

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF A 13.8 ACRE TRACT OF LAND  
THE PROPOSED SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION SITE  
LAVACA COUNTY, TEXAS

Texas Antiquities Permit 1215

by

William E. Moore

Brazos Valley Research Associates  
Contract Report Number 22

1993

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by

William E. Moore, SOPA  
Principal Investigator

Prepared for

The City of Hallettsville  
Post Office Box 257  
Hallettsville, Texas 77964

by

Brazos Valley Research Associates.  
106 West 26th Street  
Astin Building - Suite 38  
Bryan, Texas 77803

Site Number	Discussion
41LC7	Prehistoric burned rock midden on Rocky Creek. Site was recorded in 1972 or 1973 probably by E. L. Lundelius of the University of Texas Vertebrate Paleontology laboratory. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no site form or report seen in TARL files.
41LC8	Prehistoric lithic scatter/open campsite on Big Rocky Creek. Site was recorded by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. in 1985 during a survey for an overhead power distribution line and is discussed in a report by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (1985) on file at THC. No diagnostic artifacts were found and the age of this site is not known. According to the site form 41LC8 is not considered significant and no further work is recommended.
41LC9	Prehistoric open campsite on the Lavaca River. Site was recorded by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. in 1985 during a survey for an overhead power distribution line and is discussed in a report by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (1985) on file at THC. No diagnostic artifacts were found and the age of this site is not known. According to the site form 41LC9 is not considered significant and no further work is recommended.
41LC10	Republic of Texas Era log house recorded by John Gilpin Riester in 1987. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no report seen in TARL files. No recommendations made on site form.
41LC11	Prehistoric Archaic lithic scatter on West Sandy Creek dating to the Early Archaic through Late Prehistoric periods and early 1900s structure. Site recorded by Joe D. Hudgins in 1992. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no report seen in TARL files. No recommendations made on the site form.
41LC12	No site form or site card for this site was found in the TARL files. This number is on reserve.

# ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey was conducted at a 13.8 acre tract just outside the city limits of Hallettsville in Lavaca County, Texas. The purpose of this project was to examine the site of the proposed solid waste transfer station for the presence of prehistoric or historic sites. Fieldwork was performed on February 12, 1993 by Brazos Valley Research Associates with William E. Moore acting as Principal Investigator and conducting the survey. The project was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit Number 1215.

The pedestrian survey accompanied by shovel testing located the western periphery of the former city dump that was in use from the late 1920s or early 1930s until the early 1990s. That portion of the dump within the project area is not considered to possess significant research potential, and a site number was not assigned. No prehistoric sites were found.

It is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned by the City of Hallettsville. Copies of the final report and project notes have been turned over to the Texas Antiquities Committee in Austin, Texas for distribution and permanent curation.

RECORDED PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC SITES IN  
LAVACA COUNTY AS OF FEBRUARY 10, 1993

Site Number	Discussion
41LC1	Burned rock mounds on Lavaca River that may contain burials. Name of recorder and date of site recording not known. No site form or report seen in TARL files.
41LC2	Prehistoric site on Supplejack Creek that is reputed to contain burials. Site was recorded by Ken Bishop in 1970. The site form does not discuss site type or its cultural affiliation. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no report seen in TARL files. Under recommendations for work on the site form 41LC2 is referred to as an excellent site.
41LC3	Approximate location in the Lavaca River of two cannon abandoned by Santa Anna in 1836 as remembered by a Mr. Walter Malec of Hallettsville. Site was recorded by the Lavaca County Historical Survey Committee in 1971. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no report seen in TARL files. No recommendations for further work on site form.
41LC4	Prehistoric site on Rocky Creek that has produced human burials. Name of recorder and date of site recording not known. Not recorded as part of a professional survey and no report exists in TARL files.
41LC5	Prehistoric lithic scatter and historic quarry house on Big Rocky Creek. Site was originally recorded by Prewitt and Associates in 1981 and revisited by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. in 1985. Site recorded during a survey for an overhead power distribution line and is discussed in reports by Pevey and Van Cleve (1981) on file at TARL and Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (1985) on file at THC. Site was not considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or as a State Archeological Landmark; however, it is recommended on the site form that the site be avoided and a records search be conducted.
41LC6	Foundation and structural remains of an 1870 cotton gin on Big Rocky Creek. Site was recorded by Prewitt and Associates in 1981 during a survey for an overhead power distribution line and is discussed in a report by Pevey and Van Cleve (1981) on file at TARL. According to the site form 41LC6 is considered eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am appreciative of the help I received during this project. Don Jones, Mayor of the City of Hallettsville, and William Cardiff of his staff were most cooperative throughout all phases of my work. The project was reviewed by Mark Denton of the Texas Antiquities Committee who also took time to discuss my research design and assist me in obtaining a permit. Carolyn Spock, Head of Records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, and her assistant, Rosario Casarez, made my time spent at their facility more productive and enjoyable. The figures in this report were prepared by Lili Lyddon.

