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Archaeological Survey and Testing at The City of Live Oak Park, Bexar County, Texas

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND TESTING AT
The City of Live Oak Park,
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

ERWIN ROEMER, JR. AND STEPHEN L. BLACK

CENTER FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT, NO. 47

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Archaeological Research

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INTRODUCTION

On June 15, 1977, an archaeological survey was made of a 70-acre park at Live Oak, Texas. During the survey, a prehistoric site (41 BX 435) was found and recorded. Recommendations were made for testing the site to evaluate its importance and possible eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. On June 17 and 18, limited testing of the site was conducted. The results of the survey and subsequent test excavations are presented here.

The archaeological work at the park was done under a contract between the City of Live Oak (Mr. Ronald Dunlap, City Manager) and the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio.

The original survey was conducted by Stephen L. Black, and the subsequent testing was done by Erwin Roemer, Jr., Augustine Frkuska and Elizabeth Frkuska. Field work was done under the supervision of Dr. Thomas R. Hester, Director of the Center, and Jack D. Eaton, Assistant Director.

THE SURVEY

At the time of the survey on June 15, 1977, the Live Oak park was being developed and much of the area had already been modified by heavy equipment. A light scatter of cultural debris, mostly lithic materials, was seen in disturbed fill and grader cuts over much of the park area. Cores, unifaces, bifaces, patinated flakes and burned rocks were observed. It is likely that one or more sites were present in the zone before development began.

On the north side of the development zone, a relatively undisturbed prehistoric site (41 BX 435) was discovered (Fig. 1). The site is located on the south bank of a small, dry creek which enters the park site from the northwest. The total size of the site could not be determined, but it appeared to extend along the bank for roughly 75 m and was perhaps 10 m wide.

Cultural debris was observed *in situ* in the profile along the edge of the drainage cut. Eroding from the creek bank were chert flakes, bifaces, burned rocks, bone fragments and land snail shells. Also noted in the cut was a *Montell* dart point. A selection of lithic artifacts collected from the surface is shown in Figs. 2 and 3.

Because the site was in danger of being disturbed by ongoing construction, it was recommended that testing be done, first of all, to determine the importance of the site and, then, to suggest means to protect it.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Limited testing was done at site 41 BX 435 in an effort to learn something about its size, depth, content, chronological affiliations and archaeological potential. Standard excavation techniques were used and all soil was screened through a 1/4-inch hardware cloth.

