

TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Society was organized and chartered in pursuit of a literary and scientific undertaking: the study of man's past in Texas and contiguous areas. The *Bulletin* offers an outlet for the publication of serious research on history, prehistory, and archeological theory. In line with the goals of the Society, it encourages scientific collection, study, and publication of archeological data.

The *Bulletin* is published annually for the distribution to the members of the Society. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society or editorial staff.

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Membership in the Society is for the calendar year. Dues are as follows: Regular—\$12.00; Chartered Societies and Institutional—\$12.00; Contributing—\$25.00; Life—\$250.00. All members of the Society receive the *Bulletin*, published annually, and *Texas Archeology*, a newsletter mailed about four times a year. A monograph series, *Special Publications*, also is published by the Society. Back issues of the *Bulletin*, up to an including Volume 39, that are still in print, may be obtained for \$5.00 per volume. Subsequent volumes are available at a cost of \$12.50.

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Eileen Johnson, Editor

Carolyn Good, Assistant Editor — Book Reviews

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Archeological Investigations at the Thomas F. McKinney Homestead, Travis County, Texas: An Experiment in Historic Archeology Part I

Michael McEachern and Ronald W. Ralph

ABSTRACT

The Thomas F. McKinney homestead and mill complex represents an upper class Anglo rural occupation dating after the Texas Republic Period (1850's) with subsequent occupation by rural blacks. Pedestrian survey, archeological prospecting, and excavation by the Texas Archeological Society Field School and Texas Parks and Wildlife personnel defined prehistoric occupations and historic structures along with background, historical, and environmental data. Some prospecting techniques revealed probable additional archeological features. Survey and excavation data helped minimize site damage during development of McKinney Falls State Park.

INTRODUCTION

Early in 1974, the Texas Archeological Society approached the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife about the possibility of conducting one of their annual field schools in a state park. The Department responded favorably and suggested that the field school be conducted at McKinney Falls State Park located about 7 mi southeast of Austin, Texas, in Travis County. The park, named after an important hero of the Texas Revolt, was not yet open to the public and under development. Park planners considered the investigation, preservation, and interpretation of the historic McKinney homestead and mill ruins a primary objective of the interpretive program. This objective became the focus of activity at the field school.

The 1974 Texas Archeological Society field school at McKinney Falls State Park was envisioned as experimental. It was a social experiment which attempted to demonstrate that teaching, professional archeology, and amateur archeology could be combined to provide a viable service for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. It also was a series of experiments in historical archeology. The field school was divided into several sections, each with its own research design and objectives. These goals were set forth in a guide distributed at the beginning of the field school (Ralph and McEachern, 1974).

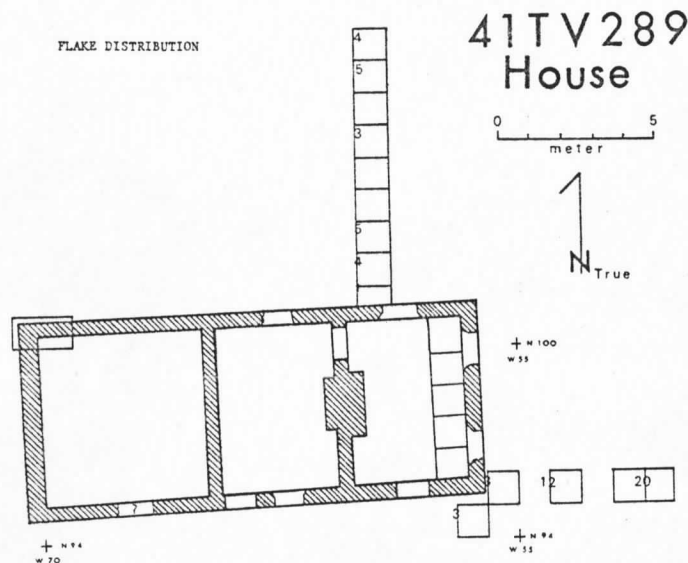


Fig. 50 Lithic distribution in McKinney House.

