

Archaeology of Native North American Sites

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What is Archaeology anyway?



- Fossils-Studied by Paleanthropologists.
 - Preserved remains of creatures from the past.
 - Fossil localities are where fossils are found.
- Archaeological sites-Studied by Archaeologists.
 - Places of past **human** activity.
 - large settlements with ceremonial centers.
 - small hunting camps.
- People who just collect antiquities are looters!!!

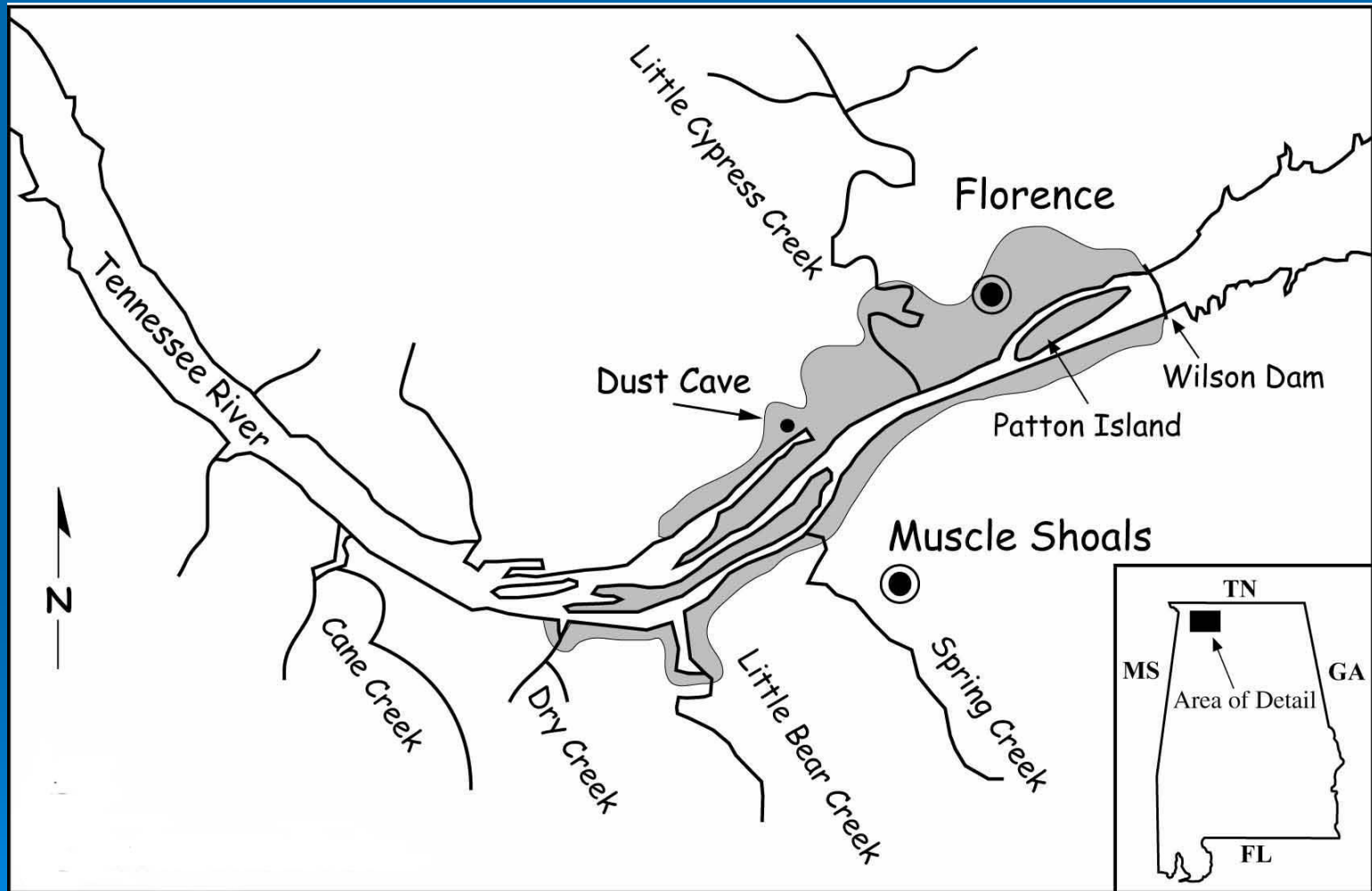
History of Archaeology at Dust Cave

- **Researchers from University of Alabama, Division of Archaeology began excavations in 1989.**
- **Discovered in 1984 by Richard Cobb, a Florence, Alabama native and amateur archaeologist.**
- **Since 1989, Dust Cave has been excavated annually as a field school.**
- **Dust Cave contains over six meters of sediments dating from 10,500-5,200 radiocarbon years .**
- **Deposits were exceptionally well-preserved, with abundant faunal, botanical and lithic remains.**

Locating the Cave

- Systematic survey
 - Excavating small units in cave to look for artifacts/remains of past human activity.
- Cave selected for investigation because Native Americans commonly used caves for habitation.
 - i.e. ready made shelter

