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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING OF SITE 41LR92
LAMAR COUNTY, TEXAS

By
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Texas
State Department of Highways and Public Transportation
Highway Design Division
July 1984

ABSTRACT

Testing of Site 41LR92 on State Highway 19 in Lamar County was undertaken by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT) in May, 1984, to determine eligibility for inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places and to determine site depth, cultural context, archaeological significance and the amount of undisturbed cultural deposits. The site is located along a minor tributary of Robinson Creek which eventually feeds the Sulphur River. Preliminary determinations by the SDHPT were that the site might contain an Archaic component beneath the location of a razed 1950s farmhouse. Testing of the site indicated that the Archaic component was a minor occupation which probably had been destroyed by previous construction activities. Due to the lack of a valid archaeological context and the sparse amount of cultural material, it appears that the site does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and no further work is proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological Site 41LR92 was recorded in April, 1984, by a member of the SDHPT professional cultural resources staff during a reassessment of historic structures along the proposed expansion of State Highway 19 south of Paris, Texas (Fig. 1). The original survey of the project area had been completed in 1974 when there was less emphasis on historic structures. During this reevaluation of the project, prehistoric Site 41LR92 was discovered beneath the location of a razed 1950s house and was isolated from construction until testing could be performed on the site area.

Site 41LR92 was recognized as a potential Archaic habitation site by the recovery of a Gary dart point (Suhm and Jelks 1962:197). An area of less than three acres was delineated as a possible site beneath the location of the house, a gravel driveway, and the remains of several large trees. Surface damage to the site was severe as the result of clearing activities, which had razed the house and its concrete slab, and the removal and burning of the trees.

The site is situated along a small hill south of an unnamed tributary of Robinson Creek, which eventually feeds the Sulphur River, and is approximately 60 meters from the lowest portion of the valley which forms the tributary. A moderate slope is

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involved with a 3-meter drop in elevation from the top of the site area into the creek (Fig. 2). The site had contained a rural house, and the flora in the immediate site area is related to the house rather than to the native plants of the area. Trees on the site include pear, plum, and remnants of hedges. The area around the project is currently being farmed and contains little native flora. Soils at the site fall within the Normangee clay loam series (Ressel 1979). The Soil Survey of Lamar and Delta Counties, Texas (Ressel 1979) describes the surface layer as dark brown, slightly acid clay loam about 7 inches thick. Between 7 and 16 inches deep, the soil is brown, medium acid clay that has red, reddish brown, and dark grayish brown mottles. This soil is moderately well drained. Permeability is very slow and available water capacity is high. The soil is seasonally wet or droughty and cracks when dry. The soils encountered during testing of the site conformed to this description.

Testing was performed on April 30 and May 1, 1984, under the direction of Wayne C. Young, a member of the SDHPT cultural resources staff, assisted by William B. White, of the SDHPT district office in Paris. Approximately 20 personhours were expended in the testing of the site