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## SHOVEL TEST LOG

Test	Depth	Diameter	Results
01	25 cm	30 cm	sterile, dug to clay
02	30 cm	30 cm	sterile, dug to clay
03	30 cm	35 cm	sterile, dug to clay
04	25 cm	30 cm	sterile, dug to clay
05	30 cm	30 cm	sterile, dug to clay
06	30 cm	30 cm	sterile, dug to clay

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Hallettsville is planning to build a solid waste transfer station on a portion of a 13.8 acre site that is presently going through the permitting process with the Texas Water Commission. The project area is located about 1.5 miles east of town in north-central Lavaca County. Its location on 7.5' topographic quadrangle Hallettsville appears as Figure 1 of this report. The site is bounded on the south by County Road 131, on the east by an arbitrary boundary that roughly parallels Grafe Branch, and on the north and west by property boundaries of the 41 plus acre tract of the L. J. Presnal League (Figure 2). The eastern boundary is irregular in shape; Its distance to the northwest corner is 686 feet and to the southwest corner is 564 feet. All proposed facilities will be constructed and maintained above the elevation of the 100 year floodplain.

Current plans call for approximately 6 acres of the 13.8 acre tract to be disturbed by construction. The southern portion of the site will contain a ramp to enable direct dumping into a Type IV waste container. No waste will be disposed of on site, but hauled in these containers to a final disposal facility. The ramp has already been constructed and is in operation, and three small dumpsters are in place adjacent to the county road and are also in use. Still to be constructed in this area are an office, a facility for recycling, and a gravel roadway that will direct traffic to the northern portion of the site.

The northern portion of the site will contain a ramp, fifteen feet in height, for garbage trucks to back up to and discard their loads into a hopper connected to a compactor. The compacted garbage will be hauled away to a disposal facility. Also, an evaporative bed septic system will be installed close to the compactor ramp. These improvements have not been built, although the area has been cleared with approximately six inches of topsoil removed or pushed.

The dirt to construct these ramps will be mined from a soil borrow area in the northern portion of the location and is estimated to encompass approximately one acre and will be about six feet deep. This process has begun as the ramp in the southern area has already been constructed. Additional disturbance in the soil borrow area consists of enlarging and deepening an existing pond which will be lined with clay and used as a reservoir of water for fire protection.

Although the 13.8 acre tract extends to the east beyond Grafe Branch, there are no plans that involve this portion of the site in the solid waste transfer station. This narrow tract of land is adjacent to the former city dump that was in operation from the late 1920s or early 1930s through the early part of this decade. The project area is part of a larger tract of 41 plus acres that was deeded to the City of Hallettsville by Ellen Grant for \$500 on February 1, 1928.

APPENDIX I

The project area is located in a region known to contain significant cultural resources. Therefore, an Antiquities Permit was required by the Texas Antiquities Committee, Department of Antiquities Protection. In order to satisfy this requirement the City of Hallettsville, Texas contracted with Brazos Valley Research Associates to conduct a cultural resources survey of the site of the proposed solid waste transfer station. William E. Moore acted as Principal Investigator. This project has been assigned the number BVRA 93-01 by Brazos Valley Research Associates. Work was performed under Texas Antiquities Permit 1215. The final report and copies of the project notes have been turned over to the Texas Antiquities Committee for permanent curation.

