

The Cattle Pen Biface Cache, Williamson County, Texas

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ABSTRACT

A cache of nine medium-sized bifaces, found in a small Williamson County burned rock midden, are reported, illustrated and discussed.

THE SITE

The site has been recorded as 41WM1184. It is in Williamson County (Figure 1), situated above the south bank of Berry Creek, on a rocky, sloping terrace with thin soil. A dense burned rock midden was the central feature of this site, with buried cultural deposits fading quickly just a few feet in all directions from the midden. The low numbers of time diagnostic projectile points and tools found at this site indicate it was used for brief, and perhaps occasional, episodes through most of prehistory. Beginning with the Late Paleoindian period, as evidenced by Angostura points, the site was used intermittently by groups of people whose diagnostic

projectile point types are as follows: Bell, Martindale, Nolan, Bulverde, Pedernales, Marshall, Williams, Lange, Castroville, Montell, Ensor, and Scallorn.

The site's use may well relate to that of small groups of hunter/gatherers passing through from main camps further upstream on their way to hunt further east on the Blackland Prairie. These peoples may have stopped at this site to carry out earth-oven cooking and, at least on one occasion, to bury their dead, as this midden contained one shallow, disarticulated burial. Natural ledge rock in the immediate area may have been used as to obtain cooking materials. The site was completely destroyed by development shortly after its excavation.



Figure 1. Location of Williamson County, Texas.

THE CACHE

The biface cache reported in this paper (Figures 2-4) was found buried in the burned rock midden at a depth of approximately six inches below the surface. The bifaces were stacked with distal tips pointing generally west. Specimens with patina were discovered with the patinated face up, and those specimens with the most patina were on the top of the stack. This cache was discovered approximately four feet from the disarticulated human burial mentioned above, and is not thought to have been associated with this burial.

The nine bifaces found in the cache are described below; each specimen number correlates with the illustrations in Figures 3 and 4. Additional details are found in Table 1.

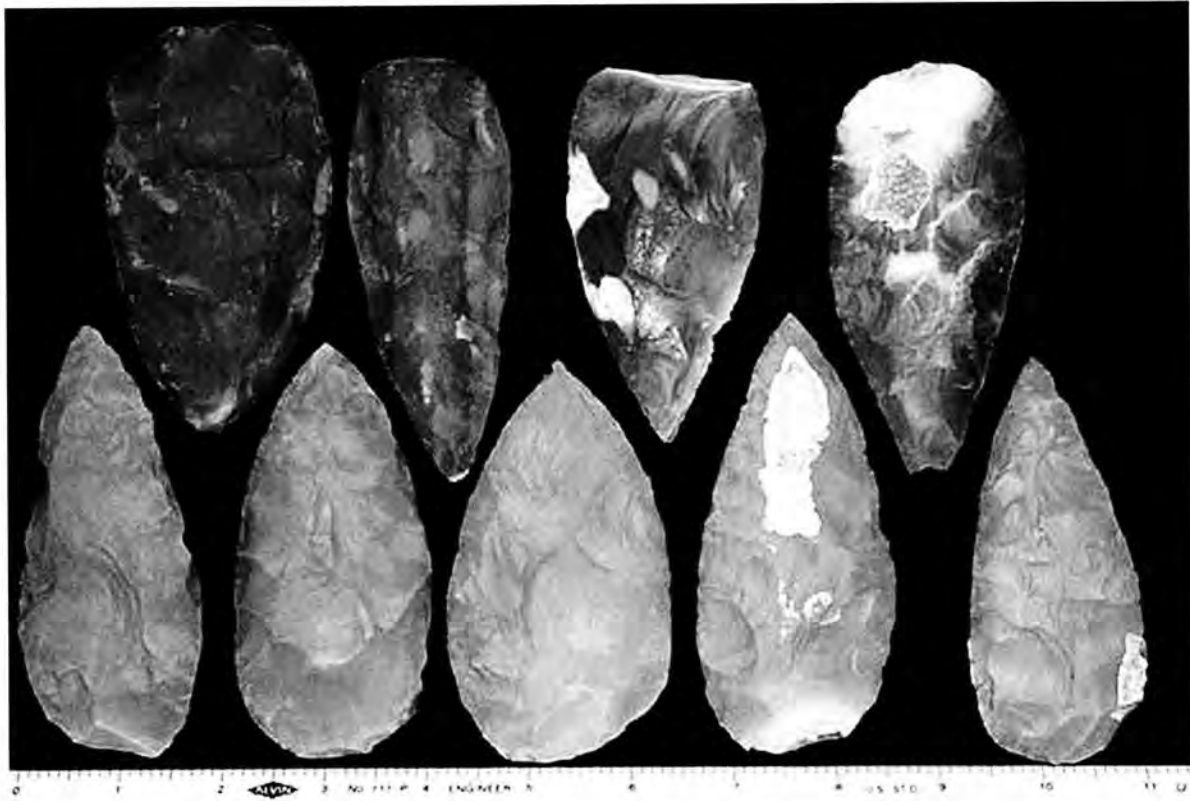


Figure 2. Photograph of the Cattle Pen Biface Cache, Williamson County, Texas.



