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Archaeological Sites Along King Creek in Western Nacogdoches County, in East Texas

Timothy K. Perttula, Bo Nelson, and Mark Walters

INTRODUCTION

The King Creek area of western Nacogdoches County in East Texas is known to be a locality where Historic Caddo sites (of the Allen phase, ca. A.D. 1650-1800) are abundant (Middlebrook 2007; Perttula et al. 2010a; Walker and Perttula 2010), or at least abundant relative to many other parts of East Texas. In addition to there being at least two branches of the late 17th-early 19th century El Camino Real de los Tejas that bisect the area on their way to crossings on the nearby Angelina River, three important Historic Caddo sites have been identified not far apart in the valley: J. T. King (41NA15) (Figure 1), David King (41NA321), and Wes Wisener (41NA336); the David King and Wes Wisener sites lie a short distance south of the J. T. King site, on the west side of the King Creek valley. Tom Middlebrook (2010 personal communication) suggests these sites, and other Historic Caddo sites yet to be identified in the valley, are part of an early 18th century Hainai Caddo village that had farmstead compounds dispersed across at least a 3-4 km stretch of the valley.

In 2009, we had the opportunity to conduct archaeological survey investigations on private land on King Creek and one of its tributaries. The survey area is about 1-1.5 km northeast of the J. T. King site (see Figure 1). The principal focus of the survey work was to identify other Historic Caddo sites in the King Creek valley. Our interest in this property had first been piqued because the landowner had reported that a iron Spanish sword had been found on the property some years earlier; the landowner also mentioned that there were preserved segments of El Camino Real de los Tejas on the property. This article summarizes the findings from a first round of archaeological survey investigations

SITES

A total of six new archaeological sites (41NA323-328) have been identified to date along this particular stretch of King Creek. Three of the sites have prehistoric and/or Caddo occupations (41NA323, 41NA325-326), a fourth appears to be of Historic Caddo age (41NA327), a fifth has both unknown prehistoric and late 19th-early 20th century artifacts (41NA324), and the last site was occupied in the early to mid-19th century (41NA328). During the course of the archaeological survey investigations, a total of 167 prehistoric and 46 historic artifacts were recovered from surface collection and/or shovel testing (Table 1); the majority of the artifacts (n=148), all aboriginal, are from 41NA327.

Prehistoric and/or Caddo Sites

41NA323 is on a rise at the edge of a wooded toe slope (310-320 feet amsl) overlooking the floodplain of King Creek. The estimated site area is 1200 m² (0.3 acres). This is the site that the landowner indicated a Spanish sword was found eroding out of a cut bank some years ago.

Two positive shovel tests, documenting archaeological deposits from 0-60 cm bs, and a small surface collection, recovered artifacts from what appears to be primarily a Caddo site that was occupied sometime after ca. A.D. 1200. The temporal estimate is based on the occurrence of brushed (n=2) and brushed-punctated (n=1) ceramic sherds from the shovel testing; a parallel incised body sherd was also recovered at the site. The brushing of utility wares by Caddo potters in the Angelina River basin postdates ca. A.D. 1200, and these decorative methods on ceramic vessels continued until at least the early 18th century. Thus, it is pos-

