



INDEX OF TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGY

Open Access Gray Literature from the Lone Star State

Volume 2015

Article 35

2015

The Coker Mound (41CS1) in the Sulphur River Basin of East Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

Heritage Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University

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.

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.

The Coker Mound (41CS1) in the Sulphur River Basin of East Texas

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

The Coker Mound (41CS1) in the Sulphur River Basin of East Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

The Coker Mound site (41CS1) in the lower Sulphur River basin in the East Texas Pineywoods (Figure 1) is one of the few known earthen mounds constructed by ancestral Caddo peoples in the Sulphur River area (Cliff 1997:9). The site was first investigated by the University of Texas (UT) in 1932 (Jackson 1932), then revisited in 1949 by archaeologists surveying the flood pool area for the then proposed Lake Texarkana (now Lake Wright Patman). In the 1990s, collectors began to excavate in a mound at the Coker site (there may be as many as four mounds at the site), where they encountered a number of Caddo burials and associated funerary offerings (Derrick 1997; Perttula et al. 1997). Among the funerary offerings was a Haley Engraved

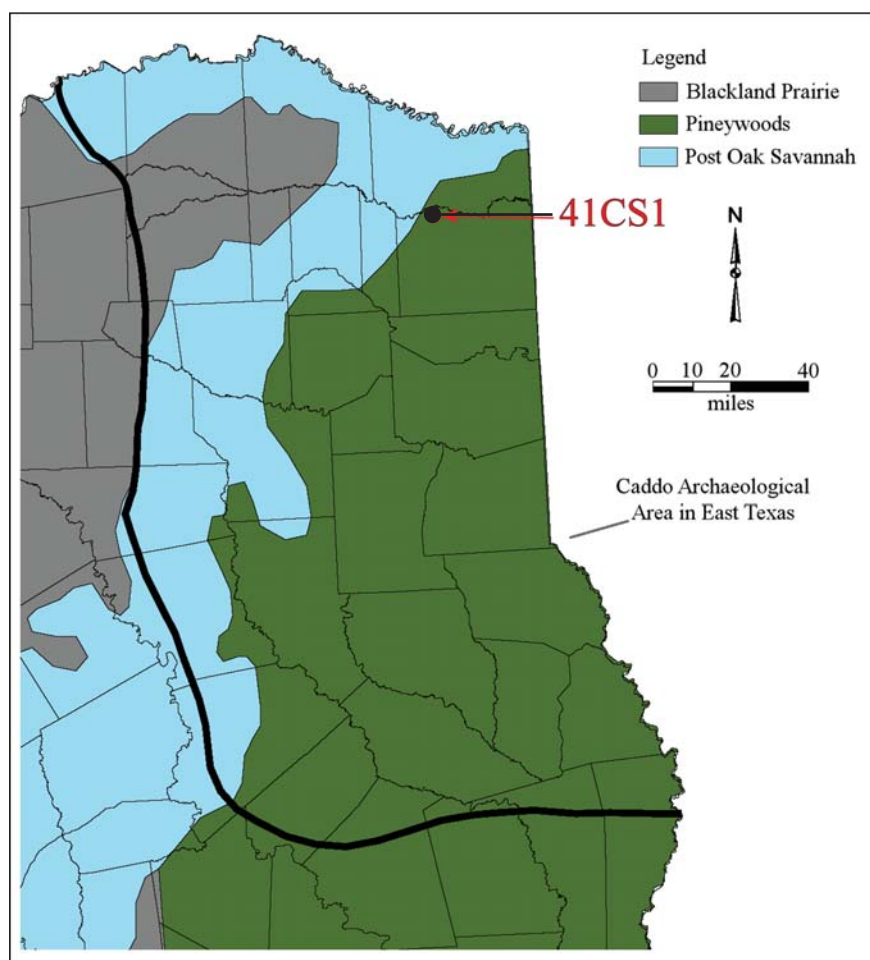


Figure 1. The location of the Coker Mound site (41CS1) in East Texas.

bottle (Perttula et al. 1997:Figure 1), and a single human vertebra from the burial deposit (obtained from one of the collectors) was eventually radiocarbon-dated by Beta Analytic, Inc. The 2 sigma calibrated age range of this sample (Beta-92919) is A.D. 1300-1435, with a calibrated intercept of A.D. 1405 (Perttula et al. 1997:17). The calibrated radiocarbon date and the Haley Engraved bottle are both indicative of use of the Coker Mound site during the Middle Caddo period.

