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The Marcus Kolb Site (41CE438), Cherokee County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Claude McCrocklin conducted metal detecting and test excavations at an historic 19th century site in the upper Neches River basin of East Texas. Based on the findings from that work, unreported until now, McCrocklin believed that this site was occupied by the East Texas Cherokee (see Everett 1990). This site, the Marcus Kolb site (41CE438) (officially recorded in 2009 by Mark Walters), “was confirmed by the artifacts identical with those found on Lost Prairie in Arkansas” (June 8, 2009 personal communication from Claude McCrocklin to Mark Walters). The Lost Prairie sites referred to by McCrocklin are the early 19th century Lost Prairie Cherokee sites along the Red River in southwestern Arkansas investigated by McCrocklin (1992:32-41). The Marcus Kolb site is within the limits of the proposed 1836 treaty land grant between the Texas Cherokee and the Republic of Texas (Figure 1).

SITE SETTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

The Marcus Kolb site is primarily situated on an upland ridge (500-510 feet amsl) overlooking an unnamed and intermittent tributary that drains west to Gum Creek, about 2 km away; there are archaeological deposits along the northern slope of the ridge (490 feet amsl). Gum Creek drains southward into Tails Creek, which is a southward-flowing tributary to the Neches River. The confluence of Tails Creek with the Neches River is about 20 km south of the site.

Through both metal detecting and hand excavations of an unknown size (nor is their precise location known with any accuracy on the landform, though they were primarily on the upland ridge landform), McCrocklin identified on the upland ridge a “main garbage site” and “second digging site” to the west (at the western tip of the ridge), as well as

an area of ceramics east of the main garbage site, along with artifact finds in a barn area at the eastern end of the ridge. At the base of the ridge, down slope from the “main garbage” area, was a third area of archaeological deposits, identified by McCrocklin as a “potential kitchen site.”

19TH CENTURY ARTIFACTS FROM THE MARCUS KOLB SITE

A total of 64 19th century artifacts are in the landowner’s collection from the Marcus Kolb site, including pearlware, porcelain, whiteware, and stoneware sherds (n=33), comprising 52% of the small collection, a few snuff and bottle glass sherds (n=12, 19%), and an assortment of iron, brass, and copper-based artifacts (n=19, 30%). The relative proportion as well as the overall quantity of metal artifacts in the assemblage is biased to an unknown extent because of the intensity of the metal detecting work compared to the amount of controlled hand excavations across the site. Without information on the size and depth of the hand excavations or whether any of the archaeological deposits in those areas were screened, it is currently impossible to determine the density of artifacts across the Marcus Kolb site, or to estimate the intensity of the 19th century occupation. No information is available on the provenience of these artifacts within the site (with one exception, Table 1), unfortunately, nor which kinds of artifacts may have been found together at the site.

The range of both kitchen/domestic (i.e., ceramic artifacts and bottle glass sherds, as well as iron forks and scissor fragments and part of a clothes’ iron), personal (brass and iron buttons), and architectural (cut nails) artifacts collected in metal detecting and limited hand excavations suggest that the occupation of the Marcus Kolb site was domestic in character, perhaps a farmstead with wood framed structures or a log cabin, occupied by a family or