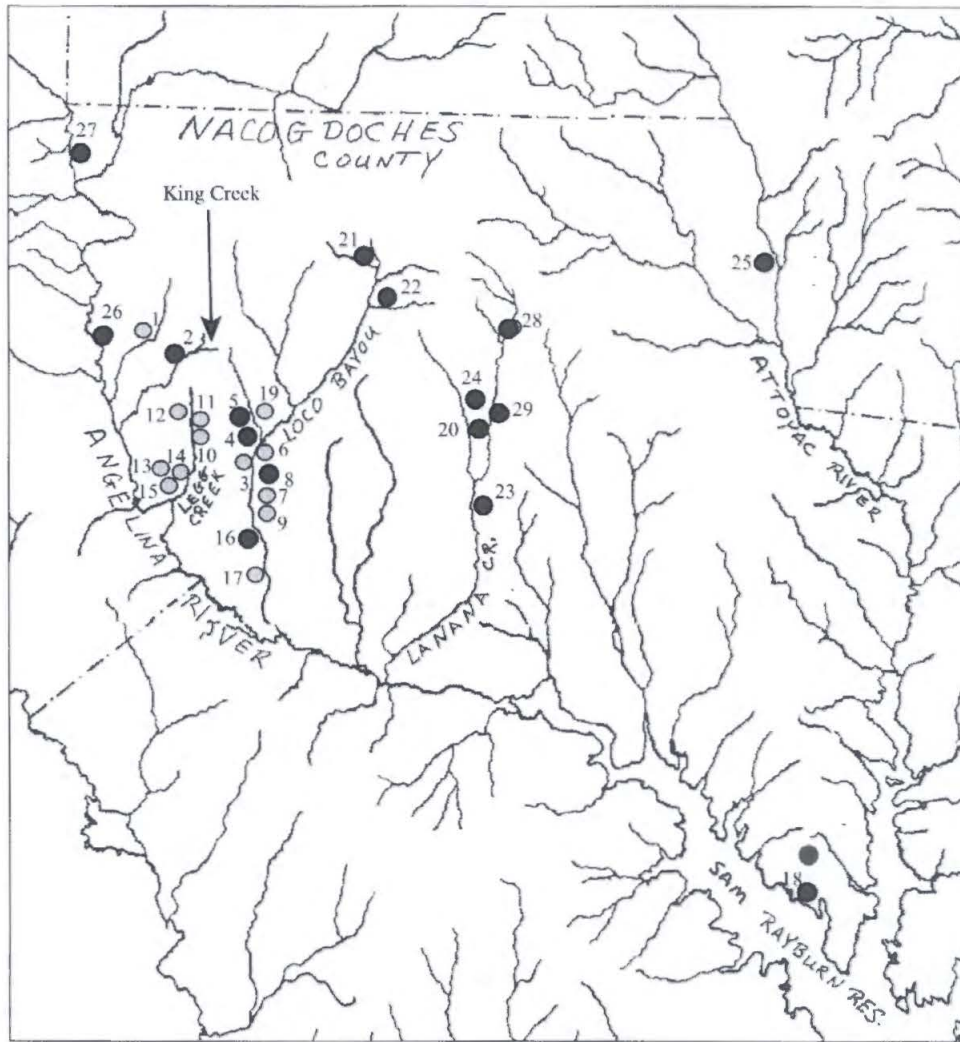


Figure 1. Known and possible Historic Caddo sites in Nacogdoches County, Texas (from Middlebrook 2007:Figure 1).

1-NA6 Dorsey	9-NA29 Perkins	17-NA65	25-Joe Little
2-NA15 King	10-NA33	18-NA67	26-AL Self
3-NA18	11-NA44 Chayah	19-NA111 Dick Shipp	27-WT Williamson
4-NA21 Mayhew	12-NA47	20-NA113	28-Appleby Bead
5-NA22 Iron Rock	13-NA53	21-NA187 Loco Fork	29-Nac. East Bead
6-NA23 Loco Bottom	14-NA Cecil Sparks	22-NA202 Stevens	
7-NA26	15-NA55	23-NA206 Steve Spradley	
8-NA27 Deshazo	16-NA60 Henry M.	24-NA223 Guadalupe Pilar	

sible that 41NA323 could have been occupied by an Historic Caddo group, and the discovery of the Spanish sword would lend credence to this suggestion, but a larger sample of plain and decorated sherds (as well as the recovery of other European trade goods) would be needed to determine that with any confidence.

The lithic artifacts from 41NA323 include a single piece of gray chert lithic debris from a shovel test, and two chipped tools from the surface. These

are a unifacial flake tool (gray chert) and a petrified wood biface fragment. Presumably these artifacts are associated with the Caddo occupation.

41NA325 has both Woodland and Caddo occupations. The site is on a small toe slope (310-330 feet amsl) about 25 m north of a tributary to King Creek. Artifacts were noted over a 4000 m² area (1 acre) in surface and shovel test contexts. The one positive shovel test documented archaeological deposits that extend from 0-40 cm bs.

Table 1. Summary of the artifacts collected during the archaeological survey investigations.

