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## Archaeological Testing of Site 41HK28 Haskell County, Texas

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING OF SITE 41HK28  
HASKELL COUNTY, TEXAS

By  
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Texas  
State Department of Highways and Public Transportation  
Highway Design Division  
August 1985

## ABSTRACT

Testing of Site 41HK28 on County Road 166 in Haskell County, Texas, was performed on July 8-9, 1985, to determine eligibility for inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places or nomination as a State Archaeological Landmark, and to determine site depth, cultural context, and archaeological significance. The site is located on a terrace overlooking California Creek, a tributary of the Brazos River system. The site has been impacted by construction of a county road and bridge, by severe erosion and deflation, and by root plowing to remove mesquite trees from the area. Results of testing indicate that Site 41HK28 represented a Transitional Archaic site which has been largely destroyed by erosion and mesquite clearing. The site appears to be limited to the surface or upper 10 cm of the soil deposits and is mixed with modern historic debris. Evidence recovered does not support a determination of eligibility for inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places or nomination as a State Archaeological Landmark.

## INTRODUCTION

Archaeological Site 41HK28 was recorded at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory of the Balcones Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, in May 1984 by a member of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT) professional cultural resources staff. Following initial evaluation, further testing and investigation were recommended. The site was tested on July 8-9, 1985, by Wayne C. Young of the SDHPT professional cultural resources staff, with field support personnel provided by the SDHPT District 8 Residency Office in Hamlin, Texas.

Site 41HK28 is located in southeastern Haskell County about 14 miles southeast of Haskell (Fig. 1). The site is situated along County Road 166 about 0.5 mile east of Farm to Market Highway 600 and occupies a terrace along the western bank of California Creek. Site 41HK28 occurs along both sides of the county road and covers an area about 150 meters along the creek and 50 meters to the west of the creek bank.

Testing of the site was performed under the auspices of Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties (36 CFR, Part 800), procedures prescribed and endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration. The object of testing was to determine eligibility for inclusion of the site within the National Register of Historic Places or nomination as a State Archaeological Landmark as prescribed by federal regulation, and to determine the nature of the deposits and the cultural context of the site.

The construction affecting Site 41HK28 involves the replacement of a Warren truss bridge with a modern concrete structure and a reconstruction of the approaches for approximately 200 ft. west and 400 ft. east of the bridge. The county road will be closed, the old bridge dismantled, and a new structure erected in its place. Additional right-of-way has been obtained for 200 ft. east and 400 ft. west of the bridge and is a uniform 100 ft. in width.

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## SITE DESCRIPTION

Site 41HK28 appears to have covered about an acre along the western bank of California Creek in Haskell County, Texas. The site is presently in a heavily overgrazed pasture with the dominant vegetation being small mesquites and broomweeds. It should be mentioned that the mesquite trees on the site are noticeably smaller than those in other pastures and that there are several brush piles present, indicating that the site has been cleared of trees in the relatively recent past. The site has probably been root-plowed within the last 20 years.

Erosion is severe on the site and may be partially attributed to the lack of ground cover in the immediate area. Very large and deep gullies are present along both sides of the county road and have cut through about 75% of the site within the right-of-way (Fig. 2). These gullies show a clean soil profile consisting of a reddish soil cap of clay loam for the upper 20 cm. This soil cap overlies a 2 meter-thick zone of brownish red clay loam with precipitation lines and small calcium carbonate gravels. The lowest meter of the gully profiles is a very red clay lacking gravels. There are several cut and fill sequences observable in the gully walls and all cultural materials within the gullies were contained in these areas. The one complete dart point, a Darl-like specimen, was found on the surface about 2 meters from the edge of the north gully and is very similar to the dart point base found in Level 1 on the south side of the road.

The gully profiles appeared at first to have dark bands representing cultural zones in them. A closer examination revealed that these bands were caused by decaying tree roots and that they disappeared when only slightly excavated.