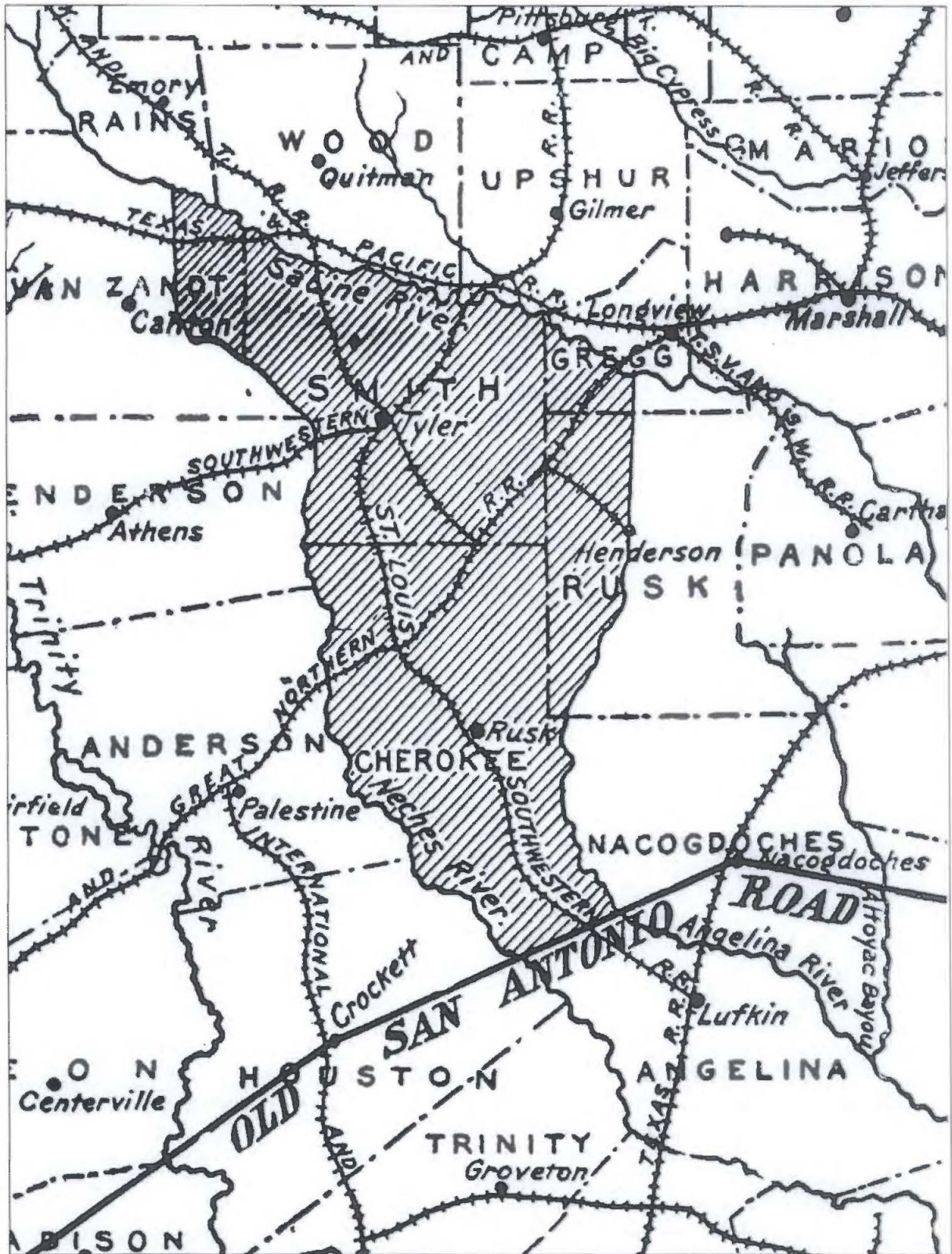


Figure 1. 1836 Cherokee land grant proposed in treaty with the Republic of Texas.

small group of people. The metal artifacts from the site indicate that its occupants had a wagon, horses, guns, and at least one axe for timber harvesting.

The ceramic artifacts from the Marcus Kolb site are dominated by refined earthenware sherds, including blue-tinted plain and decorated pearlware (n=8), plain and decorated whiteware (n=17), plain porcelain (n=1), and a post-1850s plain ironstone sherd (n=1) (Table 1). There are also several stoneware sherds, a yellowware sherd, and a sherd from a molded and glazed stoneware pipe.

Pearlware was introduced in England by Josiah Wedgwood in 1779, whereby he covered the earlier creamware ceramic fabric with a blue-tinged glaze, giving it a whiter fabric color (Sussman 2000a:37). Pearlware became remarkably popular over the approximately 50 years (ca. 1780-1830s) in which it was made. Whiteware ceramics, a harder and even lighter-colored ware, began to be made in the 1820s, but came to dominate the English ceramic market by the 1830s (Sussman 2000b:51; Miller 2000:90). At the Marcus Kolb site, pearlware comprises almost 30% of the refined earthenwares, and the remainder are from what appear to be lighter-colored whiteware plates and cups (see Table 1).

The significant proportion of pearlware sherds in the refined earthenware assemblage (see Table 1) may be compelling evidence that the Marcus Kolb site was occupied sometime before the 1830s. The decorated pearlware includes a black transfer-printed plate with a central romantic/landscape element (Figure 2, bottom row, left) and a hand-painted rim with a green petal and a thin black lip line (Figure 2, top row, left). Black transfer-printed pearlware has a production date range of 1785-1830s, with mean beginning and end production dates of 1825-1838 (Sanford 2000:Table 5). This style of hand-painted pearlware began to be made in England as early as 1810 (Majewski and O'Brien 1987:157).

