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The Goss Farm Site (41FN12) on Bois d'Arc Creek, Fannin County, Texas

Timothy K. Perttula

INTRODUCTION AND SITE SETTING

The Goss Farm site (41FN12) is an ancestral Caddo settlement on an alluvial landform on the west side of Bois d'Arc Creek near its confluence with the Red River (Figure 1). The Sanders site (41LR2) lies east of the Goss Farm on Bois d'Arc Creek; the Goss Farm site is likely part of the same ancestral Caddo settlement as the Sanders site. The recovered artifacts from Goss Farm strongly suggest that the occupations there are culturally related to that of the Sanders site (see Harris 1967; Jackson 2000; Krieger 1946; Perttula, et al. 2015).

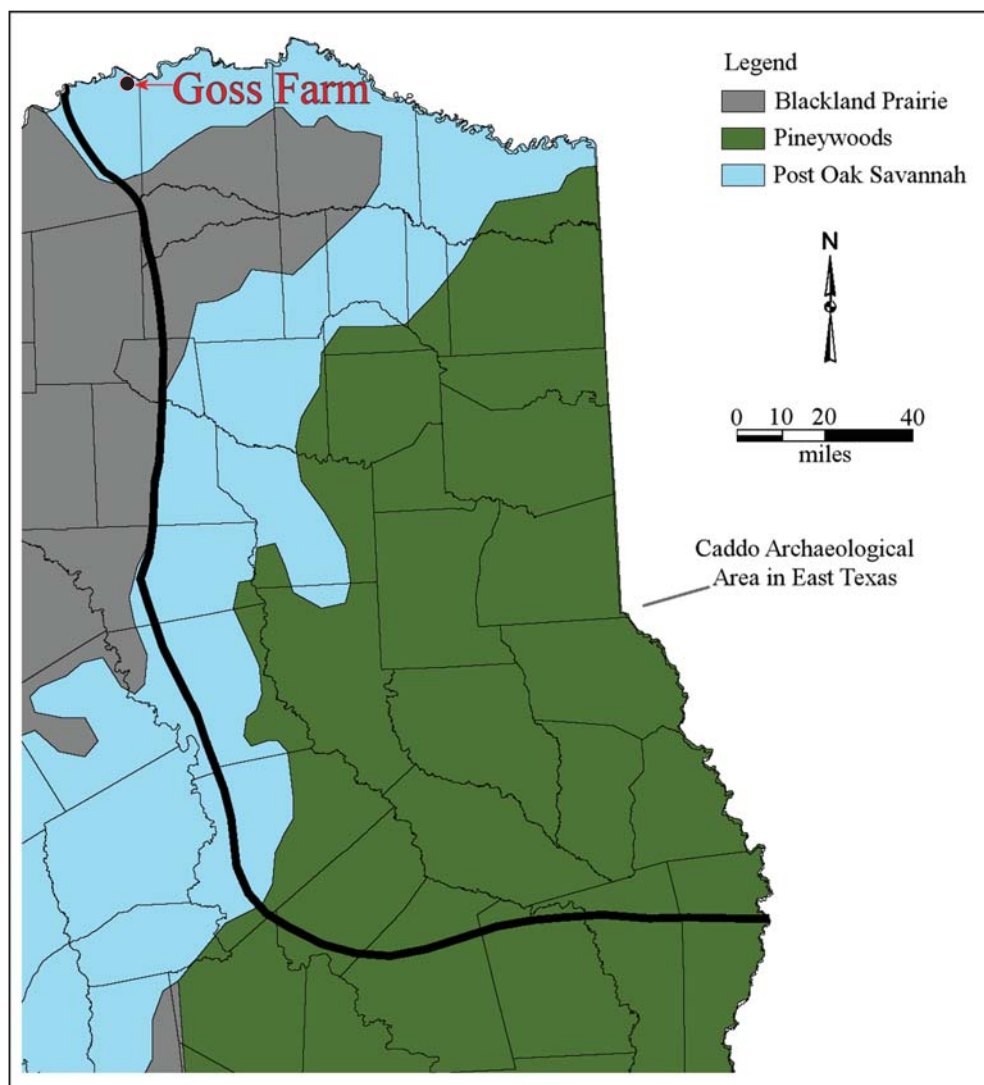


Figure 1. The location of the Goss Farm site (41FN12) in East Texas.

