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The Sipes' Home Site (41RK603): A Late 18th to Early 19th Century Caddo Site on Martin Creek in Rusk County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

The Sipes' Home site (41RK603) is an Historic Caddo site on Martin Creek, near Trammel's Trace, about 20 km from its confluence with the Sabine River (see Figure 1 in Perttula et al., this volume). It is ca. 2 km downstream from the Martin Lake dam. This site was found and investigated by Buddy C. Jones in the 1950s or early 1960s. He obtained surface collections of historic and aboriginal artifacts from the site; there are no available notes concerning this work.

ARTIFACT ASSEMBLAGE

Faience

A single rim sherd of faience brune from a plate is in the collections from the Sipes' Home site. Its exterior surface has an iron oxide or manganese-enhanced lead glaze, while its interior has a white tin enamel interior surface as well as blue and black painted lines and circle elements (Figure 1a). It may be from a St. Cloud Polychrome or Rouen Polychrome plate (see Avery et al. 2007:Figures 13-14, 16-18, 28-35), and Avery et al. (2007:Figure 39) also illustrate an unidentified faience brune sherd that is similar from the Jordan-Metoyer site (16NA53), in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. This is a post-1790 habitation site (Avery et al. 2007:Table 2). According to Avery et al. (2007:467) faience brune dates between 1770-1800.



Figure 1. Faience sherd and English blade gunflint from the Sipes' Home site: a, faience sherd; b, gunflint.

Refined Earthenwares

The refined earthenware sheds from the Sipes' Home site (n=35) include plain creamware (n=3, 1762-1820, South 1977), plain and decorated pearlware (n=17, 1780-1820, Majewski and O'Brien 1987), and decorated whiteware (n=15, post 1820s). The decorated pearlware sherds include one brown-black annular ware body sherd (see Figure 3b, below), blue and green scalloped edge ware (n=3) (Figure 2), and 10 blue transfer-printed rim and body sherds with oriental and floral motifs (Figure 3). Blue and green scalloped edge pearlware vessels were produced between 1800 and 1820 (Hunter and Miller 2009:13). Among the whitewares there are six blue and green scalloped edge ware rim sherds (ca. 1820s-1840 at the latest) and nine blue transfer-printed rim and body sherds with oriental and floral motifs, as well as a green-yellow hand-painted body sherd (Figure 3a). Blue transfer-printed wares have mean beginning production dates that range from 1817-1834 (Samford 1997:Table 5). The varying proportions of the three wares, particularly the decorated wares, suggest that the Sipes' Home site was likely first occupied by Nadaco Caddo peoples in the late 18th century, and that occupation probably lasted into the first quarter of the 19th century.



Figure 2. Shell-edged refined earthenware from the Sipes' Home site: a-b, green; c-j, blue.



Figure 3. Other decorated refined earthenware from the Sipes' Home site: a, hand-painted; b, annular ware; c-k, blue transfer-printed.

Kaolin Pipe Bowl and Stem Sherds

The Sipes' Home site surface collection has three kaolin pipe stems and one kaolin plain pipe bowl (Figure 4). The pipe stems have boreholes with 4/64-inch (n=2) and 3/64-inch (n=1) diameters. These pipe stem bore diameters are consistent with a late 18th-early 19th century age, based on Harrington (1954) histograms, in that pipes with a 4/64-inch bore hole comprised 77% of a pipe stem sample dating between 1750-1800, and Binford's (1962) regression formula (see discussion in Mallios [2005:90-91]). Binford's formula for pipe stems is:

$$Y=1931.85 - 38.26X$$

where Y represents time in years, and X signifies the pipe assemblage's average bore-diameter measurement. In the small Sipes' Home site sample, the average bore-hole diameter is 3.67. Y is thus 1791.44, the mean site occupation date, supporting the late 18th century age of the Caddo component at the site.

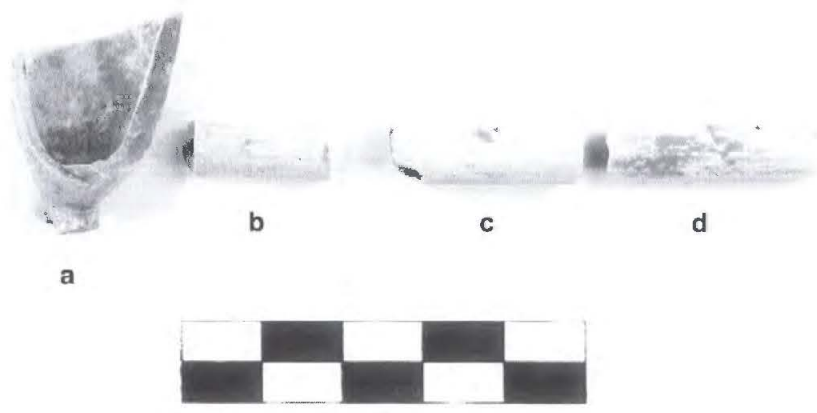


Figure 4. Kaolin pipe sherds: a, pipe bowl; b-d, stem sherds.

Bottle Glass Sherds

There are five olive green wine bottle glass body or base sherds in the collection. The one base sherd from a late 18th-early 19th century hottle (see Jones 2000:157) has a deep pontil (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Olive green wine glass base sherd from the Sipes' Home site.

Gunflint

The collection from the Sipes' Home site has a single post-1790 black Brandon chert English blade gunflint (see Kenmotsu 2000:343). The gunflint is 20.8 mm in length, 21.1 mm in width, and 7.8 mm thick; there is edge flaking on all four edges (see Figure 1b). Similar English gunflints have been recovered from nearby Martin Creek late 18th century Caddo sites on Trammell's Trace: the Taylor site (41RK36) (Clark and Ivey 1974:67 and Figure 13e) and Millsey Williamson (41RK3) (Jones 1968). Clark and Ivey (1974:69) suggest these two sites, as well as others yet to be documented, are part of a late 18th century Nadaco dispersed village or community.

Aboriginal Shell-Tempered Ceramic Sherds

There are three plain shell-tempered body sherds in the Sipes' Home site collection (Figure 6). These are from thin-walled (mean thickness of 5.5 mm) jars that were fired in a reducing environment, but cooled in the open air, leaving oxidized vessel surfaces. Shell-tempered ceramic vessels are rare in East Texas Caddo contexts before the Historic Caddo period (see Perttula et al. 2012), and even when they are present, it is likely that they are from traded/exchanged vessels from Northwest Louisiana, rather than vessels that were made with local clays. At the nearby 18th century Millsey Williamson site (41RK3), 5.5% of the vessels and 4% of the sherds were tempered with shell (Perttula and Nelson 2014).



Figure 6. Plain shell-tempered body sherds from the Sipes' Home site.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The artifact collection from the Sipes' Home site (41RK603) gathered from the surface by Buddy Jones many years ago appears to represent a single component late 18th-early 19th century Caddo settlement near Trammell's Trace and Martin Creek in the East Texas Pineywoods. In addition to both English and French trade goods, including faience brune, refined earthenwares, kaolin pipe stem and bowl sherds, wine bottle glass sherds, and an English blade gunflint being recovered from the site, the Sipes' Home site has aboriginally manufactured shell-tempered ceramic sherds. Given the probable maximum age range of the site, from ca. 1770 to the 1820s, the Sipes' Home site was a farmstead likely occupied by Nadaco Caddo

peoples in a larger village community that was dispersed along Martin Creek and Trammell's Trace, an ancient Caddo trail.

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