The decorated whiteware sherds (n=13) include purple transfer-printed, black transfer-printed (see Figure 2, top row, far right), and green transfer-printed sherds (see Figure 2, top row, 3rd from left), a blue shell-edged rim sherd with impressed lines

Table 1. Ceramic Artifacts from the Marcus Kolb site.

Artifact Category	No.
plain pearlware rim and body sherds	6
black transfer-printed pearlware sherd	1
hand-painted pearlware sherd	1
plain whiteware sherds	4
purple transfer-printed whiteware sherd	1
black transfer-printed whiteware sherds	4
green transfer-printed whiteware sherd	1
blue shell-edged whiteware sherd, impressed lines and non-scalloped lip	1
annular ware, whiteware sherds	6
porcelain sherds, plain	1
plain ironstone rim sherd*	1
yellowware sherds	1
salt-glazed stoneware sherds	2
salt-glazed ink bottle sherd	1
black stoneware sherd with clear ext. glaze, black paste	1
brown glazed molded stoneware pipe sherd	1
Totals	33

*found in the area down the hill from the "garbage" site

and a non-scalloped lip (see Figure 2, top row, 2nd from left), as well as annular ware (see Figure 2, bottom row, 2nd-4th from left) with narrow blue and black bands as well as larger gray and blue zones. The annular sherds comprise 46% of the sample of decorated whiteware sherds at the Marcus Kolb site (see Table 1).

The date ranges of production of the different colors of transfer-printed ceramics found at the site are: green (1818-1859); black (1785-1864); and purple (1814-1867) (Samford 2000:Table 5). Because these transfer-printed sherds are whitewares, and based strictly on the production date ranges, the occupation at the Marcus Kolb site could have ranged from ca. 1830s-1867. Mean beginning and end production dates for the most common black transfer printed wares suggest these sherds are from

