.

The scaled Froiseth map was the most accurate and provided the greatest level of detail. When current aerial imagery is superimposed on this map, the location of the main, unpaved, east–west road adjacent to the creek aligns with Water Street, a secondary east–west trail aligns with Walker Street, and an unpaved north–south road leading from the creek to the Snow Pine Lodge aligns with 300 West (Figures 4–7).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Using the geo-referenced map, SWCA determined the approximate location of Walker Street between 300 West and 100 West as described by Rood in 1873, comprising Froiseth's Blocks 35, 36, 53, and 54. This four-block area was selected for the archaeological survey, and Rood's building descriptions provided a general map of where to expect larger deposits of archaeological artifacts and what types of artifacts would be found (see Figure 3). The project area corresponded with previous field observations made by Mr. Jones regarding the locations of possible building foundations and artifact deposits (Figures 8–11).

Stephanie Lechert of SWCA conducted the pedestrian inventory for the town site documentation on July 7, 2014. This was accomplished using 15-meter (m) (50-foot) parallel transects across the project area. The ground was visually inspected on both sides of the surveyor to an approximate distance of 7.5 m (25 feet) on each side. In areas of dense vegetation, the transects were abandoned due to safety concerns. These areas were examined as much as possible from the edge of the vegetation to see if any features or large artifacts were visible. Aerial maps and global positioning system (GPS) coordinates and geo-referenced layers were used to navigate the project area.

Ms. Lechert used a Trimble GeoExplorer XT GPS unit with an SWCA-created data dictionary to collect inventory area data and cultural resources data. All artifact concentrations, other features, and diagnostic artifacts were documented using the GPS unit. Trimble's Pathfinder Office software was used to process the GPS data in the office. The GPS data were differentially corrected and exported in ESRI's ArcView shapefile format using the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Zone 12N, North American Datum (NAD) 83 datum coordinate system. A personal geodatabase was generated in ESRI's ArcGIS 10.1. The shapefiles were loaded into the personal geodatabase and cleaned, and the attribute table of the cultural resources database was then populated with the appropriate values. All maps were generated using ArcGIS 10.1.

Vegetation coverage across the site varied from 0 to 100 percent coverage, with an average of approximately 60 percent coverage. Several areas of disturbance were observed within the project area due to erosional processes, culvert upgrade activities, installation of a sewer line, and installation of Alta Ski Area's "Little Griz" conveyor-type ski lift.

During the survey, one feature (F-01) and seven concentrations of artifacts (C-01 through C-07) were observed (Figures 12 and 13, and Appendix B):

- *Feature 1 (F-01)* is a stone-lined foundation dug into the slope. It measures 25 feet northeast–southwest by 11 feet 6 inches east–west and is 2 feet 6 inches deep. F-01 is oriented northeast–southwest and is

located on the north side of historic Main Street. Some of the stones lining the south end of F-01 have been moved, possibly by colluvial erosion activities. One shard of curved aqua glass was observed near the edge of the foundation. A modern wood post and a large piece of metal of unknown origin were observed southwest of the feature. There may be deposits within F-01 at greater depth, but the surrounding area is sloped and has colluvial deposition.

The artifact concentrations are located primarily between Walker and Water Streets, but one concentration is located on the north side of Walker Street (see Figures 12 and 13). The two largest concentration areas (C-04 and C-06) correspond with the locations of the Auerbach clothing store (soon replaced by a restaurant) and the large Clasbey and Read general store, although post-1878 soil disturbances and depositional processes make the connection between the concentrations and the businesses uncertain at best.

- *Concentration 1 (C-01)* measures 27 × 16 feet. C-01 consists of two transfer print-decorated whiteware sherds (H-08) that can be refit (Figures B-7 and B-8); 10 sherds of undecorated whiteware; five pieces of flat rusted metal; five melted glass pieces in brown, clear, and olive green; and one metal buckle. The sherds are from a cosmetic or personal care jar lid. The design on the top of the lid consists of two black lines near the edge of the lid, words inside the black lines, and a vine-and-leaf pattern. The vine-and-leaf pattern continues onto the sides of the sherds. This concentration may be the result of disturbance from the installation of a sewer line, observed approximately 5 feet south.

- *Concentration 2 (C-02)* measures 30 × 10 feet. C-02 consists of five clear shards of window glass, one shard of amethyst glass, four undecorated whiteware sherds, one molded whiteware handle (H-11), one cream and tan sherd of stoneware, and two olive glass shards. The stoneware sherd is likely from an ale bottle. H-11 is the molded handle from a whiteware serving vessel (Figure B-11). The handle is approximately 2 inches long.

- *Concentration 3 (C-03)* measures 44 × 36 feet. C-03 consists of five pieces of rusted flat metal, five sherds of undecorated whiteware, 15 aqua glass shards, one partial base and body shard of aqua glass, 20 amber glass shards, 10 melted amber glass shards, one amber glass finish, 10 olive glass shards, 10 shards clear glass, one clear glass neck and partial shoulder, one fire-cracked shard of amethyst glass, one molded amethyst glass piece, and one cream and tan sherd of stoneware. The stoneware sherd is likely from an ale bottle. A small, dry creek bed runs through the concentration and has approximately 30 of the artifacts in it. This concentration has been affected by alluvial deposition and bioturbation.

