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# **Additional Collections of Woodland to Caddo Period Artifacts from the Alligator Pond Site (41SM442), Smith County, Texas**

*Timothy K. Perttula and Mark Thacker*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Alligator Pond site is a substantial multi-component prehistoric and historic archaeological site (ca. 1.5 acres) on an upland ridge on the east side of Saline Creek. Saline Creek is a northward-flowing tributary to the Sabine River, and the site is ca. 10 km south of the confluence of Saline Creek with the Sabine River, in the Post Oak Savannah in northern Smith County, Texas.

This is the third article that reports on the artifact assemblages from the site (see Perttula and Thacker 2013; Perttula and Walters 2012). Previous analyses of the artifact assemblages indicate that the principal component is a pre-A.D. 1200 Caddo habitation site, but there is also evidence from temporally diagnostic ceramic sherds and dart points that the site was used to some extent during the Woodland (ca. 500 B.C.-A.D. 800), Late Archaic (ca. 3000-500 B.C.), and Middle Archaic (ca. 6000-3000 B.C.) periods. Finally, there is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century historic component at the Alligator Pond site that is marked by blade gunflints, glass seed beads, refined earthenware rim and body sherds, possibly pearlware, that have hand-painted floral decorations, and an alkaline-glazed stoneware crock sherd.

## **CERAMIC ARTIFACTS**

There are at present a total of 2587 sherds from the ancestral Caddo occupation at the Alligator Pond site (Table 1), about 85.5% of which are plain rim, body, and base sherds. Based on the 66 rim sherds in the assemblage, 48% of the vessels are likely plain vessels, another 44% are from utility ware jars, and 8% are from fine ware bowls and carinated bowls. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 5.88. Approximately 92.5% of the sherds are tempered with grog (and crushed hematite pieces), and the remainder have burned bone temper.

More than 70% of the decorated sherds from the Alligator Pond site are from utility wares, particularly rim and body sherds with various incised or punctated decorative elements (Table 2). Only 10.4% of the decorated sherds have brushed rim and/or body decorations.

Fine wares are relatively common (29.3% of the decorated sherds) at the site (Table 2). The fine ware vessels used at the Alligator Pond site are about equally divided between sherds with a red slip (on one or both sherd surfaces, either from bowls or carinated bowls) and bowls, carinated bowls, and bottle sherds with simple geometric engraved elements (see also Perttula and Thacker 2013:Table 1).

## **LITHIC ARTIFACTS**

Lithic artifacts are relatively abundant in the artifact assemblage at the Alligator Pond site, especially lithic debris, cores, and a range of chipped and ground stone tools (Table 3). About 38% of the chipped stone tools are made on non-local cherts or novaculite; there is a similar proportion of non-local raw materials in the lithic debris, but only 6% of the cores are on non-local raw materials.

**Table 1. Caddo ceramic sherd assemblage from the Alligator Pond site.**

Artifact class	No.	Percent
Plain ware	2211	85.5
Plain rim	32	1.2
Plain body	2061	79.7
Plain base	118	4.6
Utility ware	266	10.3
Utility ware rim	29	1.1
Utility body	237	9.2
Fine ware	110	4.2
Fine ware rim	5	0.2
Fine ware body	105	4.0
Totals	2587	100.0

**Table 2. Decorated sherds from the Alligator Pond site.**

Decorative Method	No.	Percent
<b>Utility ware</b>		
Appliqued	7	1.9
Brushed	32	8.5
Brushed-incised	3	0.8
Brushed-punctated	4	1.1
Incised	128	34.0
Incised-punctated	14	3.7
Lip notched	1	0.3
Pinched	1	0.3
Punctated	76	20.2
Subtotal	266	70.7
<b>Fine ware</b>		
Red-slipped	51	13.6
Engraved	59	15.7
Subtotal	110	29.3
Totals	376	100.0

**Table 3. Lithic artifact assemblage from the Alligator Pond site.**

Artifact class	No.	Percent
Dart points	26	2.5
Biface preforms and fragments	11	1.1
Bifacial knives/tools	2	0.2
Arrow points	26	2.5
Flake tools	25	2.4
Lithic Debris	841	82.6
Cores	48	4.7
Celt	1	0.1
Ground stone tools	24	2.3
Fire-cracked rock	14	1.3
Totals	1018	100.0

There is a wide range of projectile points in the Alligator Pond artifact assemblage (Table 4). Dart points considered to be of Woodland period age—including cf. Darl, Ellis, Gary, Godley, and Kent forms—represent 46% of the entire dart point sample and 57% of the points that can be identified to type. Most of the other dart points represent a Late Archaic use—Bulverde, Morrill, Williams, and Yarbrough types—except for one Johnson point (dating ca. 6000 B.P. in the Middle Archaic) made from a gray novaculite and a side-notched point made from local quartzite.

**Table 4. Projectile points from the Alligator Pond site.**

<b>Dart points</b>		
Bulverde	1	3.8
cf. Darl	1	3.8
Ellis	1	3.8
Gary	8	30.8
Godley	1	3.8
Johnson	1	3.8
Kent	1	3.8
Morrill	1	3.8
Williams	2	7.7
Yarbrough	4	15.4
Unidentified forms	2	7.7
Fragments	3	11.5
Subtotal	26	100.0

**Table 4. Projectile points from the Alligator Pond site, cont.**

<b>Arrow points</b>		
Alba	5	19.2
Bassett	1	3.8
Bonham	1	3.8
Catahoula	1	3.8
Perdiz	3	11.5
Scallorn and/or Homan	3	11.5
Steiner	2	7.7
Preforms	4	15.4
Fragments	6	23.1
Subtotal	26	

The stemmed arrow points in the Alligator Pond artifact assemblage appear to reflect both pre- and post-A.D. 1200 Caddo use. The earlier forms—Alba, Catahoula, Scallorn and/or Homan, and Steiner—comprise 69% of the arrow points that can be identified to type, while the post-A.D. 1200 Bassett, Bonham, and Perdiz points (31% of the points identified to type) suggest some use of the site as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### HISTORIC ARTIFACTS

This third collection from the Alligator Pond site has a single plain whiteware rim sherd that may be associated with the small early 19<sup>th</sup> century historic component there (see Perttula and Thacker 2013).

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Alligator Pond site (41SM442) is situated on an upland ridge in the Saline Creek valley. It has been repeatedly used by aboriginal peoples from as early as ca. 6000 years B.P. until perhaps the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There is also a sparse early 19<sup>th</sup> century component that may be associated with an early Anglo-American settlement of the region; however, if this component represents a pre-1830 occupation, it may mark a habitation site occupied by a Native American group such as the Caddo, whose traditional homelands these were, or the Cherokee, who had immigrated to the area by 1820.

The most substantial and/or intensive aboriginal occupations of the Alligator Pond site took place first during the latter part of the Woodland period (after ca. A.D. 200). This component is marked principally by contracting stem Gary dart points and plain sandy paste ceramic sherds. A later, and principal aboriginal, occupation was by Caddo peoples sometime between ca. A.D. 1000-1300. This occupation was clearly that of a domestic settlement by one or more Caddo families who would have lived in a sturdy wood and thatch house, and their indoor and extra mural use of ceramic vessels for the cooking and serving of food stuffs and liquids, as well as the storage of foods, and their eventual breakage, left a substantial assemblage of sherds from plain ware, utility ware, and fine ware vessels.

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