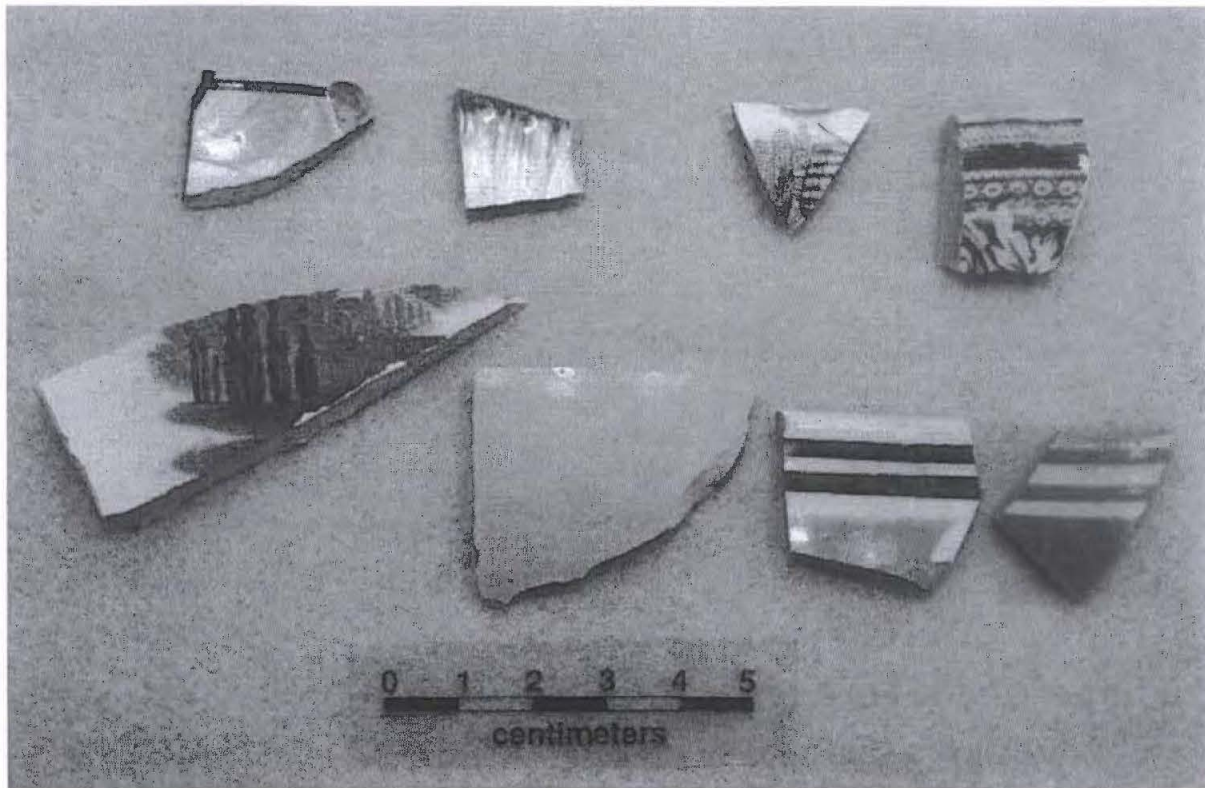


Figure 2. Decorated refined earthenware sherds from the Marcus Kolb site: top row, left to right: hand-painted (pearlware); blue shell-edged (whiteware); green transfer-printed (whiteware); black transfer-printed rim (whiteware); bottom row, left to right: black transfer-printed (pearlware); gray annular ware (whiteware); white, blue, and black annular ware (whiteware); gray, blue, and white annular ware (whiteware).

vessels that were most likely manufactured between ca. 1830-1838 (Samford 2000:Table 5). The earthy tones of the annular wares from the site—white, black, gray, and white bands—suggest these sherds are from early (ca. 1840s) annular ware (Majewski and O'Brien 1987:163).

The shell-edged whiteware from the Marcus Kolb site has a blue painted edge, impressed lines, and a non-scalloped lip. Blue shell-edged plates and platters with unscalloped rims and impressed lines were being made by the 1840s, while the earlier symmetrical scalloped shell-edged ware continued to be made into the 1830s (Hunter and Miller 1994, 2009:13); this earlier form is absent in the Marcus Kolb site artifact sample.

The stoneware sherds are from a minimum of four vessels, if the yellowware sherd is included amongst the stoneware assemblage (see Table 1). Salt-glazed sherds are the most common utility wares here (Figure 3), as they are at other pre-1860 sites in northeastern Texas (e.g., Cliff et al. 2005); they first began to be made at local kilns in the 1830s

(Greer 1981). One of the salt-glazed sherds is from an ink bottle (Figure 3, middle sherd). Another distinctive stoneware sherd has a black paste, a clear glaze on the exterior surface, and readily apparent throw lines on both interior and exterior surfaces (Figure 3, sherd on the left). This may be an example of an early to mid-19th century non-locally produced stoneware vessel (Missi Green, March 2010 personal communication).

One of the salt-glazed stoneware sherds from the Marcus Kolb site, a rim sherd, appears to have been deliberately flaked or chipped along both edges of the piece (Figures 4a-b). This chipping was likely done to shape the piece into an expedient tool, probably as a scraper used "to scrape the hair off animal hides. The chipped edges caught the hair and pulled it off" (McCrocklin 1993:12). McCrocklin (1993:13) has documented both chipped glass and ceramic artifacts at Historic Indian sites in Louisiana and Texas that had been occupied by Coushatta, Cherokee, Delaware, and Caddo groups; these tools have also been found on Anglo-American