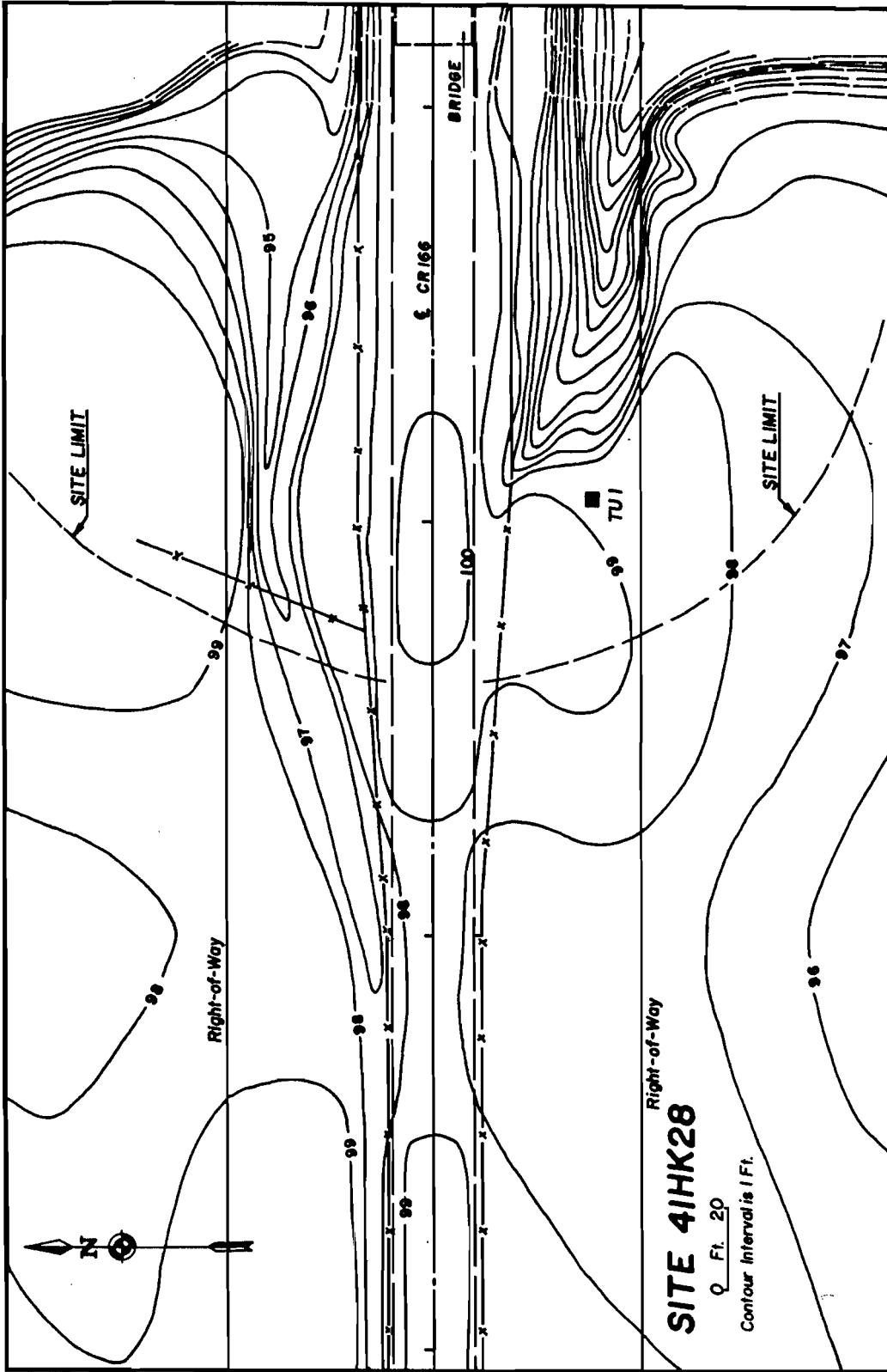


FIGURE 2. Contour map of Site 41HK28, showing excavation units.



The gullies are still quite active at the site today, as witnessed by one of the larger mesquites having been undercut and lying in the gully. The leaves were still green on the tree and it may be presumed that the tree had only recently sloughed into the gully.

## TESTING OPERATIONS

Archaeological testing of Site 41HK28 consisted of surface observations, examination of gully walls, and the excavation of a test unit by hand (Fig. 2). An examination of the ground surface revealed a thin scattering of flint and quartzite flakes and burned rocks along both sides of the county road. One possible surface hearth was located between the gully and Test Unit 1 on the south side of the road and was partially excavated. Excavation of this limestone hearth was halted when a rusted tin can was found in the center of the hearth. This feature may relate to the construction of the bridge across California Creek.

The examination of the gully was accomplished by a slow and thorough study of all visible profiles on both sides of the county road and the noting of all cultural debris adhering to the walls. This procedure failed to indicate any buried cultural zones although over 100 meters of profile were observed. A total of 3 flakes, a Darl-like dart point, and a thumbnail end scraper were recovered in this procedure, with all specimens coming from a cut and fill sequence in the north gully.

There were no surface concentrations of materials or any evidence of intact subsurface cultural zones; therefore, a locality adjacent to the historic surface-hearth at the head of the south gully was chosen for the placement of Test Unit 1. Test Unit 1 was a 1 meter square. Excavation was in arbitrary 10 cm levels with all soil passed through 0.25 in. mesh hardware cloth and all cultural material retained by square and level coordinates.

Level 1 contained a Darl-like dart point base, 3 core fragments, 2 mussel shell fragments, 26 flakes, 3 glass bottle sherds, and 5 fragments from tin cans. Levels 2-5 were culturally sterile. The excavations were halted at 50 cm since the previous 40 cm had been culturally sterile and there were no indications of deeper cultural zones from the gully walls.

All of the cultural material was found to be in a disturbed context and limited to the top 10 cm of the site.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Archaeological testing of Site 41HK28 has established that the site was primarily a surface occupation that can be related to the Transitional Archaic and that the site has been disturbed by past agricultural and construction activities—specifically overgrazing, root plowing, and the construction of the road and bridge.

The portions of the site within the right-of-way lack a valid cultural context and the same probably holds for the area outside the right-of-way. Cultural remains appear to have been severely eroded and disturbed. It is believed that the portion of Site 41HK28 within the highway right-of-way does not meet the criteria for inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places or for State Archaeological Landmark status. No further investigation of Site 41HK28 is recommended.