FLAKE BLADE

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: N3II

Description: Flake is twice as long as it is wide (Fig. 51a). The specimen has a slightly sinuous platform indicating that the flake was percussion struck while thinning a biface.

FLAKE FRAGMENTS

Number of specimens: 61

Provenience: E1II(3), E2II(3), E3I(5), E3II(2), E3III(5), E5I(8), E5II(12), N1II, N2III(4), N3II(5), N6II(3), N8I(5), N9I(4), NWV

Description: This category includes flakes which lack striking platforms, i.e., distal ends or crushed platforms. Twenty-seven of the flakes (44%) have a sheen or pink tint that is often considered a result of heat treating.

Discussion: Experiments in heat treating Texas cherts indicate that not all heat treated material exhibit diagnostic changes (Hester and Collins, 1974). Actual instances of heating may be higher than indicated in the analysis.

NONDESCRIPT CHERT SPALLS

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: E5I(2)

Description: Irregularly shaped pieces which result from faults in the material or lack of control on the part of the knapper.

REJUVENATION FLAKE

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: N8I

Description: A heavy percussion flake which was used to prepare a new set of platforms after the previous platform was destroyed by a poorly executed blow which step fractured when struck with too little force (Fig. 51b).

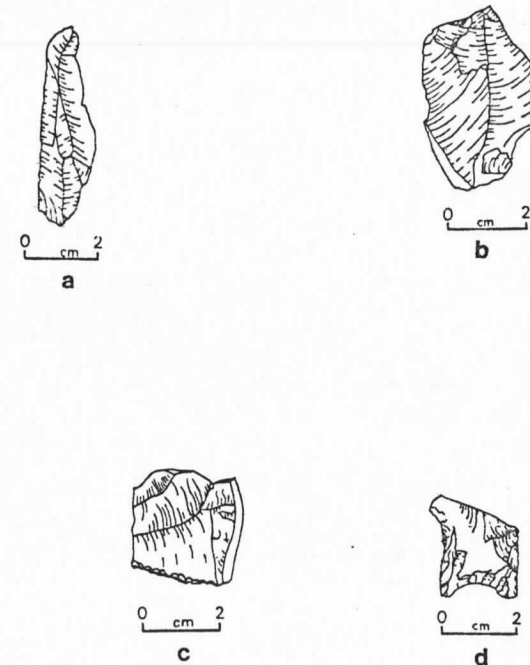


Fig. 51 Illustrated lithics: a. flake blade; b. rejuvenation flake; c. flake core; d. Pedernales point base.

FLAKE GEOMETRIC

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: E5II

Description: A section from a thinning flake which was struck near the center on the dorsal side breaking the flake into sections. Part of the negative cone is present on the specimen.

FLAKE TOOL

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: E1I

Description: A heavy percussion flake that was retouched by pressure flaking along distal and proximal ends and lateral edge.

CORE

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: NWI

Description: A light percussion flake which was retouched along a lateral edge and had microblades or burins removed from the distal end (Fig. 51c).

PROJECTILE POINT BASE

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: E3I

Description: Base (Fig. 51d) of a Pedernales point (Suhm and Jelks, 1962).

MISCELLANEOUS HOUSE ARTIFACTS

Beads

PLASTIC TEARDROP

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: N3I

Description: A teardrop shaped, pink, plastic, translucent bead measuring 16 x 10 x 5 mm with a small hole through the top.

BLUE GLASS

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: R1I

Description: A round, faceted, glass bead measuring 5.5 mm in diameter; translucent blue with one central hole.

RED GLASS

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: N2I

Description: An opaque, red, faceted glass bead with one hole through the 6 mm diameter.

BLUE/BLACK GLASS

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: N3I(2)

Description: Blue and black, faceted, glass beads, each 7.5 mm in diameter. The black one is opaque and may be a burned blue bead.

Miscellany**COAL, ANTHRACITE**

Number of specimens: 4 lots

Provenience: E3I, E3II, E5I, E5II

Description: Small chunks of coal were located in the area described by Charlie Johns as the area for fireplace ash (trash dump).

