

# **Yellow Beach 2 after 75 Years**

**The Archaeology of a WWII Invasion Beach  
on Saipan and its Historic Context in the  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**

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**with contributions by  
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**Access Archaeology**





ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978-1-78969-258-7

ISBN 978-1-78969-259-4 (e-Pdf)

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Cover photo: NARA USMC #83987, Native man carries his belongings to POW stockade. June 1944. Saipan. Opper.  
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## Preface

This book is based on research conducted by Cardno GS between 2014 and 2017 during archaeological inventory survey and data recovery excavations at Parcel 004-I-52 in San Antonio, Saipan, in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Preliminary results have been presented at the 2nd and 3rd Annual Marianas History Conferences held in Saipan and are available to the public via [www.Guampedia.com](http://www.Guampedia.com). Rosanna Barcina is especially thanked for coordination and inspiration to make these events and their contributions a reality. Archaeopress Production and Design editor Ben Heaney is greatly thanked for his patience and dexterity in dealing with both manuscripts and their authors.

The authors would like to acknowledge the following individuals and their institutions on Saipan for their continued support. At N15 Architects, Chris Fryling, Andrew Ashburn, and Catherine Shai maintained an open door policy with staff archaeologists. At Honest Profit International Ltd. (HPIL), Peter Che was instrumental in keeping staff archaeologists in the loop with Win Win Way's project manager Elaine Kwok and Hugo Kan. They ensured access to Bill and Conrad at Hofsneider Engineering and to project biologist and permit facilitator John Gourley.

The CNMI Historic Preservation Office (HPO) with Mertie Kani and Rita Chong-Dela Cruz and their staff archaeologists coordinated permitting requirements with project staff and the Japanese Consulate in a changing economic climate and Typhoons Soudelor and Yutu. HPO staff archaeologists Erik Lash, Jennings Bunn, and Jim Pruitt helped guide the data recovery and laboratory analyses at critical junctures. Former San Antonio resident Robert Hunter at the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA), welcomed staff archaeologists at the CNMI Museum of History and Culture on more than one occasion and shared their guidelines and storage space, plus childhood stories of the property.

John Scott of AMPRO graciously gave field staff unexploded ordnance safety briefs and sage advice more than once. Win Win Way safety officer Ponce Raza helped establish daily contact with the Saipan police department EOD for removal of World War II era UXO. Spontaneous encounters with Scott Russell of the CNMI Humanities Council also provided focus and context to almost daily surprises in the field, as did conversations with colleagues Dr. Mike Dega at Scientific Consulting Services, Lon Bulgrin of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas, the late Carmen Sanchez, Sam McPheters, Alexander Astroth for NARA cover photos, and Susana Camacho and Alexandra Garrigue of ARCGEO for archival support. HPO review board members Don Farrell, Dr. Hiro Kurashina, and Dr. Mike Carson offered advice when sorely needed.

SWCA staff osteologist, Kathy Mowrer, shared the challenges of fieldwork and always reported with a smile for everyone. Cherie Walth of SWCA crafted an excellent burial report out of hours of sand and sweat and sun. Cardno GS staff included project manager Todd McCurdy in Honolulu and Terry Rudolph in Boise, Guam archaeologists Rick Schaefer for his magnificent artifact photographs, Jacy Moore Miller and Brent Coffman for keeping it light, plus Saipan archaeological guru John Castro. Boise based Cardno GS archaeologists Isla Nelson and Robert Jones shouldered much of the original manuscript generation. Brenda Tenorio provided a much needed reality check with Saipan history in this volume, with special help from former Lt. Governor Pedro A. Tenorio, Jesus T. Guerrero, Rudolpho Manganero Sablan, Frances S. Ramon, and Nieves Cruz Ngeskebei. And special thanks to the late Jeffrey Putzi for keeping us all grounded after hours.

The Procedures for the Treatment of Human Remains adopted by the CNMI in 1999 were followed during data recovery excavation, analysis, and reporting. Only selected photographs from analysis are included in this book as per HPO consultation. WWII Japanese remains were returned to the Japanese consulate by the HPO on Saipan in 2015 for proper treatment of their war dead. The WWII Japanese munition magazine is preserved in situ pending consultation with the Chamorro and Japanese community, the HPO and DCCA, and HPIL.