- *Concentration 4 (C-04)* measures 96 × 77 feet. C-04 consists of one amethyst glass base (H-03), 20 sherds of undecorated whiteware, one whiteware sherd with a maker's mark (H-04), 10 clear glass shards (7 are curved, 3 are flat), 20 olive green glass shards (including one finish and neck), five amethyst glass shards, 10 amber glass shards, one sherd of stoneware (with evidence of being exposed to fire), and six 3 × 6–foot sheets of modern plywood. H-03 is an amethyst glass, paneled base of a drinking vessel. H-03 is approximately 2½ inches in diameter, and the base is approximately 1 inch thick (Figure B-2). The vessel is consistent with a heavy-duty glass that would have been used in a saloon or bar. H-04 is a whiteware sherd with a partial black transfer print maker's mark (Figure B-3). The mark has E / IN / …LAND and part of an illegible design above it. No manufacturer can be matched to the mark. This concentration appears to be located near where several saloons, bars, and shops once stood. While the plywood and evidence of erosion may indicate that subsurface deposits within parts of the concentration area have been disturbed, the rest of the area may contain intact subsurface deposits with potential to provide useful archaeological information.

- *Concentration 5 (C-05)* measures 46 × 37 feet. C-05 consists of approximately 20 sherds of whiteware ceramics and approximately 15 clear glass body shards. One maker's mark was observed in the concentration, on artifact H-12. H-12 is a sherd of whiteware ceramic with black transfer print maker's mark consisting of WA… IRONST… and feathers with a ribbon with ICH inside of it (Figure B-12). The

sherd is flat and was likely the center of a plate or bowl. The complete mark is WARRANTED IRONSTONE CHINA / TRADEMARK / JOHN EDWARDS / ENGLAND surrounding three feathers and crown in the center and two ribbons with ICH and OIEN inside. The John Edwards company produced ceramics with this mark between 1880 and 1900 (Godden 1991:231; Lage 2004:99).

- *Concentration 6 (C-06)* measures 96 × 60 feet. C-06 consists of approximately two brown glass shards, 15 clear glass shards, and three olive green glass shards; one porcelain cowboy boot (H-05); one porcelain four-hole button (H-06); and one metal utensil handle (H-07). H-05 is a clear glazed, porcelain cowboy boot (Figure B-4). The boot, broken near the top and at the toe, is likely from a figurine. There is no maker's mark on it, but it did have red, powdery residue inside. H-06 is a Prosser four-hole dish-type button measuring 11/16 inch in diameter (Figure B-5). The center recessed area is approximately 3/8 inch in diameter. The porcelain button is white with a glazed finish but no other decoration. Prosser buttons date after 1840 (Sprague 2002:111). H-07 is the handle of a piece of metal flatware (Figure B-6). It is unknown what implement it came from.

- *Concentration 7 (C-07)* measures 27 × 16 feet. C-07 consists of two brown glass shards, two amethyst glass shards, two clear glass shards, three olive green glass shards (one of which is a base and kick-up shard), five sherds of undecorated whiteware, two rusted metal crown caps, and one piece of rusted flat metal. The artifacts were observed in a heavily disturbed area near the ski conveyor. None of the artifacts in C-07 were buried, and the concentration is on a slight slope. No vegetation was observed in the concentration area. C-07 is likely a secondary deposit that resulted from the construction of the conveyor.

In addition to the artifacts in these concentrations, artifacts observed elsewhere on the site consist of four sherds of whiteware with a maker's mark (H-02), one aqua glass bottle shard with embossing (H-09), one whiteware sherd with a maker's mark (H-10), one aqua glass neck and oil finish (H-14), five olive green glass neck and finish shards, five olive green glass base and kick up shards, 20 olive green glass body shards, 21 clear glass bottle body shards, two clear flat window glass shards, 12 green glass bottle body shards, 30 amber glass body shards (likely from alcohol bottles), 10 amethyst glass body shards, two melted pieces olive green glass, one melted piece clear glass, 40 undecorated whiteware sherds from an unknown vessel, 10 undecorated whiteware rim sherds, 10 undecorated whiteware base sherds, five undecorated porcelain sherds, five gray stoneware sherds (burnt), and 32 pieces of rusted flat metal.

H-02 consists of four whiteware sherds, two of which have a partial black transfer print maker's mark and could be refitted (Figure B-1). The maker's mark has …NE CHINA above a crest with a crown flanked by a unicorn on the right and another animal to the left, which could not be seen due to a break in the sherd. The crest is divided into quarters with an outside band surrounding it with the words SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE. The crest contains three animals in the upper left, one animal in the upper right, and three animals in the lower right. The lower left could not be seen due to a break in the sherd. No manufacturer can be matched to this mark. However, based on this information, it seems very likely that the mark is the British royal coat of arms, which originally would have read HONI (or HON Y) SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE. This device was commonly used on British ceramics by royal warrant holders and sometimes by manufacturers who did not hold a warrant but wished to add prestige to their wares.

H-09 is an aqua glass shard from a bottle (Figure B-9). The shard has …CKPORT. embossed on it. The bottle was likely paneled. Based on the font and uppercase lettering, the bottle may have been manufactured by the Lockport Glass Company in Lockport, New York, which was operated by several owners from 1840 to 1942, although there is insufficient evidence to confirm this (Dunn 1971).

H-10 is a whiteware sherd with a partial black transfer print maker's mark (Figure B-10). The mark reads IRONS… / J & G. M… below an unknown design. The maker's mark is likely that of J. & G. Meakin and dates between 1870 and 1890 (Lage 2004:214).