Location of Dust Cave



View of Coffee Slough



Boat Access



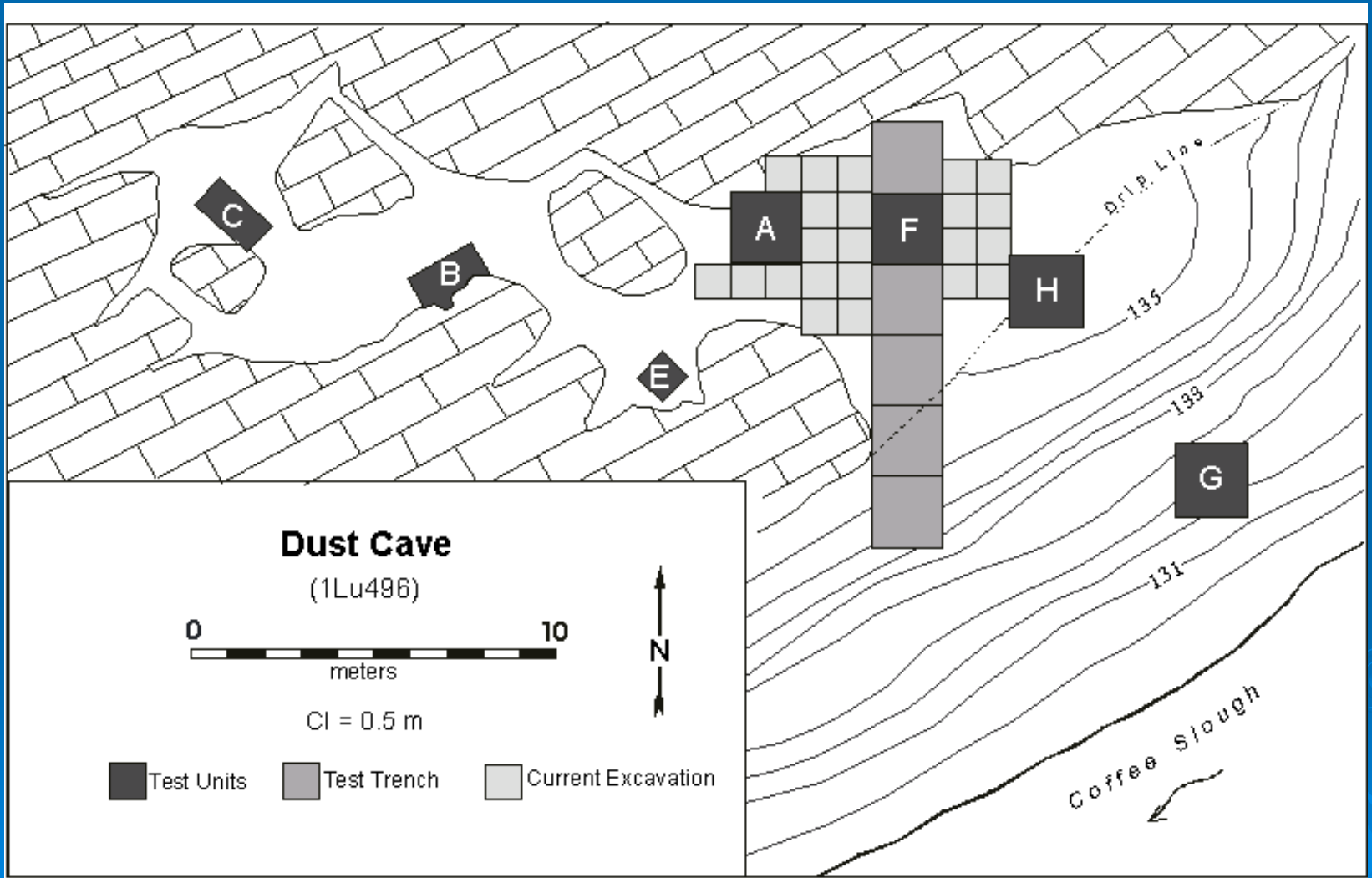
Laboratory and Kitchen Facility



Excavating the Cave

- Once artifacts were recovered, researchers returned and excavated larger “units” in the cave.
- The initial units were 2 meters by 2 meters square.
- Then a “trench” 2 meters by 12 meters was excavated to the bottom of the cave (bedrock).

Excavation Units



Dating the Cave

➤ Radiocarbon Dating (C-14)

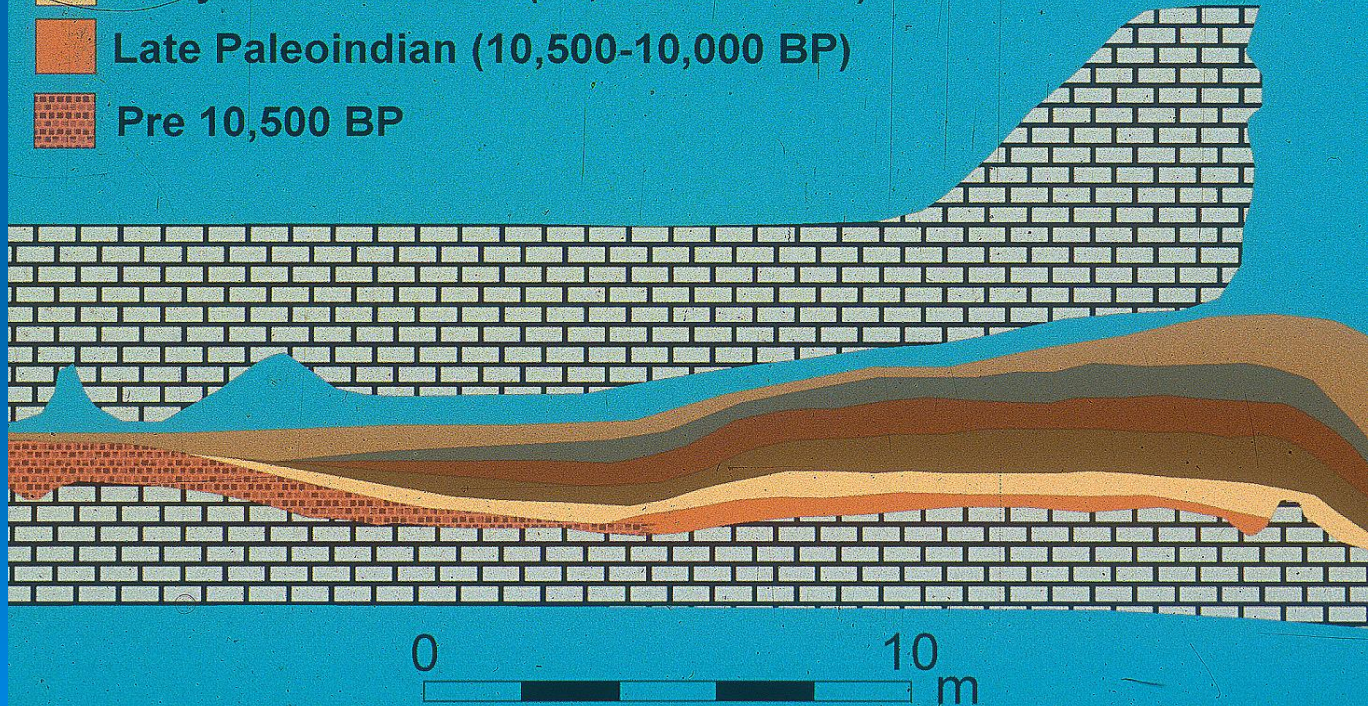
- Living things are in equilibrium with the atmosphere, and the radioactive carbon dioxide is absorbed and used by plants. The radioactive carbon dioxide gets into the food chain and the carbon cycle.
- All living things contain a constant ratio of Carbon 14 to Carbon 12. (1 in a trillion).
- At death, Carbon 14 exchange ceases and any Carbon 14 in the tissues of the organism begins to decay to Nitrogen 14, and is not replenished by new C-14.
- The change in the Carbon 14 to Carbon 12 ratio is the basis for dating.
- Assumes that the rate of Carbon 14 production (and hence the amount of cosmic rays striking the Earth) has been constant (through the past 70,000 years).

