

Discovering Traces of the Caddo in Northeast Texas

Archeology Fact Sheet – Anderson County, Tyler District

Project Details: US 175

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Tyler District is dedicated to enhancing mobility projects to ensure the safety of the traveling public. When the project to widen US Hwy 175 initiated in 2003, TxDOT's team of archeologists investigated the project area for historic and prehistoric resources. This is just one step in the environmental review process that occurs before construction can begin.

It took nearly a decade to complete the investigations as TxDOT waited for access to the right-of-way and project funding. The team also experienced several bumps along the way, but discovered a few rare archeological sites affiliated with Caddo Indians who once inhabited the area.

THE LOST SITES

Previously recorded archeological sites help TxDOT identify and evaluate sites that may occur in a project area, allowing TxDOT to avoid sensitive places such as cemeteries and sacred burials. Archeologists working in the 1930s and 1940s had recorded sites in the area, but their proximity to the US 175 project was not clear. TxDOT archeologists had to dig deeper by examining old photographs, measuring distance from the original highway route, studying old Texas Highway Department maps, and comparing previous reports.

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

TxDOT identified several sites that date back to the 1400-1600s, and earlier. The sites contained Caddo farmstead and village remnants, as well as two Caddo mounds – built-up earthen mounds that are used for special ceremonies. Mounds are an extremely rare discovery, even in Northeast Texas which is rich in Caddo history and archeology.

A few of the sites were determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. That means the sites offer information that can help contribute to a better understanding of the prehistory of Texas. TxDOT has completed excavations at one of these sites. Among the artifacts uncovered was a metal artifact that may predate what people supposed about initial European contact with Native Americans in Texas.



Metal Artifact

Read more about other TxDOT archeology projects. Visit www.txdot.gov, Keyword: "Archeology."

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Ceramic artifact, dating from AD 1480 to AD 1680

In addition, archeologists found nine clay pipes, an obsidian arrow point, 204 vessels, several burials, 194 arrow points, and two metal objects, among other things. The metal objects uncovered appear to be a box fragment consisting of two pieces from two different sides of a Spanish jewelry box. TxDOT is in consultation with the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma to determine outreach activities to educate various audiences throughout the state about Caddo archeology and heritage.