

# Big Lost River Construction Camps on the INL: Let Them Eat Bread



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## • Introduction

The Big Lost River Irrigation Project, which began in 1907, was responsible for creating over 140 miles of irrigation canals on what is now the INL. This large-scale undertaking diverted water from the Big Lost River to provide consistent water supply and control for hopeful homesteaders. Based on newspaper articles and US Census data, we hypothesize that the individuals who constructed these canals may have been Mediterranean immigrants (more specifically from Greece and Italy). Construction camps dot the landscape along these canal structures and are where these people lived while they worked on the canals. In addition to stone bread ovens, there are various other artifacts and features present at these camp sites that raise multiple research questions.

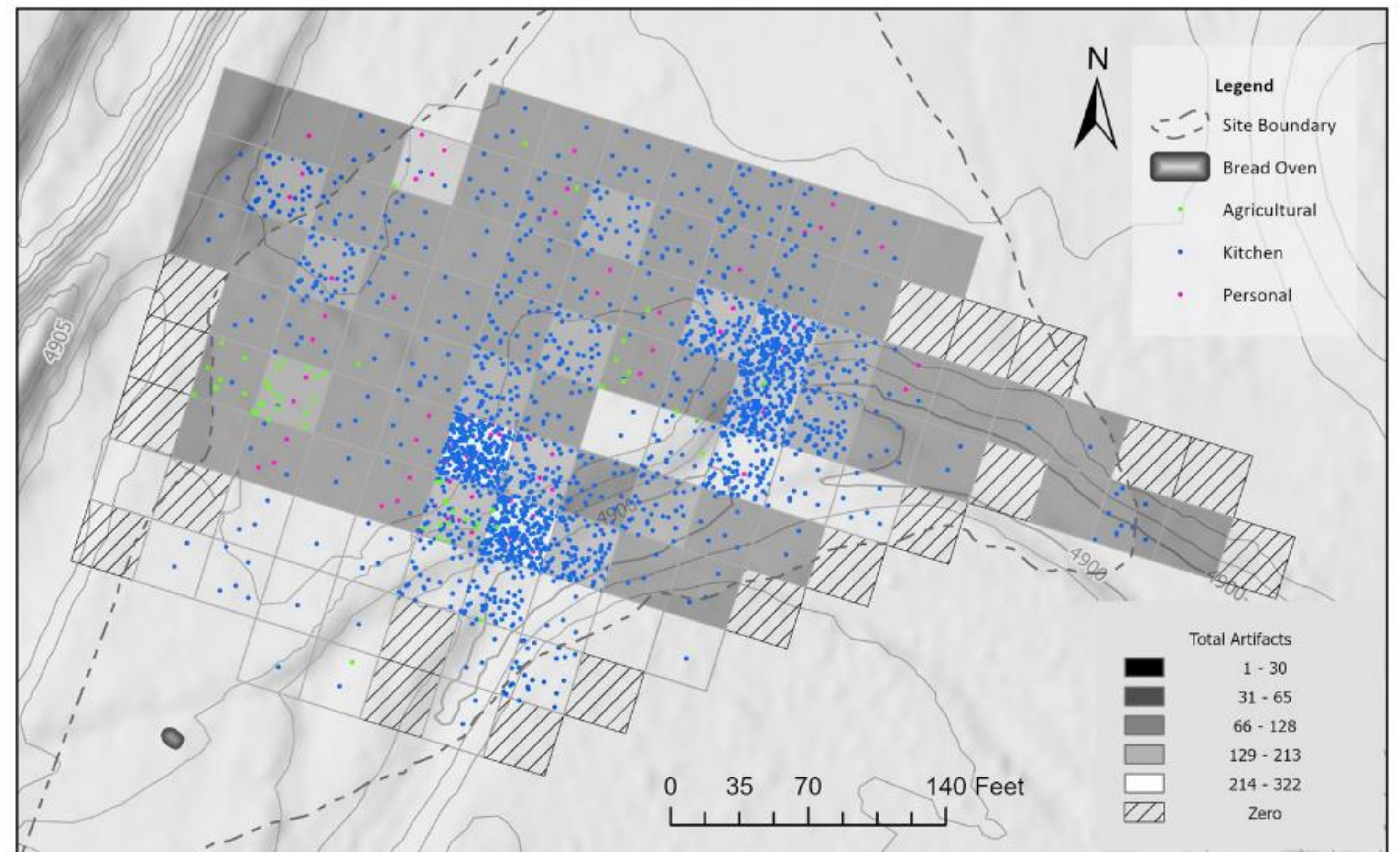


Fig. 1: Site grid and artifact distribution

## • Research Questions

- Does the artifact assemblage provide data regarding the demographics of the individuals who lived at these camps?
- Does the artifact assemblage indicate the layout of these construction camp sites, more specifically different use areas?