H-14 is an aqua glass neck and oil finish (Figure B-13). The finish (the raised section forming the mouth of the bottle) appears to be hand-finished as no seams are visible and the overall finish is uneven.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the geo-referenced map and the results of the archaeology survey, it can be confirmed that the mid-1870s Alta town site was located downslope from the current location of the Snow Pine Lodge, extending east toward the Albion Day Lodge and bounded on the south and north by Little Cottonwood Creek and State Route 210. Archaeological features and artifact concentrations indicate that the Walker Street business district described by Rood likely corresponds with the location identified on the geo-referenced map. The historic, ca. 1873 view of Walker Street (see Figure 2) could be recreated by standing on the geo-referenced location of Walker Street at about 150 West, further confirming the early town site location (Figures 14 and 15). (The conveyor ski lift prevented the recorder from taking the photograph from farther east at about 100 West, as was the case in the historic photograph.)

The town site is located along a popular running and hiking trail in the Alta Ski Area and is vulnerable to vandalism and looting of artifacts. It is also likely that due to the slope angle (ranging from approximately 10 degrees to 20–25 degrees near the paved road) and the existence of active colluvial and alluvial depositional processes, a significant number of artifacts may have moved south from the upper streets to the blocks between Walker and Water Streets. Despite these issues, it is still possible that, given the cluster of saloons, bars, and stores near the intersection of 200 West and Walker Streets, artifact concentration C-04 may represent an area with intact subsurface deposits that merits further archaeological investigation, as controlled excavations in this area could produce important new information about the town's history. Concentrations C-04, C-05, and C-06 may also represent areas with subsurface deposits that could produce important information. In addition, future investigations should consider the heavily vegetated areas because they may be obscuring additional foundations or artifact concentrations.

We appreciate the opportunity to work on this interesting project and would like to extend a special thanks to Alta Historical Society representative Brian Jones for his knowledge, assistance, and enthusiasm. Please contact me with any questions regarding this letter report or the survey. I can be reached via email at aoliver@swca.com or by telephone at (801) 322-4307.

At the request of the U.S. Forest Service, the information in this report should be treated as privileged and confidential. Prior to publicly disseminating any of the project results, please consult with Tom Flanigan, Heritage Program Manager for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, by email at tflanigan@fs.fed.us or by telephone at (801) 236-3448.

Best regards,

Anne Oliver, M.S., Project Manager
Historic Preservation Principal Investigator

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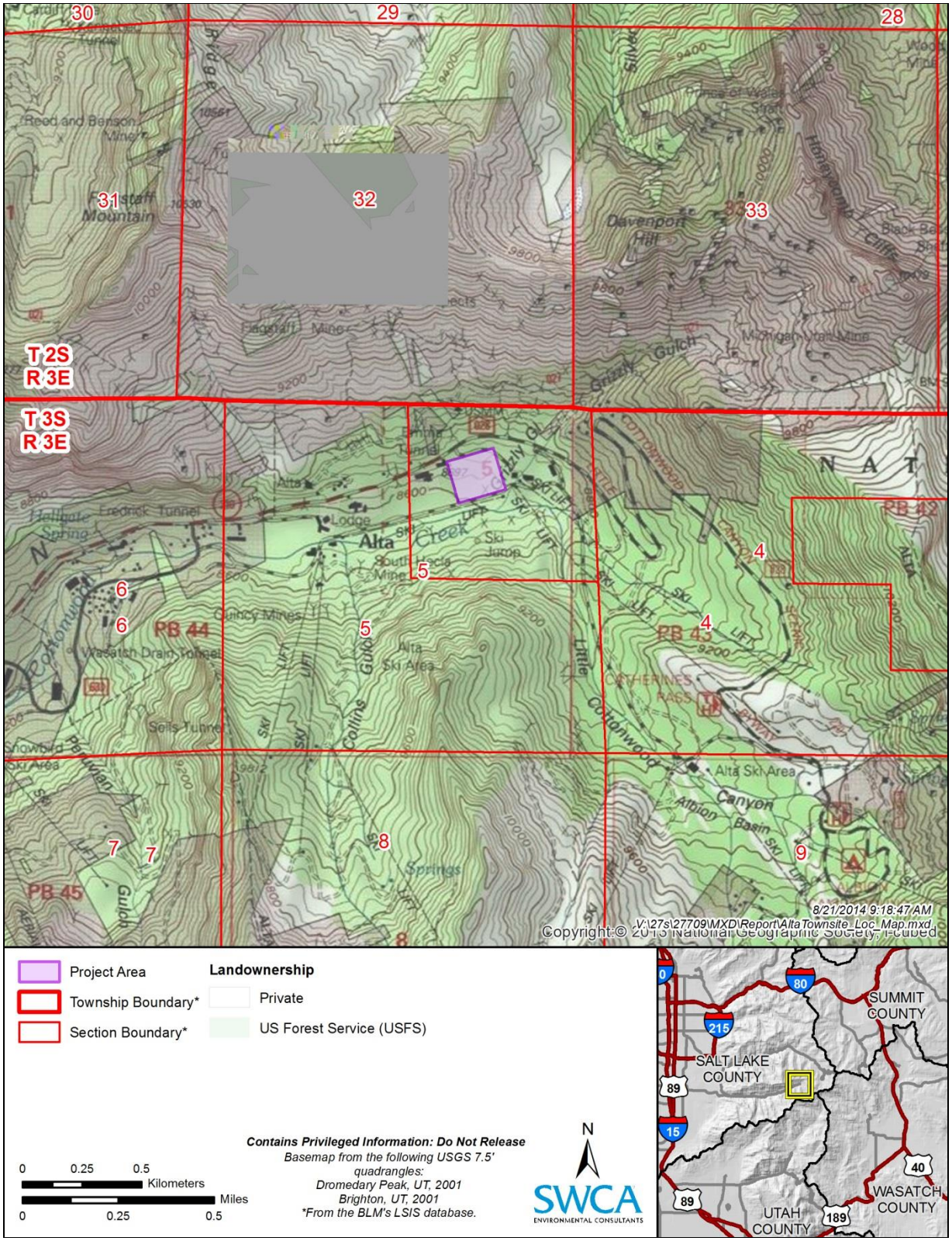

Figure 1. Location map for Alta Historic Town Site Documentation project, 2014.

