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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATIONS AT THE HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE 41BZ89,
BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

by

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DESIGN DIVISION
AUSTIN, TEXAS

ABSTRACT

Archaeological test excavations were performed at the historical archaeological site 41BZ89 on the 12th of October 1992. The excavations revealed a highly predictable horizontal distribution of artifacts over the site. They indicate an occupation beginning, apparently in the late 1880s extending into the 1950s (the 1950s occupation may represent reuse by hunters or a campsite for stock handlers). At least two building phases are evident in the structures. Preliminary archival investigations suggest that the property was occupied by a family named Foster at the time of the construction of the residence. Ceramic sherds excavated from the test units and three observed on the surface of the site suggest a mid-nineteenth century occupation. Given the probability of the site to yield important archaeological data, it is believed that the site is potentially eligible, under Criterion D, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and qualifies for State Archeological Landmark status.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The historic archaeological site 41BZ89 is situated on a knoll of upland clay and sand overlooking Turkey Creek, an affluent of the Brazos River. It is on the left bank of the creek and has a complex of farm structures including a residence, a two pen crib barn, two single pen structures and a masonry cellar (Fig. 1,2). The residence is a multi-room house set on limestone and sandstone masonry piers. The frame consists of a six by six sill plate and similar top plate supported by vertical boards. The interior is sheathed in carboard siding and the exterior is sheathed indrop style horizontal wood board siding. Two by four vertical studs were not used (Fig. 3A). A porch extended across the south side or entrance side of the building supported on extruded high fired brick piers made by Globe Brick Company of West Virginia between 1927 and 1930 (Gurcke 1987: 240-241). Opening on to the porch were two doors. It appears that the porch and one rear room may have been additions. The piers of the porch are constructed of very different material from the house piers. Originally, the roof was made of wood shakes. This was later sheathed in corrugated sheet iron.

Northeast of the house was a two pen log crib barn (Fig. 3B). The log ends were square notched and sawn but the faces were adzed to square the sides. A central passage is bridged by a corrugated sheet iron roof and the pens are supported on large petrified wood piers. Two board and batten lean-tos were placed on the west side of the pens and the roof extended several feet beyond the north wall of the north pen. Cut and wire nails were observed in the construction of the barn. This structure is in current use.

To the northeast of the barn is a single pen crib with a sheet iron roof. This covers an earlier shake roof. Petrified wood and concrete support the structure. Notches in the unmodified logs are saddle notches and the ends are saw cut. This does not appear to be an early structure.

West of the residence is another crib structure which has largely collapsed. The logs making up the structure are unmodified with saddle notches and axe cut ends (Fig. 4A). It is supported on sandstone piers buried below the present surface. Corrugated sheet iron roofing lies near the roofless structure. Only the lower few courses of logs remain.

Situated north of the house, between it and the barn, is a sandstone and brick masonry basement that evidently supported a frame above ground structure. The upper courses of masonry are brick made by Globe Brick Company to a level surface. There is some distortion of the south wall of the structure due to pressure from the surrounding earth (Fig. 48).