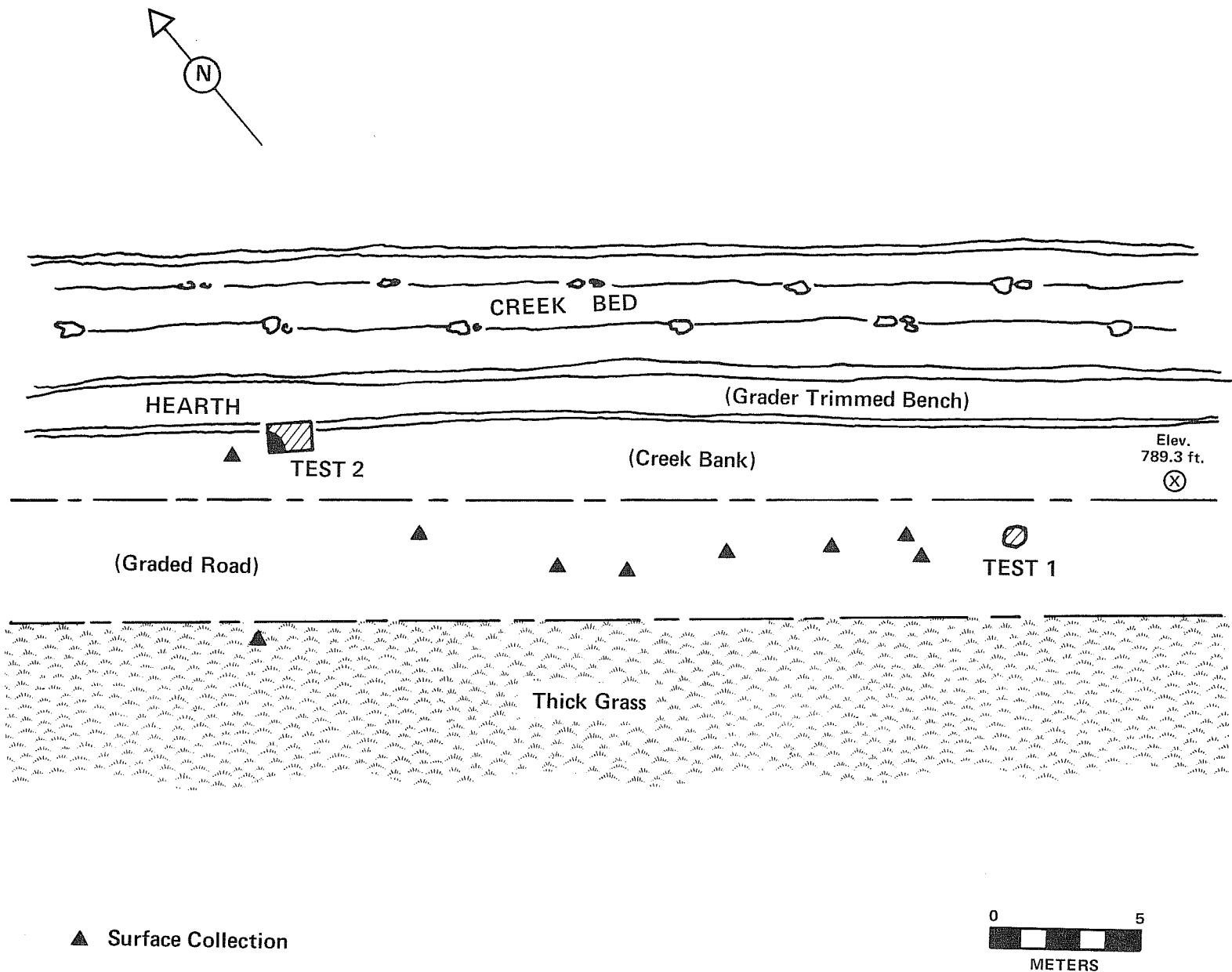
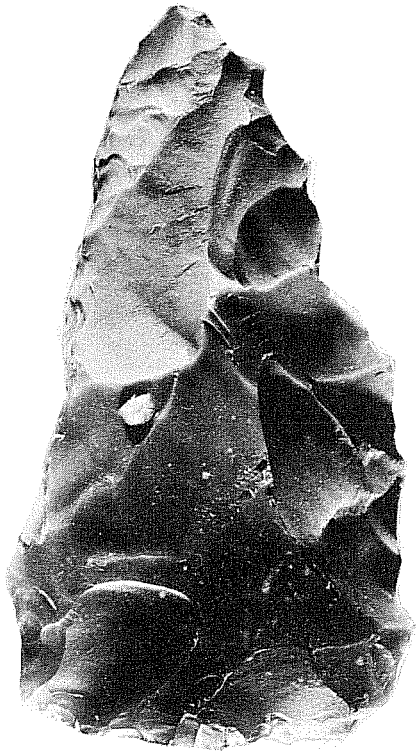
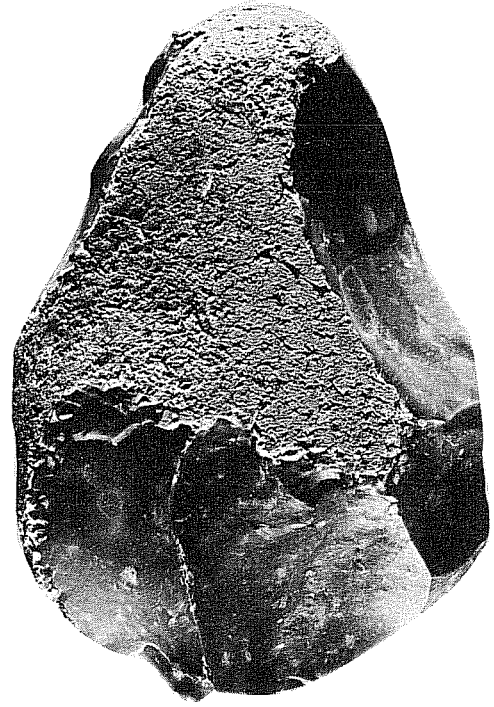


Figure 1. 41 BX 435 Site Plan. Shown are locations of Test Units #1 and #2 and surface collection proveniences.