Figure 3. Cattle Pen Biface Cache Specimens 1-4 as listed in the text.

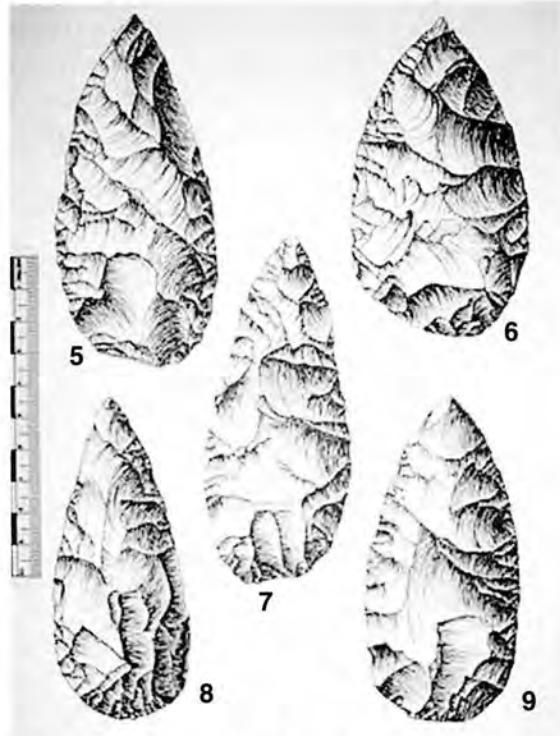


Figure 4. Cattle Pen Biface Cache. Specimens 5-9 as listed in the text.

Table 1. Descriptive Details for the Cattle Pen Biface Cache.

Spec	Length	Width Max.	Thickness Max.	W/T Ratio	Cortex	Overall Shape	Base	Lateral Edges	Cross Section	Symmetrical
1	103 mm	49 mm	12 mm	4.08	Y1	Leaf	Convex	Convex	Plano-convex	No
2	107 mm	41 mm	11 mm	3.73	Y1	Lanceolate	Convex	Convex	Convex	No
3	103 mm	57 mm	13 mm	4.38	N	Ovate	Convex	Convex	Convex	Yes
4	95 mm	50 mm	11 mm	4.55	Y1	Triangular	Straight	Convex	Convex	Yes
5	109 mm	49 mm	12 mm	4.08	Y1	Ovate	Convex	Convex	Convex	Yes
6	100 mm	56 mm	12 mm	4.67	N	Ovate	Convex	Convex	Convex	Yes
7	109 mm	46 mm	12 mm	3.83	N	Leaf	Convex	Convex	Convex	No
8	101 mm	43 mm	12 mm	3.58	N	Leaf	Convex	Convex	Plano-convex	Yes
9	103 mm	49 mm	14 mm	3.5	N	Leaf	Convex	Convex	Convex	Yes

Specimen #1 is an irregular leaf-shaped biface made from high quality Edwards Georgetown chert. Flaking is random, although generally collateral, with several flake scars traveling two-thirds across the face. The biface exhibits two overshot flakes near and at the base. The reverse faces lateral edges have been lowered and lightly trimmed. Cortex remnants remain on the reverse face. This biface was made from a large flake spall and no traces of the bulb of percussion remain. Percussion flaking on this specimen was accomplished with a soft hammer. A light patina covers most of the face illustrated, while the reverse exhibits no patina what so ever.

Specimen #2 is a slender, irregularly shaped biface, made of high quality, Edwards Georgetown chert. Flaking on this specimen is random, soft hammer percussion. Remnants of larger percussion flakes can be seen on the illustrated face as well as what appears to be pressure flaking along the lower left lateral edge. The illustrated face has a light covering of patina, while the reverse face has no patina at all. Evidence of overshot flaking is exhibited in the lower left corner of this biface. From the lower half of this biface, both lateral edges exhibit some sort of use wear. The base of this specimen also exhibits obvious use wear. On the reverse face, both lateral edges have been lowered. The distal tip has traces of cortex. This specimen was made on a large flake spall, and any evidence of the bulb of percussion has been removed.

Specimen #3. This specimen, again, is made from high quality Edwards Georgetown chert. This artifact was made on a large flake spall with all evidence of the bulb of percussion removed. The illustrated face has a light patina, while the reverse has no patina at all. Flaking is again random and accomplished with a soft hammer. Some use wear is evident along the illustrated faces right lateral edge, and this artifact may have been used in scraping and cutting activities. Larger percussion flake scars go well past the artifact's midline, and on the reverse face at least one flake scar appears to almost have overshot the biface. This is the only biface in this cache that has a large flake scar struck from the base.