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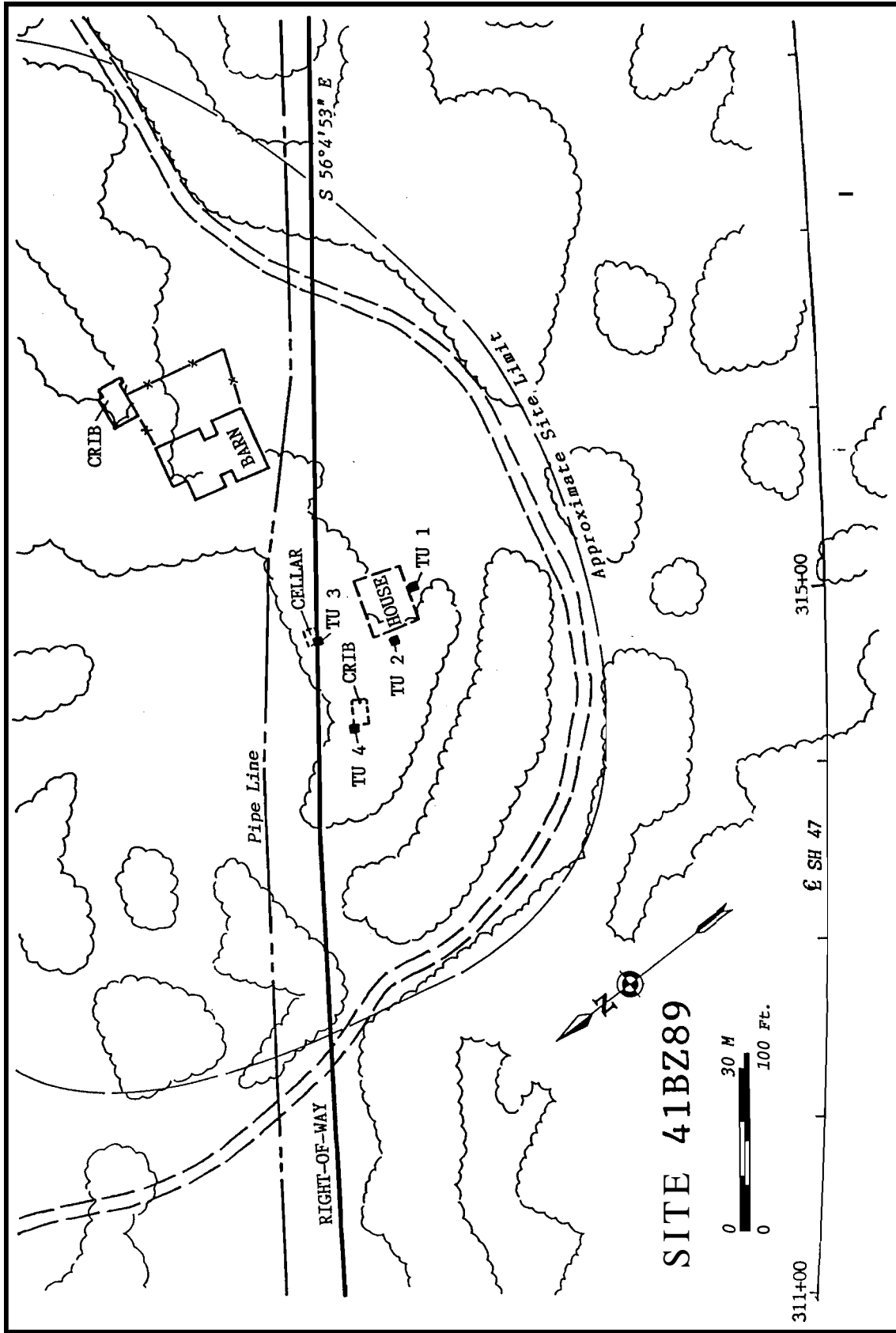


Figure 2. Test Units 1-4 were situated adjacent to the house, cellar and one of the log crib structures, all within the right-of-way of the project. Structures outside the right-of-way were not tested.



Figure 4A. The log crib structure northwest of the house was made of axe cut logs with saddle notches.