## • Methods

- Research- historical documents, newspapers, etc.
- Site recordation- grid vs. traditional methods

## • Conclusion

The distribution of the different types or categories of artifacts (Fig.2) illustrates a separation of activities and that some activity areas (cooking at the bread oven) were much more removed from the main living and working areas (see Fig.1). Regarding the demographics of people on the site, we have reason to believe that men, women, and children were occupying this site. The presence of porcelain doll fragments (n=2; Fig.3), children's tea sets (Fig.5), and a bobby pin suggest that women and children were present during the occupation of this site. The presence of ornate dinnerware (see Fig.4) and glass ware may also be an indicator of families living on this site and bringing their heirlooms with them for use. These data have helped to address the above research questions while at the same time raises further questions for future investigation. In conclusion, we suspect that it was not just workers living here, but families, and the current surface assemblage still reflects a separation of cooking, living, and working areas.

## • Results

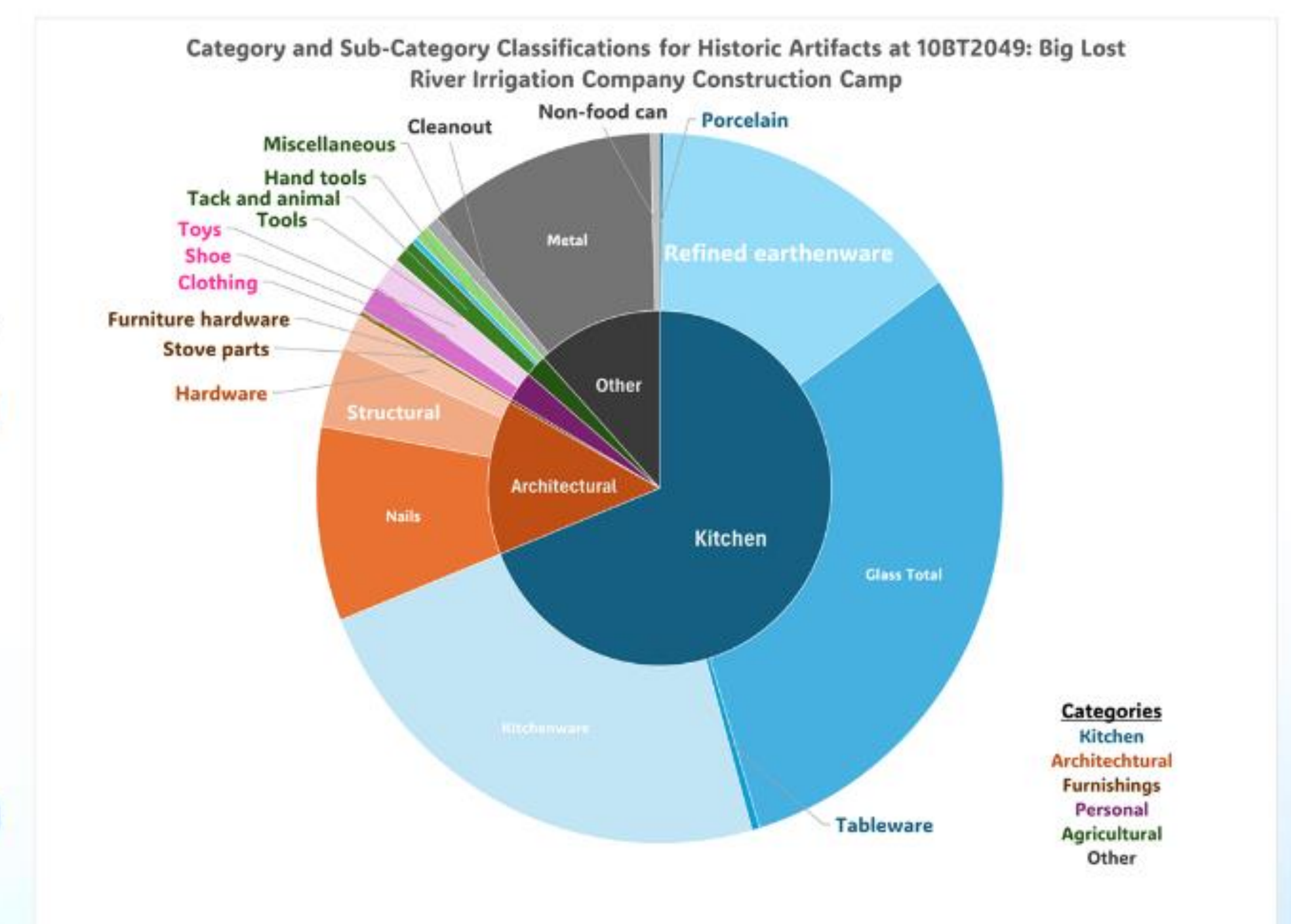


Fig. 2: Artifact Classifications



Fig. 3: Porcelain doll fragments



Fig. 4: Ceramic plate(bottom left) and cups, lamb figurine (top right), and utensils (bottom right)



Fig. 5: Bike pedal(top right), marble (bottom right), glass stopper(top left), and glass stein (bottom left)



Fig. 6: basalt bread oven (left), stove pipe (right)



Fig. 7: horse bridle(left), horseshoe (right)