In August 1930, B. B. Gardner of the University of Texas conducted limited archaeological investigations at the site. He noted that the alluvial landform had midden deposits as well as burials, and he suggested that the site probably contained a large number of burials (Gardner 1930:15-19). In the work, a 15 cm thick ash feature was identified at ca. 76 cm bs; this may be evidence of extensive burning from hearths or the incinerated remains of a burned structure; the full extent of the feature was not defined by Gardner. Three burial features (Burials 1-3) were also excavated at the Goss Farm in 1930, two in close proximity (Burials 1 and 2) that were in flexed positions, were buried at depths of between ca. 45-76 cm bs, and had no associated funerary offerings. Burial 3 was 30 m south of the flexed burials, and was an adult with a cranially deformed skull (comparable to the skulls at the Sanders site, see Jackson et al. 2000) that was buried at a depth of ca. 30 cm bs in an extended position, with the head facing west. One shell-tempered bowl (14.0 cm in height and 14.5 cm in orifice diameter) was included as a funerary offering with Burial 3. The vessel was decorated with two sets of two appliued nodes and two sets of three appliued nodes. This decorative treatment is similar to Late Prehistoric Southern Plains shell-tempered decorated vessels (i.e., a variety of Nocona Plain) in the upper Brazos and Red River basins in North Central Texas (Brack 2000:Figures 4g-h and 7a-c).

The Goss Farm was periodically visited by members of the Dallas Archeological Society (Harris 1951, 1953, 1967; Housewright 1946). Housewright (1946:10) excavated a child burial at the site that contained an extraordinary funerary offering of 260 disk-shaped turquoise beads and two turquoise pendants (Jurney and Young 1995:Figure 4). Found also during the excavation of the burial was a single red-slipped sherd, likely from a Sanders Plain vessel.

ARTIFACT ASSEMBLAGE

Ceramic Sherds

There is only a small ceramic sherd assemblage at the Goss Farm in the TARL collections (Table 1). It includes plain ware, utility ware (primarily jars decorated with wet paste decorations), and fine ware (bowls and carinated bowls decorated with leather hard or post-firing engraved lines as well as an occasional red slip). About 69 percent of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and the remainder are equally split between sherds from bone- and shell-tempered vessels.

Table 1. Ceramic Sherds from the Goss Farm site.

Sherd type	Grog tempered	Bone tempered	Shell tempered	N
Plain ware	3	–	1	4
Utility ware	6	2	2	10
Fine ware	9	2	1	12
Totals	18	4	4	26

About 45 percent of the decorated sherds in the Goss Farm collection are from utility wares, and they include rim and/or body sherds from grog-, bone-, and shell-tempered vessels (Table 2). Among the grog-tempered sherds are five fingernail or tool punctated rim and body sherds with rows of punctations encircling the rim and body of jars. These are likely from Monkstown Fingernail Impressed or Emory Punctated-Incised vessels, or tool punctated variants of the two types. One grog-tempered lower rim-body sherd from a Monkstown Fingernail Impressed jar has a row of fingernail punctates on the rim and a vertical appliued fillet on the vessel body (Table 2).

Table 2. Decorated sherds in the Goss Farm ceramic assemblage.