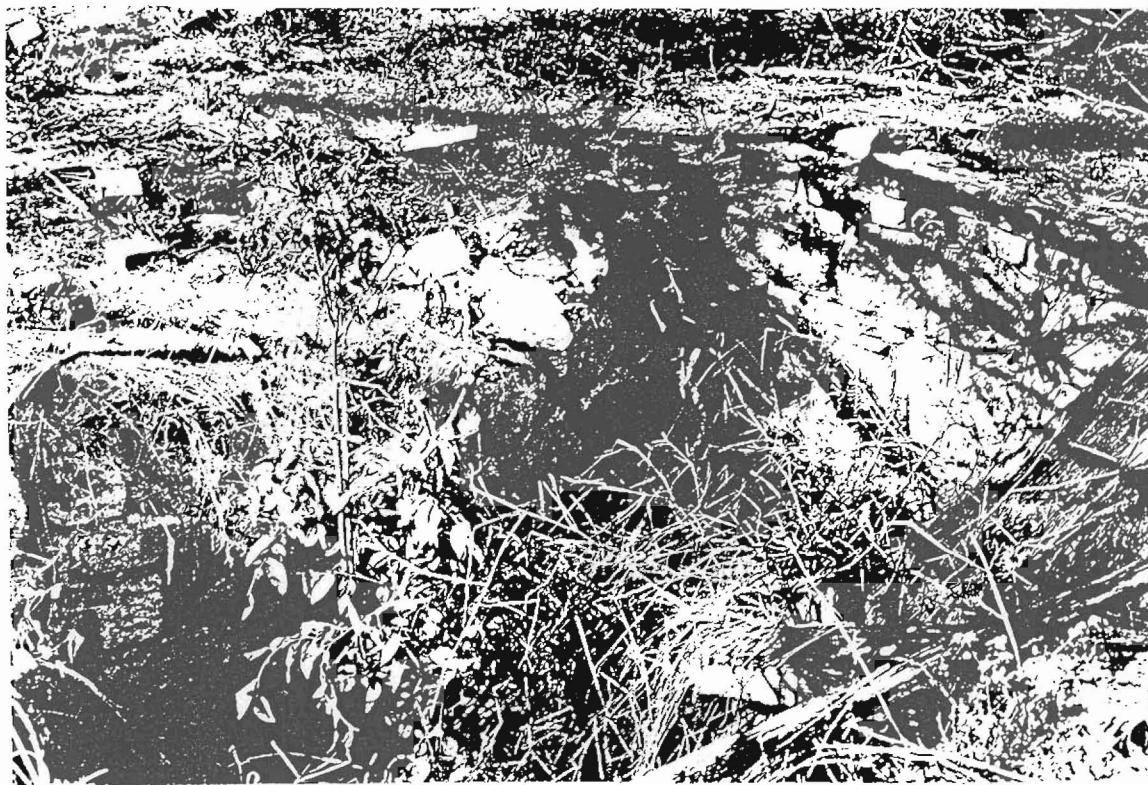


Figure 4B. Much of the stone and brick masonry cellar lies outside the right-of-way. The test revealed a shallow fill over a plaster or concrete floor.



Figure 3A. The house structure was built on sandstone masonry piers and had no stud framework in the walls. The walls are three boards thick; vertical structural boards, carboard interior veneer and exterior horizontal siding.