This book commemorates the 75th anniversary of WWII on Saipan, and is dedicated to the people of San Antonio, past and present, who have endured yet another disaster from Typhoon Yutu to become even more resilient.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction to Yellow Beach 2 on Saipan**

### **1.1. Yellow Beach 2 (Afetna Point) after 75 Years**

After 75 years, this story begins where two previous Archaeopress narratives left off, completing the chronological history of the island of Saipan into the 21st century. The Pre-Latte Period at Unai Bapot from 1500 B.C. to A.D. 1000 (Carson and Hung 2017) and the Latte Period at Afetna Point from A.D. 1000 to 1700 (Dixon et al. 2019) transpired centuries before modern events here detailed, as told by archaeologists and not observers. This book, presents archaeological, archival, and oral historic accounts from local Chamorro residents for what is likely the most (and hopefully the last) catastrophic period in Pacific Basin history, from Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

At the time Spanish Captain General Ferdinand Magellan (Portuguese born Fernando de Magallanes) first anchored off the island of Guam on March 6, 1521, the Chamorro inhabitants of the small Latte Period village at Afetna Point on the southwest coast of Saipan some 218 kilometers or 135 miles north were likely unaware of the consequences. Little did they know (nor their relatives on Tinian, Rota, and Guam) that foreigners from distant lands would again invade their splendid isolation; first from Spain and the Philippines in 1668, then from Germany in 1898 and Japan in 1914, then from America in 1944, and finally to waves of Asian visitors during succeeding decades into the present era.

On June 15, 1944, Afetna Point was called ‘Yellow Beach 2’ by the U.S. Marines and Army infantry braving Japanese resistance to establish a beachhead before capturing As Lito airfield (today Isely Field International Airport) the following days. The beachhead then served as a resupply landing for the next week or two as U.S. forces took the battle east and north to slowly clear the island of enemy strongpoints, and remove wounded Americans and battle weary civilians to off-shore medical treatment. At the end of the battle, Chamorro and Carolinian locals and non-local civilians were relocated into camps for their separation from Japanese soldiers until repatriation to their homelands and liberation for the Chamorros and Carolinians on July 1, 1946.

An archaeological inventory survey by Cardno GS in 2014 recorded prehistoric Chamorro and WWII combat remains on the surface around post-war U.S. Coast Guard Loran Station buildings and antenna support structures, and a modern boxing rink and fruit stand just off Beach Road. Excavation in 2015 and laboratory analysis in 2017 yielded subsurface remains of the Latte Period village and its inhabitants around a deep sand mine from the 1980s, alongside WWII burials of Japanese war casualties and a munition magazine, plus American combat weapons and discarded field gear, unexploded ordnance removed by Saipan EOD, and post-war disturbances from the construction of the U.S. Coast Guard LORAN facility.

Afetna Point has long been punctuated by brief episodes of intense struggle for Saipan on a global scale over centuries if not millennia, perhaps beginning circa 1500 B.C. with initial settlement of the archipelago and its idyllic landscape from SE Asia. Once again in the 21st century, competition for regional tourism and investment makes Saipan and its neighbors a nexus of geopolitical intreague and foreign investment. Afetna Point contributes to this story and leaves the visitor and residents captivated by its beauty after 75 years, while it is still painful to envision the horrors of WWII at Yellow Beach 2 today.

## Chapter 2

# The Afetna Point Archaeological Project

The Archaeological Survey and Data Recovery Project at Afetna Point (Yellow Beach 2) was conducted by Cardno GS for Honest Profit Limited International (HPIL) of Hong Kong, People's Republic of China, in support of a proposed resort development at Parcel 004-I-052 in San Antonio, Saipan (Figure 1), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The CNMI Historic Preservation Office (HPO) identified the project area as having a high potential for encountering significant archaeological and historical resources. Previous investigations reported subsurface archaeological deposits on the property, it is located on a National Historic Landmark WWII American Invasion Beach, and supported a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Long Range Navigation (LORAN) Station and antenna facility used from late 1944 to 1978.

The proposed resort development measured approximately 40,827 square meters (439,458 square feet), or 4.09 hectares (10.1 acres). It is situated immediately north of the Pacific Islands Club, bounded to the east by Beach Road (Figure 2), to the west by the Lagunan Chalan Kanoa and Philippine Sea coast at Unai Afetna, and to the north by residential neighborhoods and San Antonio Middle School. In 1987, a sand mining project removed an unknown number of prehistoric human remains from the east half of the parcel, in an area measuring approximately 0.91 hectares (2.25 acres) before the HPO ceased this operation.