Decorative element	Grog		Bone		Shell		N
	rim	body	rim	body	rim	body	
Utility Ware							
parallel incised	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
diagonal incised [left to right] and tool punctated row at rim- body juncture	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
diagonal fingernail punctated row	–	1	–	–	–	1	2
fingernail punctated row	1	–	–	1	–	–	2
tool punctated rows	3	–	–	–	–	–	3
fingernail punctated row and vertical appliqued fillet	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
Subtotal	4	2	–	2	–	2	10
Fine Ware							
circular and rectilinear elements	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
curvilinear engraved lines	–	2	–	1	–	–	3
horizontal lines and hatched vertical zone	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
Womack Engraved elements	2	3	–	1	1	–	7
Subtotal	3	6	–	2	1	–	12
Totals	7	8	–	4	1	2	22

One bone-tempered body sherd, likely from a Canton Incised vessel, has parallel incised lines (see Table 2). Another bone-tempered body sherd with a row of fingernail punctations is probably from another Monkstown Fingernail Impressed jar.

Both shell-tempered body sherds from utility ware vessels are probably from Emory Punctated-Incised vessels (see Story et al. 1967:136-138). One has diagonal incised lines on the vessel body and a row of tool punctations at the rim-body juncture (see Table 2). The other shell-tempered body sherd has a row of large diagonal fingernail punctations.

The grog- and bone-tempered fine wares in the Goss Farm collection include three body sherds with curvilinear engraved lines, one grog-tempered sherd that has a red slip on both interior and exterior vessel surfaces, and a body sherd from a carinated bowl with concentric circular and rectilinear elements (Figure 2b). There is also a grog-tempered rim sherd with an inverted rim that has horizontal engraved lines under the vessel lip and at the carination as well as a vertical zone or band connecting the two horizontal lines that is filled with diagonal hatched lines (Figure 2a).

The remainder of the fine ware sherds from the Goss Farm site are rim and lower rim-body sherds from early historic Womack Engraved vessels, probably all from carinated bowls (Figure 3). More than 71 percent of these sherds are from grog-tempered vessels, and there are single examples of sherds from either

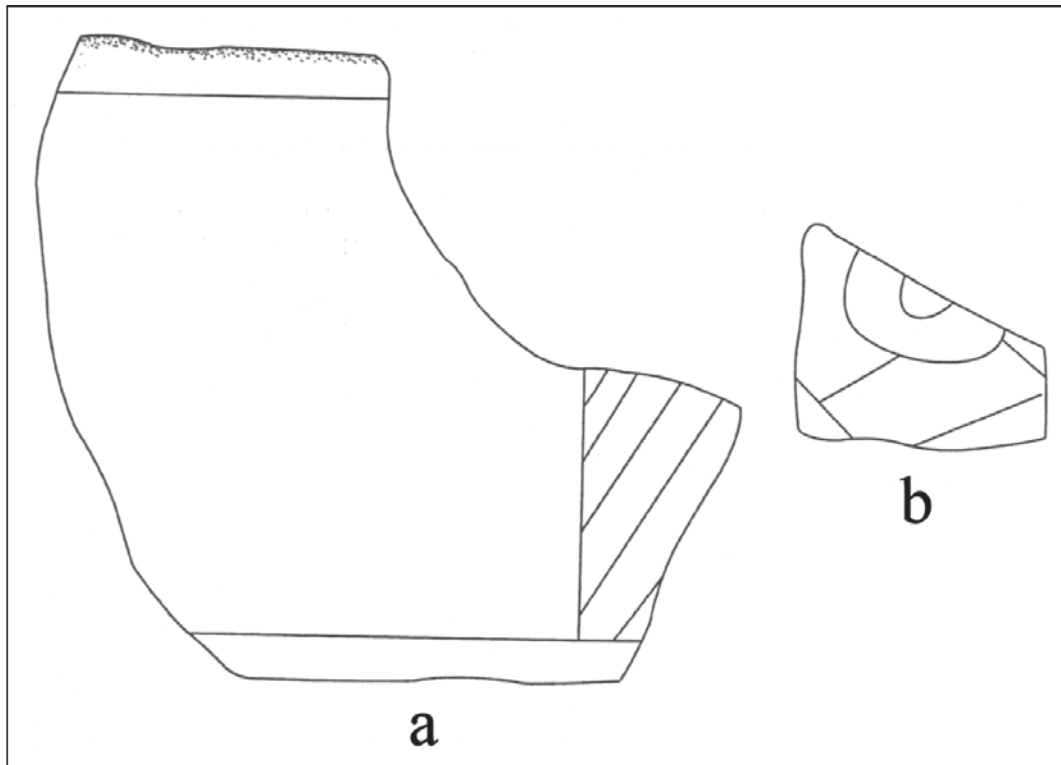


Figure 2. Engraved rim and body sherd from the Goss Farm site.