Site	Prehistoric to Early Historic					Historic				
	PS*	DS	DP	T	LD	WC	N	SW	G	D/Br
41NA323	2	4	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
41NA324	—	—	—	—	3	4	—	6	1	—
41NA325	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
41NA326	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—
41NA327	35	99	1	3	10	—	—	—	—	—
41NA328	—	—	—	—	—	12	18	—	2	3
Totals	38	104	1	5	19	16	18	6	3	3

* PS=plain sherd; DS=decorated sherd; DP=dart point; T=tool; LD=lithic debris; WC=whiteware ceramics; N=cut nails; SW=stoneware; G=glass, both window and bottle; D/Br=daub/brick

Artifacts found at 41NA325 include a piece of gray chert lithic debris from the surface, along with a grog-tempered diagonal incised body sherd from a Caddo utility ware vessel of unknown age. The one shovel test recovered a plain sandy paste Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* body sherd. This type of pottery is found in ca. 500 B.C. to A.D. 800 Woodland period contexts in the Angelina River basin in East Texas (Story 1990; Perttula 2008).

The last of the prehistoric sites in this survey area is 41NA326, which is located on a lower upland slope (310 feet amsl) overlooking the floodplain of King Creek and a tributary stream 150 m to the north that flows west a short distance to a confluence with King Creek. Shovel testing and surface artifacts indicate that the site covers ca. 1350 m² (0.3 acres). Two positive shovel tests document archaeological deposits between 20–40 cm in depth.

Only prehistoric lithic debris (n=4) of an unknown age were found at 41NA326. These include flakes on local raw materials—brown chert (n=1), quartzite (n=1), and petrified wood (n=1)—as well as a non-local piece of gray novaculite.

Possible Historic Caddo Site

This possible Historic Caddo site (41NA327) is on a wooded alluvial rise and alluvial fan (290 feet amsl) immediately adjacent to the King Creek floodplain. It covers an estimated 10,800 m² (2.7 acres) as defined by 14 positive shovel tests. Archaeological deposits extend from 0–50 cm bs, based on the shovel tests and the excavation of Unit 1, a 1 x 1 m

unit. The mean artifact density in the shovel testing at 41NA327 is 5.5 per positive shovel test, or ca. 44 artifacts per m². The one excavation unit has documented an area with a density of 71 artifacts per m² (Table 2). Ceramic sherds comprise more than 90% of the artifacts from the site (see Table 1).

The Caddo ceramics from 41NA327 include 32 plain grog-tempered body (n=31) and base (n=1) sherds and 99 decorated rim and body sherds (Table 3). More than 86% of the decorated sherds (including 83% of the rim sherds) are from utility ware vessels, with the remaining 13.1% coming from broken engraved or engraved-brushed fine ware vessels. Of the utility wares (n=86), 89% are from jars with brushed, brushed-incised, or brushed-punctated decorations, followed by jar sherds with incised (5%), punctated (2.3%), incised-punctated (1.2%), and applied (1.2%) decorations.

Table 4 provides a more specific breakdown of the decorative elements identified in the 41NA327 utility wares and fine wares. Most of the jars are decorated with brushing on the rim and/or body (probably from Bullard Brushed jars), although two rims are brushed as well as punctated below their folded over rims, and a fifth rim has horizontal incised lines on it. Jar bodies had primarily parallel (likely vertical in orientation), vertical, overlapping, and opposed brushed marks on them, with small amounts of body sherds with brushed-incised lines (Spradley Brushed-Incised?, an Historic Caddo type in the Angelina and Neches river basins), brushed-punctated body sherds, a few incised sherds (including one with a cross-hatched element), and a single

Table 2. Summary of the artifacts collected from Unit 1 at 41NA327.

Depth (cm bs)	Plain Sherd	Decorated Sherd	Chipped Stone Tool	Ground Stone Tool	Lithic Debris	N
0-10	5	12	–	–	–	17
10-20	7	13	–	1	2	23
20-30	5	13	–	–	–	18
30-40	2	8	1	–	2	13
Totals	19	46	1	1	4	71

body sherd with an unidentifiable incised-punctated decorative element.

