

LAS January 2017 Headlines:

Hell Gap archaeology site wins national recognition

By Kelsey Dayton, www.WyoFile.com, January 20, 2017

Thousands of years ago, North America’s earliest people hunted bison and made tools in an area 13 miles north of Guernsey now called Hell Gap.

Discovered accidentally by two students in the 1950s, Hell Gap is one of the most important paleoindian archeological sites in North America, said Marcel Kornfeld, a professor of anthropology at the University of Wyoming.

The stratified way cultural artifacts were preserved in the earth for thousands of years gives unprecedented information about paleoindian life across generations.

The importance of the site was recognized Jan. 11 when Interior Secretary Sally Jewell designated the site in Goshen County a national historic landmark, citing its contribution to knowledge about North America’s earliest people. It is the 27th national historic landmark in Wyoming and is one of 2,500 landmarks nationwide.

Judy Wolf, chief of planning for the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, said she instigated the nomination. She started her efforts in 2011.

“This is such an important site nationally,” she said. It is the only known paleoindian site in North America with artifacts from humans who lived 13,000 to 8,500 years before present.

Information gleaned from the site continues to teach archaeologists about the people who lived thousands of years ago in what is now Wyoming.

Hell Gap is located in the Hartville Uplift near Guernsey and Manville. Two archaeology students accidentally discovered the site in the late 1950s, when they found themselves stranded after a rainstorm. They walked up a creek and found projectile points that would later become known as Hell Gap Points.

Excavation on the site began in the 1960s after the students showed the points to a professor at the University of Wyoming, Kornfeld said. The site attracted national attention and archaeologists from Harvard University also came to work at the site. Excavators found several hundred projectile points, hundreds of scrapers and tens of thousands of flakes — the remains from making stone tools.

Archaeologists also found rare beads from the paleoindian era. A total of 140 beads from this period have been found in the world. Three were at Hell Gap, one bone, one stone and one okra.

Many items found during the 1960s were never fully reported. Other sites and projects drew the interest of researchers. Work at Hell Gap stalled. It wasn’t until the late 1980s that the site again piqued the interest of archaeologists, including Kornfeld.

Kornfeld started working at the site in the 1990s. He knew from the previous site work it was important, but there was still more to learn: What was life like? Did the people live in structures? Where did they get raw materials for tools? How did they process their food?

If there was any place that Kornfeld’s questions could be answered, it was at Hell Gap. Hell Gap offers more than a mile of artifacts from early cultures, preserved in a stratified manner, with evidence of one era on top of another. This type of preservation isn’t often found. Usually archaeological sites represent short periods, like a bison-kill area, where humans stayed briefly for an event like the butchering of an animal.



Ancient humans removed marrow from this butchered bison jaw. The jaw was found at Hell Gap in 2016. Hell Gap is famous for preserving artifacts from paleoindians that lived 13,000 to 8,500 years ago. (University of Wyoming)



Loveland Archaeological Society, Inc.

A Colorado Non-Profit Corporation

“What you had at Hell Gap is a place that people came back to again and again and again, for 4 or 5,000 years,” Kornfeld said. “It’s very different kind of information you are gaining about what past people were doing back then.”

The Hell Gap valley was occupied consistently through those thousands of years and archeologists have uncovered artifacts from nine different paleoindian cultures.

Archeologists found bone needles used for sewing clothes and post holes from structures that once stood in the area.

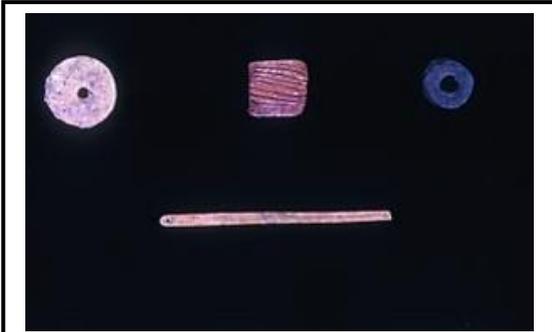
All of these items give clues about life 13,000 years ago to about 8,500 years ago, Kornfeld said.