Figure 2. Historic photograph of Alta's Walker Street business district between about 100 and 300 West ca. 1873, view facing west. (Courtesy Utah State Historical Society.)

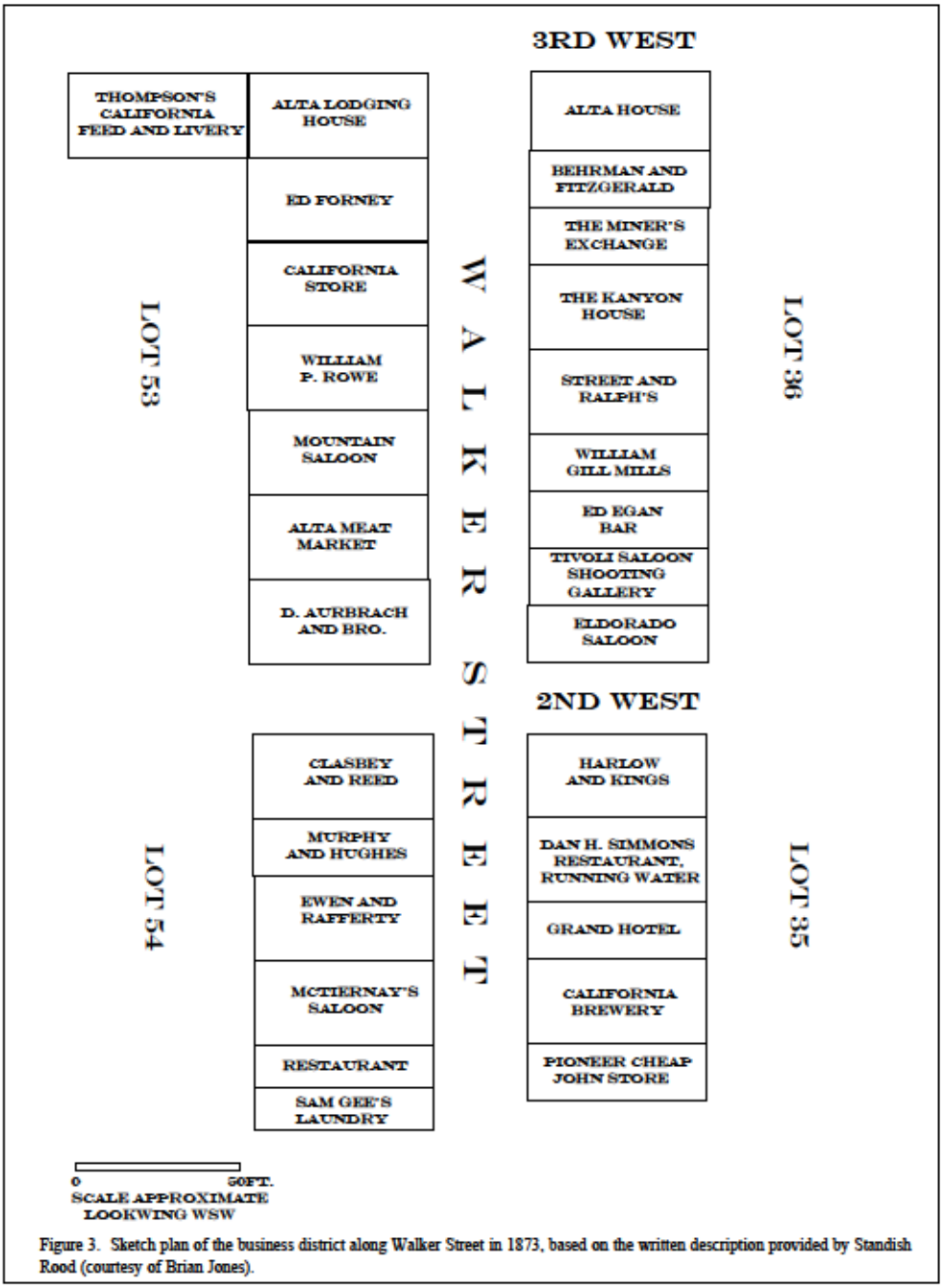

Figure 3. Sketch plan of the business district along Walker Street in 1873, based on the written description provided by Standish Rood (courtesy of Brian Jones).

Figure 3. Sketch plan of the business district along Walker Street in 1873, based on the written description provided by Standish Rood (courtesy of Brian Jones).

Figure 4. Aerial view of the Alta Historic Town Site Documentation project area, 2014.

Figure 5. Aerial view of the project area with the geo-referenced 1873 Froiseth map superimposed.

Figure 6. Detail of aerial view of the project area, 2014.

Figure 7. Detail of aerial view of the project area with the geo-referenced 1873 Froiseth map superimposed.