In 2015, Cardno GS completed an Archaeological Inventory Survey report of the project area that included National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) significance evaluations at four surface sites with recommendations for their treatment (Dixon and McCurdy 2015a). The four archaeological sites were assigned permanent numbers by the CNMI HPO (Figure 3) with SP prefix numbers correlated to their time period (Figure 4): SP 1-1037 is a subsurface cultural horizon with prehistoric remains; SP 5-1036 is a WWII Japanese ammunition magazine; SP 6-1035 is the remains of the WWII and Cold War USCG LORAN station; and SP 6-1038 is a modern concrete pad for a boxing rink and then a fruit stand formerly on the west side of Beach Road, with a post-WWII buried structural component.

The overall strategy employed during 2015 data recovery fieldwork and 2017 labwork, after consultation with CNMI HPO (Dixon and McCurdy 2015b and 2015c), consisted of implementing three phases of investigation. This strategy involved a combination of mechanical excavation conforming to the project engineering design including large scale vegetation clearing, global positional system (GPS) recording of all significant artifacts and features including burials, and manual excavations targeting features found to have intact remains for radiocarbon dating and microfossil analyses.

All activities outlined in this project complied with pertinent sections of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and associated 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 800, as well as with CNMI Public Law 3-39 and in accordance with 55-10-725 Standards for Excavation Permits, and the Content, Format, and Submission Standards for Final Reports of Archaeological Projects in the CNMI. When human remains were encountered the Procedures for the Treatment of Human Remains adopted by the CNMI in 1999 were followed.

All excavations, testing, and reporting relating to cultural resources in the form of archaeological sites, features, structures, artifacts, and human remains were carried out under the supervision of Cardno GS senior archaeologist Boyd Dixon, Ph.D. meeting the professional qualifications found in the Secretary of Interior Professional Qualification Standards, 48 Federal Register 44716.

