Archeological Testing Site 41WH85 Wharton County, Texas

Wayne C. Young

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita

Part of the American Material Culture Commons, Archaeological Anthropology Commons, Environmental Studies Commons, Other American Studies Commons, Other Arts and Humanities Commons, Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons, and the United States History Commons

Tell us how this article helped you.

Cite this Record
ISSN: 2475-9333
Available at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ita/vol1986/iss1/30

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Regional Heritage Research at SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Index of Texas Archaeology: Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State by an authorized editor of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.
Archaeological Testing Site 41WH85 Wharton County, Texas

Licensing Statement
This is a work produced for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) by the report producer. TxDOT and the report producer jointly own all rights, title, and interest in and to all intellectual property developed under TxDOT’s contract with the report producer. The report may be cited and brief passages from this publication may be reproduced without permission provided that credit is given to both TxDOT and the report producer. Permission to reprint an entire chapter, section, figures or tables must be obtained in advance from either the Supervisor of the Archeological Studies Branch, Environmental Affairs Division, Texas Department of Transportation, 125 East 11th Street, Austin, Texas, 78701 or from the report producer.
Archaeological site 41WH85 was located by the author during a routine archaeological survey of FM 442 in June of 1986. A small area about 100 ft. in diameter was located north of FM 442, west of the San Bernard River, and east of a private gravel driveway (Fig. 1), and contained a quantity of small oyster shell fragments and very scattered flint flakes. Surface visibility was quite limited by waist-high native prairie grasses. It was noted that all shell fragments were found along an eroded surface between the gravel driveway and the San Bernard River. Once right-of-way limits were defined and the property was purchased by the state, testing was undertaken to determine if there were any subsurface deposits at the site.

Testing of the site was conducted by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation's Archaeology Section on November 24, 1986, under the auspices of the Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties (36 CFR, Part 800) and with the assistance of two SDHPT District 12 personnel and a backhoe. Three man-days were expended on the site.

Right-of-way stakes were in place when the testing program began, and they shed considerable light on the project boundary and its relationship to the site locale. In the site area, approximately 125 ft. of
This Page Redacted Per THC Policy
right-of-way width existed between the pavement edge and the north right-of-way boundary. Within this area, a distance of about 45 ft. from the pavement toward the north right-of-way had been previously impacted by highway construction and maintenance. Approximately 85 ft. of the site north-to-south extended into the SDHPT jurisdiction, while the east-west limits were about 100 ft. long between the gravel driveway and the edge of the river terrace.

Approximately 5 in. of rain had fallen on the site immediately prior to testing and had flattened most of the native vegetation. The area thought to be an eroded surface could then be seen as a small borrow pit from which most of the black clay topsoil within the right-of-way site area had been removed. A surface investigation under these conditions indicated that the observed shell was crushed oyster fragments and located immediately adjacent to the private driveway and FM 442.

A backhoe trench was excavated into the site along the edge of the borrow source. This 3-meter-long trench was 1 meter deep and failed to indicate any subsurface cultural materials. The profile contained 80 cm of black clay overlying a yellowish orange clay. The profile was void of shell fragments, flint flakes, features, or burned rock.

After a thorough surface examination and a view of the backhoe trench profile, it is the author's opinion that what was reported as an archaeological site is most likely shell brought in from the coast for road construction. Both the crushed nature of the shell and the
presence of oyster shell 50 miles inland from the coast suggest something other than an aboriginal occupation of the area. Also, most of the area thought to represent a site has been removed by borrow-pit activities and the intact portions within the right-of-way do not contain subsurface archaeological materials.

No additional research is proposed within the right-of-way. The existence of an archaeological site at this locale is seriously questioned, and the area does not appear to be worthy of a State Archaeological Landmark or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.