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VIEWS OF THE HACHEL SITE (41BW3) DURING THE 1938-1939 WPA EXCAVATIONS

Timothy K. Perttula

The Hatchel site (41BW3) is a major prehistoric and protohistoric Caddo village and mound center on the Red River in Bowie County, Texas (Figure 1). The site was occupied by the Caddo from at least A.D. 1040 to the late 17th century. The earliest end of this age range is based on 2-sigma calibrated ages from radiocarbon dates recently obtained in the village areas (Perttula 2003, 2005).

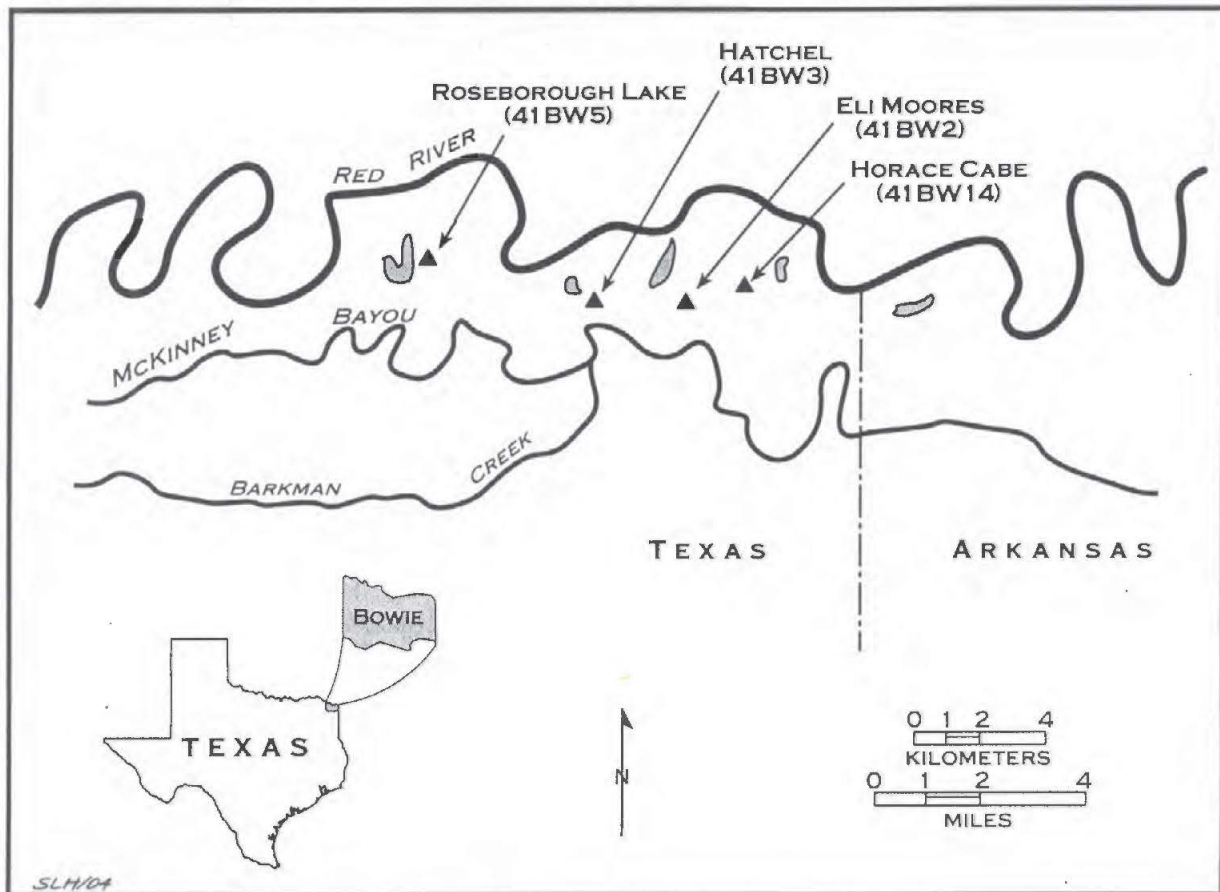


Figure 1. Hatchel site and other Late Caddo sites along the Red River in Bowie County, Texas.

