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# The Caddo Occupation of the L. B. Miller Farm (41HE4/55) in the Post Oak Savanna and Trinity River Basin in East Texas

*Timothy K. Perttula*

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## Introduction

The L. B. Miller Farm site (41HE4/55) is a Late Caddo period Frankston phase Caddo habitation site and small cemetery on an upland landform (400 ft. amsl) in the Coon Creek-Catfish Creek drainage in the Post Oak Savannah of the Trinity River basin (Figure 1). The ancestral Caddo artifact collections from the site at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin (TARL) include four vessels from a burial feature, sherds from two unreconstructed ceramic jars found in habitation contexts, and 178 ceramic sherds from midden deposits.

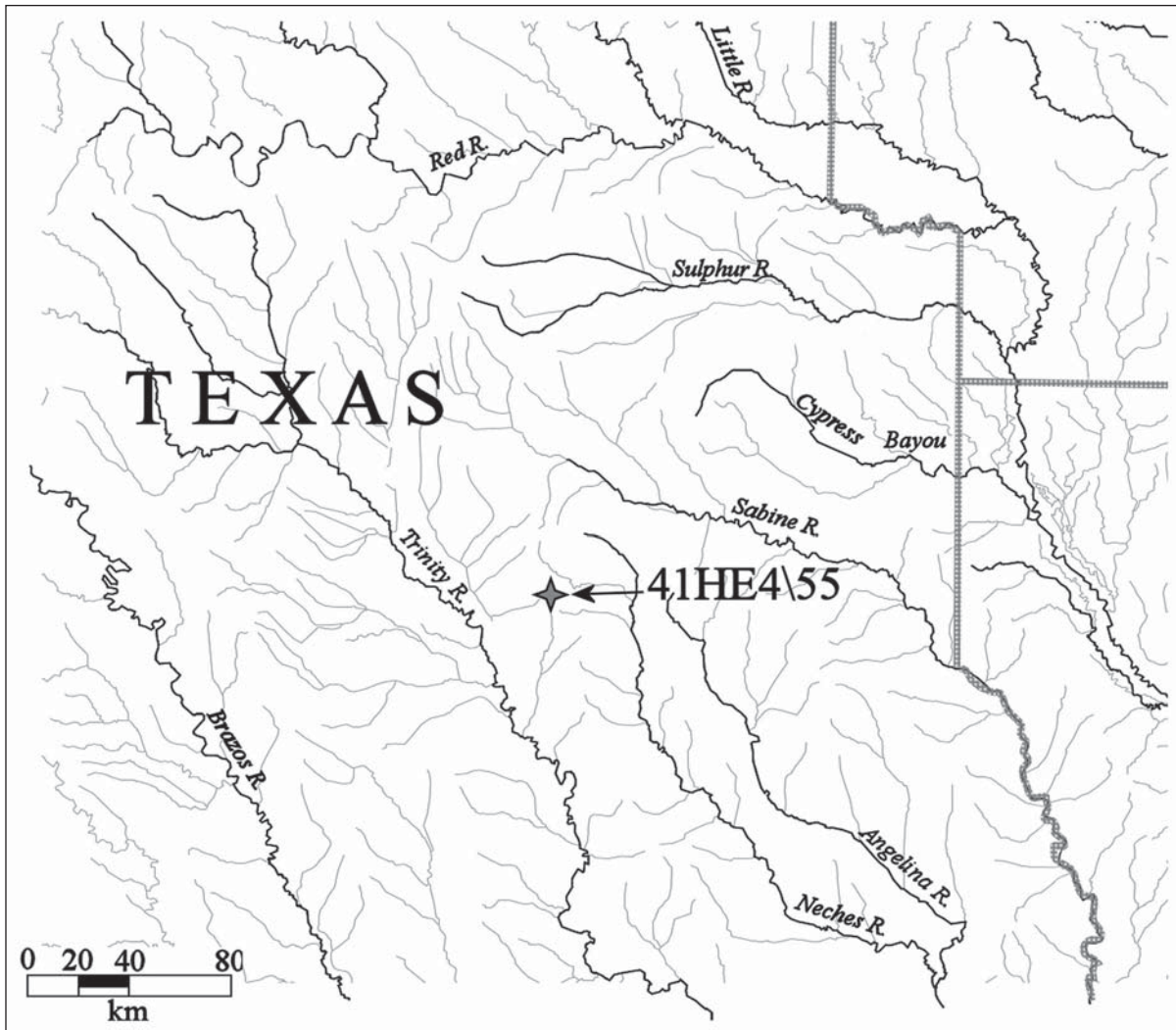


Figure 1. Location of the L. B. Miller Farm site in East Texas.

