

THE JAMISON SITE--41-Lb.-2
A Preliminary Report on the Houston Archeological
Society excavations in Liberty County Texas

Introduction

The purpose of this preliminary report is to acquaint the public with the work being done by the Houston Archeological Society at the W. T. Jamison site as regards methods of excavation and findings. As any project of this nature will have its share of discrepancies, merits, and possibilities which may go unnoticed by those in direct contact with the situation, it is hoped that this report will inspire criticism and comment from its readers. Conclusions will be reserved as much as possible for the forthcoming final report on this site.

One of the purposes of the H.A.S. as stated in our constitution is the "collection of materials and data...to sponsor projects and promote investigations to inculcate a wider public understanding and appreciations of Archeology".

As a major step in fulfilling this purpose, the H.A.S. board of directors took steps at the beginning of this year to sponsor the excavation and study of a sand midden in or around Harris County. An Excavating Committee of four was appointed by the directors to select a site for excavation, the method of excavation, and a system of analysis of the material gathered.

Delays in obtaining a site extended into May, then a site three miles east of Dayton was suggested. Mr. J. R. Jamison, a son of the landowner, Mr. W. T. Jamison, was approached for permission to investigate the site. Permission was readily given by Mr. Jamison. While visiting Mr. Jamison, the excavating committee was able to examine parts of a skull and fragmentary remains of a burial removed by Mr. Jamison from the bank of a pit 50' in diameter previously dug by people looking for gold. Numerous projectile points had also been taken from the site.

A 3' x 3' test pit was dug on this midden to a depth of 21" in 7" levels. Artifacts from this pit indicated an accumulation of midden debris and with the permission of the Jamisons it was decided to begin excavations as soon as possible.

Location

The Jamison site (named after the landowner Mr. W. T. Jamison) is located in Liberty County Texas, approximately 3.5 miles north-east of the city of Dayton. Bowie Creek, a tributary of the Trinity River, originates approximately 2½ miles northeast of its junction with the Trinity flows in a somewhat intermittent waterway characterized by a shallow stream bed giving rise to a flora of cypress trees, palmettos, and other marsh land plants. About ½ mile from its origin, Bowie Creek is intersected by another intermittent stream, and at this point between the two streams, three terraces or natural levees are to be noted. These natural levees begin along the south bank of Bowie Creek, increasing in height and breadth toward the gently sloping north bank of the other stream. On the second levee (the first levee has been eroded away at this point and begins 200' west of the site) is an accumu-

lation of midden debris bearing the University of Texas site number 41-Lb-2. The number 41 indicates Texas's place in the alphabetical order of states; Lb. is the University of Texas abbreviation for Liberty County; and the number 2 designates the second site recorded by the University of Texas for Liberty County.

The Beaumont Quarternary deposit may be said to be the most recent and hence the most important geological feature of this area at the moment in so far as Archeology is concerned. Since its deposition 5000-10,000 years ago, this deposit of yellowish clay (montmorillonite) has undergone its main modification through water action. This water action in the form of flooding waterways has been instrumental in laying down the topsoil of the area. On the average, it may be said that topsoil deposits (largely sand) in most areas will rarely exceed 2' in depth and in some instances there is no topsoil to be found. These water laid deposits must be reckoned with as an important factor governing the instances of aboriginal occupations, as sand deposits usually accumulate in such a manner as to form ridges or levees along the banks of waterways, and such formations were apparently cherished as campsites for their affordance of an elevated terrain relatively safe from flood waters as well as their close proximity to a water supply. It is on such a natural levee formed by silt laid down during the periodic flooding of Bowie Creek that the Jamison site is located.

Methods of Excavation

A contour map of this site has been prepared by Mr. John Dieckman and is included in this report. This map also indicates the location and extent of excavations to be completed at the site.

Supplementary to the general contour map, a "Ground Level Report" for each square has been compiled by Mr. Louis Lenz. This, in short, is a contour map of the ground level of each square and shows numerous shallow disturbances due to hogs, plowing, and pot hunters.