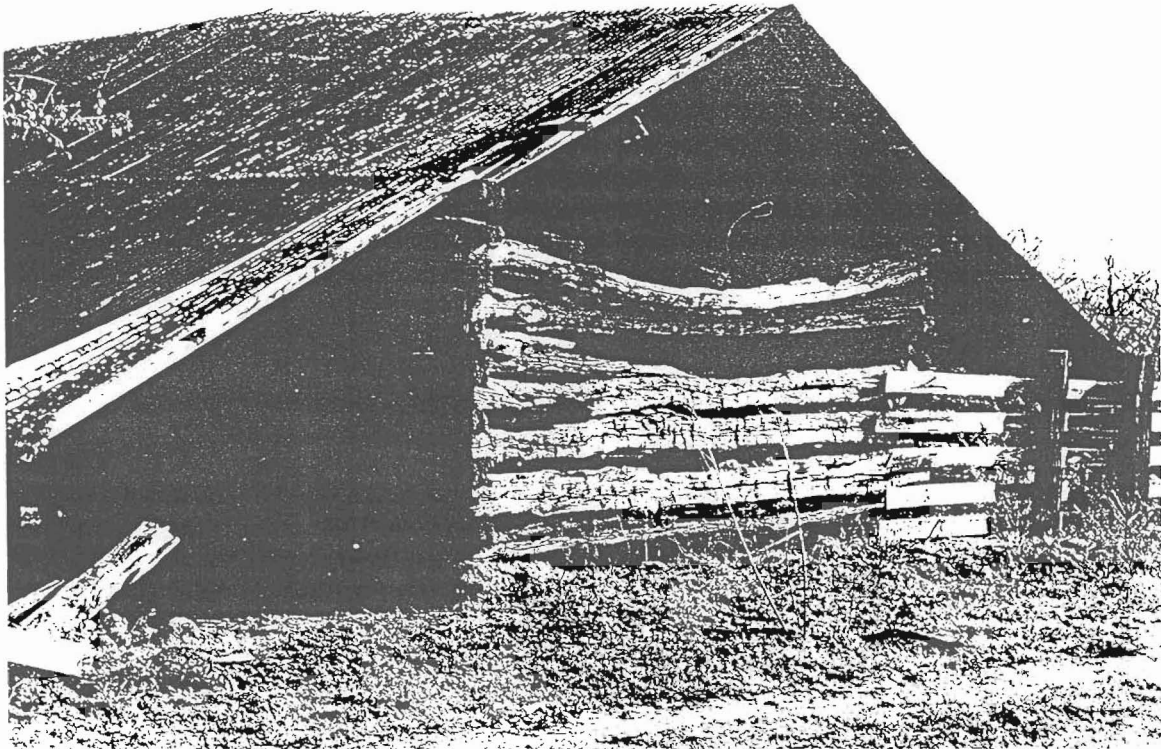


Figure 3B. East northeast of the house is the log pen barn with square notched and adzed logs built on petrified wood piers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A preliminary search of deeds was done by Bryan District Right-of-way personnel extending the ownership of the property from the present to 1900. Because of the complex nature of a law suit at that time, the district people did not pursue the chain of title. We have been able to determine, however, that the property was granted by the Mexican government to Dr. Thomas J. Wootton in February of 1834 in the then larger county of Washington (Brazos County was created from Washington at a later date). Dr. Wootton immigrated to Texas with Sterling C. Robertson, agent for the Texas Association, in 1830. Robertson and Wootton presented themselves at the newly completed Fort Tenoxtitlan where Wootton made a good impression on Col. Francisco Ruiz, commander of the garrison charged with the duty of keeping out American immigrants. Wootton cured several of the soldiers at the post. Wootton and the heads of the forty nine other families with Robertson were able to avoid deportation until Mexican immigration laws were changed (McLean 1966:27,29).

Because of the limited time allotted for research there is a gap in the deed record until 1900 when F. E. Geiske acquired the property through a Sheriff's sale of property involved in a series of law suits against the estate of Eliza Foster. It is assumed that Eliza Foster was the widow of a husband named Foster. The Fosters evidently were large land holders having several tracts of land including some in Hudspeth County. There were several prominent Foster families in the area, some descendent from families settling the area with Stephen F. Austin's Old Three Hundred. At this point, a connection between Eliza Foster and any of the early settlers has not been made.

Geiske sold the property to August Dockal in 1904. From 1900 to 1904 the property was still in litigation. Dockel evidently conveyed his property to his daughter Lucy Hudetts at his death in May, 1958. It was then conveyed to Milton Lightsey as trustee for George and Elva Lightsey and Oliver and Lucille Lightsey, grand children of Lucy and Steve Hudetts. It was then acquired by Gateway One Ltd in May, 1985 and was foreclosed upon in July 1989 returning to the ownership of George and Elva Lightsey (Brazos County Courthouse, Deed Records, Vol H: 99. Vol. 28: 276, Vol. 27: 468, Vol. 189: 77, Vol. 798:191 and Vol. 1128: 225).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Previous historical archaeological work in Brazos County includes work on site 41BZ74 (Carlson, 1983) and two surveys of sites including historic sites (Kotter 1982 and Sorrow and Cox 1973). The Carlson report deals with a nineteenth century ranch and farm site in the county. Nineteenth Century farm site excavations have been well reviewed by Fox 1983: 215-238). He discusses the excavations by Tunnel and Jensen (1969) at the LBJ State Park where German Hill Country farms were investigated. Another German farm site was investigated in 1971 in Mason County (Dragonwagon n.d.). Several farm sites were investigated near LaGrange at Biegel Settlement (Carter and Ragsdale 1976). Occupants here initially were Anglo-Americans who were supplanted by immigrants from eastern Europe. Several of these sites were log houses. Near Victoria the Steiner farm, another German immigrant, was investigated in 1977 (Fox and Livingston 1979). The most extensive general investigation of late

nineteenth and early twentieth century farm sites was performed by Moir and others in Rabb et al (1982). This project involved survey and testing of a variety of farm sites in Navarro and Freestone Counties. Much was done with "sheet refuse." Site architecture was discussed and none of these sites are very similar to 41BZ89. Texas Department of Transportation investigations have considered a late nineteenth and early twentieth century African-American farm site in north Austin and an Hispanic-American tenant farm in Bastrop County. Neither is comparable to this site.