Dating the Cave

- Radiocarbon years ago or Before Present (B.P.)
- Calculated as (Roughly):
 - 7,000 B.P. = 5,000 B.C.

Dust Cave (1Lu496) Cultural Components

- Non-Artifact Bearing Deposits
- Seven-Mile Island (6000-5200 BP)
- Eva / Morrow Mountain (7000-6000 BP)
- Kirk Stemmed (8500-7000 BP)
- Early Side-Notched (10,000-9000 BP)
- Late Paleoindian (10,500-10,000 BP)
- Pre 10,500 BP



Stratigraphic Sequence

View from Front
of Cave to the
back of the
Entrance Chamber



Students Excavating Entrance Trench



Student Excavating Unit (to the east of the entrance trench)



Context

- An artifact's context is its specific location where it was found and how it relates to other artifacts around it.
 - *i.e. A stone arrowhead is found with newspapers and plastic bottles, what would you conclude about the arrowhead's context?
- So a pot on its own may tell you how it was made or what it was made from, but if it is removed from its context archaeologists have no idea what it was associated with.

Finding Artifacts

- Screening through mesh about $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in size.
 - Dirt put into buckets with screen at bottom and then water from hoses washes away the dirt.
 - Artifacts picked out from rocks and other debris.
- Flotation
 - Used for finding smaller artifacts (plant remains).
 - Soil samples dumped into 55 gallon tanks of water and plant remains float to the top and are sifted out.