Figure 8. General view of the ca. 1875 Alta town site showing the approximate location of the blocks along Walker Street between 300 and 200 West (view facing south, with the access road from the Snow Pine Lodge to the canyon bottom on the right). Walker Street runs across the grassy area in about the middle of the photo. The road in the distance is the approximate location of Water Street.

Figure 9. General view of the ca. 1875 Alta town site showing the approximate location of the blocks along Walker Street between 200 West and 100 West (view facing south-southeast, with the conveyor ski lift on the left). Walker Street runs across the grassy area in about the middle of the photo. The road in the distance is the approximate location of Water Street.

Figure 10. The ca. 1875 Alta town site showing the approximate location of the blocks along Walker Street between 300 and 100 West (view facing northwest, with Snow Pine and Rustler lodges).

Figure 11. General view of the ca. 1875 Alta town site (view facing north, with the Snow Pine Lodge in the background).

Figure 12. Aerial view of ca. 1875 Alta town site showing results of the archaeological survey.

Figure 13. Aerial view of ca. 1875 Alta town site with the geo-referenced Froiseth map superimposed, showing results of the archaeological survey.

Figure 14. Recreation of ca. 1873 view of Walker Street as shown in Figure 2. Photograph was taken from the approximate location of Walker Street and 150 West as located on the geo-referenced map created for this project (see Figure 6).

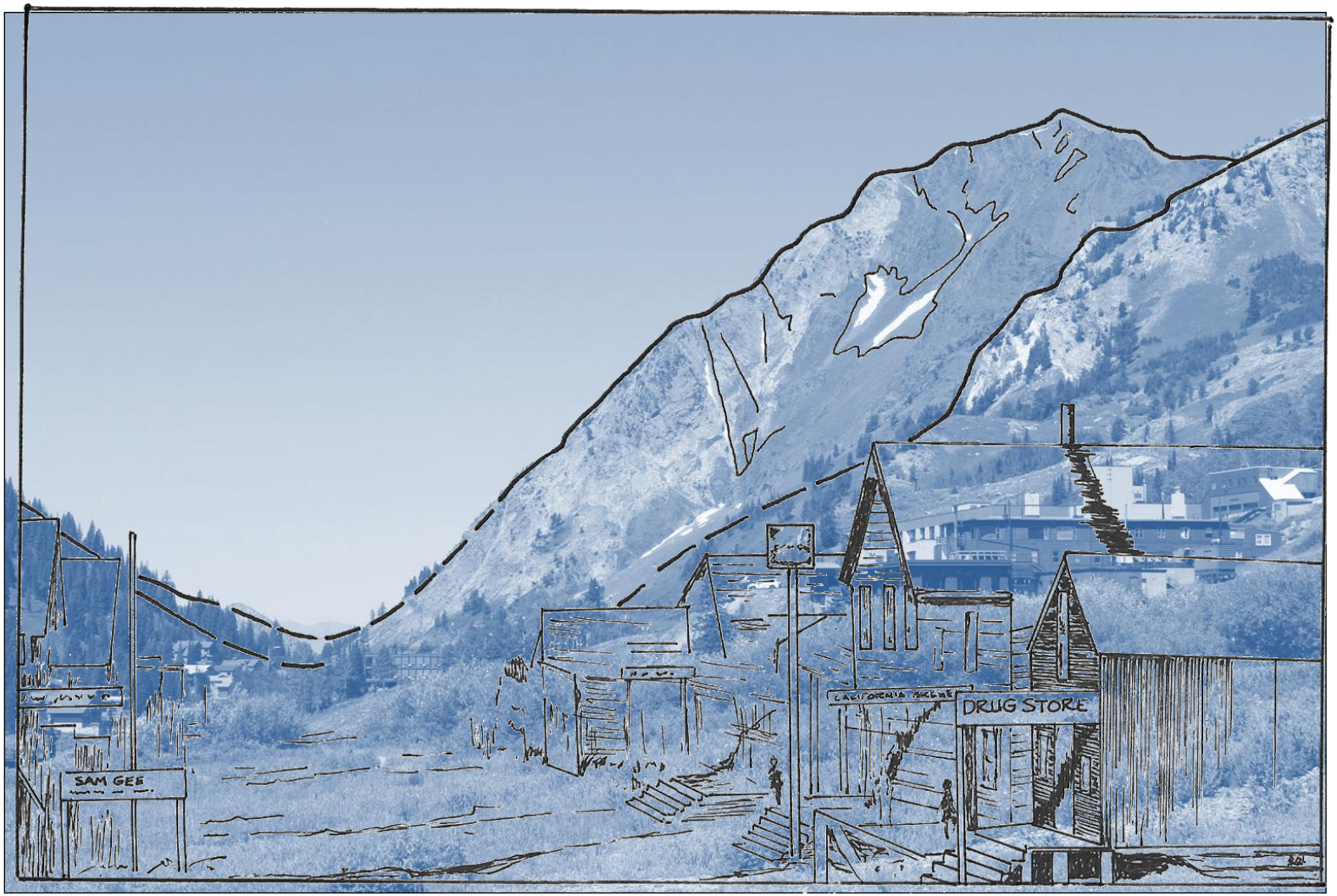

Figure 15. The historical view from Figure 2 as recreated in Figure 14, with an outline sketch of the buildings and ridgelines present ca. 1873 superimposed on the 2014 photograph (sketch courtesy of Brian Jones).