### 1920 and 1934 Investigations

Caddo ceramic vessels from a burial in an unmarked cemetery were exposed in a gully in 1920 on the L. B. Miller Farm, where they were collected by the landowner's son. These four vessels were obtained by J. E. Pearce of the University of Texas (UT) on long-term loan that year. In November 1935, UT archaeologists led by A. M. Woolsey returned to the site to try to locate and excavate additional Caddo burial features (Woolsey 1935). An area at least 20 ft. in each direction from the 1920 burial feature location was excavated by UT, but no other burial features were located.

UT archaeologists also excavated another place on the site an unknown distance southwest of the burial feature, in an area that apparently had midden deposits (Woolsey 1935). This area had sherds from two different unreconstructed ceramic jars as well as a number of sherds from unrelated plain ware, fine ware, and utility ware vessels.

### Ceramic Vessels

The four vessels from the ancestral Caddo burial feature exposed in 1920 at the L. B. Miller Farm site include a Killough Pinched jar body section, a Poynor Engraved, *var. unspecified* bottle, a Hood Engraved, *var. unspecified* effigy bowl (missing the effigy head), and a Poynor Engraved, *var. N* carinated bowl. These types and varieties are consistent with the burial feature dating to some portion of the Frankston phase (ca. A.D. 1400-1680).

SITE NAME OR SITE NUMBER: L. B. Miller Farm

VESSEL NO.: 1

VESSEL FORM: Jar body section

NON-PLASTICS AND PASTE: grog

RIM AND LIP FORM: N/A

CORE COLOR: F (fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air)

INTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: yellowish-brown; fire clouds on the body and base

EXTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: yellowish-brown; fire clouds on the rim, body, and base

WALL THICKNESS (IN MM): body, 7.6 mm

INTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: smoothed

EXTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: none

HEIGHT (IN CM): 10.2 cm, body section

ORIFICE DIAMETER (IN CM): Unknown

DIAMETER AT BOTTOM OF RIM OR NECK (IN CM): 10.8

BASE DIAMETER (IN CM) AND SHAPE OF BASE: 7.6; circular and flat

ESTIMATED VOLUME (IN LITERS): 0.66+

DECORATION (INCLUDING MOTIF AND ELEMENTS WHEN APPARENT): The lowermost portion of the rim section has remnants of horizontal pinched ridges. The vessel body has curvilinear and concentric pinched ridges that cover the vessel body to within 1.0 cm of the vessel base.

PIGMENT USE AND LOCATION ON VESSEL: none

TYPE AND VARIETY (IF KNOWN): Killough Pinched (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 46g)

SITE NAME OR SITE NUMBER: L. B. Miller Farm

VESSEL NO.: 2

VESSEL FORM: Bottle with a carinated body

NON-PLASTICS AND PASTE: grog

RIM AND LIP FORM: Direct rim and a flat lip

CORE COLOR: G (fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air)

INTERIOR SURFACE COLOR:  
dark grayish-brown

EXTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: yellowish-brown; fire clouds on the rim, body, and base

WALL THICKNESS (IN MM): rim, 5.8 mm

INTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: none

EXTERIOR SURFACE  
TREATMENT: smoothed

HEIGHT (IN CM): 17.8

ORIFICE DIAMETER (IN CM): 4.4

DIAMETER AT BOTTOM OF RIM OR NECK (IN CM): 5.6 cm; maximum body diameter is 12.8 cm

BASE DIAMETER (IN CM) AND SHAPE OF BASE: 7.5; circular and flat

ESTIMATED VOLUME (IN LITERS): 0.55

DECORATION (INCLUDING MOTIF AND ELEMENTS WHEN APPARENT): the vessel body has two opposing sets of large diagonal hatched engraved brackets that extend from the top of the vessel body to the vessel carination (Figure 2). Between the large hatched brackets are narrow rectilinear engraved zones filled with short vertical lines.