The two most distinctive fine ware sherds from 41NA327 are two King Engraved body sherds with cross-hatched engraved zones/panels (see Table 4). As recently defined, the King Engraved type has cross-hatched engraved zones, either in panels, panel dividers, or in large bands apparently oriented in several directions on the rim panel. Similar sherds have been documented at several Historic Caddo Allen phase sites, among them the Deshazo site (Fields 1995:Figure 70d, j-l), the J. T. King site (Walker and Perttula 2010), the David King site (Perttula et al. 2010a), the Henry M. site (Perttula et al. 2010b:Figures 14b and 15b), as well as in other

Historic Caddo ceramic assemblages in the Angelina River basin (Shawn Marceaux, November 2008 personal communication).

Another fine ware sherd has an engraved design (horizontal lines) on the rim of a carinated bowl, and the vessel body has horizontal brushing marks (see Table 4). The brushing of fine ware vessel bodies is a practice seen on both Late Caddo (ca. A.D. 1400-1650) and Historic Caddo vessels in the Angelina-Neches river basins, so its occurrence at 41NA327 would not be unexpected if the site dates to the Historic Caddo period. Other engraved sherds are currently unidentifiable to type, but include examples with geometric elements, as well as two with panels filled with horizontal or parallel engraved lines (see Table 4).

Table 3. Decorated sherds from 41NA327.

Decorative Method	Rim	Body	N
Utility Wares			
Brushed	4	68	72
Brushed-Incised	–	2	2
Brushed-Punctated	–	3	3
Punctated	–	2	2
Incised	1	4	5
Incised-Punctated	–	1	1
Appliqued	–	1	1
Fine Wares			
Engraved	1	11	12
Engraved-brushed	–	1	1
Totals	6	93	99

Table 4. Decorative elements on the utility ware and fine ware sherds from 41NA327.

Decorative Element	Rim	Body	N
Utility Wares			
Appliqued ridge	–	1	1
Horizontal brushed	2	–	2
Opposed brushed	–	3	3
Overlapping brushed	–	6	6
Parallel brushed	–	60	60
Vertical brushed	–	1	1
Opposed brushed-incised line	–	2	2
Horizontal brushed and tool punctates on folded over rim	1	–	1
Overlapping brushed and tool punctates on folded rim	1	–	1
Parallel brushed with tool punctated row pushed through the brushing	–	1	1
Tool punctated row	–	2	2
Horizontal Incised lines	1	1	2
Cross-hatched Incised lines	–	1	1
Parallel incised lines	–	1	1
Single straight incised line	–	1	1
Straight incised line adjacent to linear punctated zone	–	1	1
Subtotal	5	81	86
Fine Wares			
Cross-hatched engraved zone/panel+	–	2	2
Horizontal engraved lines/horizontal brushing on body; CB	–	1	1
Horizontal and diagonal opposed engraved lines	1*	–	1
Opposed sets of parallel engraved lines	–	1	1
Opposed engraved lines and panel filled with parallel engraved lines	–	1	1
Panel filled with horizontal engraved lines, CB	–	1	1
Parallel engraved lines	–	1	1
Single straight engraved line	–	5	5
Subtotal	1	12	13

* this rim sherd has a possible Redwine mode rim (Walters 2010), with a folded over and flat lip;
 CB=carinated bowl; +=King Engraved

Overall, the ceramic sherd assemblage from 41NA327 is quite similar in character to the three Historic Caddo sites situated 1-2 km downstream on King Creek (Table 5). It is true that no Patton Engraved sherds—the quintessential Historic Caddo ceramic type in the Angelina-Neches river basin—have been found at 41NA327, but then again only 13 small engraved sherds have been recovered at the site during our limited archaeological investigations. King Engraved, another Historic Caddo fine ware type, is present at 41NA327. More telling is the amount of brushed sherds in the 41NA327 assemblage, as the proportion of brushed sherds in an assemblage as a whole, or its proportions in the decorated sherd assemblage, are key measures in the identification of Historic Caddo sites in the Angelina River basin in the absence of European trade goods (see Middlebrook 2007; Perttula et al. 2010a, 2010b; Walker and Perttula 2010).

By the late 17th-early 18th centuries, for example, in Caddo sites in the Angelina River basin such as Deshazo (41NA27), Mayhew (41NA21), Steven Spradley (41NA206), and the Mission San Jose de la Nasoni sites (41RK191, 198, 200), brushed sherds account for between 50-90% of all the decorated sherds. All of the King Creek sites, including 41NA327, discussed here have assemblages where between 69-78.5% of the decorated sherds are brushed. Furthermore, more than 51% of all the sherds (plain and decorated) from these generally contemporaneous sites have brushed decorations, and the highest proportion (58.8%) is documented from 41NA327 (see Table 5).

