

OFFICE OF
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MEMORANDUM

Date: June 15, 2023
To: Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission
From: Mike Runge, City Archivist
Re: **Mineral Palace, Gem Theater Archaeological Collection Donation**

On June 1, 2023, the City Archivist was contacted by representatives from the Mineral Palace Gaming Establishment located at 601 Main Street. The discussion focused on the donation of artifacts unearthed during the 2005 archaeological investigation of said property.

Background on the Assemblage

This assemblage was unearthed during the expansion of the Mineral Palace in the fall/winter of 2005 and includes artifacts from the Gem Theater (1879 – 1899) and the Log Cabin Gas Station (1924-1950). Interesting to note, the artifacts from the gas station are minimal compared to the Gem Theater artifacts. There are 32 boxes within the assemblage – 35 test groups, 67 trench groups, and 45 bulk sample groups and constitute approximately 11,000 artifacts.

On June 9, 2023 archival staff and student intern Samantha Hamann reviewed this assemblage and took photographs of the boxes (see attachment #A). The boxes are grouped into three categories: test group (XU), trench group (T), and bulk sample group (B). It was also noted that several of the boxes were damaged by water while in storage. Despite this mishap, Mineral Palace staff should be commended for keeping the assemblage together, not separating the objects from the labels and moving the collection to a safe and dry location.

Historical Significance

The Mineral Palace archaeological assemblage can be classified as a high-profile collection due to its direct ties to the historic Gem Theater and legendary proprietor, Al Swearengen. The HBO series, Deadwood of the early 2000s helped rekindle a national and international interest into the Gem Theater. The objects also maintain a high intrinsic value through their direct documentation with Deadwood's most infamous drinking establishment.

Recommendation

Accept the Mineral Palace archaeological collection and incorporate this assemblage into the City Archaeological repository.