Water-screening



Flotation



Artifacts



Bone tools



Projectile Points



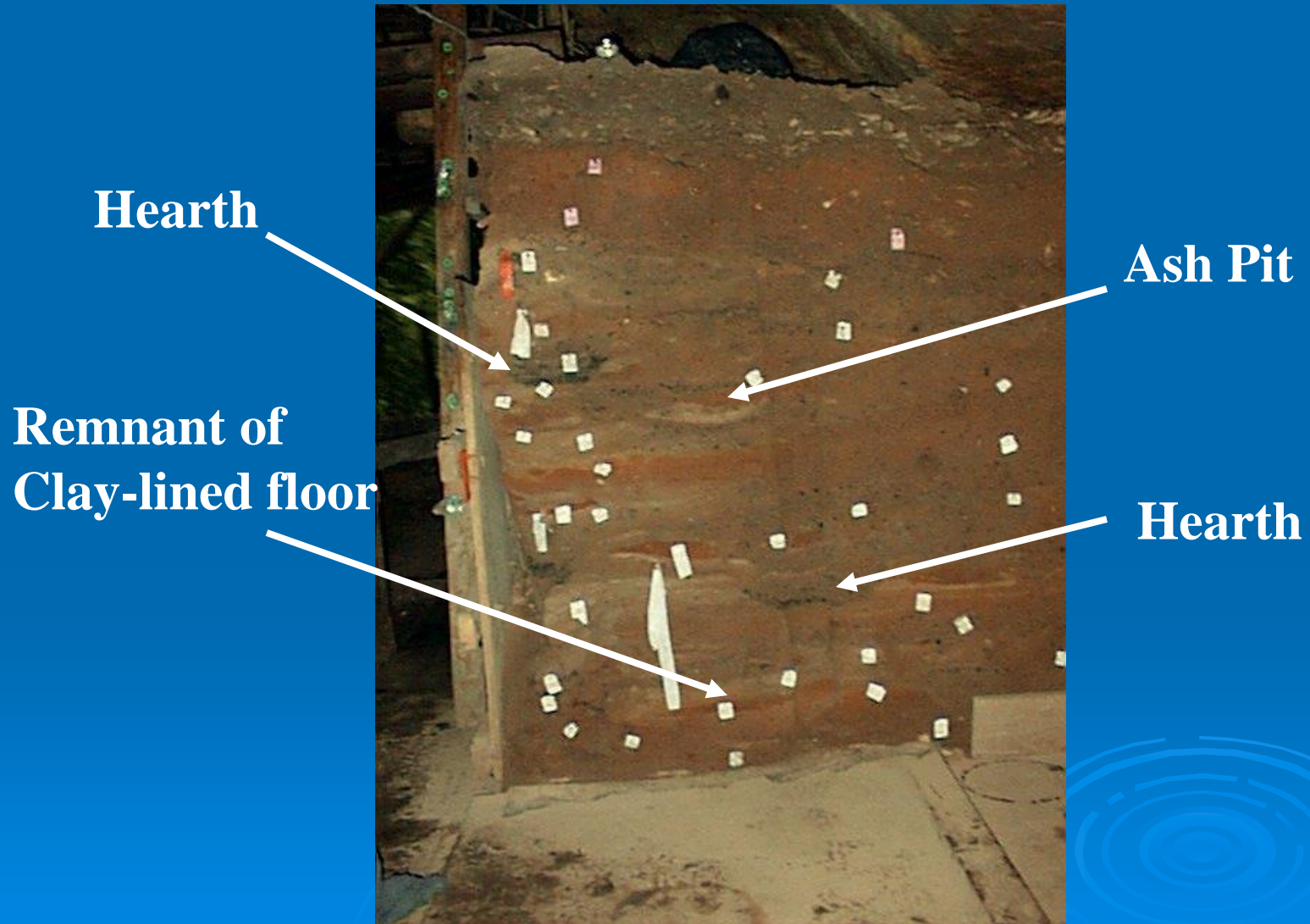
Animal bones

Features

- Non-moveable remains of human activity.
- Most common-hearths and fire pits.
- Also dog and human burials.