Another measure of the age of the Caddo occupation at 41NA327 is the plain/decorated sherd

ratio (P/DR) (see Table 5). This ratio appears to hold considerable promise as an independent means of establishing the age of Caddo ceramic-bearing components on Historic Caddo sites in the Angelina-Neches River basin. For example, Historic Caddo sites in this region have P/DR values that are less than 0.60, but Caddo sites that are older have P/DR values that range from 0.77 to greater than 4.00. For example, the P/DR ratio from the ca. A.D. 1675-1715 occupation at the Deshazo site (41NA27) is only 0.30 (Fields 1995). The Allen phase component at the Kah-hah-ko-wha site (41CE354) has a P/DR of 0.20 (Perttula and Nelson 2007a:72, 74), while Historic Caddo (Nabedache Caddo) ceramic assemblage on San Pedro Creek (Perttula and Nelson 2006, 2007b; Perttula et al. 2010a) have P/DR ratios that range from 0.07-0.60. The P/DR ratios from the four Caddo sites on King Creek listed in Table 5 range only between 0.33-0.51, and it seems reasonable to conclude that all four sites are generally contemporaneous Historic Caddo settlements. Further investigations at 41NA327 will be geared to acquiring a larger sample of both plain and decorated sherds to refine the select ceramic comparisons, as well as determining if European trade goods are present at the site; these goods are rare (a few beads, lead balls, kettle fragments) at the other King Creek Historic sites.

In addition to the possible Historic Caddo ceramic sherds from 41NA327, there are three Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* body sherds from ST 11 (0-20 cm bs), ST 12 (0-20 cm bs), and ST 19 (20-40 cm bs). The recovery of these sherds is evidence that 41NA327 was also occupied by Mossy Grove Culture people (see Story 1990; Perttula 2008) some time during the lengthy Woodland period.

Table 5. Selected ceramic comparisons between 41NA327 and nearby Historic Caddo sites.

Comparisons	J. T. King (41NA15)	David King (41NA321)	Wes Wisener (41NA336)	41NA327
Plain to Decorated Sherd Ratio (P/DR)	0.51	0.36	0.37	0.33
% Brushed in decorated sherds	78.5	69.0	76.8	77.8
% Brushed among all sherds	52.0	50.7	55.9	58.8
Sherd sample size	1694	209	272	131*

*Does not include three Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* sherds

A dart point fragment from ST 7 (40-50 cm bs) suggests that 41NA327 was also occupied during the Archaic period, perhaps ca. 4000 B.P. or earlier. The dart point tip and blade, made from a light gray chert, has a distinctive beveled blade, an attribute more commonly seen on points made and used prior to the Late Archaic in East Texas.

Other lithic artifacts—of unknown temporal attribution—include a petrified wood hammerstone from Unit 1 (20 cm bs), an expedient unifacial flake tool (gray chert) from Unit 1 (30-40 cm bs), and 10 pieces of lithic debris. The lithic debris is from the knapping of several different raw materials: quartzite (n=3, 100% cortical); hematite (n=1, 100% cortical); petrified wood (n=1, 100% cortical); red chert (n=1, 100% cortical); grayish-brown chert (n=1, 100% cortical); brownish-gray chert (n=1, 100% cortical); dark gray chert (n=1, 0% cortical); and white-gray chert (n=1, 100% cortical). Known local raw materials (quartzite, hematite, petrified wood, and red chert) comprise 60% of the small sample of lithic debris; the other 40% (cherts of various colors) of the lithic debris may be from non-local raw material sources in Central Texas or stream gravels in the Brazos, Trinity, and Neches rivers (see Girard 1995).

A single piece of burned animal bone was recovered from ST 7 (0-20 cm bs)

UNKNOWN PREHISTORIC AND LATE 19TH-EARLY 20TH CENTURY SITE

This site (41NA324) is situated on an upland ridge (350 feet amsl) about 280 m north of an intermittent tributary to King Creek. It is about 2000 m² in size (0.5 acres) around the edge of a 2 acre well pad, as estimated from the surface extent of artifacts, but may be larger based on the size of the landform. No shovel testing was done at 41NA324.