Appendix A

Historic Maps

Figure A-1. Lower left quarter of B.A.M. Froiseth's 1873 Little Cottonwood Canyon Mining District map showing the early Alta town site.

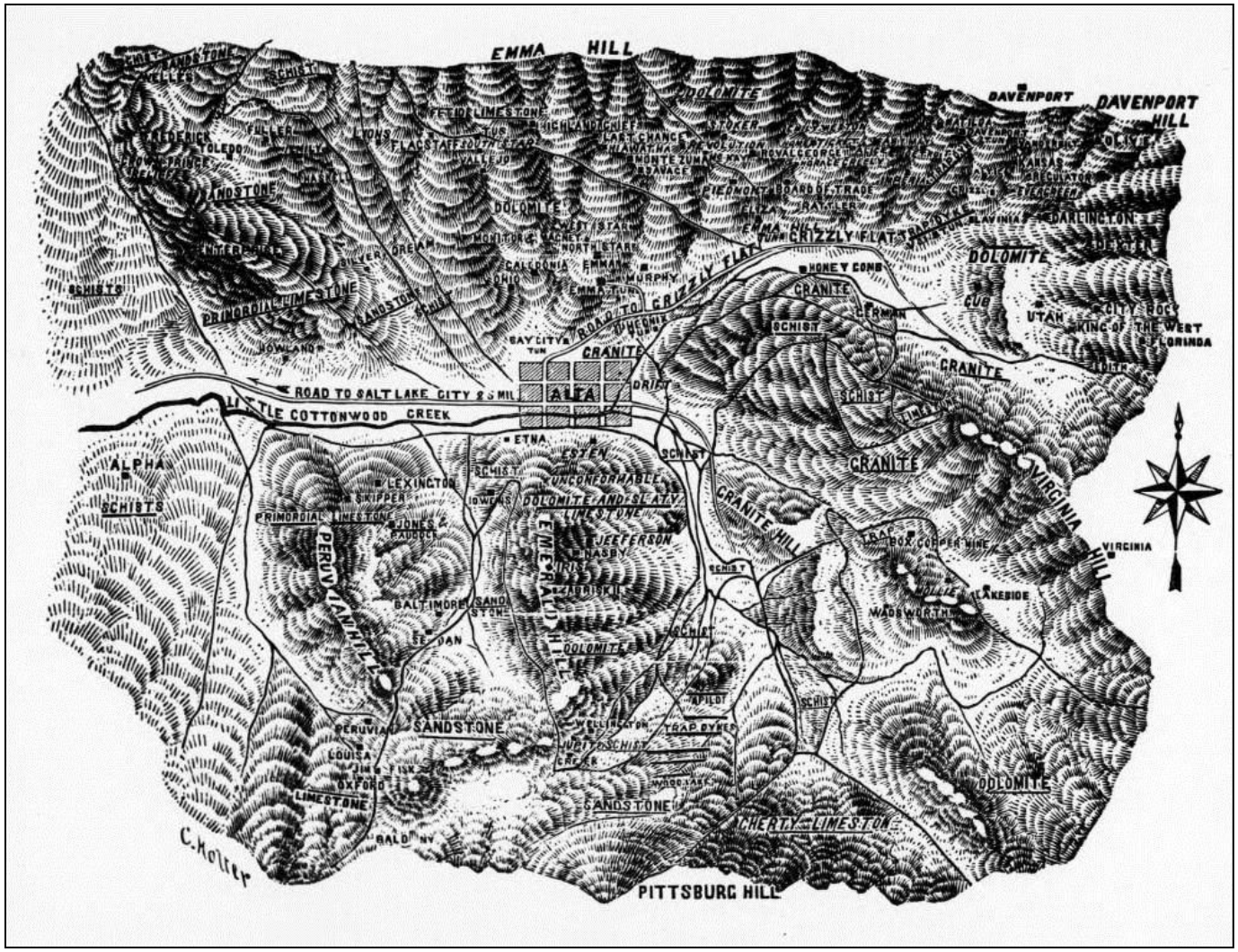

Figure A-2. C. Kelter's ca. 1873 map of the Little Cottonwood Canyon Mining District. Image courtesy Utah State Historical Society.