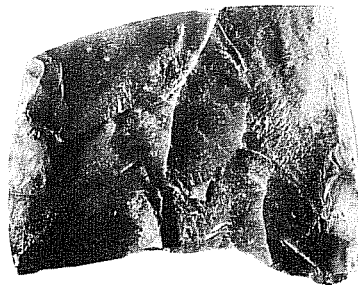
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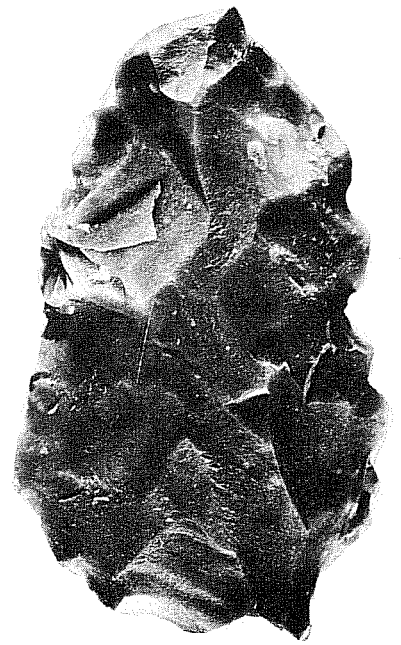
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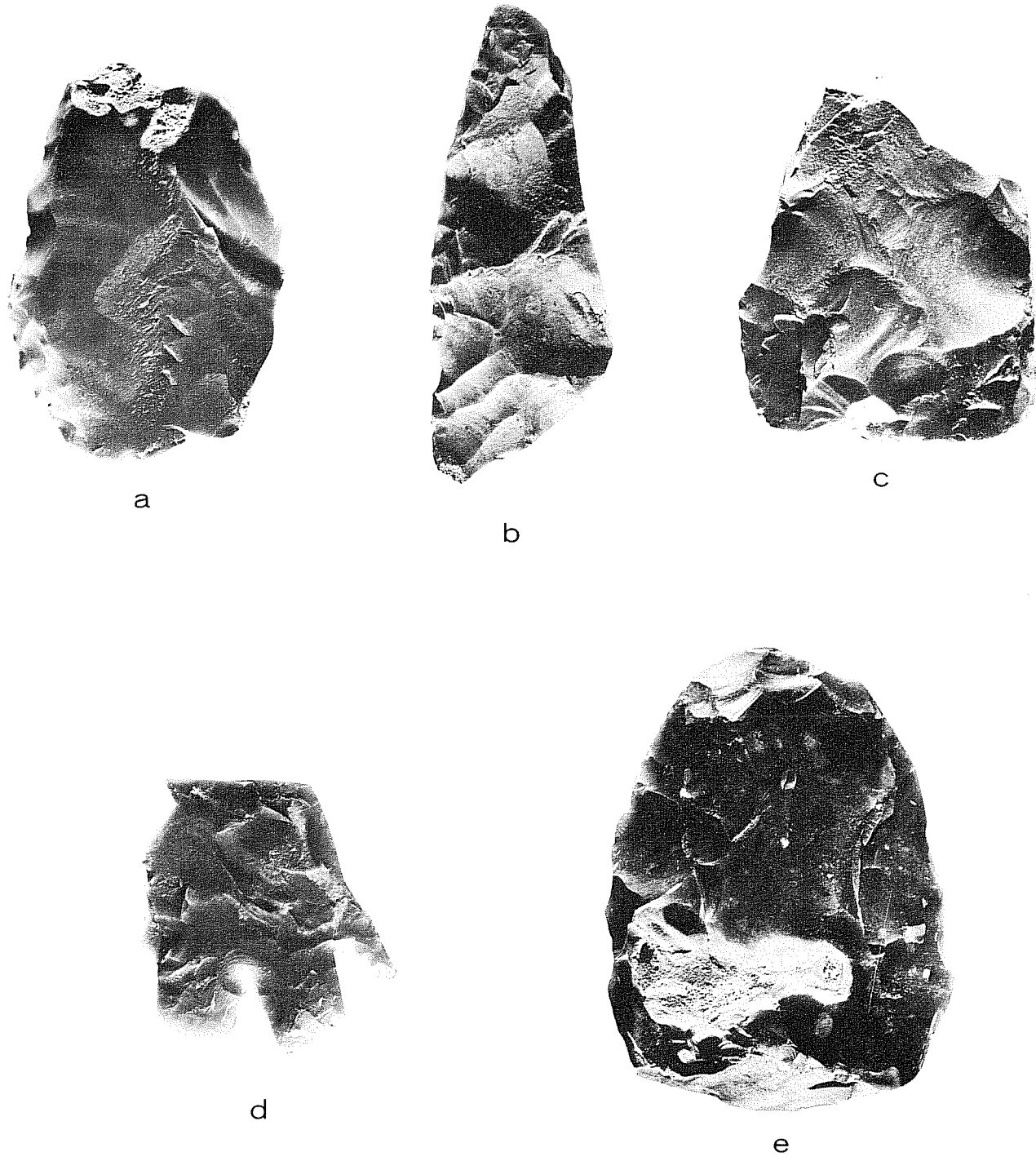
d