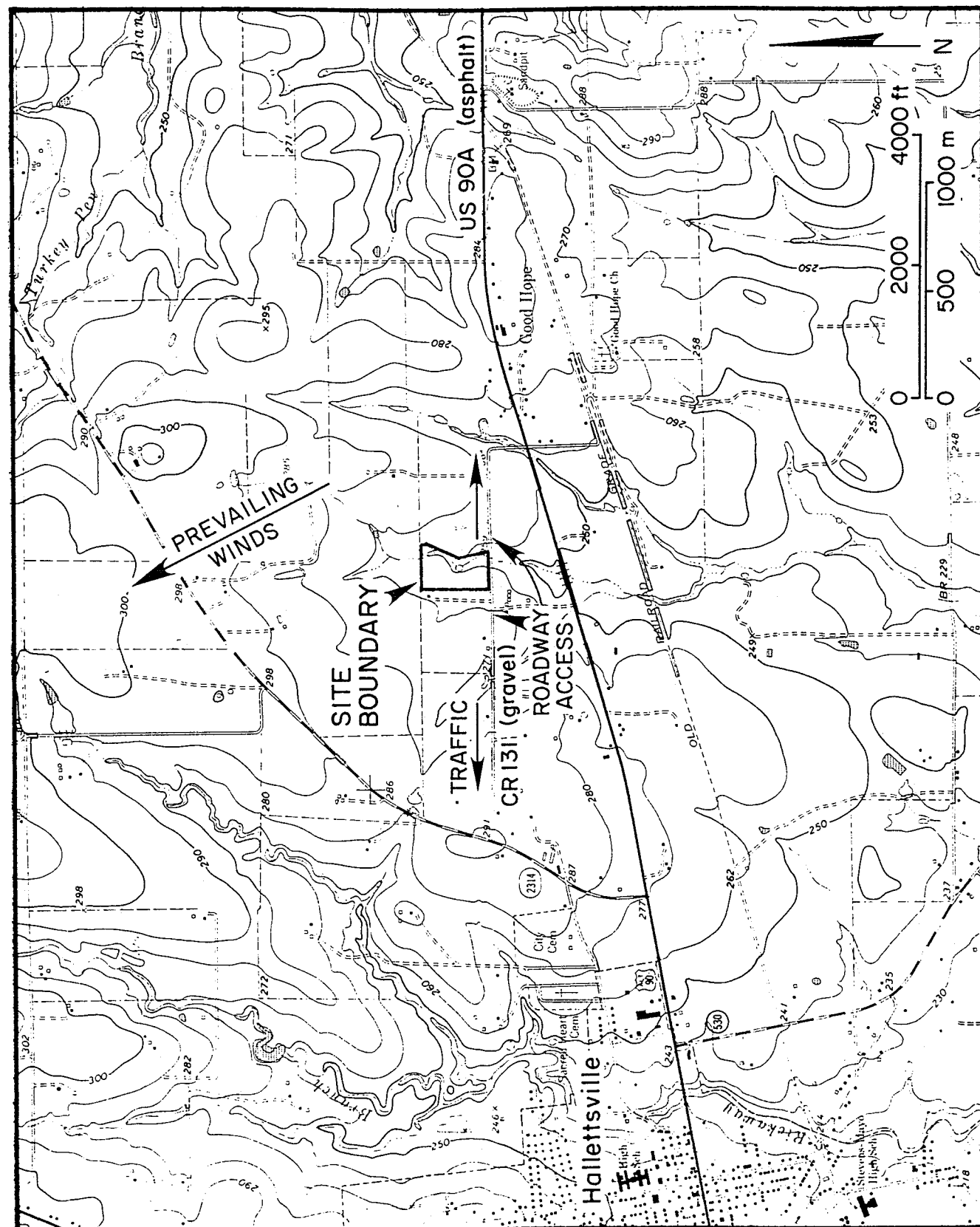


Figure 1. Location of Project Area on Topographic Quadrangle, Hallettsville.