In 1691, A Spanish expedition led by Don Domingo Teran de los Rios explored the Red River area (Hatcher 1999), and a detailed map was drawn of a Nasoni Caddo village that depicted a *templo* or temple mound at the western end of the village (Figure 2). That mound has been identified as the large earthen mound at the Hatchel site (see Wedel 1978). The map also showed many houses, and associated outbuildings, from numerous individual compounds in the village (Figure 3). The village itself is believed to have extended several miles along the Red River.

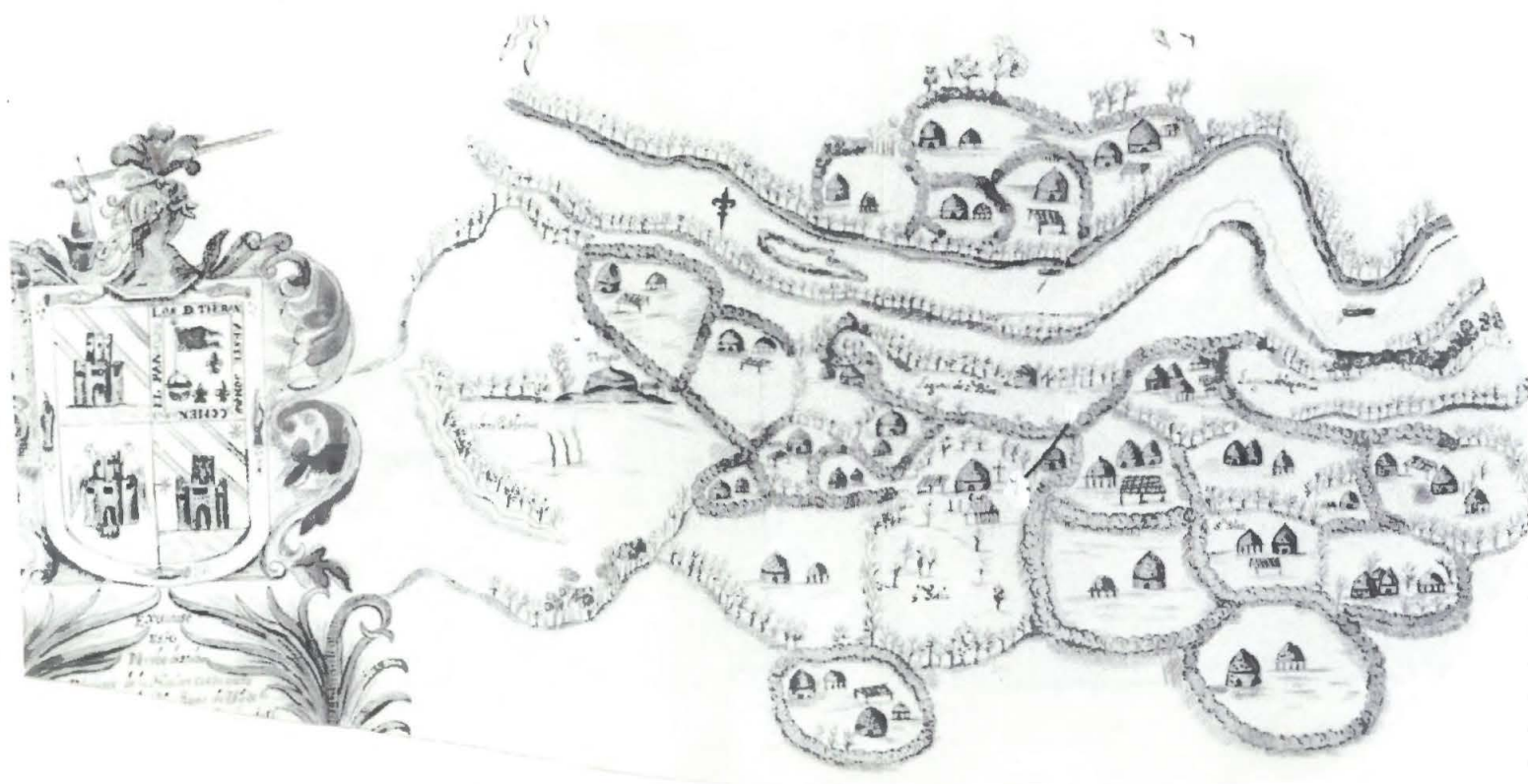