e

cm | '1| '2| '3| '4| '5|

Figure 2. 41 BX 435 *Surface Artifacts*. a, bifacial quarry blank; b, bifacial core; c-d, bifacial preform fragment; e, bifacial quarry blank.



cm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Figure 3. 41 BX 435 Surface Artifacts. a, bifacial preform; b, unifacial side scraper; c, unifacial quarry blank; d, Montell point fragment; e, bifacial quarry blank.

Investigations at 41 BX 435 began with a controlled surface collection of the site. This was followed by the excavation of two test pits (Test Units #1 and #2) dug into selected areas of the site (Fig. 1). The artifacts and other cultural debris collected during the excavations are summarized in Table 1.

Test Unit #1

This was a 40 cm² pit dug in 10-cm arbitrary levels to a depth of 80 cm. The unit was placed in a graded road surface on top of the creek bank about 5 m from the creek bottom (Fig. 1). It is estimated that several cm of original surface had been removed by the grader, but the deposits were otherwise undisturbed.

Level 1 (surface to 10 cm) contained the largest sample of cultural debris within the unit. The lithics include a unifacial side and end scraper (Fig. 4,a), a core and flakes. Lithic artifacts (mostly flakes) were recorded from every subsequent level except Level 5. Only a few fragments of possibly burned rocks were noted in this level.

The deposits were composed basically of medium brown clayey soil with occasional small inclusions of caliche throughout. The soil was darkest in color in the first two excavation levels (0-20 cm). This soil continued through the third and fourth levels (20-40 cm) but with an admixture of light brown clay.

Level 5 (40-50 cm) was notably grayer, loosely packed and contained some sand. This level had no artifacts and, with the exception of two fire-fractured rocks, appeared to be culturally sterile. Extending below this level, to the 80-cm depth at which excavations terminated, was a uniform medium brown clayey soil similar to the upper levels. Artifactual materials (flakes, charcoal, land snails) were present in this deposit (see Table 1).

Although some scattered burned rocks were noted in most levels, no concentrations which might represent a cultural feature were uncovered.

Test Unit #2

This unit was a 50-cm x one-m test pit dug into the creek bank. It was placed between the creek bed and the graded road mentioned above. The unit was located about 25 m upstream from Unit #1.