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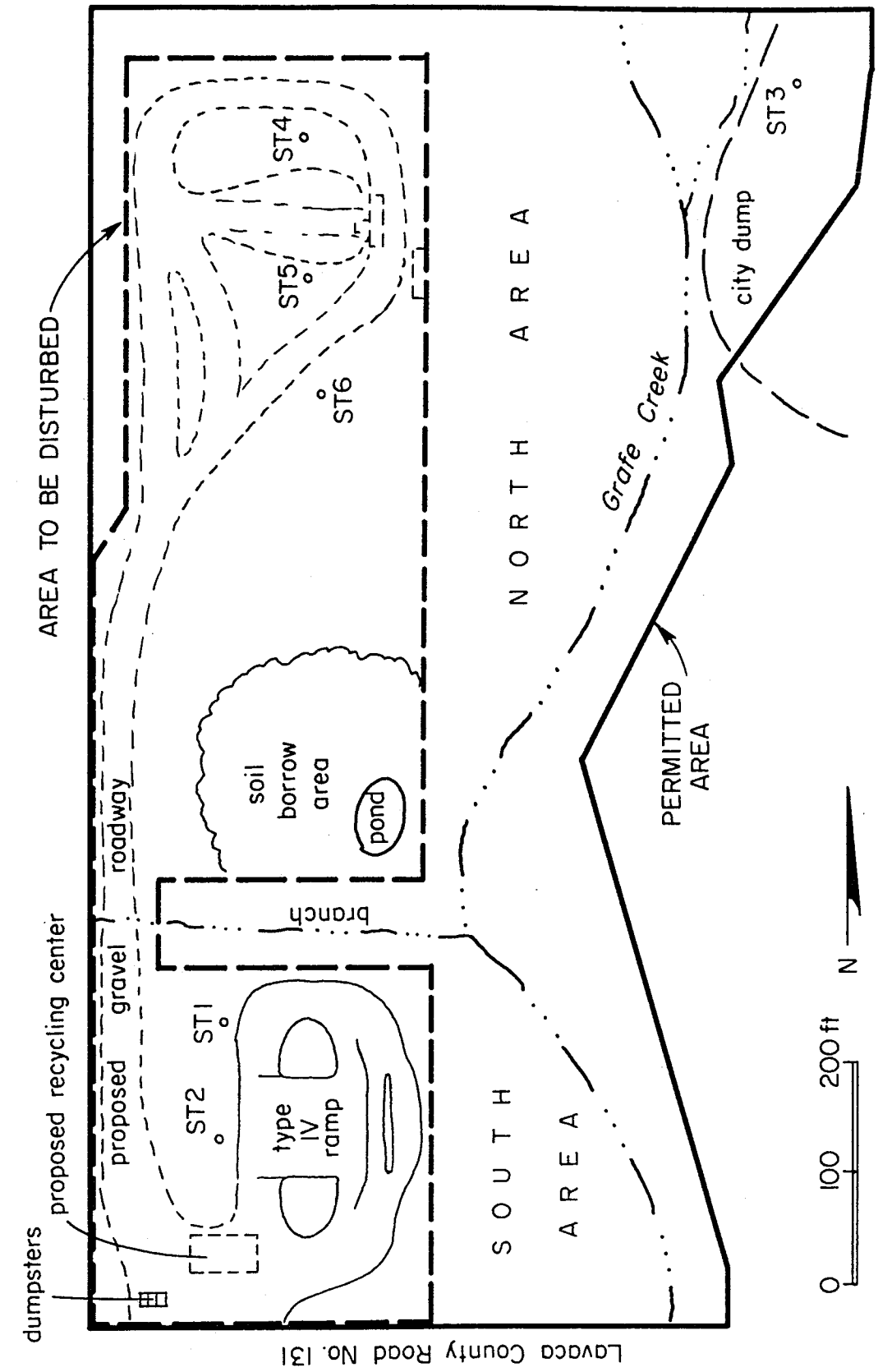


Figure 2. Project Area Depicting Location of Shovel Tests.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is located just outside the city limits of Hallettsville, Texas, the county seat of Lavaca County which is situated in the approximate center of the county. The geography is described in the 1992-1993 Texas Almanac as an area of rolling hills and plains. The major drainages in the county are the Lavaca and Navidad rivers and their tributaries. The project area is drained by Grafe Branch, an intermittent stream that ultimately connects with the Lavaca River.