Close-up of Zones and Features



Burials

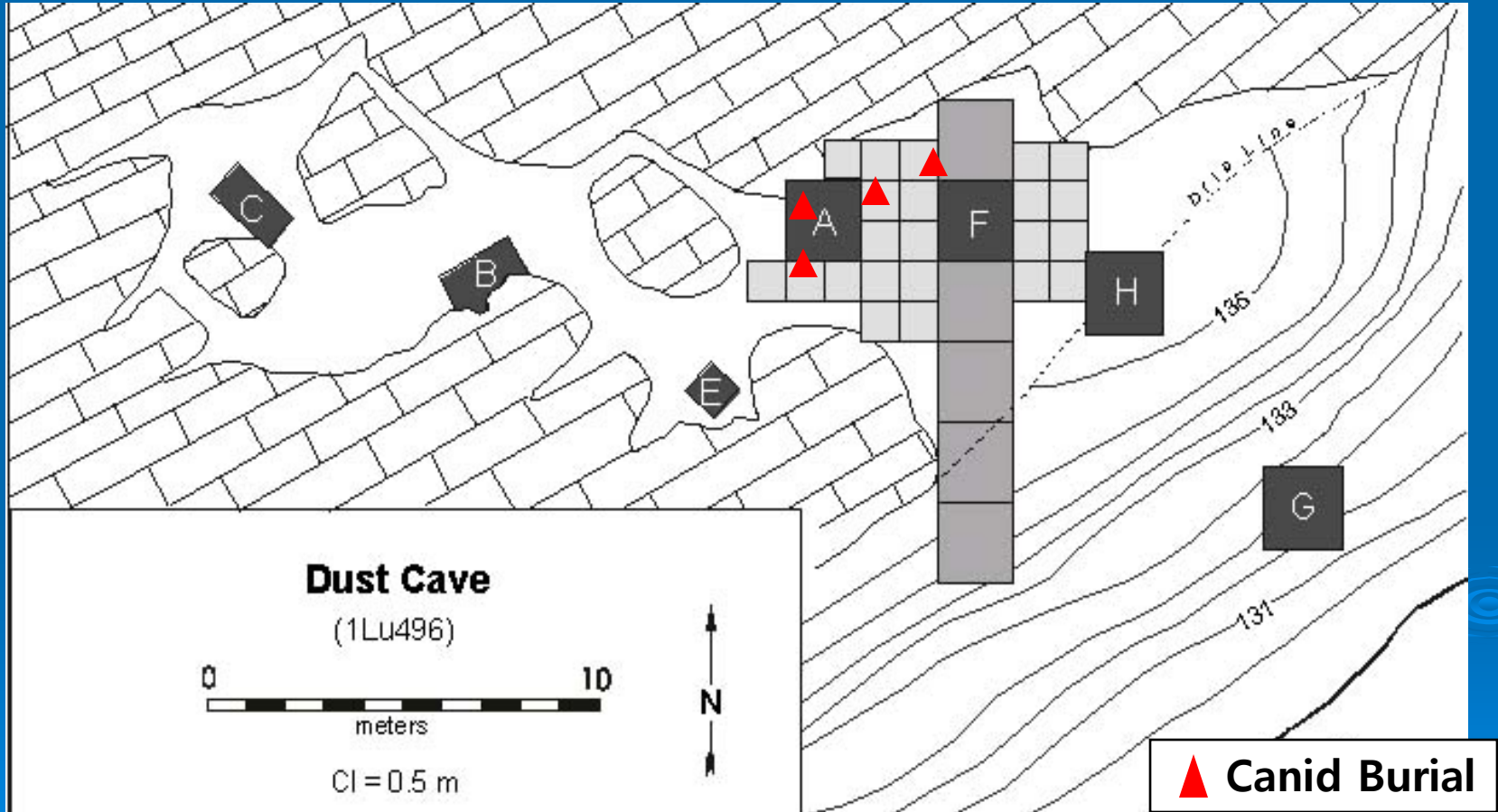
➤ Dogs

- 4 individual dog burials

➤ Humans

- 14 analyzed as of 1994

Location of Dog Burials



Feature 3, Test Unit A, 1989



Feature 202, N62W66



Feature 483, N64W65



Feature 492, N59W68



Possible Uses of Dogs?

- Hauler of household goods, animal kills
- Hunting companions
- Camp alarm systems, clean up
- Ritual

Hauler



Assiniboin camp, Karl Bodmer, 1843 (Schwartz 1997)

Hunter



An Assiniboin hunter, Peter Rindisbacher 1833 (Schwartz 1997)

Companion



A Micmac camp, Anonymous, c. 1820-1830 (Schwartz 1997)

Ritual



White Dog Dream, Peter Jemison, 1985 (Schwartz 1997)

Human Burials

- 14 analyzed to date-over 20 total.
- Five females and 2 males identified
 - Others were indeterminate
- Ages ranged from newborn to 55 years.
- Dates of burials ranged from 7,000 to 5,200 years ago.

Enter NAGPRA

- All archaeological sites protected under federal law.
- Burials protected under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 1990
 - Defines and directs the protection of Native American graves that could be impacted due to construction, and provides for reburial of previously excavated remains.