PIGMENT USE AND LOCATION ON VESSEL: none

TYPE AND VARIETY (IF KNOWN): Poynor Engraved, *var. unspecified*

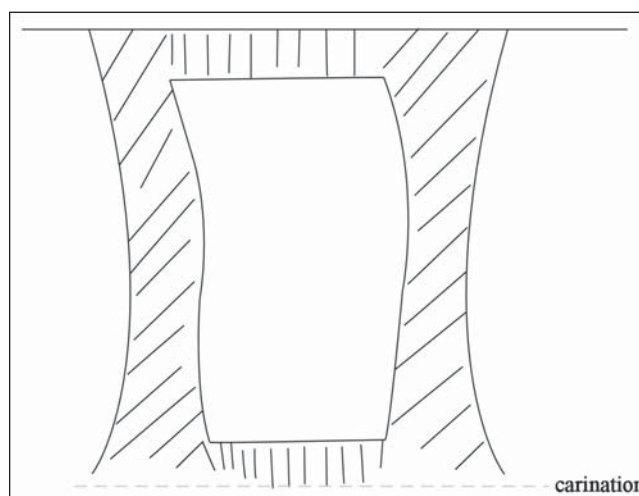


Figure 2. Decorative elements on Poynor Engraved, *var. unspecified* bottle (No. 2) from the L. B. Miller Farm (41HE4/55).

SITE NAME OR SITE NUMBER: L. B. Miller Farm

VESSEL NO.: 3

VESSEL FORM: Bowl, with tab tail (34 x 10 mm in length and width); effigy head attachment is missing

NON-PLASTICS AND PASTE: grog

RIM AND LIP FORM: Direct rim and rounded lip

CORE COLOR: G (fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air)

INTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: grayish-brown

EXTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: black slip overlying yellowish-brown surface

WALL THICKNESS (IN MM): rim, 6.4 mm

INTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: smoothed

EXTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: burnished

HEIGHT (IN CM): 5.1

ORIFICE DIAMETER (IN CM): 9.5

DIAMETER AT BOTTOM OF RIM OR NECK (IN CM): N/A

BASE DIAMETER (IN CM) AND SHAPE OF BASE: 6.4; circular and flat

ESTIMATED VOLUME (IN LITERS): 0.2

DECORATION (INCLUDING MOTIF AND ELEMENTS WHEN APPARENT): There are two broad horizontal engraved lines on the upper part of the vessel.

PIGMENT USE AND LOCATION ON VESSEL: none

TYPE AND VARIETY (IF KNOWN): Hood Engraved, *var. unspecified* (Perttula 2011:271), probably *var. Hood*

SITE NAME OR SITE NUMBER: L. B. Miller Farm

VESSEL NO.: 4

VESSEL FORM: Carinated bowl

NON-PLASTICS AND PASTE: grog

RIM AND LIP FORM: Inverted rim and rounded lip

CORE COLOR: F (fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air)

INTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: yellowish-brown; fire clouds on the rim, body, and base

EXTERIOR SURFACE COLOR: yellowish-brown; fire clouds on the rim, body, and base

WALL THICKNESS (IN MM): rim, 7.3 mm

INTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: smoothed

EXTERIOR SURFACE TREATMENT: smoothed

HEIGHT (IN CM): 13.4

ORIFICE DIAMETER (IN CM): 18.5

DIAMETER AT BOTTOM OF RIM OR NECK (IN CM): 22.5

BASE DIAMETER (IN CM) AND SHAPE OF BASE: 9.5; circular and flat

ESTIMATED VOLUME (IN LITERS): 2.2

DECORATION (INCLUDING MOTIF AND ELEMENTS WHEN APPARENT): The rim is divided into six panels by a series of opposed and oval-shaped hatched brackets (Figure 3). In each panel is a single engraved hooked arm element formed by two or more closely-spaced engraved lines.

PIGMENT USE AND LOCATION ON VESSEL: none

TYPE AND VARIETY (IF KNOWN): Poynor Engraved, *var. N* (Perttula 2011:Figure 6-65)