Figure 2. 1691 Teran Map.

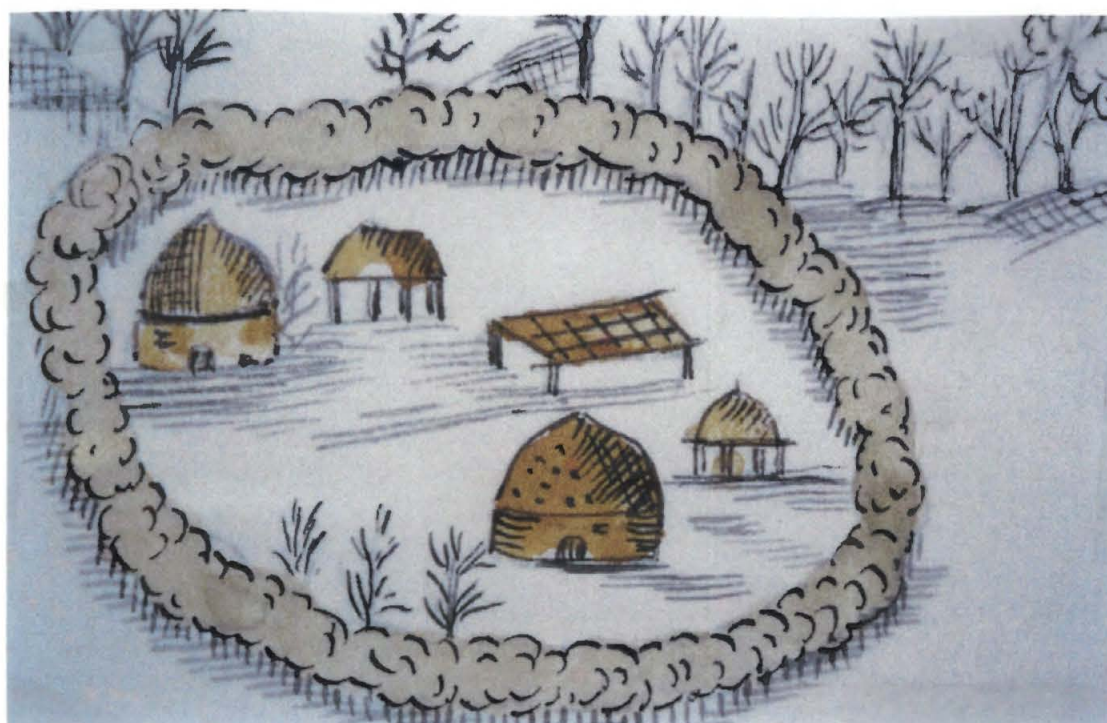


Figure 3. Close-up of Caddo house compound on the Teran map.

We know that the Hatchel site contains extensive village archaeological deposits to the south, southeast, and southwest of the main earthen mound (Figure 4; see Pertulla and Nelson 2003). The mound stood at least 25 ft. in height at the time of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) work (Figure 5). A second, and lower mound (Md. 2), stood about 3000 ft. southeast of the Hatchel Mound, in a cultivated field (Figure 6) some distance east of Village Area IV (see Figure 4).