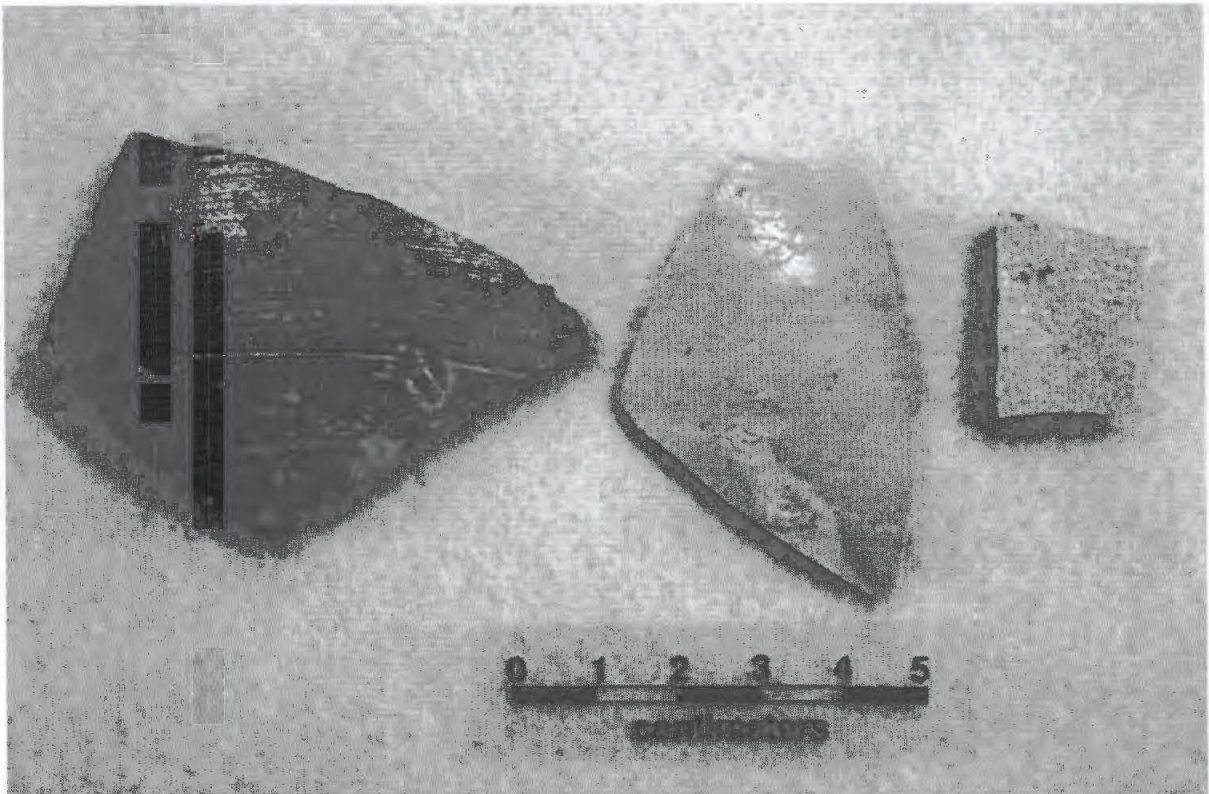


Figure 3. Stoneware sherds: left to right: black paste stoneware sherd; salt-glazed ink bottle sherd; salt-glazed sherd.

sites, but apparently not with the frequency noted on Historic Indian sites.

The one pipe sherd from the Marcus Kolb site is a mid-19th century stoneware form with a reddish-brown paste and a clear glaze. The elbow-shaped stoneware pipe is a reed stem pipe with a replaceable reed stem, and is mold-made, with a 21 cm orifice diameter ribbed bowl (Figure 5). These sorts of pipes were made at several pottery kilns in the region, including the J. S. Nash factory in operation in Marion County, Texas, between 1850-1880 (Lebo 1988:282). Similar styles of molded elbow pipes have been recovered in earlier contexts from 1837-1846 and 1852-1857 Anglo-American farmsteads in northeastern Texas as well as the 1840s-1860s port of Monterey (Nelson and Pertula 2003; Pertula 1989:99; Pertula and Nelson 2010).

Yellowware began to be produced in the 1820s in England, but by the 1840s it was also being manufactured in the United States, especially in the Midwest (Leibowitz 1985:4). The peak production of yellowware vessels was in the 1860s and 1870s, although it was still being made in the early 1900s (Leibowitz 1985:14).

The bottle glass from the Marcus Kolb site are from hand-blown bottles and snuff bottles of several different colors, including aqua, colorless, and brown (Table 2). They have applied lips (Figure 6, second through fourth from the left), suggesting they were made in the early to mid-19th century. These vessels or containers would have held medicinal liquids, liquor (beer and wine), and snuff. One of the aqua bottle glass sherds has unidentifiable embossed lettering on the base, a technique which began to be used about 1850 (Newman 1970:74).

The metal artifacts found at the Marcus Kolb site represent a diverse assortment of horse and stable gear, tools, cutlery, and gun parts (Table 3). More specifically they range from horse and wagon parts to buttons, cut nails (1820-1891, Wells 1998), iron forks, gun parts, and an iron axe.

The two cut nails (1820-1891) indicate that a wood framed structure may have been present at the site. There are also two hand-forged clamp type nails (Figure 7).