bone-tempered or shell-tempered vessels (see Table 2). The rim sherds have diagonal or curvilinear engraved scroll lines with excised tick marks, and they may be from Motif B (Figure 3a) and Motif D (Figure 3c) of Womack Engraved (see Story et al. 1967:Figure 49); this latter rim is from a shell-tempered vessel. The other rim has a diagonal scroll line with tick marks and a single horizontal engraved line under the vessel lip (Figure 3b); this may also be from a Motif D Womack Engraved vessel.

The lower rim-body sherds of Womack Engraved vessels include one sherd from a Motif A vessel (see Story et al. 1967:Figure 49a) with large pendant triangles filled with cross-hatched lines (see Figure 3f). Another body sherd has a large triangular area filled with cross-hatched lines that is probably either the upper or lower scroll-filled zone of a Motif D vessel (see Figure 3e). A second lower rim-body sherd from a Motif D vessel has a diagonal scroll line with tick marks and part of a cross-hatched filled scroll fill zone (see Figure 3g). Finally, a Motif B Womack Engraved sherd from a carinated bowl has a large negative circle surrounded by a zone of cross-hatched engraved lines (see Figure 3d).

Chipped Stone Tools

The chipped stone tools in the TARL collections from the Goss Farm site include arrow points (n=2), flake tools (n=3), an adze, early stage biface fragments (n=2), and dart points (n=25). These tools are from several different prehistoric components, the earliest likely one that may have occurred in the Late Paleoindian period. This early occupation is marked by a possible Scottsbluff dart point fragment with blade resharpening, collateral blade flaking, and a parallel stem. It is made from a Red River gravel chert.

The other dart points in the assemblage are Gary points (n=24). These are made from local quartzite (50 percent), Red River gravel chert (46 percent), and novaculite (4 percent).