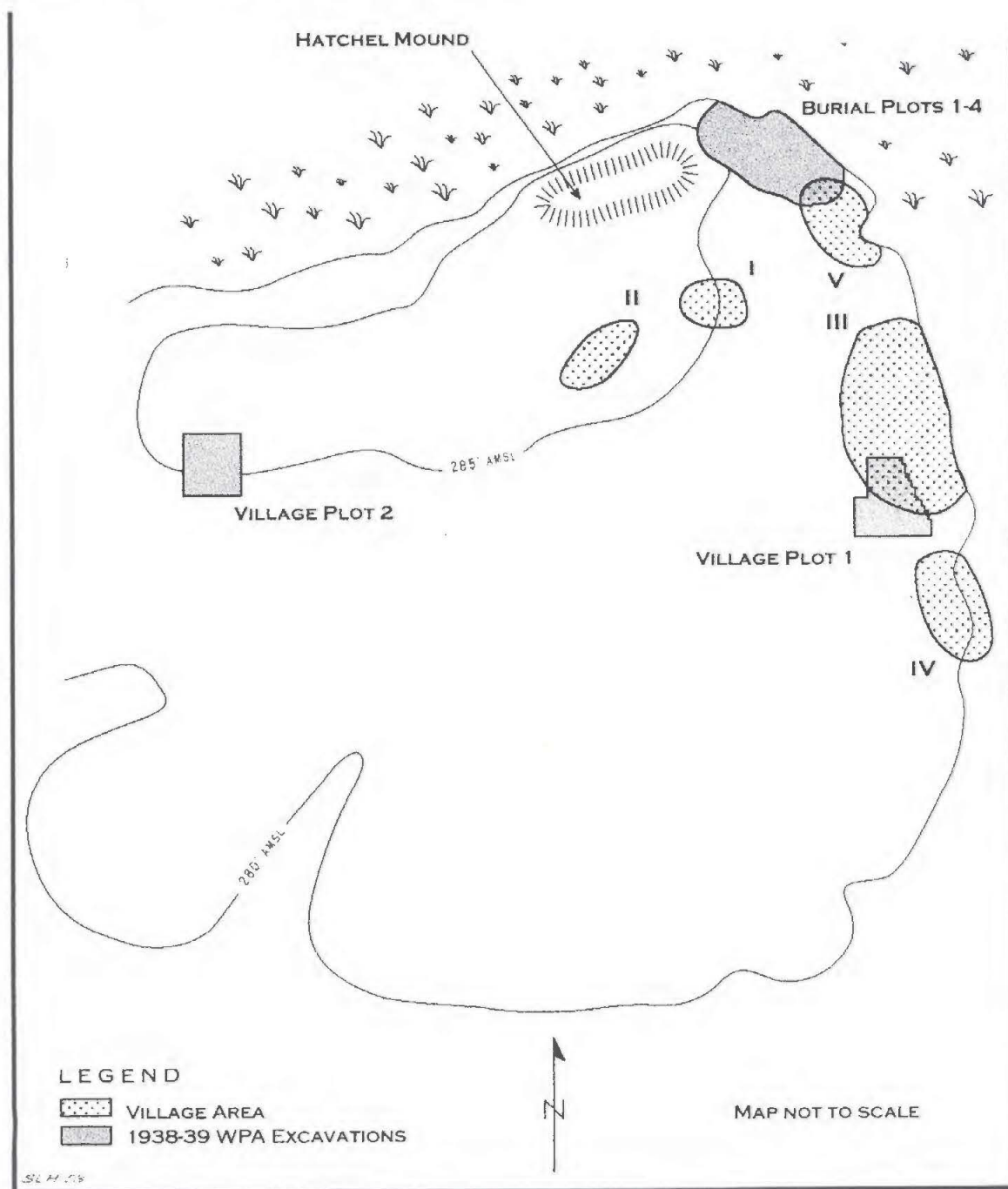


Figure 4. Village Areas I-V, the Hatchel Mound, and WPA excavations: Village Plots 1-2 and Burial Plots 1-4.