Although the literature search for this report has not been exhaustive, it is evident that historic archaeological investigations in the Brazos County area have been few in number, mostly confined to reconnaissance surveys by people who are primarily prehistoric archaeologists. A copy of Carlson's report on BZ74 was not available to the author at this time so it is difficult to evaluate the cogency of a comparison of that site to this one. The scarcity of late nineteenth century Anglo-American farm sites investigated in the region is notable. It is evident that ethnic studies have concentrated on the German farmers in central and south central Texas.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING

Prior to testing the initial site survey located the major structural features. The unique construction techniques used in the building of the residence was also noted. It was assumed that the site represented a late nineteenth century occupation based on the style of the construction materials (carboard siding, foundation construction, lack of chimney but presence of woodstove pipe and the presence of both wire and cut nails in the construction). Therefore, since a certain horizontal artifact distribution pattern was expected, four test excavation units were placed so as to confirm or deny the presence of this pattern on the site. A crew was provided by the Bryan District. Excavations were conducted by hand and screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth with specimens placed in labeled bags.

Test Unit 1: This 5-by-5 ft. square was placed at the south edge of the former porch location with one unit corner coterminous with a corner of the central porch pier. It was expected that a large volume of artifacts would be in this location since it was opposite the front doors. The soil in this test unit was a very dry sandy clay, dark gray incolor (10YR 4/1, dry; 10YR 3/1, wet). The excavation of this unit was very difficult because the clay tended to make large clods difficult to break. Because of the nature of this effect, the unit was excavated to a depth of one foot. Although a fairly large number of artifacts was collected from this unit, only a small percentage were collected because most artifacts remained in unbroken clods. It was noted that the area had been heavily compacted due to the location of the unit and to trampling by cattle presently occupying the site. The deposit contained numerous brick fragments to a depth of about 1 ft. as a result of construction of the porch. The unit contained the following items:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| hard paste earthenware (plain) | 2 |
| porcelain door knob fragments | 2 |
| green bottle glass | 31 |
| amber bottle glass | 19 |
| window glass | 358 |
| wire window screen | 5 |
| wire nails | 12 |
| cut nails | 6 |
| unidentified nails | 18 |
| twisted wire | 3 |
| chrome plated brass sheet | 3 |
| brass washer | 1 |
| shotgun cartridge case | 1 |
| iron pot lid lifter fragments | 2 |
| plastic comb back | 1 |
| flint flake | 1 |
| TOTAL | 465 |

The green and amber bottle glass represent more recent reuse of the area, possibly in the 1950s or early 1960s. They represent two bottles, one a soft drink bottle and the second, a beer bottle. The shotgun cartridge case is labeled:

FEDERAL
No. 12
MONAPV

Numerous brick fragments were noted.

Test Unit 2: Again, because of an expected artifact pattern, this unit was excavated on the west side of the house 5 feet away from the wall and mid way down the length of the wall in the expectation of finding few artifacts. It should be noted that a window was present between this unit and the southwest corner of the house. The deposit was sandier and less compact than that in Test Unit 1. It was lighter in color (10YR 4/2 dry and 10YR 3/3 wet) and did not tend to break into dense clods. This unit was also a 5-by-5 ft. square unit excavated to a depth below 0.5ft., the maximum depth of cultural deposits. It contained the following items:

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| porcelain colander fragment | 1 |
| amber bottle glass | 7 |
| manganese bleached bottle glass | 1 |
| window glass | 21 |
| wire nails | 4 |
| cut nails | 16 |
| unidentified nails | 5 |
| wire spring | 1 |
| TOTAL | 56 |

None of the artifacts appeared to be of recent origin.