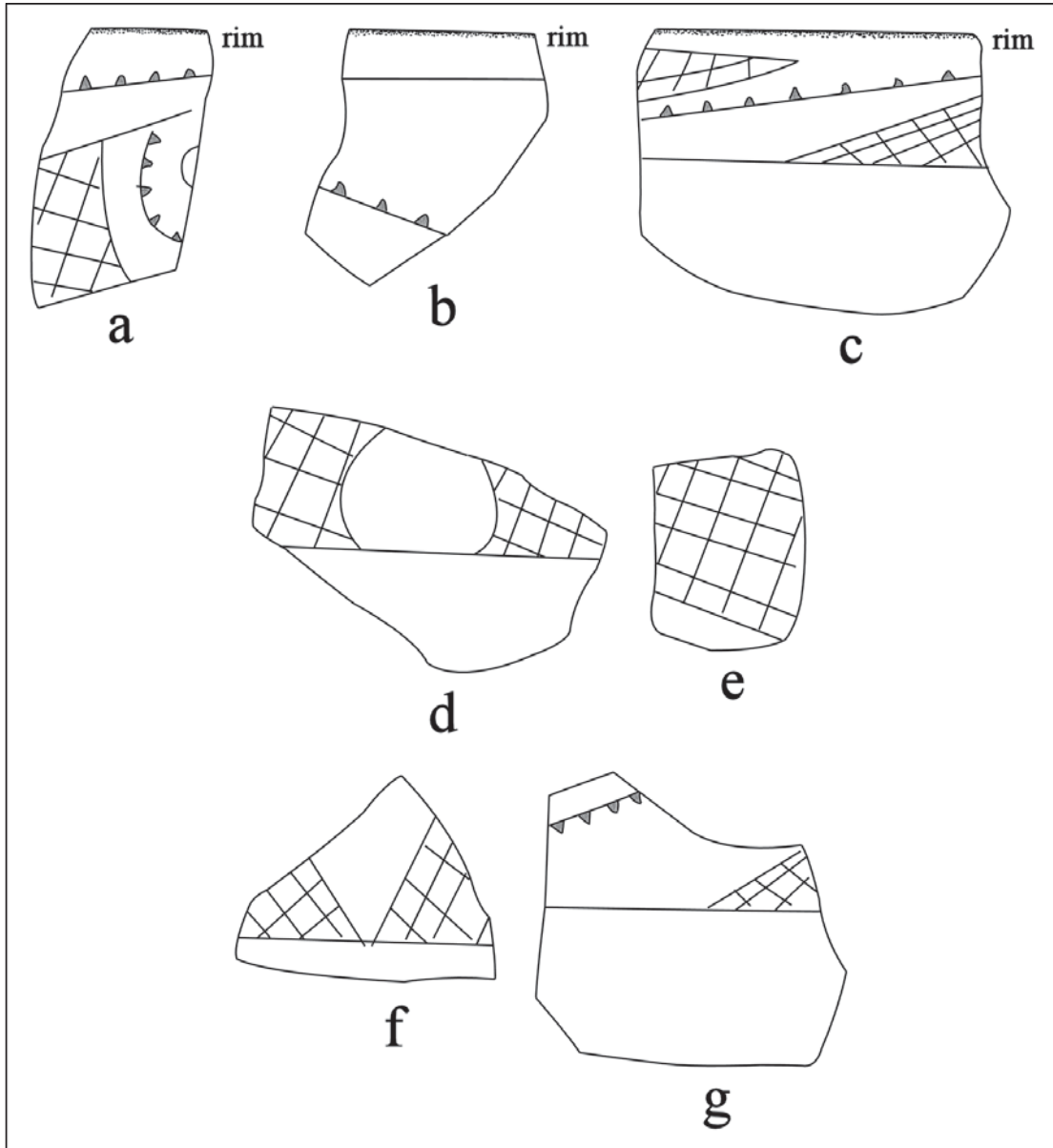


Figure 3. Womack Engraved rim and body sherds from the Goss Farm site: a-c, rim sherds; d-g, lower rim and body sherds.

One of the two arrow points in the Goss Farm collection is a Bonham point made from a black Big Fork chert. This point is associated with the Middle Caddo period, Sanders phase, occupation at the site. The other arrow point is a triangular arrow point made of novaculite, probably a Fresno point like those found in considerable numbers in possible early historic (i.e., late 17th-early 18th century) Caddo components at the Sanders, Womack, and Harling (41FN1) sites.

Other chipped stone tools in the collection include two early stage biface fragments made from Red River gravel cherts, a bilateral side scraper (Red River gravel chert), two unilateral flake tools made from quartzite and novaculite, and a quartzite unifacial adze. This tool has a chipped bit width of 43.0 mm, and it is 65.9 mm in length, 45.0 mm in width, and 19.6 mm in thickness.

Bone Tool

The one bowl tool in the collection from the Goss Farm is a polished bone awl (Figure 4). The awl is 73.6 mm in length, a maximum of 16.0 mm in width, and 7.9 mm thick.

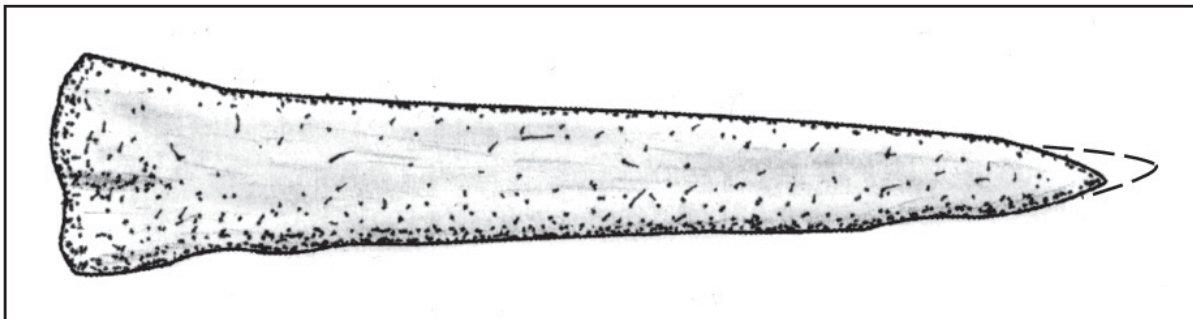


Figure 4. Bone Tool from the Goss Farm site.