Specimen #4. This specimen is distinctly triangular in outline and made of high quality Edwards Georgetown chert. This specimen also exhibits a light

patina on the illustrated face, while the reverse has no patina. This biface is made on a large flake with all evidence of the bulb of percussion removed. The base of this specimen exhibits a heavy patina, which formed on an older flake surface. Flaking is random and accomplished using a soft hammer and the illustrated face exhibits substantial amounts of pressure flaking and some apparent use wear on the distal half's lateral edges.

Specimen 5 is a leaf shaped biface made of high grade Edwards Georgetown chert. The illustrated face has a light patina across the face, while the reverse has no patina, but does exhibit original cortex remnants on the base and calcium carbonate build up on the distal one half. Flaking is random and soft hammer, with some flake scars appearing to almost over shot the biface on both faces. On the reverse face, the lateral edges have been lowered and some use wear appears present on the illustrated faces lower right lateral edge. This biface was made on a large flake spall whose bulb of percussion was removed.

Specimen #6 is ovate in outline, and also made of high quality Edwards Georgetown chert. It was made on a large flake spall and all evidence of the bulb of percussion has been removed. Again, large, soft hammer percussion flakes are random, with some appearing to have overshot the biface. This specimen also appears to have use wear along the illustrated face's lower right lateral edge. This specimen does not appear to have any patina on either face.

Specimen #7 is a very irregularly leaf shaped biface made from high quality Edwards Georgetown chert. Neither face of this artifact exhibits any observable patina. Again, this specimen was made on a large flake spall, whose bulb of percussion has been completely removed. Flaking was accomplished by soft hammer percussion and is irregular and random. Some flake scar remnants again appear to nearly have overshot the biface edges. Some possible use wear is exhibited on the lower left lateral edge of the illustrated face.

Specimen #8 is made from high quality Edwards Georgetown chert and has hints of patina on the illustrated face only. The artifact was made on a large flake spall and retains no evidence of a bulb of percussion. Flaking is soft hammer and randomly patterned. Remnants of large percussion flakes, which do or nearly

do “overshoot” the biface are exhibited on both faces. The base on this specimen appears to exhibit use wear. The illustrated face’s lateral edges have been lowered, and the specimen itself appears to retain some of the original flake spall curvature.

Specimen #9 is made from high quality, Edwards Georgetown chert and has some evidence of patina on the illustrated face. This specimen was made on a large flake spall whose bulb of percussion has been completely removed. Flaking is random and accomplished by soft hammer percussion. Obvious overshoot flaking is exhibited on this specimen reverse face, while the illustrated face exhibits at least one flake scar traveling well past three-fourths the specimens face. This specimen appears to exhibit use wear at several locations on both its lateral edges.

Note on raw material The first four bifaces, described above, appear to have been made from the same cobble or core while the next five bifaces appear to have been made from a slightly different Edwards Georgetown chert core or cobble. All were examined with a UV light and the results are found in Table 2.

DISCUSSION

Generally, most biface caches reported in Texas, contain specimens that are much larger in size than those reported in this paper (for a more detailed discussion of caching practices of prehistoric peoples, see Miller (1993, 2008). This central Texas cache consists of nine bifaces of similar size and outline, which could be dart point performs. However, the presence of apparent use wear on the basal and lateral edges on the specimens suggests that their usefulness to their prehistoric owners did not begin as finished dart points. Rather, some of these bifaces appear to have been used in scraping or cutting activities, suggesting that the intended use of a tool might change as the lithic reduction process continues. That these bifaces were cached on a minimally used site, in a setting spaced between larger sites upstream and the Blackland Prairie to the east, might suggest their intended use as tools in processing of food resources, at the time of their caching.

Although these bifaces have absolutely nothing in common with Clovis technology, and are almost

Table 2. Results of UV Light Analysis of Specimens in the Cattle Pen Biface Cache.

Specimen	Natural Light	Short Wave	Long Wave
1	Gley 1 4/5GY	5Y 7/8	5YR 5/6
2	Gley1 4/10Y	10YR 6/8	2.5Y 4/6
3	Gley1 5/10Y	2.5Y 6/6	2.5Y 4/6
4	Gley1 4/10Y	5Y 7/8	2.5Y 4/6
5	Gley1 5/N	25Y 7/6	5YR 6/6
6	Gley1 5/10Y	2.5Y 7/6	5YR 6/6
7	Gley1 5/10Y	2.5Y 7/6	5YR 6/6
8	Gley1 5/N	2.5Y 7/8	5YR 6/6
9	Gley1 5/10Y	2.5Y 7/6	5YR 6/6

certainly from the Late Archaic time period, it maybe, because of the many overshot or near overshot flakes exhibited on these specimens, that the knapper was intentionally using an overshot strategy in his reduction process. However, if this is the case, the possible intentional use of overshot flaking in this cache, did not have the same results one would see at the same stage of Clovis biface reduction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Richard McReynolds for his fine illustrations, which are the better part of this report. Thanks as well to Debbie Calame, for her assistance with the UV light analysis. And finally,

thanks to Dr. Thomas R. Hester for his editorial assistance.

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