Figure 5. Looking southwest at main earthen mound at the Hatchel site. TARL negative no. 41BW3-



Figure 6. Md. 2 before WPA excavations were underway. TARL negative no. 41BW3-149.

The 1938-1939 WPA archaeological work was extensive, particularly in the main earthen mound (Figure 7). Here, multiple “floors” or mound surfaces with house structures were recognized in the mound (Jackson 2003, 2004). These all apparently date to the Late Caddoan period Texarkana phase occupation (ca. A.D. 1400-1600+). The mound covered a large structure on floor K, and a Crockett Curvilinear Incised vessel was found associated with this structure. The floor K structure was occupied sometime prior to ca. A.D. 1300. Village Area II (see Figure 4), not far south of the main earthen mound, has three calibrated radiocarbon dates on occupational debris that range from A.D. 1040-1280 (Pertulla and Nelson 2003: Table 15).

Figure 7. Camera tower on Hatchel Mound; village area II to the south. TARL negative no. 41BW3-44.

During the WPA excavations by the University of Texas, large-scale archaeological investigations also took place in the Hatchel site village (TARL n.d.). These include Village Plot 1 and 2 and Burial Plots 1-4 (see Figure 4). The village at Hatchel seems to have been composed of a number of distinct village areas. It is likely that these areas represent different individual compounds or sets of related compounds (see Figure 3) of Caddo families and/or extended families that contained grass-covered house structures, above-ground granaries, and outdoor ramadas or arbors.

Village Plot 1 was in the same general location as Village Area III defined by

Perttula and Nelson (2003) (see Figure 4), in a large cultivated field south of the Hatchel Mound (Figure 8). The WPA work was done by laborers and tenant farmers that lived in the local area (Figure 9). The block excavations in Village Plot 1 (Figure 10) contained numerous post holes (Figures 11-12), along with several structures (Figure 13, see also Figure 12), pits, and a midden deposit from a Texarkana phase occupation.

Figure 8. The Hatchel site, with the large earthen mound in the distance and village areas in the foreground. TARL negative no. 41BW3-125.



Figure 9. Beginning excavations in Village Plot 1. TARL negative no. 41BW3-57.



Figure 10. Village Plot 1 excavations, looking south. TARL negative no. 41BW3-126.