NAGPRA Definitions:

- cultural affiliation-relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced.
- associated funerary objects-objects placed with remains during death rites.
- sacred objects-objects important to religious practice.
- tribal patrimony-objects associated with Native American groups, not belonging to individual.
- Right or possession-possession assigned to closely related cultural group, unless group ties cannot be proven.

Ownership

- Lineal descendants of the Native American
- Owners of associated tribal land
- Aboriginal tribe of associated federal land
- Tribe of strongest demonstrated relationship

Problems

➤ Dust Cave burials

- Who do they belong to?
- Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw?
 - Government says Cherokee, but they are over 5,000 years old.

➤ Kennewick Man

- Skeleton from Washington State
- Dates to 9,300 years ago

Kennewick Court Case

- Argued since discovery in 1996.
- Courts ruled in “favor” of scientists to allow study.
- Native Americans unhappy about this.
- Who “owns” Kennewick man?



Not just human remains

- Associated burial objects
- New York State Museum
 - Over 3,000 objects associated with burials
 - Affiliated with Seneca, Mohawk and Mohican

Beads: *Busycon* spp. (Whelk) Columella

BA03



Shell Maskette: *Busycon* spp. (Whelk)

DF17



Unmodified Fauna

Unmodified Fauna:
Anas platyrhynchos
(Mallard) Humerus



Unmodified Fauna: *Haeliatus*
leucocephalus (Bald Eagle)
Talon

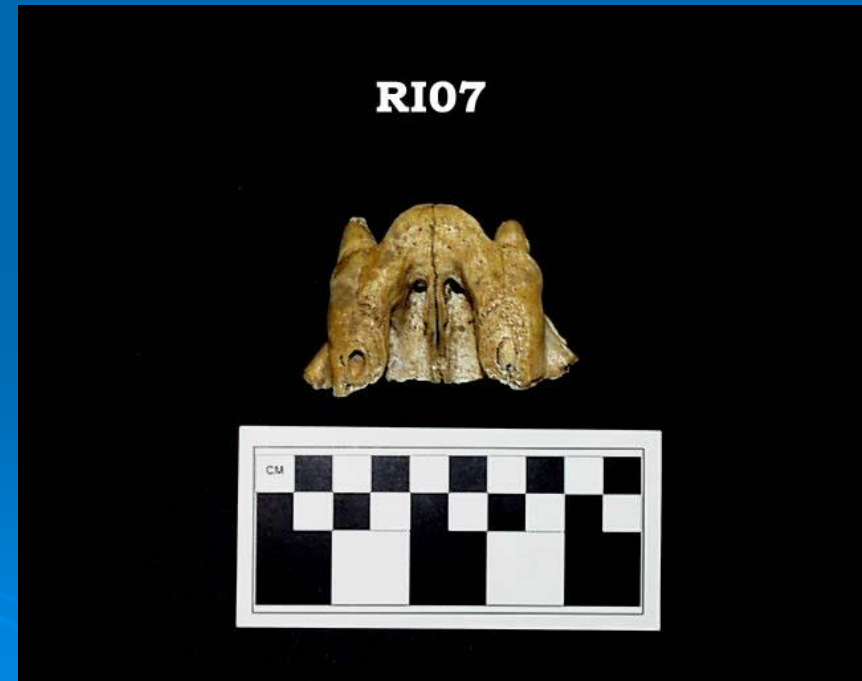


Modified Fauna

Modified Fauna: *Ursus americanus* (Black bear)
canines



Modified Fauna: *Felis concolor* (Mountain Lion)
Maxilla



Pendants

Pendant:
Pelecypoda (Mussel)
Shell



Pendant: *Busycon* spp.
(Whelk)



Worked Object (Spoon): Cervidae (Deer/Elk) Antler

BH31



Rattle: *Terrapene carolina* (Eastern Box Turtle) Shell

RI34



Combs-after Historic Contact

BH35



Anthropomorph & Bird (Hawk?)

DF13