Test Unit 3: The cellar appeared, based on its position on the right-of-way map, to be only partially within the proposed right-of-way. Consequently, a 2-by-2 ft. square unit was dug. This was excavated to the plaster floor about 0.5ft. below the top of the fill. It contained 16 wire nails and one amber

bottle glass sherd. It also contained brick, mortar and sandstone fragments from the breakdown of the wall. The color of the deposit was a dark gray brown (10YR 5/2, dry; 10YR 3/2, wet).

Test Unit 4: This unit was placed adjacent to the partially buried and largely collapsed log crib structure west of the house. It will be recalled that the log ends on this structure were finished with an axe. This appears to be the earlier of the two log cribs and the only one within the right-of-way. A 2 by 2 ft. square unit was placed on the west side of the structure at the north corner. The placement of the unit was designed to expose the foundation and determine what artifacts might be located adjacent to a storage structure. Soil consisted of sand and sandy loam of a dark gray color (10YR 4/1, dry; 10YR 3/1, wet). Excavation was continued to a depth of slightly more than one foot where cultural material ceased to be present. The following items were found in the unit:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| hard paste earthenware (hand painted) | 2 |
| hard paste earthenware (stamped) | 1 |
| unbleached bottle glass | 2 |
| manganese bleached bottle glass | 1 |
| selenium bleached bottle glass | 4 |
| amber bottle glass | 2 |
| window glass | 11 |
| lamp chimney | 2 |
| wire nails | 17 |
| cut nails | 13 |
| unidentified nails | 6 |
| fence staples | 6 |
| sheet iron | 7 |
| barbed wire | 4 |
| wire | 5 |
| sheet brass | 2 |
| slate | 1 |
| flint flakes | 21 |
| TOTAL | 107 |

The ceramic sherds seem early for the site. Both types are mid nineteenth century often found at sites dating in the 1850s. Obviously late items include the selenium bleached bottle glass, the wire nails, fence staples and barbed wire. In addition, 21 nondescript flint flakes were found mixed with the historic artifacts.

POTENTIAL FOR RESEARCH

There are several questions of an archaeological nature that may be addressed by further work on this site. Because of the high level of predictability of the horizontal distribution of artifacts, this kind of study is probably not warranted on this site. The site does have intact deposits containing a variety of artifacts. The major structures are at least partially standing and those within the right-of-way are among the more important on the site. The area between the cellar and the barn outside the right-of-way has been disturbed by pipeline construction but all areas within the right-of-way appear to be undisturbed. The construction techniques of the buildings within the right-of-way appears to date from the late 1880's. There is also the association of the property with Dr. Thomas J. Wootton, one of Sterling Robertson's colonists, and with the Foster family who may have been associated with Austin's Old Three Hundred.

One major area of interest to historical archaeologists appropriate for study of this site relates to the market network accessed by the site residents. Maker's marks on bottles and ceramics can contribute a great deal to this kind of information. The bricks utilized in the construction of the porch and the upper courses of the cellar likewise suggest areas of market oriented research and potential for elucidating aspects of market access and consumer preference. A study of the artifact functional categories similar to South's (1977) can potentially provide useful data of a nature directly comparable to other sites analyzed in the same way. Apparently, the people that occupied this site were relatively wealthy in regard to land holding and were able to have a fairly large house and substantial out buildings. The analysis of artifacts from the site should reveal a fairly high percentage of decorated ceramics. Since wood fragments have been preserved, bone may also be preserved though none was found. If so, then dietary behavior may be discussed in the analysis of the site.

A substantial and undisturbed portion of this site lies in the right-of-way. There are numerous artifacts on the surface and buried in the shallow soil of the site and may provide useful data on a group and area under study in Texas historical archaeology. There is also a good chance here to relate structures to artifacts and artifacts to people. The value of the site to provide insights into horizontal distributions of artifacts in Anglo-American sites may be minimal; however, the utility of analysis of artifacts in relation to their functional categories and functional use of space and market systems accessed, have the potential to provide new and useful data of a comparative and quantified nature. This data coupled with extensive archival research including the completion of the chain of ownership, economic aspects of the owner's activities and genealogical data can provide a social anthropology for this group of people. Thus, we believe that the site may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D, and inasmuch as part of the site is now on state property it does qualify as a State Archeological Landmark.

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