Lavaca County contains 970.3 square miles of land not covered with water with varying altitudes of 133 to 533 feet above sea level. The annual rainfall is 38.4 inches. This combined with warm temperatures throughout the year produces a growing season of 280 days.

The economy of the county is based largely on agriculture with livestock, especially cattle, a major source of revenue. Crops include hay, milo, and corn. Additional income is provided by oil and gas and hunting and fishing.

Soils of this area are described on the General Soil Map of Texas as alfisols with the Lufkin-Axtell-Tabor soil association in the project area. This association consists of soils with loamy surface layers and mottled gray and red or yellow cracking clayey subsoils. No soils book was available for Lavaca County, so more specific soils data were not available.



#### RECOMMENDATIONS

No significant cultural resources were found during the archaeological survey of the 13.8 acre site of the proposed solid waste transfer station in Lavaca County, Texas by Brazos Valley Research Associates. It is, therefore, recommended that the City of Hallettsville be allowed to proceed with construction as planned. The presence of an archaeologist to act as monitor is not considered necessary. There is always the possibility that cultural materials or features are overlooked during the course of any archaeological survey. Should the presence of cultural materials or features not discussed in this report be discovered during construction the City of Hallettsville is advised to cease construction immediately and contact the Texas Antiquities Committee so the situation can be properly evaluated.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Lavaca County is located in the Central Coastal Plain region of Texas as defined by Biesaart et al. (1985:76) in a statistical overview of prehistoric sites in Texas published by the Office of the State Archeologist, Texas Historical Commission. This is an area not well documented in terms of numbers of sites when compared to other regions in Texas. When the statistical overview was compiled in 1985, a total of 1067 prehistoric sites (5.28% of the state) was recorded in the entire region. Only three of the thirteen regions in Texas reported fewer sites or had a lower percentage statewide. In terms of county statistics only three prehistoric sites were included in the statistical overview of 1985. This was the lowest number for this region comprising .29% of the region and .01% of the state (Biesaart et al. 1985:90). The reader is referred to the overview for additional statistical information concerning Lavaca County and its relation to the rest of Texas. Since the overview was published, the number of prehistoric sites recorded in the county has increased to eight. The total number of sites, both prehistoric and historic, at this time is twelve.

In terms of professional work very little has been carried out in Lavaca County. A search of the files at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in Austin, Texas revealed only five cultural resource surveys have been conducted in the county. Three of these projects involved power or distribution lines including several counties, one examined a pipeline right-of-way, and the fourth dealt with a community park for the town of Moulton.

The first professional archaeaological survey in Lavaca County was conducted by Prewitt & Associates, Inc. in 1979 (Laurens et al. 1979). An area of approximately 50 miles of existing and proposed overhead electric power lines in Bastrop, Fayette, and Lavaca counties was examined, and 27 archaeological sites were examined. No sites were recorded for Lavaca County.

In 1981, Prewitt and Associates, Inc. surveyed 43 miles of overhead power distribution lines in Austin, Fayette, and Lavaca counties (Pevey and Van Clevve 1981). Five previously recorded and sixteen previously unrecorded sites were included in the survey and assessment. Two of the newly recorded sites (41LC5 and 41LC6) are in Lavaca County. Site 41LC5 is described as a prehistoric lithic scatter and historic quarry house on Big Rocky Creek. Site 41LC6 is described as a foundation and structural remains of an 1870 cotton gin on Big Rocky Creek.

In April of 1981, Prewitt and Associates, Inc. conducted a cultural resources survey of a 17.5 mile pipeline right-of-way in Gonzales and Lavaca counties (Kotter 1981). Only a small fraction of the project area extended into northwest Lavaca County east of Moulton, and no sites were recorded along this segment of the right-of-way.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The background check at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory and the Texas Historical Commission revealed that no work by professional archaeologists has been conducted in the project area, and no prehistoric or historic sites are recorded within its boundaries. It was also discovered that the area has been virtually ignored in terms of contract archaeology as reports of only five professional studies have been performed, three of which failed to locate cultural resource sites. In all, only twelve sites are registered with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory for the entire county (Appendix II).