Unit #2 was excavated in 10-cm levels to a depth of 90 cm. Lithic artifacts, mostly flakes, were found in quantity in all levels. Also noted in most levels were burned rocks, fragments of charcoal and land snail shells. Found in Level 3, at a depth of 28 cm, was an *Ensor* point (Fig. 4,b). In Level 5 a core fragment with a concave utilized edge was found (Fig. 4,c), as well as a bovid tooth fragment (probably bison). In Level 6 a bifacial core (Fig. 4,d) and a biface fragment were found.

It is interesting to note that the count of chert flakes and chunks steadily increased with depth, with the largest concentration found in Level 7. Most of the chunks of chert are fire-burned. Within this level, in the western half of the excavation unit and at the 63- to 70-cm depth, a concentration of burned

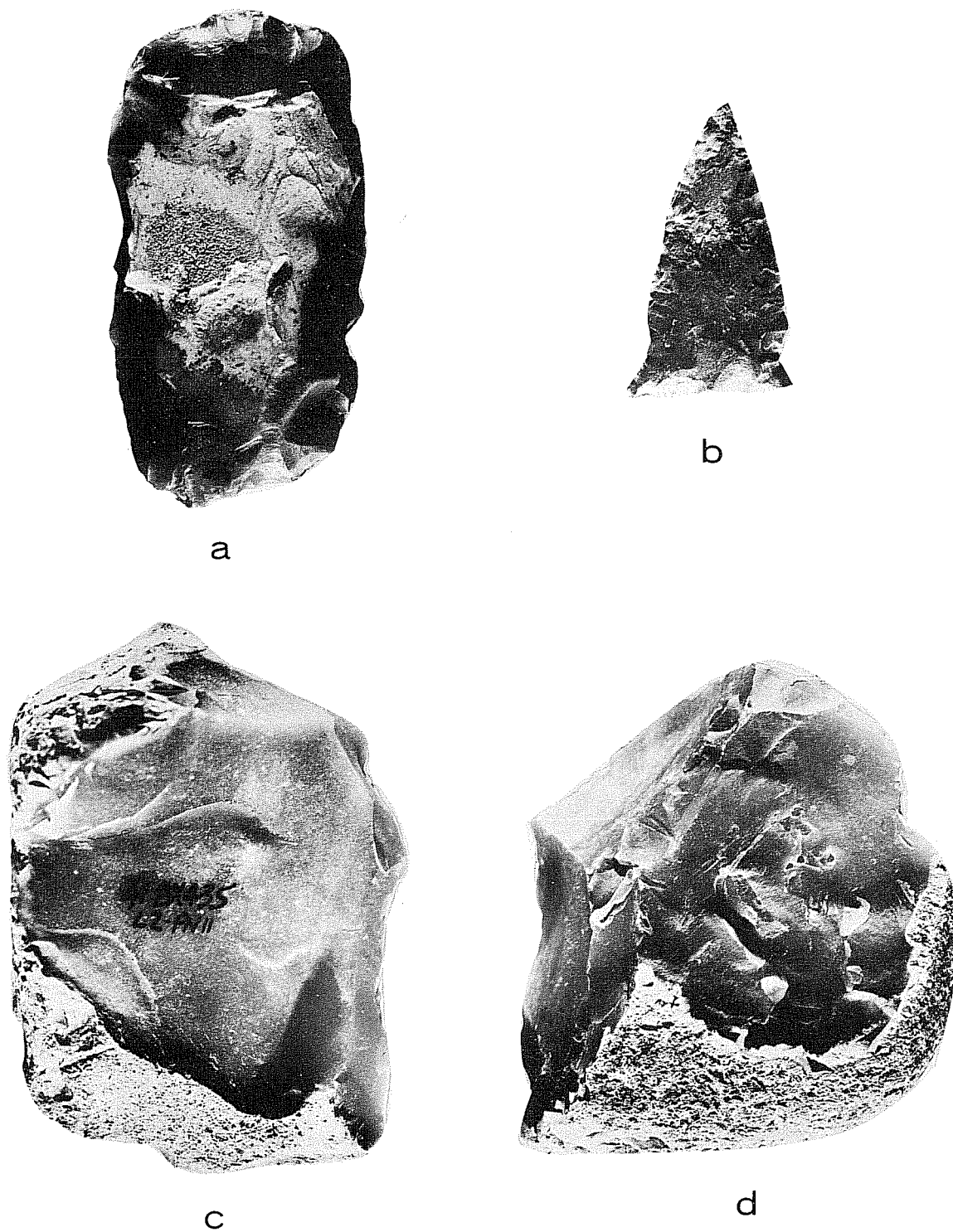


Figure 4. 41 BX 435 *Lithic Artifacts from Excavation Units*. Unit #1: a, unifacial side and end scraper; Unit #2: b, *Ensor* point; c, core fragment; d, bifacial core.

TABLE 1
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIALS FROM TEST UNITS AT SITE 41 BX 435

Collected Material (by level)	Surface	Test Unit #1								Test Unit #2									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Projectile Points	1											1							
Unifaces	1	1																	
Cores	5													1	2				
Quarry Blanks	11																		
Preforms	9			1															
Primary Flakes	1			1					1	1		1			1	1			
Secondary Flakes		6	1					1	2	1	1	2	2	6	3	12	9	6	3
Interior Flakes	6	19			1			2	6	1	2	9	18	39	52	49	79	18	2
Lithic Chunks*		39	5	7	5	2		6	4		6	36	74	176	191	222	224	56	111
Land Snail Shells		5						2	5		5	12	18	52	126	192	142	13	14
Charcoal Samples								1	1					1	1	1	1		1
Bone Fragments		3													1			4	

*These were mainly of low-grade chert, fire fractured, and ranged from .5 cm to 5 cm in size. They appear to have been hearth stones.

rocks (with scattered charcoal in association) was recorded (Fig. 5). This buried burned rock feature had a relatively lighter incidence of flakes within and around it. Near the concentration of burned rocks was a large number of land snail shells (*Rabdotus* sp.). A hackberry seed was also collected.

Through Levels 8 and 9 there was a noticeable decline in overall quantities of materials, although the burned rock feature continued as deep as excavations were made. In Level 8 some unidentifiable bone fragments were found.