MOUND EXCAVATIONS

According to Jackson (1932), the earthen mound at the E. A. Coker Farm was ca. 36 x 42 m in size (east-west and north-south) and stood approximately 1.7 m in height. The mound is situated at the northern end of the site, on a bluff overlooking an old channel of the Sulphur River and the Sulphur River flood-plain, and it is associated with a habitation area that covers approximately 5-6 acres. The habitation area has midden deposits.

UT archaeologists excavated a 21.6 x 2.6 m long and wide trench in the center of the mound (Figure 2). The excavations documented 1.7 m of mound deposits overlying a sandy loam A- and E-horizon (1.7-2.2 m bs) and a red clay B-horizon at 2.2 m bs. The sandy loam sediments underneath the mound contained small

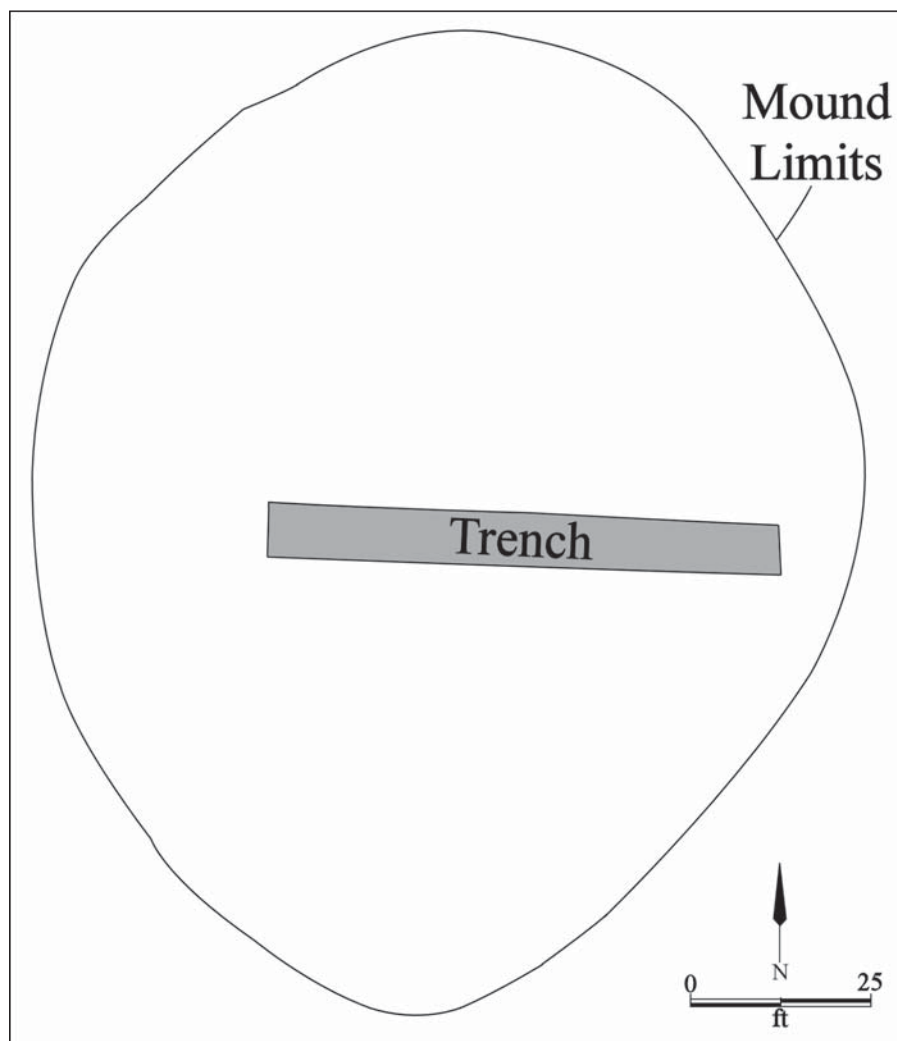


Figure 2. UT trench excavations in the Coker Mound.

amounts of charcoal and ash, as well as arrow points, ceramic sherds, and animal bones, and these deposits appear to simply contain habitation debris. One dart point was recovered from 2.3 m bs, while small arrow points were found in the A- and E-horizon sediments (2.1 m bs) as well as in the mound deposits (ca. 1.07 m bs). Jackson (1932:3) also noted that worked pieces of antler were found at a depth of ca. 1.4 m in the mound deposits.