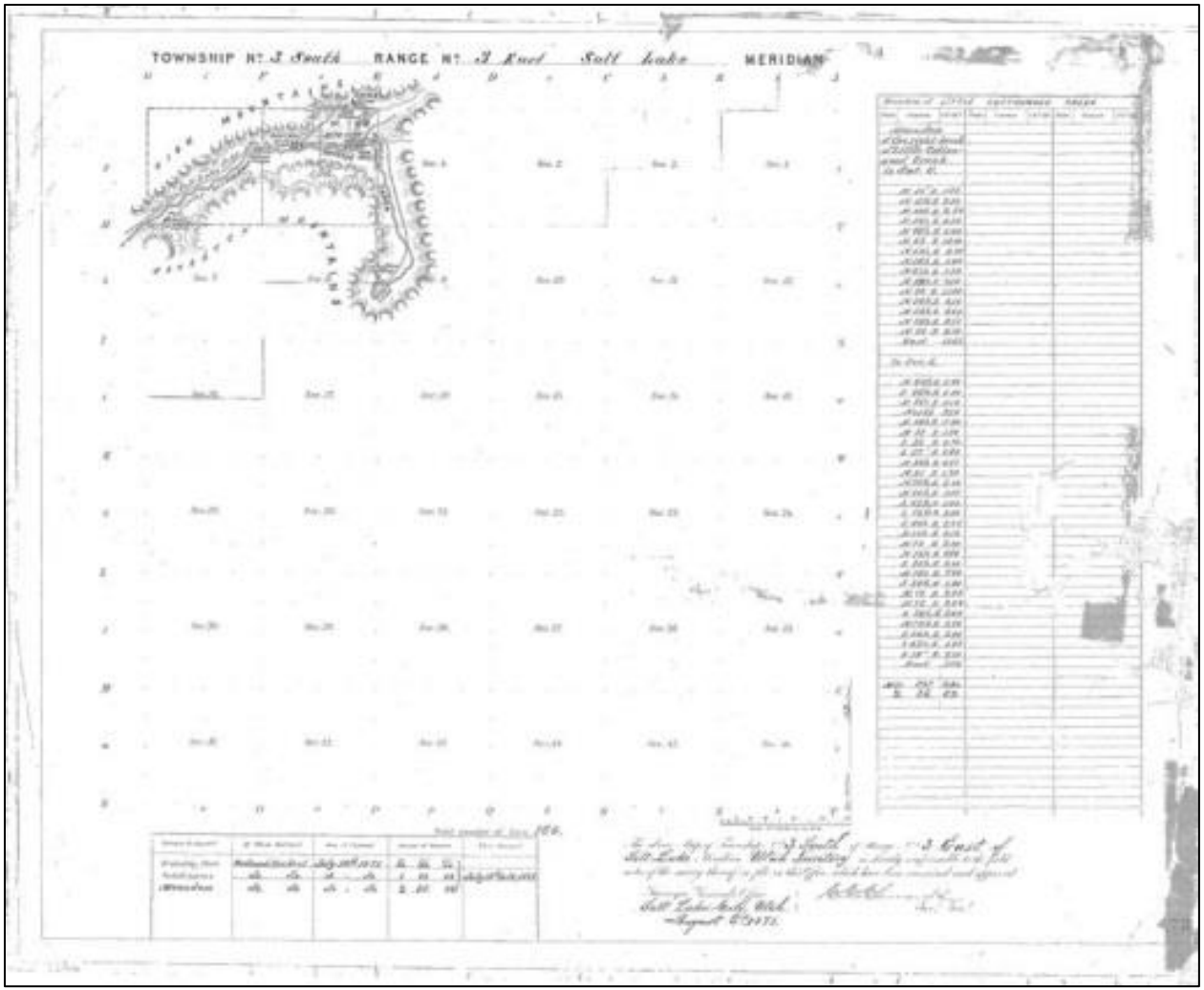

Figure A-3. GLO map of Township 3 South, Range 3 East, map created by Ferdinand Dickert. Available online at: http://www.ut.blm.gov/LandRecords/viewimage.cfm?/LandRecords/Survey_Plats/Slm_Archive/Se//ut260030s0030e0-c0473.tif

Appendix B

Artifact Photographs

Figure B-1. H-02, four whiteware sherds with transfer-printed maker's mark.

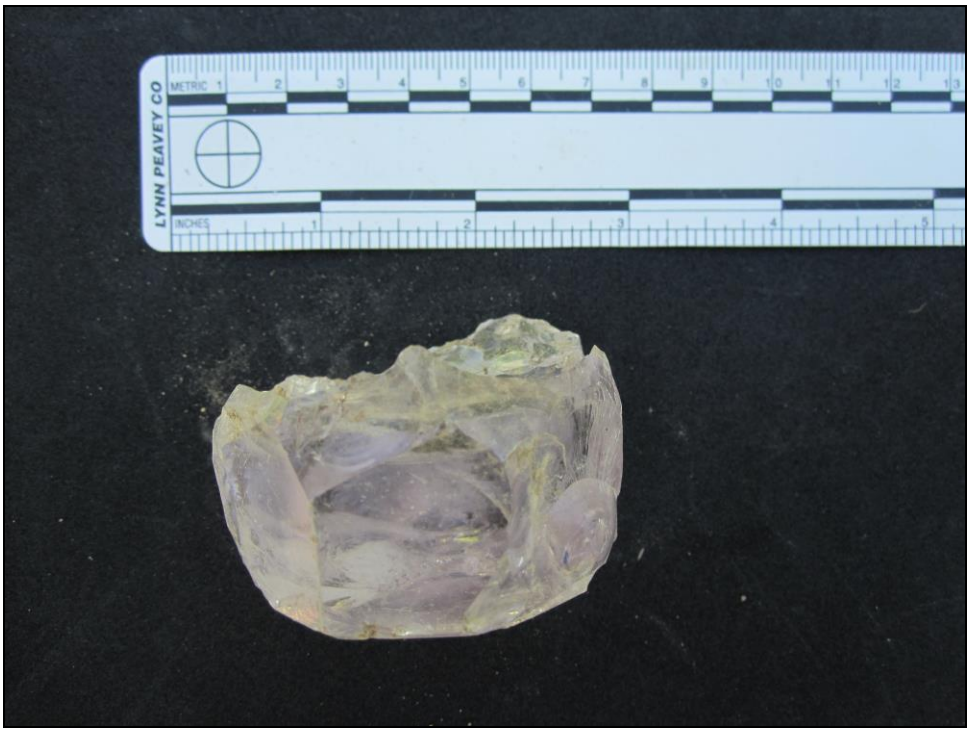

Figure B-2. H-03, amethyst drinking glass base.