The soil in Test Unit #2 was consistently a very hard brown clay with occasional caliche flecks and small gravels. There was some indication of root activity extending to a depth of around 70 cm.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Site 41 BX 435 is a relatively large (750+ m²) prehistoric occupation site. Parts of the site appear to have been utilized intermittently (e.g., the two "horizons" evident in the vertical distribution of artifacts from Test Unit #1), while other site areas saw repeated occupations by local hunter-gatherer populations (e.g., the Test Unit #2 area). Chronologically, the site apparently dates from Late Archaic times, as evidenced by the recovery of *Montell* and *Ensor* dart points. Dating of the Late Archaic is uncertain, in terms of absolute temporal parameters, but radiocarbon evidence from south central Texas (at La Jita, Hester 1971; and at Walker Ranch, Jaquier *et al.* 1977) suggest that it ended about A.D. 800-1000. This is considerably later than the upper time limits suggested for the period by either Prewitt (1976) or Weir (1976) for the central Texas area proper.

The depth of buried deposits, the occurrence of a deeply buried (and as yet unexplored) burned rock accumulation, the presence of considerable lithic remains, charcoal and snails, and the potential of these extensive archaeological materials for future scientific studies are all indicative of the significance of this site. Accordingly, we have submitted the appropriate forms for its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

As a result of our investigations, the City of Live Oak (as represented by City Manager Ronald E. Dunlap) agreed to protect this site during the completion of work on the park. It is planned, as part of the park development scheme, to cover the entire site surface with a layer of sod. This measure should protect the site both from erosion and from indiscriminate relic collecting. We further suggest that proper management of this important resource should include fencing of the site area. Unless the remaining portions of 41 BX 435 are preserved, south central Texas will lose yet another valuable cultural resource.



a



b

Figure 5. 41 BX 435: *Test Unit #2 Excavations*. a, view of Test Unit #2; b, Test Unit #2 south profile; note buried burned rock feature.

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