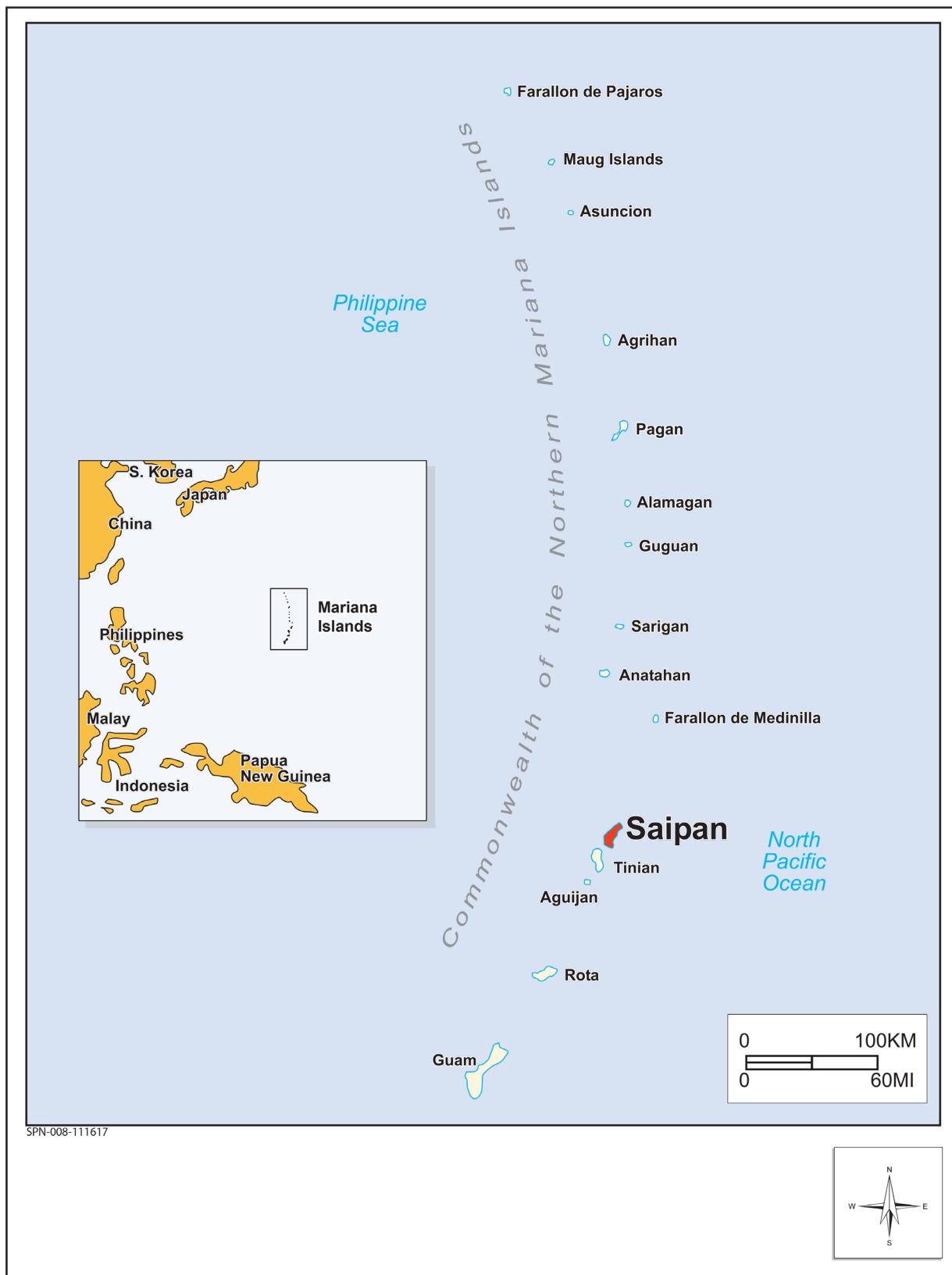


Figure 1. Location of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands

## YELLOW BEACH 2 AFTER 75 YEARS



Figure 2. Project Area on Saipan