Discussion: Coal burning stoves probably were used in the later phase of the house occupation. Coal was not used by McKinney, since it was not available from Pennsylvania until 1871 when rail service began in Austin (Roberson, 1974:55).

LEATHER

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: E4I, N3I

Description: Boot heel fragments.

PERISHABLES

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: R1I(2)

Description: One bundle of fine, Z twist threading and a piece of tightly woven fabric; both charred and recovered from the southeast corner of the house.

PLASTER

Number of specimens: 2 lots

Provenience: R4s, R5I

Description: Two bags of charred plaster were saved from the excavation.

Discussion: The plaster is the same as samples from the wall and fill of the middle room.

PLASTIC COMB

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: E3II

Description: Toothless fragment of a plastic pocket comb.

PLASTIC FURNITURE DECORATION

Number of specimens: 4

Provenience: E2I(4)

Description: Fragments of a flower pattern decoration for wooden furniture.

PLASTIC STOPPER

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: R5I

Description: An artifact with the inscription "Pat. pending" on one side 15.5 mm in diameter with horizontal ridges for reinforcement.

Discussion: It may be a fragment of a stopper for a small medicine container.

RUBBER TRICYCLE TIRE

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: E5I(2)

Description: Fragments were recovered from the trash dump east of the house. Both pieces are 17 mm wide and have three parallel ridges on the inside.

SLATE

Number of specimens: 2

Provenience: E5II(2)

Description: Two small pieces of blackboard slate, both 2.9 mm thick and smoothed on both faces.

SPHERE

Number of specimens: 1

Provenience: N3I

Description: A sphere 7.4 mm in diameter which has a small filled hole that does not penetrate the diameter. It may be the plastic or ivory head of a hat pin.

WOOD

Number of specimens: 12 lots

Provenience: E2s, E2I, E3II, E3III, E4I, E5II, N2II, NWI, NWV, R1I, R4I, R5I

Description: Miscellaneous pieces of charred wood and charcoal. Pieces were not large enough to give dimensions. One wedge shaped fragment has a charred end with a cut nail fragment in place.

CISTERN ONE**Research Design**

The two cisterns appeared to be an ideal locality for recovering small animal remains and provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the technique of fine wet screening. Cistern One was selected for excavation. The predicted results were expressed in the field guide (Ralph and McEachern, 1974:3):

The upper portion of the cistern is expected to yield post 1940 artifacts representing debris tossed into the cistern after it was abandoned. The lower portion of the deposit is expected to contain fine sediments and the remains of small animals which worked their way into the cistern while it was being used. Between the post 1940 deposit and the lower deposit, a silt deposit representing the 1921 flood is expected. The lack of this deposit would indicate the cistern was re-excavated (cleaned) after the flood.

Description

Two cisterns, located south of the McKinney House, were arbitrarily assigned Cistern One (northern-most) and the other, Cistern Two. The description is based on field notes.

It appears that the cisterns were dug about 5 m into the alluvial deposit. Uncut (hand chiseled) stone was used to pave the bottom and sides; a rough, grainy mortar holds the small limestone chinking. A plaster, which appears to have a greater content of lime than the mortar, was then applied to the walls and floor (Fig. 52). The bottom of Cistern 1 is slightly rounded. Wall thickness varies, judging from the slightly collapsed Cistern 2. The walls of Cistern 2 are a single course of limestone about 30 cm wide, 10-30 cm long, and 5-15 cm thick.

It does not appear that the cisterns were connected to each other in any way. Filling procedures are unknown, but several possibilities are offered: 1) the cisterns were filled simultaneously from gutters and piping at each end of the house; 2) a three way valve was used to shuttle water from a single pipe to the house to the cistern which needed the water most; or 3) it is remotely possible that water was pumped from a spring with no input from the house.

It is doubtful that the cisterns were ever completely sealed. A wooden cover probably was used. This cover would allow periodic cleaning and repair. There is some evidence that patching had been done as large areas were covered with additional puddles of plaster.