Atop the A- and E-horizon, the lowest mound deposits (1.65-1.70 m bs) are a black sandy loam with charcoal and ash (Jackson 1932:3), probably the remnants of a burned wood structure. This burned structure was then covered up with sterile white-gray sand, clay, and silt (1.52-1.65 m bs). According to Jackson (1932:3), this mound deposit formed a platform approximately 3.6 m in length and a maximum of ca. 38 cm in height near the center of the mound.

The next mound deposit, 0.84-1.52 m bs was composed of a mixture of sandy sediments and black midden deposits from the surrounding village areas, as well as traces of ash, charcoal, mussel shells, and a few ceramic sherds. Above this, from ca. 0.40-0.84 m bs, are black midden deposits with charcoal, ash, animal bones, mussel shells, many ceramic sherds, and chunks of fired clay. This same mound deposit also had a 1.2 x 1.8 m ash deposit near the center of the mound, likely the remnants of another burned wood structure or a large hearth feature in use on the mound. The final mound deposit (0-40 cm bs) is a red sandy loam with charcoal, ash, and some midden material remains.

The inventory of material culture remains recovered by the UT archaeologists at the Coker Mound include three Maud arrow points from the surface of the site, as well as a few sherds also indicative of a post-A.D. 1400 occupation, including sherds from Nash Neck Banded jars (n=3) and one sherd from a Killough Pinched vessel. The remainder of the sherds in the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin collections—463 plain rim, body, and base sherds and 159 decorated sherds—appear to be from the Middle Caddo period occupation of the village and the construction of the mound from associated village midden deposits. The proportion of red-slipped sherds in the Middle Caddo period ceramic assemblage is notable (47 percent), as are the percentage of engraved sherds from red-slipped vessels (3.8 percent). Other decorative methods represented in the sherds include engraved (but not slipped) (6.3 percent), applied (6.9 percent)—probably from Pease Brushed-Incised vessels (Perttula et al. 1997:19), incised (17.6 percent), punctated (8.2 percent), incised-punctated (0.6 percent), and brushed (10.1 percent).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Coker Mound site (41CS1), including at least one constructed earthen mound and associated 5-6 acre village, was occupied during the Middle Caddo period (ca. A.D. 1200-1400), based on the range and proportions of different utility and fine ware sherds recovered in the mound deposits. The earthen mound excavated by UT archaeologists in 1932 was apparently built over a burned structure that had been constructed on the original ground surface, then covered over first with a thin sterile and mounded deposit of sand, clay, and silt. The remainder of the mound was built up from midden deposits and sandy sediments, and there may have been a structure or large hearth feature near the top of the mound that was marked by a concentrated layer of ash 1.2 x 1.8 m in size. Another mound at the site that was investigated by collectors in the 1990s had mortuary deposits that also dated to the Middle Caddo period and documents that the Coker site was being used as a place at that time to bury important Caddo individuals in an earthen mound in the lower Sulphur River area.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lance Trask prepared the figures for this article.

REFERENCES CITED

Cliff, M. B.

1997 The Middle Caddoan Period in the Lower Sulphur River Area. *Journal of Northeast Texas Archaeology* 9:9-16.

Derrick, S. M.

1997 A Study in Frustration: Analysis of Human Remains removed from the Coker Mound Site (41CS1). *Journal of Northeast Texas Archaeology* 9:21-29.

Jackson, A. T.

1932 Earthen Mound on E. A. Coker Farm in Cass County, Texas. MS on file, Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, The University of Texas at Austin.

Perttula, T. K., M. Turner, and B. Nelson

1997 A Radiocarbon Date from the Coker Mound (41CS1). *Journal of Northeast Texas Archaeology* 9:17-20.