Mussel Shell Hoes

Harris (1951:20) reported on the discovery of a cache of four mussel shell hoes in the midden deposits at the Goss Farm. These hoes have a central perforation or hole through which a wooden handle could be mounted, as well as lateral and distal working edges with either crushed or polished use worn areas (Figure 5).

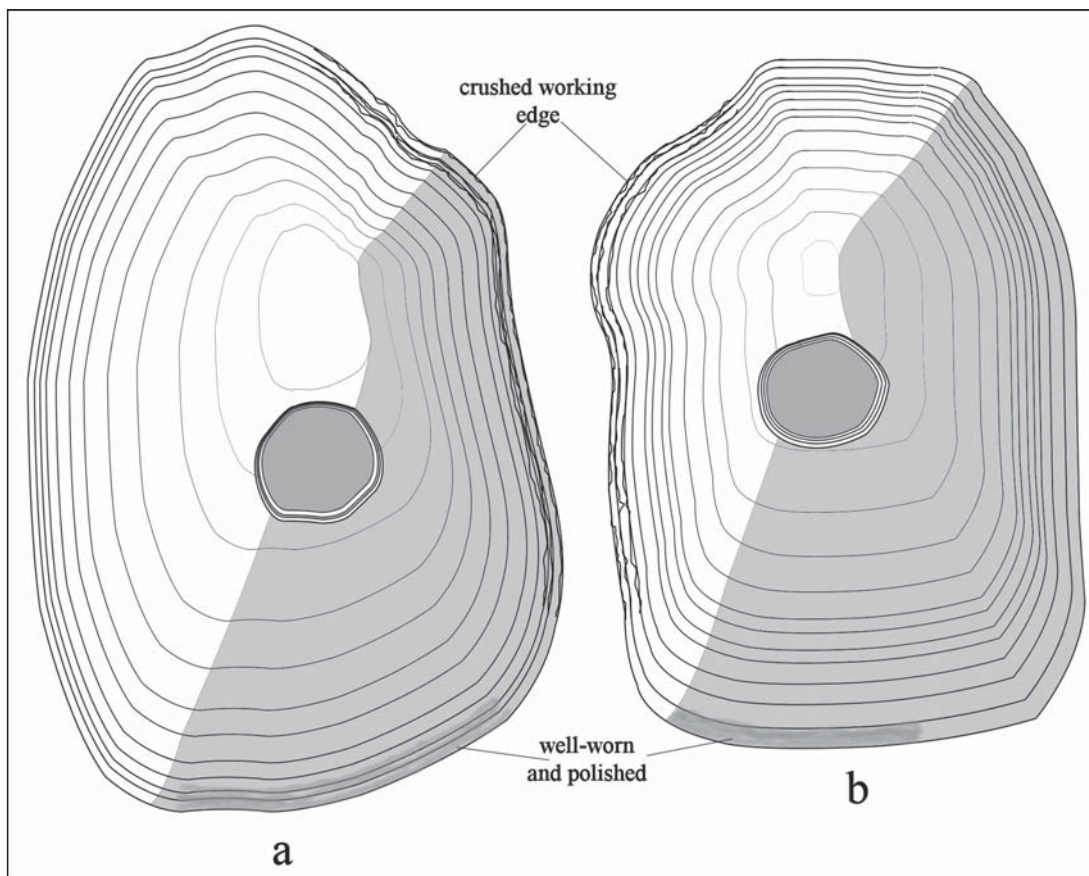


Figure 5. Mussel shell hoes from the Goss Farm site.