The site was laid out on a 5' grid and two intersecting 50' trenches were staked out so as to encompass the limit of excavations. A numbering system used by the University of Texas was adopted to designate the squares. This system is as follows:

An arbitrary datum point designated as north 500' east 500' is established at the estimated center of the midden. The four corners of each square are numbered in relation to this point, the northeast corner being the designator for the square. Lines progressively north of datum increase numerically in five foot sequences --N505, N510, N515, etc. Lines south of datum decrease numerically in the same manner --N495, N490, N485, etc. Lines east of datum increase and lines west of datum decrease in the same relationship. Points formed by the intersection of a north line with an east line receive their designation from these lines --datum point (N500 E500) is the intersection of the north 500 line with the east 500 line.

All depth measurements are recorded in feet and inches relative to the elevation of the datum point which was set at 0'0".

Points of measurement higher than datum are referred to as plus (+) measurements, all points below datum are referred to as minus (-) measurements.

Depth of levels was arbitrarily set at 6" relative to datum elevation. These levels are kept of a horizontal plane and do not follow the contour of the midden. Due to this system of horizontal levels and depth relative to datum, the first level of each square is usually not a full six inches. As an example, ground level of a square may be plus 3" (three inches higher than datum) and the first level in this square will only be 3" deep, bringing the floor level down to 0'0" (on the same horizontal plane with datum). The next level then will be a full six inches from 0'0" to minus 6 inches elevation (6" below datum).

Each level is excavated by use of shovel and either $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{1}{4}$ " screen depending on the depth. During the early stages of excavation at this site, $\frac{1}{4}$ " screen was used exclusively. After it became apparent that pottery and arrowpoints no longer occurred below minus 2'6", it was decided to use $\frac{1}{2}$ " screen for levels below this depth. The $\frac{1}{2}$ " screen is faster and will obtain almost all of the material to be found at this lower depth. This lower level material typically consists of clay balls, bone, charcoal flakes, large dart points, a few flint chips, and more clay balls.

The floor of each level is troweled for color changes and if any are noted they are sketched in on the Level Report form.

Wall profiles are mapped only after the complete excavation of two adjacent squares.

Artifacts and materials recovered are kept separated by levels. Level reports are filled out for each level describing matrix, and associated features, artifacts and profiles. Feature reports are filled out for all flint artifacts. These reports indicate the square and level that the artifact is found and are accompanied by an outline tracing of the artifact.

The Distribution Table from 5 Completed Squares

In setting up a distribution table to accompany this report, certain limitations were necessary. Detailed study of the artifacts have not been attempted at this early stage, and this necessarily controls the amount of definition possible to be applied to any specific specimen. Restrictions of this nature are however largely confined to the lithic artifacts. Point types have not been defined in the table and actually the small number of points found so far would probably not indicate much even if arranged according to type.

Twelve categories of artifacts have been included in the table and it is believed that these will give a good example of what is being found at the Jamison site.

Arrow points

This category includes the smaller sized projectile points with stems suitable for hafting on a small diameter arrow shaft. Only those (apx. 90%) specimens complete enough to possibly be classified as to point type are noted in the distribution table. That is, if the distinctive basal portion of the point is missing it has been excluded from this report, and these instances are limited to two or three specimens. Point types are largely confined to Perdiz Pointed Stem, Clifton, and Alba Barbed.

Dart points

These are the larger points usually characterized by percussion flaking. Although these points appear quite crude at first glance, it becomes apparent upon closer inspection that the workmanship is truly excellent when one considers the raw materials and techniques used. As with the arrow points, only those dart points having the basal portion intact (apx. 80%) are referred to in the table. Blades of these points are usually triangular or concave-convex with either parallel sided or expanding stems, however, contracting stems have been found.

Unnotched Blades

This definition concerns chipped stone artifacts having no noticeable stem. Two drills apx 1/8" in diameter and square in crosssection fall into this heading along with a number of leaf shaped percussion blades which may possibly be knives.

Worked Flakes

Eighteen flakes have been noted that show definite sharpening or use on at least one edge. Sharpening is usually confined to small steep angled pressure flakes and does not modify the shape of the flake to any degree, however, one flake has been worked to a somewhat blunt point.