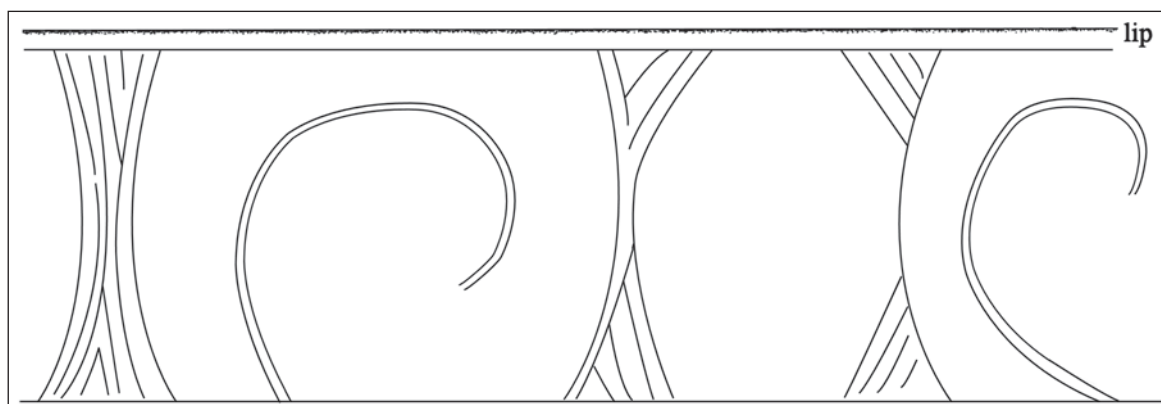


Figure 3. Poynor Engraved, *var. N* carinated bowl (No. 4) from the L. B. Miller Farm site (41HE4/55).

### Ceramic Vessel Sherds

Based on a 1985 TARL inventory prepared by Dr. Dee Ann Story, the first of the unreconstructed ceramic vessels from the L. B. Miller farm is a large jar with two opposed handles and an incised decoration on the rim. That decoration consisted of upper and lower horizontal incised lines on the rim panel as well as an unknown number of sets of three diagonal incised lines, pitched right to left. The second unreconstructed vessel is about 33 percent of a large Maydelle Incised jar represented by 35 rim sherds: the rim sherds had incised-punctuated elements, and the body sherds had brushed decorative elements.

The 178 other sherds from the midden deposits at the L. B. Miller Farm site include sherds from plain ware, fine ware, and utility ware vessels (Table 1). No information on the temper of these wares was provided on the TARKL inventory, but it is likely that the majority of the sherds were from vessels tempered with grog, as is the case in the nearby Caddo Creek valley in the upper Neches River basin (Perttula and Walters 2016).

**Table 1. Ceramic wares from the L. B. Miller Farm (41HE4/55).**

Ware	Rim	Body	Base	N
Plain	3	93	12	108
Fine	-	7	-	7
Utility	12	51	-	63
Totals	15	151	12	178

The plain to decorated sherd ratio of the L. B. Miller Farm site ceramic assemblage is 1.54. Approximately 51.4 percent of the decorated sherds have brushed decorative elements, while 40 percent have wet paste decorations (i.e., incised, incised-punctated). The brushed/wet paste ratio in the sherd assemblage is 1.29. These assemblage metrics in the midden deposits at the site are consistent with a ca. A.D. 1400-1480 Frankston phase occupation (see Perttula and Walters 2016).

Fine ware sherds in the assemblage only account for 10 percent of the decorated sherds (see Table 1). None of them were described or typologically identified on the TARKL inventory. The utility wares include 35 brushed body sherds and one brushed-incised body sherd, both likely from Bullard Brushed jars; 19 punctated sherds; two incised-punctated sherds likely from Maydelle Incised jars; and six Maydelle Incised rim and body sherds;

### Summary and Conclusions

The L. B. Miller Farm site (41HE4/55) is an ancestral Caddo habitation site and cemetery of unknown size on Coon Creek in the Post Oak Savannah in the Trinity River basin in East Texas. UT archaeologists first investigated the site in 1920, when the landowners loaned them four ceramic vessels that had been eroded from a burial feature, and then again in 1935, when excavations failed to identify any additional Caddo burial features but did identify midden deposits with sherds from two large, but unreconstructed ceramic jars as well as 178 other ceramic sherds.

The analysis of the ceramic vessels and an examination of an 1985 TARKL inventory of the sherds indicates that the L. B. Miller Farm site was occupied during the Frankston phase of the Late Caddo period; the vast majority of known Frankston phases are in the Neches River basin, and there is a particular concentration of Frankston phase sites in the adjoining Caddo Creek valley in the upper Neches River basin (Perttula and Walters 2016). Ceramic plain and decorated sherd metrics suggest that the midden deposits may have accumulated during the early part of the Frankston phase, from ca. A.D. 1400-1480. The temporal sequence of Poynor Engraved varieties and other engraved fine wares in the upper Neches River basin (see Perttula 2011:Table 6-37) when compared to the few ceramic vessels from the burial feature suggest the deceased at the L. B. Miller Farm site was interred in the later part of the Frankston phase, from ca. A.D. 1560-1680.

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