In addition to a plain iron button (20.3 mm in diameter) in the collection, there is also a slightly smaller (19.0 mm in diameter) brass button with a

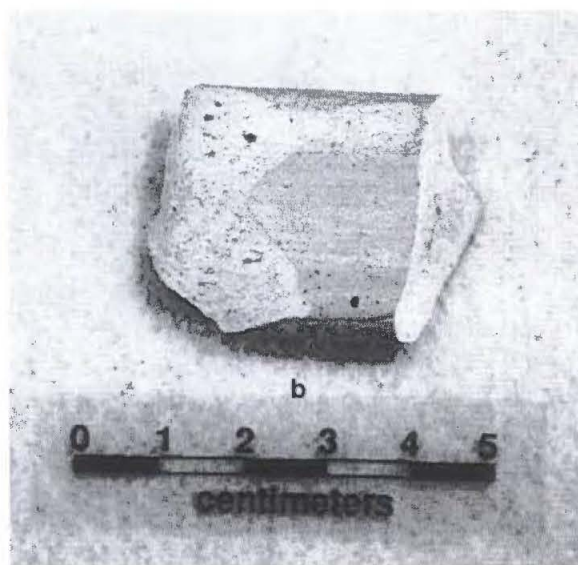
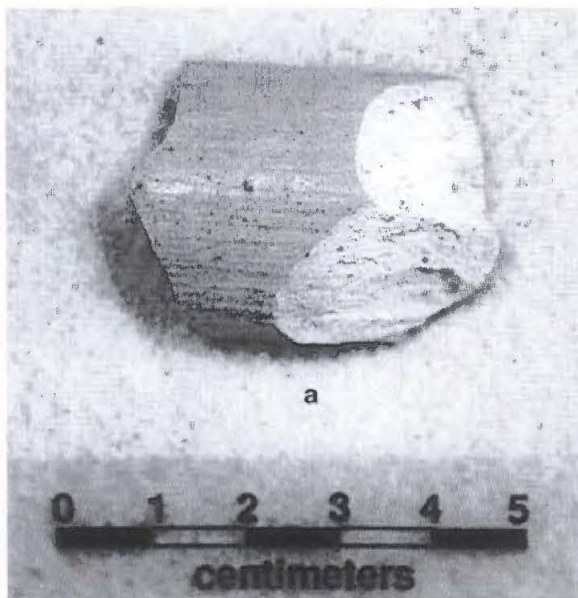


Figure 4. Two views of possible worked salt-glazed stoneware sherd: a, exterior view; b, interior view.

single interior stay or attachment (Figure 8, left). It has raised lettering in a narrow band encircling the button stay: the lettering is "Benedict Burnham Extra."

There is also a cut and crimped rectangular piece (possibly a piece cut from a thin kettle sheet) of a thin copper-based material in the metal artifacts from the Marcus Kolb site (see Figure 8, right). There are two stays or attachments on the apparent back side of the piece, and the crimping is along one corner. The purpose or function of this artifact is not known; McCrocklin identified it as an "ornament."

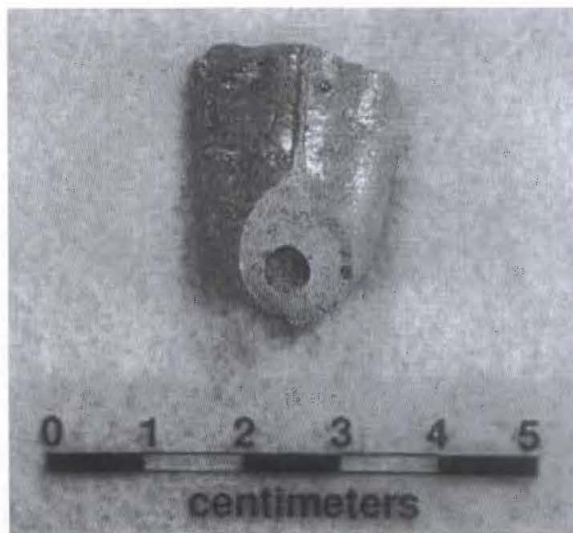


Figure 5. Stoneware molded elbow pipe.

Table 2. Glass Artifacts.

Artifact Category	No.
Brown snuff glass sherds	1
Brown bottle glass sherds	2
Aqua bottle glass sherds	7
Colorless bottle glass sherds	2
Totals	12

A roughly oblong mass of lead (weighing 260 g) was recovered from the site, most likely during the metal detecting work (Figure 9). The lead mass (73 x 52 mm in length and width) may have been the raw material used for the on-site manufacture of lead balls for use in a rifle or musket.

Another artifact that apparently provides tangible evidence of the use of weaponry on the Marcus Kolb site is a possible iron gun worm (Figure 10, top). The broken and poorly preserved piece is 87 mm in length.