Grinding Tools

Five sandstones suitable in size and shape to have been used as abrading implements have been found. Three of these are oval or circular in outline. Color of these oval sandstones is a deep red and sand content is high. The other two sandstones are flat on both faces, a light tan in color, with one specimen showing abrasion on the edge of the stone.

Clay Balls

At the moment it is hard to imagine what bearing this category will have on the site as these clay balls are as yet undefined as specific artifacts. Little is known about this subject except that they are found in practically every site in the Galveston Bay area, both sand and shell middens alike. Dr. Donald Lewis of Shell Laboratories has informed us that some of these clay balls are actually weathered sandstone and coals. The depth concentration of clay balls is usually just below the middle of the midden accumulation but drastic differences in numbers are to be noted in the same level of different squares. It is hoped that the H.A.S. excavations at the Jamison site with the help of Dr. Lewis will be able to shed some light on this baffling subject. Some clay balls bear impressions of branches or reeds and are quite like the wattle and daub used to plaster house walls.

Pottery

Of the 791 sherds so far recovered, 731 can be classed as Goose Creek Plain, 29 Goose Creek Incised, 25 San Jacinto Plain, 2 San Jacinto Incised, and 5 as yet unidentified.

Vessel forms have not been noted due to the lack of reconstruction. Nodal bottoms common to the Goose Creek series have been found.

Goose Creek Plain. This so far is the most common pottery type found in the Jamison site and composes 93% of the sherds recovered. A definition of the Goose Creek series may be found in Joe Ben Wheat's Addicks report (THE ADDICKS DAM SITE, River Basin Surveys Papers, No. 4, Pt. 1, Bureau of American Ethnology).

Goose Creek Incised. Because the decoration of these vessels is usually confined to the rim area, sherds from lower portions of Goose Creek Incised vessels are indistinguishable from Goose Creek Plain. For this reason, total sherd count is somewhat superfluous. A more indicative analysis may be made by comparing the number of rims of each type. Both comparisons have been made in the accompanying distribution table.

The San Jacinto series of pottery has been proposed by Mr. R. E. Worthington (H.A.S. Pottery Symposium, 1959) and composes 3% of the sherds so far recovered.

This is a pottery type whose main distinction from Goose Creek is the tempering agent. Goose Creek is a sand tempered pottery whereas San Jacinto ware is either sherd or Calcium Phosphate tempered.

So far, the provenience of San Jacinto Ware conforms to that proposed by Mr. Worthington, that is, it is found in the uppermost levels of the midden.

The unidentified sherds mentioned above are all from the same vessel, having a sharply outcurving rim decorated by deeply incised cross-hatching. Temper seems to be sand, color is Grey-Black, and the outside has a rather thick accumulation of soot adhering to the cross-hatching.

This report has been compiled by the H.A.S. Excavations committee, Charles G. Caldwell foreman, R. E. Worthington assistant foreman, R. W. Stevenson and Gordon F. Bailey crew chiefs, and was made possible only through the work of the H.A.S. members who have participated in the excavations and lab sessions.

Future study of this site will entail a botanical evaluation of the area by Dr. Robert A. Vines, noted botanist of this area. Our editor Mr. Hubert Mewhinney, is an expert on spoil flakes and we hope to have him examine the numerous flakes found in the site. Dr. Lewis will continue to conduct chemical analysis of material found at the site. A preliminary geological study of the site has already been submitted by Mr. John J. Dieckman.

41-Lb-2
DISTRIBUTION TABLE
5 Completed Squares in 6" Levels

| arrow points | dart points | unnotched blades | worked flakes | Goose Creek Plain Body Sherds | Goose Creek Plain Rim Sherds | Goose Creek Incised | San Jac Plain Body Sherds | San Jac Plain Rim Sherds | San Jac Incised | clay balls | sand stone |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|---|--|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 109 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 265 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 33 | 0 |
| 8 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 215 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 119 | 1 |
| 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 76 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 371 | 2 |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 22 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 570 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 672 | 2 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 814 | 0 |
| 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 626 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 220 | 0 |
| Totals | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 700 | 31 | 29 | 25 | 0 | 2 | 3433 | 5 |