The prehistoric artifacts on the surface consist of three pieces of non-cortical lithic debris of an unknown age. The lithic debris are dark gray chert (n=2), probably from a non-local (i.e., Central Texas) raw material source, and a white quartzite (n=1), possibly Glover quartzite from a Neches River source (see Pertulla and Nelson 2006).

The historic artifacts found at 41NA324 are likely from a tenant farm that was known to be in this general location (George Perry Campbell, May 2009 personal communication). The artifacts

include four pieces of plain whiteware (n=2) and porcelain (n=2), late 19th to early 20th century stone ware sherds (one sherd with a Bristol glaze with a cobalt tint; one sherd with an Albany glaze; three sherds with a brown lead glaze; and one salt-glazed sherd) (see Greer 1981; Lebo 1987), and a clear tableware glass sherd.

EARLY TO MID-19TH CENTURY SITE

41NA328 is an early to mid-19th century farmstead on an upland landform (350 feet amsl). In addition to archaeological deposits that extend from 0-40 cm bs over a 2500 m² area (0.6 acres), there is a visible well depression at the site, and there are ruts from a section of El Camino Real de los Tejas that run just south of the farmstead.

Seven positive shovel tests at 41NA328 contain early to mid-19th century plain (n=7) and decorated (n=5) whiteware ceramics, cut nails (n=18, 1820-1891, see Wells 2000), brown beer/snuff bottle glass (n=1), aqua-colored window glass (n=1), daub or burned clay (n=2), and hand-made brick fragments (n=1); the daub and brick fragments are likely from a chimney associated with a wood-framed structure that stood on the site. The density of artifacts in the shovel testing is 5.0 artifacts per positive shovel test, or ca. 40 artifacts per m².

One of the decorated whiteware sherds from 41NA328 is a blue painted shell-edged rim with a non-scalloped rim but impressed lines. 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 41NA328 artifact sample. The other four decorated sherds are transfer-printed, either brown (n=1), light blue (n=1), red (n=1), or black (n=1). The date ranges of production of the different colors of transfer-printed ceramics found at the site are: brown (1818-1869), light blue (1818-1867), red (1818-1880), and black (1785-1864) (Samford 2000:Table 5). Because these transfer-printed sherds are whitewares, and based strictly on the production date ranges, the occupation at 41NA328 could have ranged from ca. 1830s-1880. Mean beginning and end production dates for the transfer printed wares suggest these sherds are from vessels that were most likely manufactured between ca. 1830-1843 (Samford 2000:Table 5).

The one piece of aqua-colored window glass suggests that at some time, the wood-framed structure at 41NA328 had a window installed in one or more of the walls. The pane thickness (1.9 mm) of the one window glass sherd suggests the window pane was manufactured and installed in the early 1870s (Moir 1987).

CONCLUSIONS

The recent archaeological survey of a parcel of private property along King Creek in western Nacogdoches County in East Texas has documented sporadic use of the land since at least 4000 years ago by ancestors of the modern day Caddo Nation of Oklahoma. The existence of a branch of El Camino Real de los Tejas that cuts across the property, and the possibility that a Spanish sword was found at 41NA323, suggests use of the land during the Spanish and/or Mexican colonial periods (ca. 1690 to 1836). The land was also settled by Anglo-Americans in the 1830s—probably after the Caddo peoples had been removed from their traditional East Texas homelands and after Texas became an independent Republic—and used as a farm since that time.

With respect to the aboriginal use of the land, it was during occupations by Caddo peoples (after ca. A.D. 1200 and as late as the early 18th century), that the land along King Creek was apparently most intensively used for settlement. The Caddo sites (41NA323, 41NA325, and 41NA327), although poorly known due to limited archaeological investigations, were likely farmsteads or small hamlets (in the case of 41NA327, the possible Historic Caddo site). Agricultural fields would also have been situated around each of the habitation sites, as well as foot trails connecting the sites to others in the King Creek valley, including the Historic Caddo sites not far downstream at the J. T. King, David King, and Wes Wisener sites.

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