The site is on property owned by the Wyoming Archaeological Foundation and is used for education. The national historic landmark designation could help in obtaining grants for work at the site, Kornfeld said.

But for Kornfeld, who helped write the landmark nomination, it’s mostly about the recognition of the importance of the site.

Each summer University of Wyoming students work at Hell Gap, trying to glean more information about the paleoindians. They know ancient people occupied the site throughout the year. But there is still more to learn about daily life thousands of years ago.

“Anyone can say ‘Look, there are some flakes there,’” Kornfeld said. “It takes a lot more to know what those flakes were actually doing there.”



Archaeologists discovered three paleoindian beads at Hell Gap in Goshen County in the 1960s. Hell Gap recently became a national historic landmark. (University of Wyoming)

In Remembrance: Jean Follis (November 13, 1943 - January 14, 2017)

Jean Marie Follis, 73, of Ogallala, passed away Jan. 14, 2017 at the University of CO at Aurora. She was born Nov. 13, 1943, to Eugene and Marie (Miller) Scollin at North Platte. She graduated from Paxton High School with the class of “62”. Jean was united in marriage to LeRoy J. Follis on August 19, 1968 in Ogallala, NE. She worked at Gerald Gentleman Station at Sutherland and American Shizuki in Ogallala. Jean was passionate about arrowhead hunting and fishing. She is survived by her son, Ken Witt of Wauneta; her daughter, Shelly Witt of Ogallala; her brother, Jim (Diane) Scollin; four grandchildren, Kaelyn (Cody) Armstrong, Cody Bown, Lance (Kristina) Witt and Jay (Shanae) Witt; seven great grandchildren, Keely Armstrong, Jace Witt, Elijah Armstrong, Isaiah Witt, Ane Waldron, Madi Witt and Evan Witt; and best friend Becky Anderson and many special friends in the archeology community. Cremation was chosen. Online condolences may be shared at www.carpentermemorial.com. Those wishing to sign her memorial book may do so from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Wednesday through Friday at Carpenter Memorial Chapel. Memorial services will be 1:00 p.m. Saturday, January 21, 2017 at Carpenter Memorial Chapel



Online condolences may be shared at www.carpentermemorial.com. Those wishing to sign her memorial book may do so from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Wednesday through Friday at Carpenter Memorial Chapel. Memorial services will be 1:00 p.m. Saturday, January 21, 2017 at Carpenter Memorial Chapel

- Sponsor of the Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair -

www.stoneagefair.com



LAS Find of the Month, January 2017:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

** With the weather cancellation there was no Find of the Month for January 2017. **

LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

Really!! We need speakers for our 2017 meetings! If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary, just a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!

- February 7, 2017 **NOTE:** February 2017 meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting of the Loveland Archaeological Society will be March 7, 2017. (See page 1, "Minutes from January 3rd, 2017 Meeting" for details.)
- March 7, 2017 March meeting. Program: DVD, "History of the Stone Age Fair." Rich Savino taped Mr. Allen Crawford giving a history of the Stone Age Fair going back to the first Fair in Cornish. Join us in reliving this poignant interview.
- March 31 through
April 2, 2017 Fort Collins Rockhounds Club annual Gem and Mineral Show at the Ranch (McKee 4-H, Youth and Community Bldg) in Loveland, Colorado. See the website for more information: www.fortcollinsrockhounds.org.
- April 1, 2017 2017 Spring Into Archaeology Fair. We will again be joining with the Fort Collins Rockhounds Club and having our 2017 Spring Into Archaeology Fair at the McKee 4-H, Youth and Community Building at the Ranch in Loveland on April 1, 2017. If you plan to exhibit please call Andy Coca at (303) 286-7711 for table space. A map with directions to the McKee Building will be included with the February and March 2017 newsletters. Parking is free. See you there!