As a result of the pedestrian survey, one historic site was located (Figure 2), and no prehistoric sites were found. The historic site is identified as the western periphery of the former city dump which was in use from the early part of the 20th century (1920s-1930s) to the early part of the 1990s. The land for this dump was part of a 41 plus acre tract deeded to the City of Hallettsville by Ellen Grant on February 1, 1928 for \$500.

Artifacts were observed in Grafe Branch and extending to the tree line that approximates the eastern boundary of the project area. It is estimated that historic trash belonging to the dump covers an area of 100 feet (north-south) by 241 feet (east-west) within the 13.8 acre tract. Kinds of artifacts observed include snuff bottles, cold cream jars, soda water bottles (Coca Cola and Pop Cola [made in Hallettsville]), medicine bottles, and crockery fragments. All of the glass bottles were machine made, and no artifacts dating to the nineteenth century were seen.

The historic trash present in the project area consists mainly of a surface scatter of artifacts that represents only a small portion of the main dump area to the east. Since the major part of this site is out of the project area it was not assigned a site number and is not considered to possess significant research potential.

The absence of prehistoric remains in the project area may be due in part to the ephemeral nature of Grafe Branch, which is dry much of the year and the fact that much of the site is just above the 100 year floodplain. Gravels suitable for making stone tools are not available in the project area and immediate vicinity. Sites on sandy hills adjacent to more dependable water sources and possibly raw materials for stone tool manufacture were probably more desirable as prehistoric campsites. Due to the amount of disturbance already present in the project area, any cultural resource sites that might occur would most likely be affected to the point that little, if any, research potential would still exist. In summary, the 13.8 acre tract of land was not found to contain significant cultural resources worthy of affecting construction of the solid waste transfer station as proposed by the City of Hallettsville, Texas.

In 1985, James E. Warren examined a sixteen acre tract in the City of Moulton that was the site of a proposed community park. No evidence of prehistoric or historic sites was found, and no further work was recommended. This project is reported by Warren (1985).

In October of 1985 a cultural resources survey of existing and proposed distribution lines in Colorado, Fayette, and Lavaca counties was conducted by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. The size of the project area was 34.8 miles with a 30 foot right-of-way. Seven previously unrecorded sites were located and one previously recorded site was evaluated. In Lavaca County, three sites were assessed. Site 41LC5, a prehistoric/historic site originally recorded by Prewitt and Associates (Pevey and Van Cleve 1981), was revisited. The prehistoric component was not found during this project, and the site was not recommended for further work. The two newly recorded sites in Lavaca County are 41LC8 and 41LC9. Both sites are described as prehistoric lithic scatters with no temporally diagnostic artifacts or features. These sites were not viewed as significant. This project is reported by Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (1985).

The lack of archaeological investigation in Lavaca County makes it difficult to discuss the cultural environment that existed in prehistoric times. Of the eight prehistoric sites recorded for Lavaca County, only one (41LC11) is described in terms of cultural affiliation. According to the site form, site 41LC11 was probably occupied from the Early Archaic through Late Prehistoric periods based on the presence of two dart points and one arrow point. Limited data are available for the remaining seven prehistoric sites except for those recorded as a result of professional activity. Sites are described as burned rock mounds, lithic scatters, and open campsites. Three of the sites (41LC1, 41LC2, and 41LC4) are reported to have yielded human skeletal materials.

Evidence collected by Prewitt and Associates, Inc. during their survey of an overhead power distribution line (Pevey and Van Cleve 1981:6-8) support a contention held by J. Charles Kelley (1959) that the area constituted a cultural "transitional zone." By comparing artifact inventories and general cultural traits, Kelley hypothesized that a cultural relationship existed between inland and coastal groups which would have affected the transitional zone between them. Data compiled by Suhm and Jelks (1962) have been interpreted as suggesting there may be a distinctive adaptive technological system within the intermediate zone between coastal and inland cultural complexes. A more detailed discussion of this ecological/cultural transitional zone hypothesis is presented in a report by Skelton (1977:13-16).