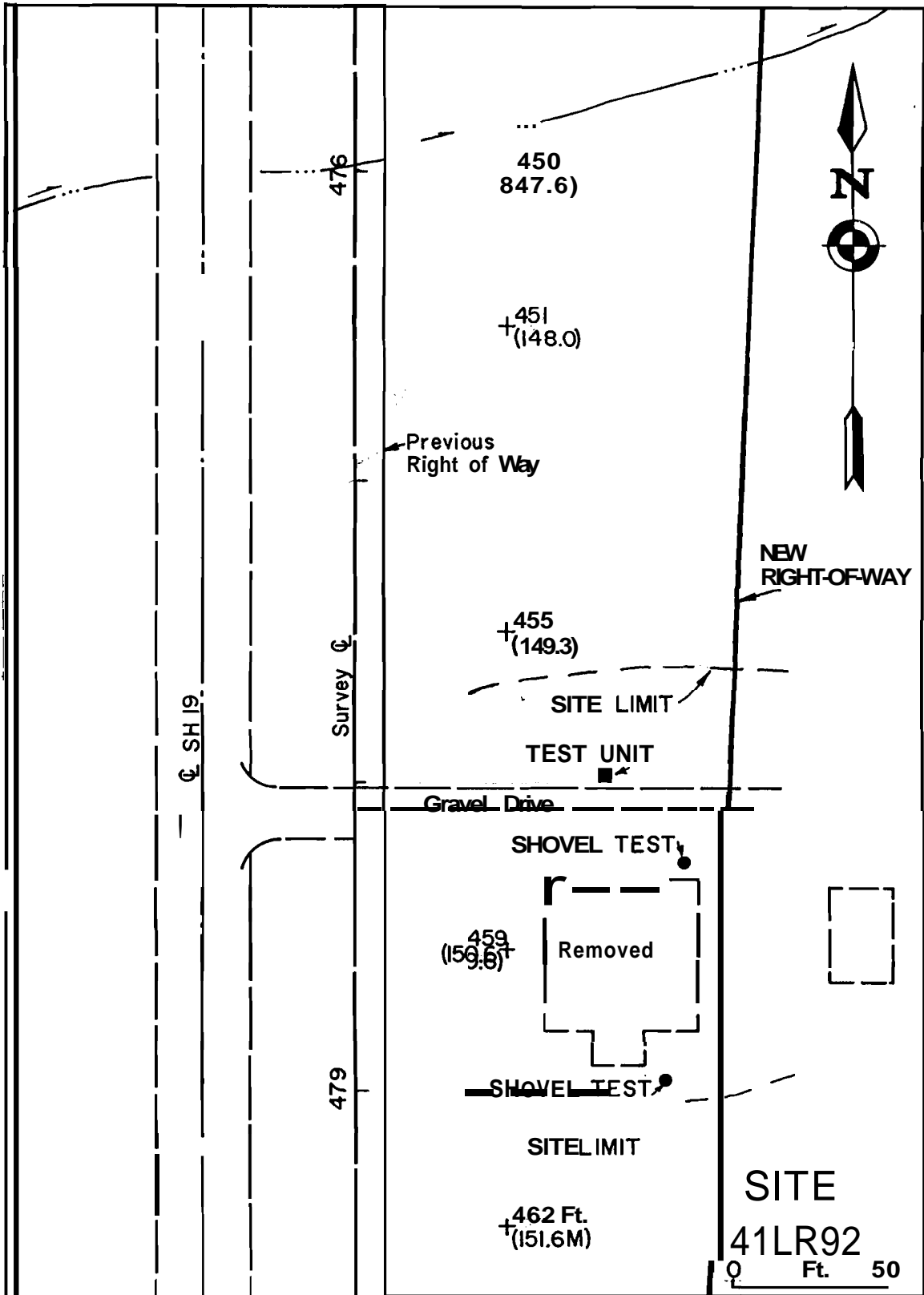


FIGURE 2. Project map showing location of test unit and shovel tests.

Testing was performed in accordance with Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties (36 CFR, Part 800), procedures prescribed and endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration. Objectives of the test were to determine the nature of the site, its cultural affiliations, and eligibility for inclusion within the National Register of Historic Places. Cultural context, stratification of materials, and the site limit were questions of primary concern.

TESTING PROCEDURES

Archaeological testing of Site 41LR92 consisted of a thorough surface examination to determine the limit of the site and to locate surface concentrations of prehistoric materials. Testing consisted of two shovel tests and the hand excavation of a 1-meter square into basal clays. Soils were screened through 0.25 in. mesh hardware cloth. Recovered materials were removed from the site and brought to the SDHPT Laboratory for Archaeological Studies for cataloging and temporary storage.

The initial step during the testing phase involved an intensive survey of the site surface area. Visibility was extremely good since almost 90% of the site surface had recently been scraped clean of vegetation in clearing activities. All prehistoric cultural debitage and tools were collected. These included a possible burinated scraper bit and an aborted thick biface fragment. No definite flaking debitage was noticed, although a considerable amount of crushed flint was found in and around the driveway area of the site. Both tool fragments and the Gary point found during the initial survey were located immediately adjacent to the historic structure which had recently been removed.

Construction impact in this area of the site was quite pronounced, with a depression from excavating the house slab and

numerous deep ruts from heavy equipment on the site during wet conditions. Two shovel tests, one north and the other south of the structure area, were excavated in what appeared to be less disturbed areas to determine if any intact soils remained in this portion of the site. Both tests encountered sterile basal clays at a depth of 14 cm from what could be presumed to be the original ground surface. At this depth, construction impact, i.e., depressions where the structure had been excavated and the numerous track ruts, could be seen easily.

A 1-meter square was then excavated just outside the northern limit of the gravel driveway. This area appeared to have been less disturbed than other portions of the site and was thought most likely to contain intact materials. Three 10-cm levels were excavated in this unit, with basal clays being encountered at 14 to 18 cm below the present ground surface. No cultural materials were recovered in this test unit.

OBSERVATIONS

Prehistoric cultural materials observed at Site 41LR92 consist of a Gary dart point, a possible scraper fragment, and an aborted thick biface fragment. Flake debitage was not seen on the surface or recovered in the excavations. Testing failed to locate any intact cultural deposits, probably because of the construction activities at the site prior to its discovery.

Any interpretation based on such a small sample is tenuous, other than that a very minor occupation appears to have been present at one time but evidence of that occupation is now destroyed. The single projectile point provides little information on the age of the site since this type spans the entire Archaic Period and much of the Formative Period of northeastern Texas. A horizontal limit cannot be adequately established from a sample of three artifacts, but the prehistoric site appears to have been in the area of the house. A vertical limit probably does not exceed 18 cm to the basal clays, but the deposits have been disturbed and there appear to be no intact deposits remaining within the right-of-way portion of the site.

It appears that Site 41LR92 does not meet eligibility requirements for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Further research is not proposed due to the lack of a valid context and the small amount of prehistoric cultural material available for study.

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