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Perdiz Points from Site 41CH161

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# Excavations at 41CH161, Chambers County

Sheldon Kindall and Leland Patterson

## Location

This site is located on the edge of Cotton Lake, one of several old lakes in the Trinity River delta. Trinity River empties into Trinity Bay, a part of Galveston Bay. Cotton Lake has been made deeper by recent subsidence but it is still a shallow lake. The western and northern edges of Cotton Lake are a part of the rim of Galveston Bay: there are about two miles of marsh land between Cotton Lake and Galveston Bay. The water in Cotton Lake is brackish but there are nearby bayous sufficiently close to the site to be a source of fresh water fish. One bayou which was near the site, Alligator Bayou, is now inundated by a modern Houston Lighting and Power (Houston Industries) cooling pond.

## Background

This site was reported to the Houston Archeological Society by a person who had found a handle among the ceramics on the site. The handle looked like a primitive but ordinary coffee cup handle. There was a strong suspicion that this was a site with occupation lasting into the Historic period.

## Objectives of test excavations

The objective of the excavation was to try to determine whether the occupation period of this site did extend into the Historic time period. Also, the excavation results will contribute to the regional database for coastal margin sites.

## Procedure

Ceramics were collected from the surface along the lake shore and inland for a distance of 10 meters. Site 41CH161 is a large Rangia shell midden. A part of the midden is just offshore, now under water. A large amount of pottery had eroded out of the offshore portion of the midden and washed up on the beach.

A total of five 1-m-square test pits were started. Three of these pits were terminated early because they missed the main site and encountered a not very early Anglo disturbance, which tended to confuse the objective of this work. Only two pits were excavated through the site to sterile soil, pits A and E. Both pits were about 40 meters back from the shoreline and up a steep bank, about 4 meters above the water level (see Figure 1).

Excavation proceeded in levels of 5 centimeters. All soil was water screened through 1/4-inch mesh screen. A 10-cm-square column of soil was removed from the wall of pit A and another from the wall of pit E. Both were carefully extracted and bagged in levels of 5 cm, and taken to the lab for fine screening and microscopic examination.

The area of the site is estimated at 1050 square meters, not counting the portion of the midden in the water. The amount of the site disturbed by this work was very small.

All artifacts were removed to the HAS lab facilities at Rice University for further processing. The soil for fine screening was turned over to Bill McClure, who is also doing the faunal analysis.