## METHODS

The project was divided into three phases - background and archival research, field reconnaissance, and report writing. Prior to commencement of the field survey, the files at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory and the Texas Historical Commission were checked for previously recorded sites in the project area and vicinity. No soils book for Lavaca County was available.

The field survey was performed by the Principal Investigator on February 12, 1993. The ground surface was examined by a series of transects, while the subsurface was examined by a total of six shovel tests and several shovel probes excavated randomly across the 13.8 acre site. Each subsurface test was dug to sterile clay, and all excavated fill was screened through one-quarter inch hardware cloth. The results were documented by a shovel test log (Appendix I). Additionally, the project was documented through project notes.

No artifact collection was made from the historic trash scatter. Instead, a list of artifact types was compiled as part of the project notes. The location of the historic site was plotted on the topographic map, Hallettsville (Figure 1), and on the project map in this report (Figure 2). Since the trash in the project area only represents a small fraction of the site that lies to the east, it was not assigned a site number. As required by the Texas Antiquities Committee, copies of the final report and project notes have been submitted to that agency for distribution and permanent curation.

In general, the regional cultural sequence can be divided into four time-related developmental stages. These are Paleo-Indian (8000 - 10,000 B.P.), Archaic (8500 -1250 B.P.), Neo-Archaic (200 - 1250 B.P.), and Historic (200 B.P. - Present). This chronology is derived from the Central Texas region (Prewitt 1981) and, according to Pevey and Van Cleve (1981:8), "may not necessarily reflect the precise situation in and around Fayette County, particularly in light of the transitional nature of the project area."

In the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries Lavaca County was occupied by various bands of Indians. During the nineteenth century these bands assimilated and were known as the Tonkawa tribe. Later in the century other groups from the Plains, such as the Lipan Apache and Comanche, moved into the area forcing the Tonkawa to move southward (Newcomb 1961). Contact between Europeans and native Indian groups occurred during the early historic period, but evidence of this is rare. Trade goods such as glass beads; European-made ceramics, including pipes; gun parts and manufactured gun flints; and metal arrow points found in Indian sites are indicators of this contact. No sites of this period have been reported in Lavaca County.

The area now called Lavaca County was once included in the grants of Stephen F. Austin and Green C. DeWitt. The following discussion is taken primarily from volume II of the Handbook of Texas (Webb 1952:37). According to Webb, the first settlers on the Lavaca River were probably fugitives from an Indian raid at Goliad in 1826. By 1831, DeWitt had allotted homesteads to twenty-one and Austin to twelve Anglo-American families who had come to establish cotton plantations. Settlements were founded at Zumwalt's Mill, Rocky Creek, Hallettsville, and at William Milligan's ginhouse which became the center of revolutionary activity in 1835.

Two historic sites believed to represent the Republic of Texas Era have been documented in Lavaca County. Site 41LC3 is the approximate location of two cannon abandoned by Santa Anna in the Lavaca River. Unfortunately, the presence of the cannon has not been confirmed. The other, 41LC10, is a log cabin that was moved to its present location from the Old Adams Place in 1934.

Lavaca County was created in 1842 as a "judicial" county from Fayette, Colorado, Jackson, Victoria, and Gonzales counties with the name of La Baca. In 1846, it became a regularly constituted county with Hallettsville established as the county seat in 1852. The population of the county seat increased from 1581 in 1940 to 2718 in 1993.

Transportation was slow to develop in the county although the La Bahia Road, originally an Indian trail, crossed Lavaca County possibly as early as 1690. No stage line was operated until 1861, and the first railroad in the county, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass, was constructed in 1887.

Agriculture remains the chief occupation with cotton and cattle raising the staples of the economy. Hay, milo, and corn are other leading crops. German and Bohemian immigrants arrived in large numbers about 1880 and developed truck gardening and poultry and hog raising.

One historic site has been documented in the county that evidences the days of cotton production during the nineteenth century. Site 41LC6 is described in the report by Pevey and Van Cleve (1981) as the foundation and structural remains of an 1870 cotton gin and sawmill/butcher shed on Big Rocky Creek. The structure was made of limestone/sandstone quarry bricks and lime mortar.