A forged piece to a 19th century wagon (see Spivey 1979), possibly a tongue pin or a linch pin, is in the collection of metal artifacts (see Figure 10, bottom)

There are also portions of two iron horse ring bits from the site (Figure 11). The two rings of the bit range from 42-59 mm in diameter, while the attached mouthpieces are 88-90 mm in length.

Iron artifacts used for domestic purposes include forks and portions of a pair of scissors. The

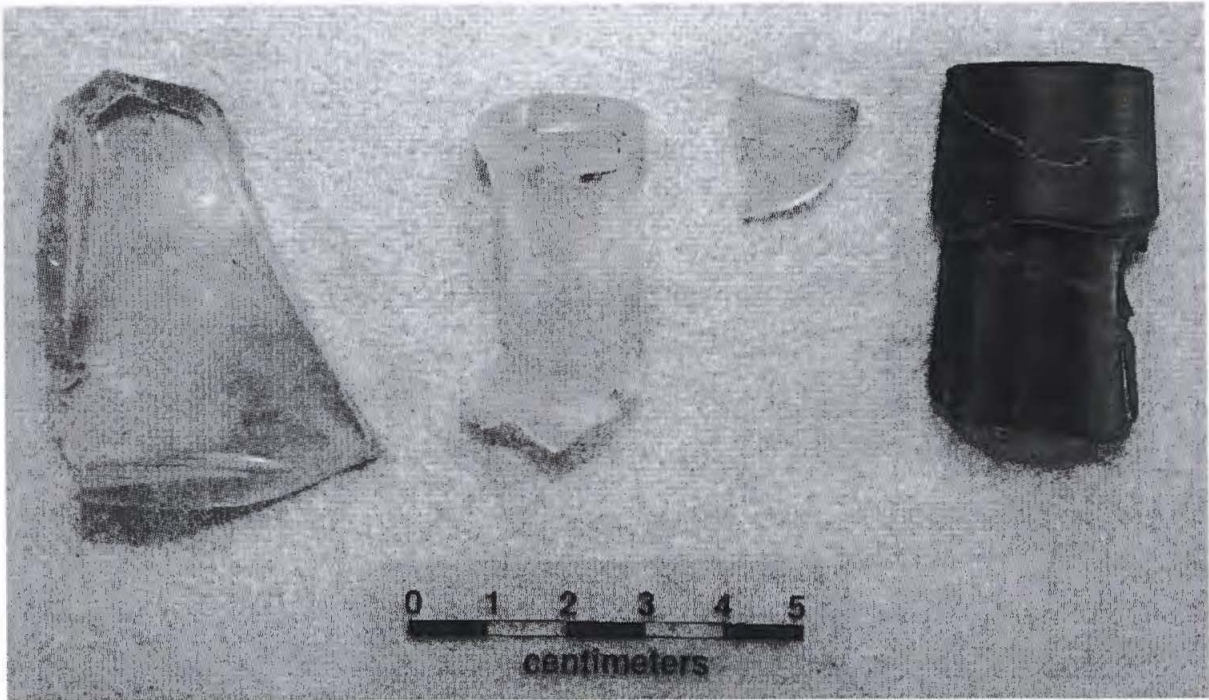


Figure 6. Bottle glass sherds: left to right: aqua base; aqua lip; aqua lip; brown lip sherd.

Table 3. Metal Artifacts.

Artifact Category	No.
Iron horse bits	2
Iron wagon part, tongue pin?	1
Iron forged nail or bolt	1
Iron sawmill part?	1
Hand-held iron clothes handle	1
Iron axe	1
Plain iron button	1
Brass button	1
2-tine Iron fork	2
Iron scissors handle/finger hold fragment	1
Cut nails	2
Hand-forged clamp type nails	2
Iron gun worm	1
Lead mass for manufacture of lead balls	1
Copper-base "ornament" with crimped edges	1
Totals	19

2-tined iron forks from the Marcus Kolb site would have originally had bone handles (Figure 12, top and middle), but those have long since been eroded or decayed. The scissor fragment consists of a 39