Glass Beads

There are two glass beads in the TARL collections from surface contexts at the Goss Farm site. One is a medium-sized and olive-shaped opaque white bead (No. 6 in the Harris et al. [1965:309] bead classification scheme), and the other is a medium-sized and barrel-shaped blue bead (No. 11 in Harris et al. 1965:309). These beads are likely associated with the Womack Engraved ceramic sherds and triangular arrow point in the collection, and are part of a late 17th-early 18th century Womack phase Caddo occupation at the Goss Farm.

Metal Buttons

There are two different kinds of brass buttons in the Goss Farm collection. The first is only 12.0 mm in diameter and is undecorated; it has a central perforation (Figure 6a) and resembles buttons from 18th century contexts at the Womack site (41LR1) (Harris et al. 1965:Figure 22k-1). The second and larger button (16.9 mm in diameter) has a concave interior, and a single circular engraved line near the exterior margin of the button (Figure 6b); no interior attachment is preserved on the button.

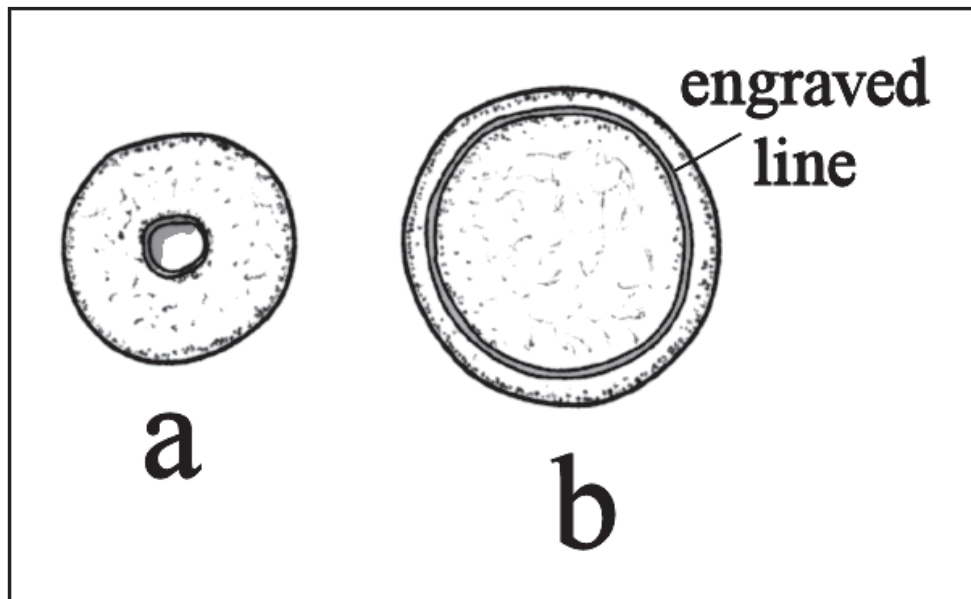


Figure 6. Brass buttons from the Goss Farm site.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Goss Farm site is an ancestral Caddo habitation site on an alluvial landform just south of the confluence of Bois d'Arc Creek and the Red River at the far western extent of Caddo settlements along the Red River in East Texas. These Caddo occupations took place during both Sanders phase (ca. A.D. 1100-1300) and Womack phase (ca. late 17th-early 18th century) times; based on the number of Womack Engraved sherds in the collection, the Womack phase occupation may have been the most intensive. It was also occupied during Late Paleoindian and Woodland period times.

The site is best known for the discovery of many turquoise beads and pendants as funerary offerings in an ancestral Caddo burial of probable Sanders phase age by Housewright (1946). It is likely that both the Sanders phase and Womack phase settlements at the Goss Farm site on the west side of Bois d'Arc Creek are part of, or at least closely associated with, the extensive Sanders phase and Womack phase settlements at the Sanders site on the east side of Bois d'Arc Creek (Perttula et al. 2015).

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