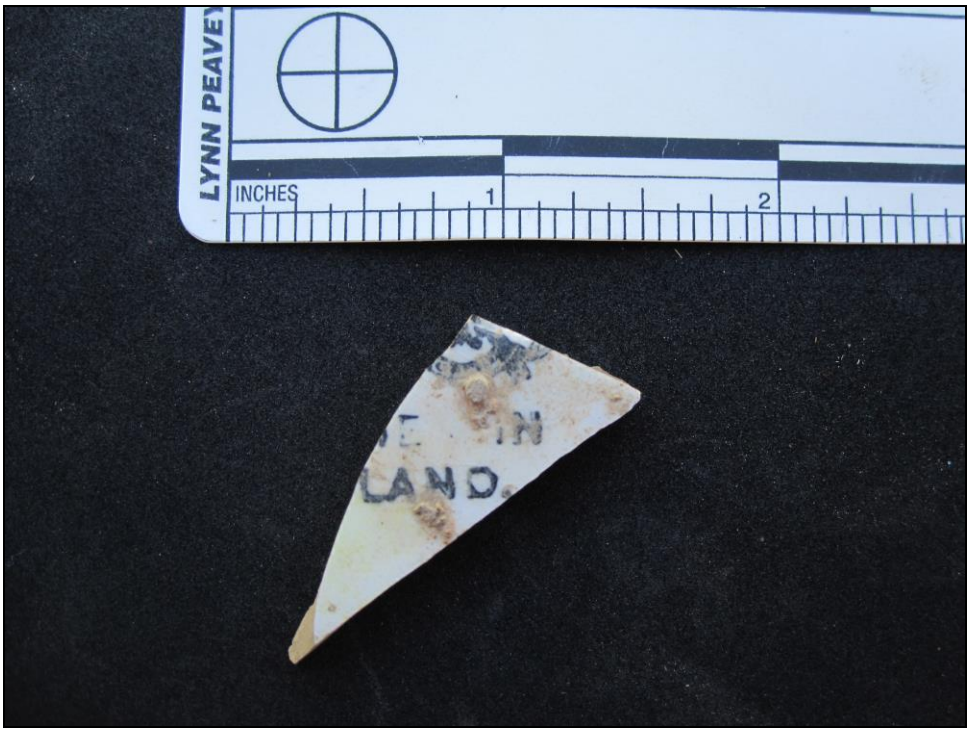

Figure B-3. H-04, whiteware sherd with E / IN / LAND transfer-printed on the base.

Figure B-4. H-05, porcelain cowboy boot.

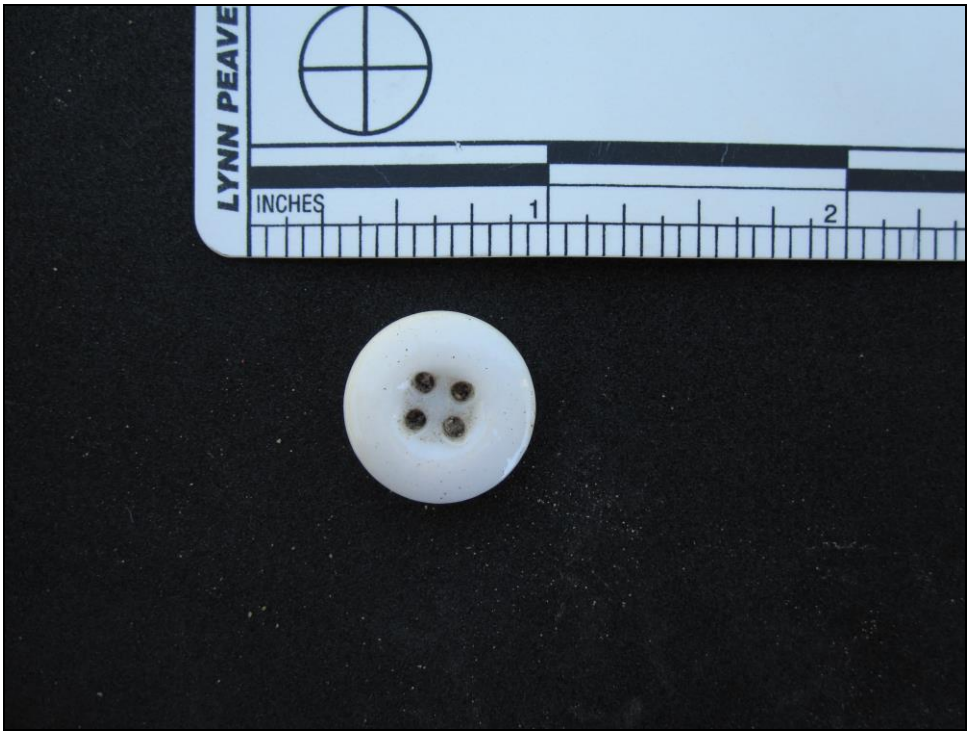

Figure B-5. H-06, Prosser four-hole dish-type button.

Figure B-6. H-07, metal eating utensil handle.

Figure B-7. H-08, two sherds of a transfer-printed whiteware lid, side view.

Figure B-8. H-08, two sherds of a transfer-printed whiteware lid, top view.

Figure B-9. H-09, aqua glass bottle shard with CKPORT embossed on it.

Figure B-10. H-10, whiteware sherd with IRONS / J & G M…/ transfer-printed on the base.

Figure B-11. H-11, molded whiteware handle, likely from a serving dish.

Figure B-12. H-12, whiteware sherd with maker's mark.

Figure B-13. H-14, handmade, aqua glass bottle finish and neck.