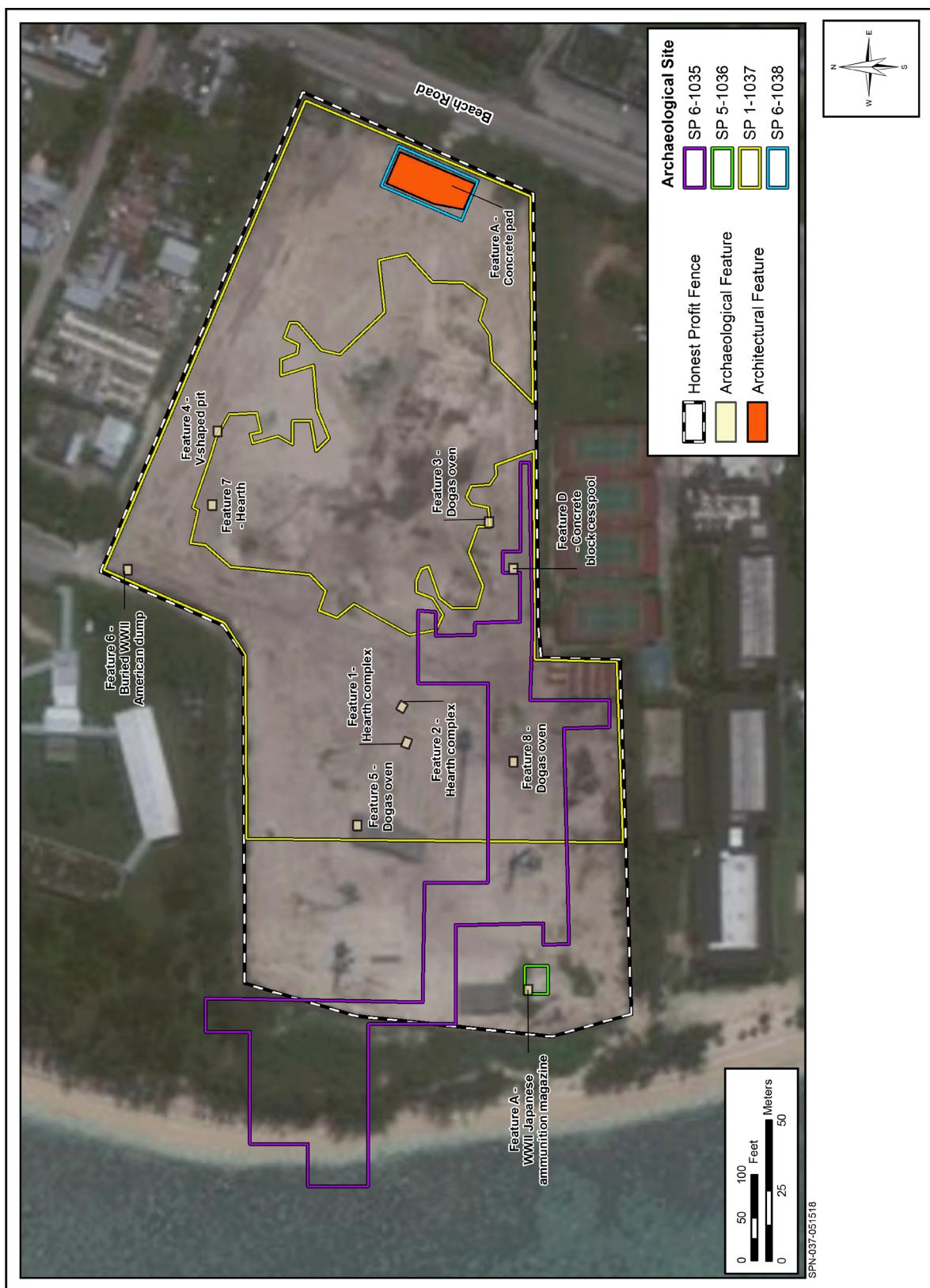


Figure 3. Sites and Features in Parcel 004-1-52

## YELLOW BEACH 2 AFTER 75 YEARS

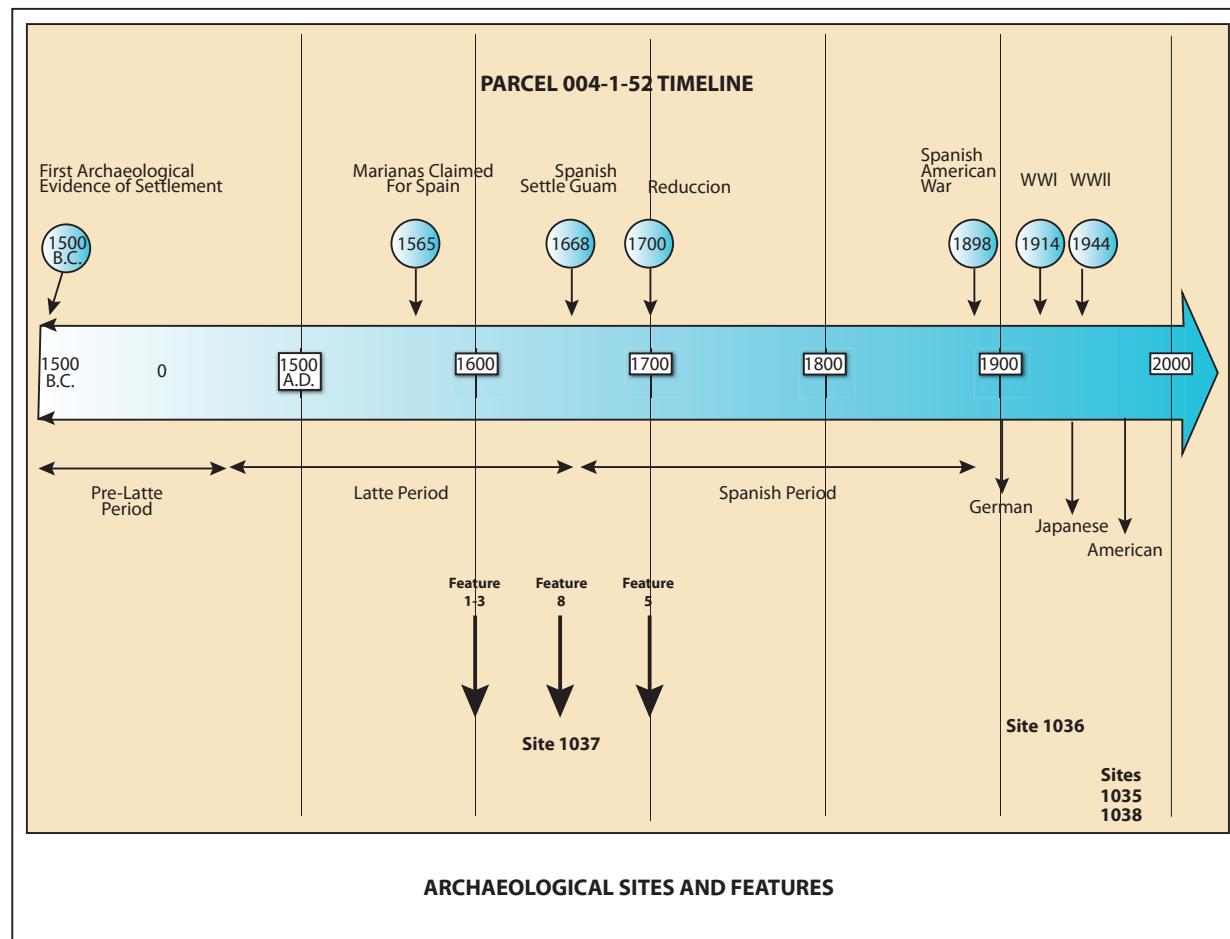


Figure 4. Timeline for Parcel 004-1-52