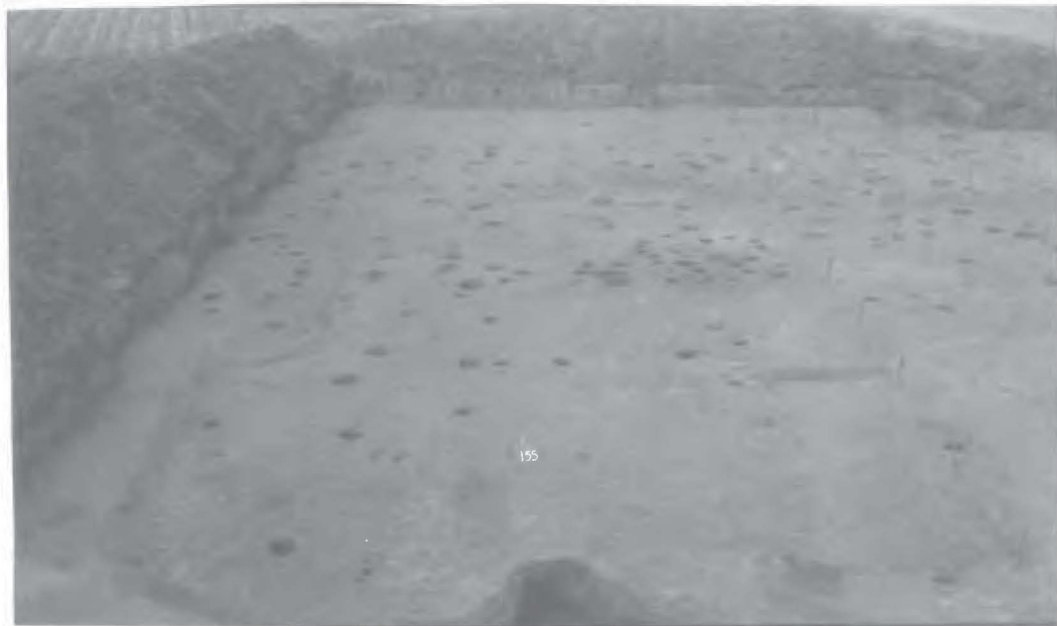


Figure 11. Excavations completed in western half of 1st excavated section, Village Plot 1; note Fea. 2 in left center of photograph. TARL negative no. 41BW3-77.



Figure 12. Looking west at Fea. 2 post holes. TARL negative no. 41BW3-141.



Figure 13. Features and post holes in Village Plot 1.

WPA Village Plot 2 lay some distance to the southwest of the main earthen mound, but was also in a cultivated field (Figure 14). The block excavations here exposed portions of several structures, part of a possible compound fence (Figure 15), and burials from a Texarkana phase cemetery (Figure 16).



Figure 14. Looking north at Village Plot 2 before excavations. TARL negative no. 41BW3-177.

The WPA excavations at the Hatchel site have not been fully studied or the results published to date. Hopefully, renewed examination of the records and collections from the WPA archaeological investigations will be done, and will contribute to a fuller understanding of the history and prehistory of the Caddo peoples that lived at the Hatchel site and other villages in the Red River valley of northeastern Texas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I appreciate the permission of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin to reproduce a number of the WPA photographs of the archaeological excavations at the Hatchel site. Sandra Hannum prepared several of the site maps and WPA block excavations used in this article.