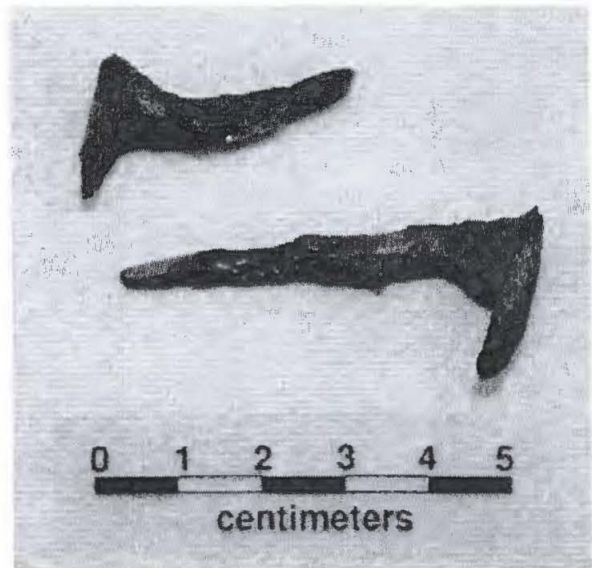


Figure 7. Nails, hand-forged clamp type.

cm diameter finger hold and a 65 cm portion of one broken scissor blade (Figure 12, bottom).

The complete "Kentucky pattern" iron axe (Russell 1967:272 and Figure 70c) from the Marcus Kolb site is 180 mm in length, 104 mm in width at the bit and 82 mm wide at the poll end, and 28 mm thick at the poll end (Figure 13). The bit end is only



Figure 8. Brass button and copper-based crimped artifact: left to right: brass button; copper-based artifact.



Figure 9. Lead mass.



Figure 10. Gun part and wagon part: top to bottom: iron gun worm; iron wagon part.



Figure 11. Iron horse bits.



Figure 12. Scissors and 2-tined forks: top to bottom: 2-tined iron fork; 2-tined iron fork; iron scissors handle.

13 mm thick. The opening slot or eye for the wood handle is 58 mm in length, while the lateral extension on the other side of the eye is 59 mm in width. This type of axe probably dates to the early part of the 19th century, ca. 1830s (Russell 1967; O'Shea and Ludwickson 1992:171).

A single piece of unburned animal bone, probably from a cow, is also in the collection from the Marcus Kolb site.

Possible Late 19th-Early 20th Century Artifacts

Late 19th to early 20th century artifacts were found in the barn area at the Marcus Kolb site. These include brown, purple, and amber bottle glass sherds (n=3), one plain whiteware body sherd, and two green or blue 1930s-era Fiesta ware sherds (see Majewski and O'Brien 1987:164). The green Fiesta



Figure 13. Iron axe.

ware sherd has a green glaze on the interior surface of a vessel and a brown lead glaze on the exterior vessel surface. Another piece of purple (1880-1918) bottle glass is in the collection, along with a 20th century plow part, but their recovery locations within the site are not known.

PREHISTORIC ARTIFACTS FROM THE MARCUS KOLB SITE

The sole prehistoric artifact collected from the Marcus Kolb site is a Late Archaic (ca. 5000-3000 years B.P.) style dart point stem fragment made from a non-local and heat-pocked black chert. The stem is square or parallel-sided, with a flat base and small barbs. It is 5.5 mm thick, and has a 17.8 mm stem width.

CONCLUSIONS

Although archaeological investigations at the Marcus Kolb site have been limited to date,

nevertheless the recovered artifacts (especially the black transfer-printed pearlware sherds and the worked stoneware sherd, and possibly the cut and crimped copper-based artifact) suggest that the site could have been occupied as early as the 1820s-early 1830s, during the time when this part of northeastern Texas was occupied by the Cherokee. This tantalizing possibility of a Cherokee Indian occupation is negated to some extent by the chronological evidence that can be drawn from the decorated whiteware sherds. The preponderance of that evidence is more consistent with a ca. 1840-1860 occupation, one that postdated the Cherokee occupation of East Texas. That would mean that the historic occupation of the Marcus Kolb site is most likely the product of an Anglo-American settlement.

To further evaluate the possibility that the Marcus Kolb site may have been occupied by a group of Cherokee Indians between ca. 1820-1839, when they settled in the region, more intensive archaeological investigations—including shovel testing and systematic metal detecting at a minimum—are called for to gather a larger assemblage of 19th century artifacts

from controlled subsurface contexts and establish if distinctive cultural features are preserved at the site. A larger assemblage of artifacts would likely contain more chronologically-specific specimens that could refine or refute the findings suggested here. Particular kinds of artifacts may also be found—such as glass beads, silver artifacts or evidence of its workmanship, metal arrow points or other tools made from barrel or kettle scrap, or perhaps even sherds of Cherokee ceramics—that would lend much-needed support to the notion that the Marcus Kolb site was occupied by the Cherokee Indian peoples in the early part of the 19th century.

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