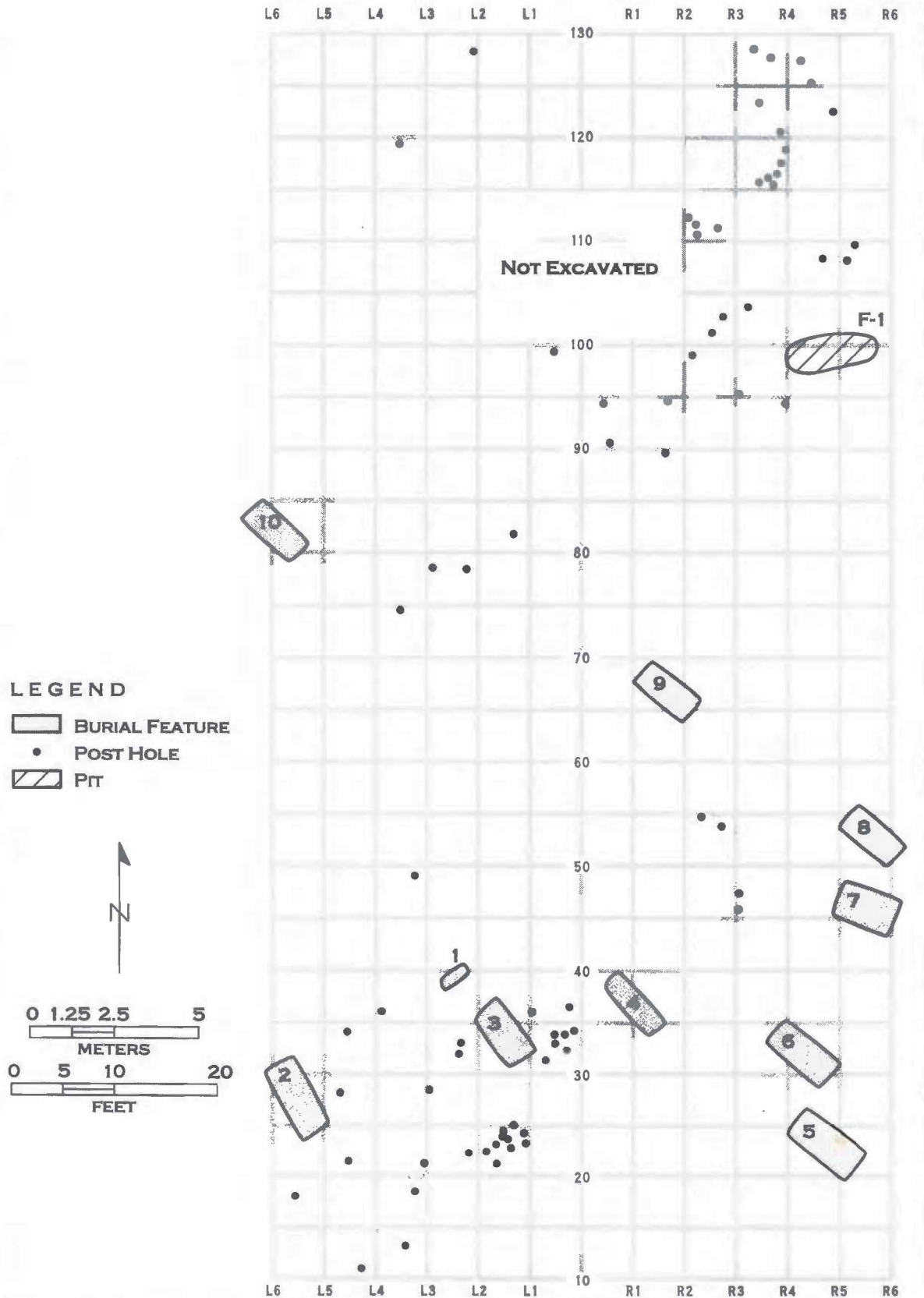


Figure 15. Features and post holes in Village Plot 2. Note burials 1-9.

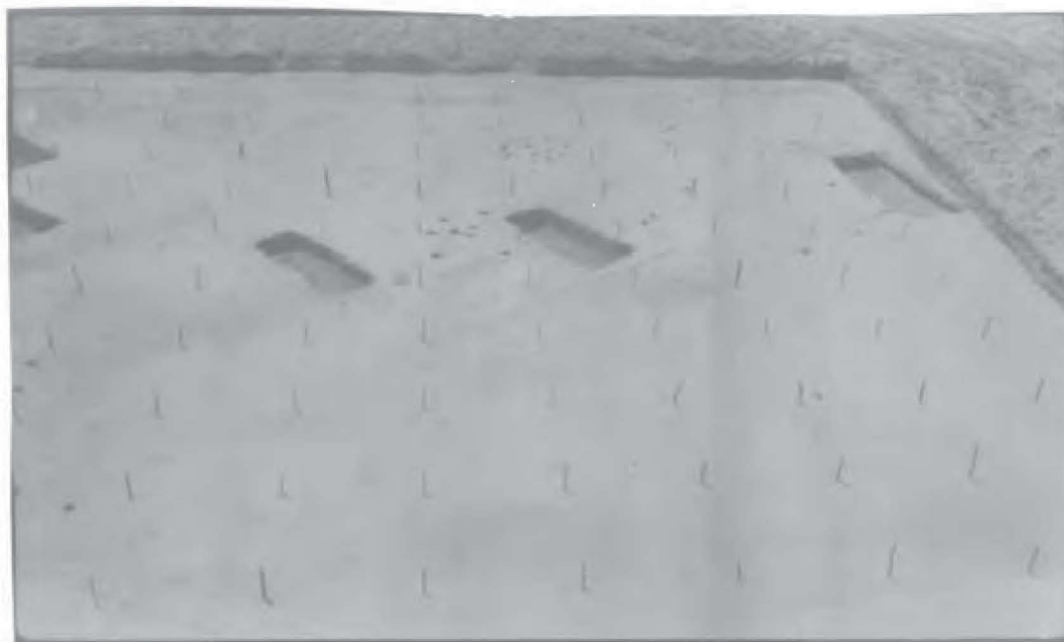


Figure 16. Village Plot 2, note the excavated burial pits. TARL negative no. 41BW3-201.

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