MONEY PIT

disturbed

DATUM POINT N500 E500

N505 E510

N505 E500

N530 E500

N485 E600

X+8"

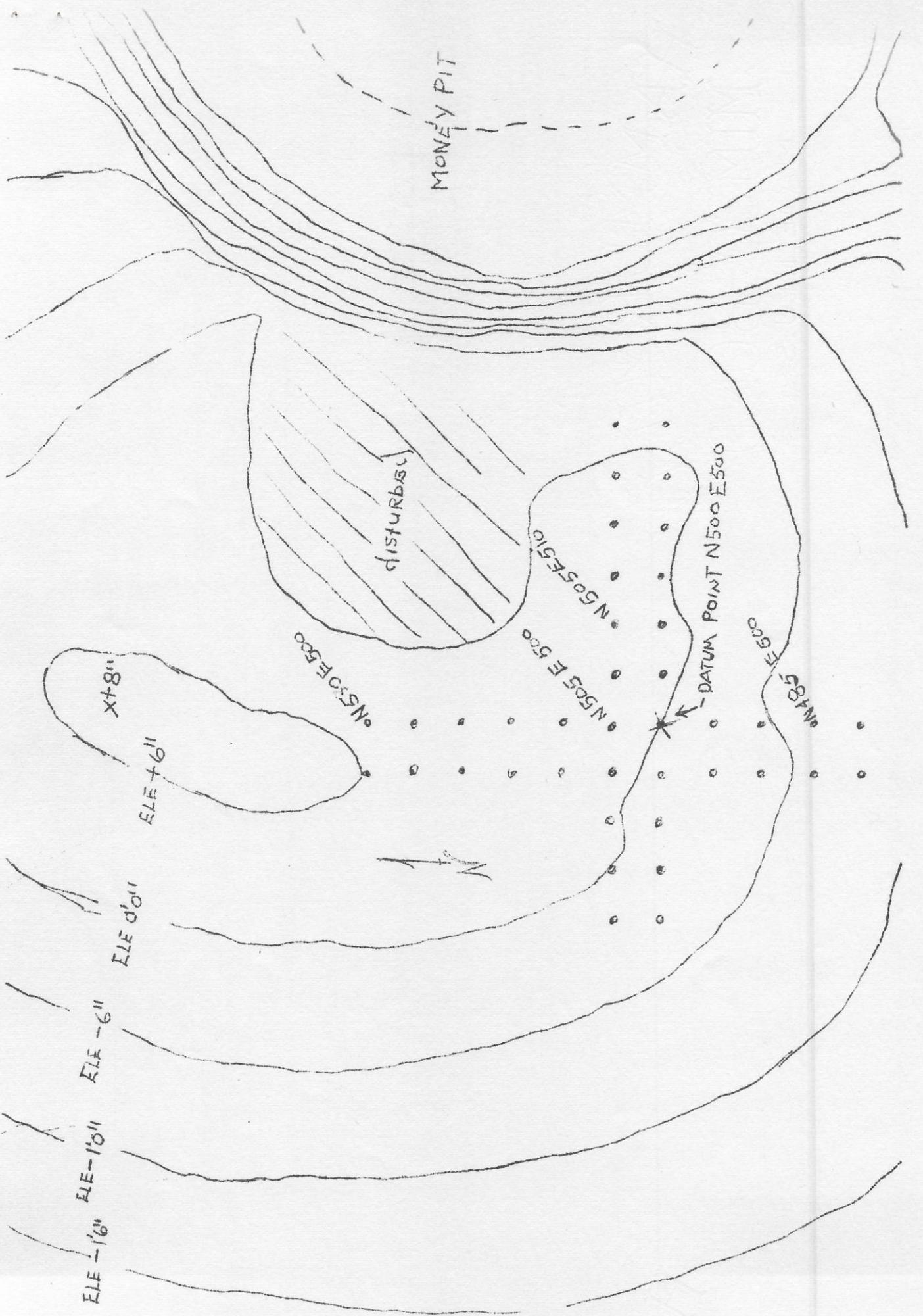
ELE +6"

ELE 0'0"

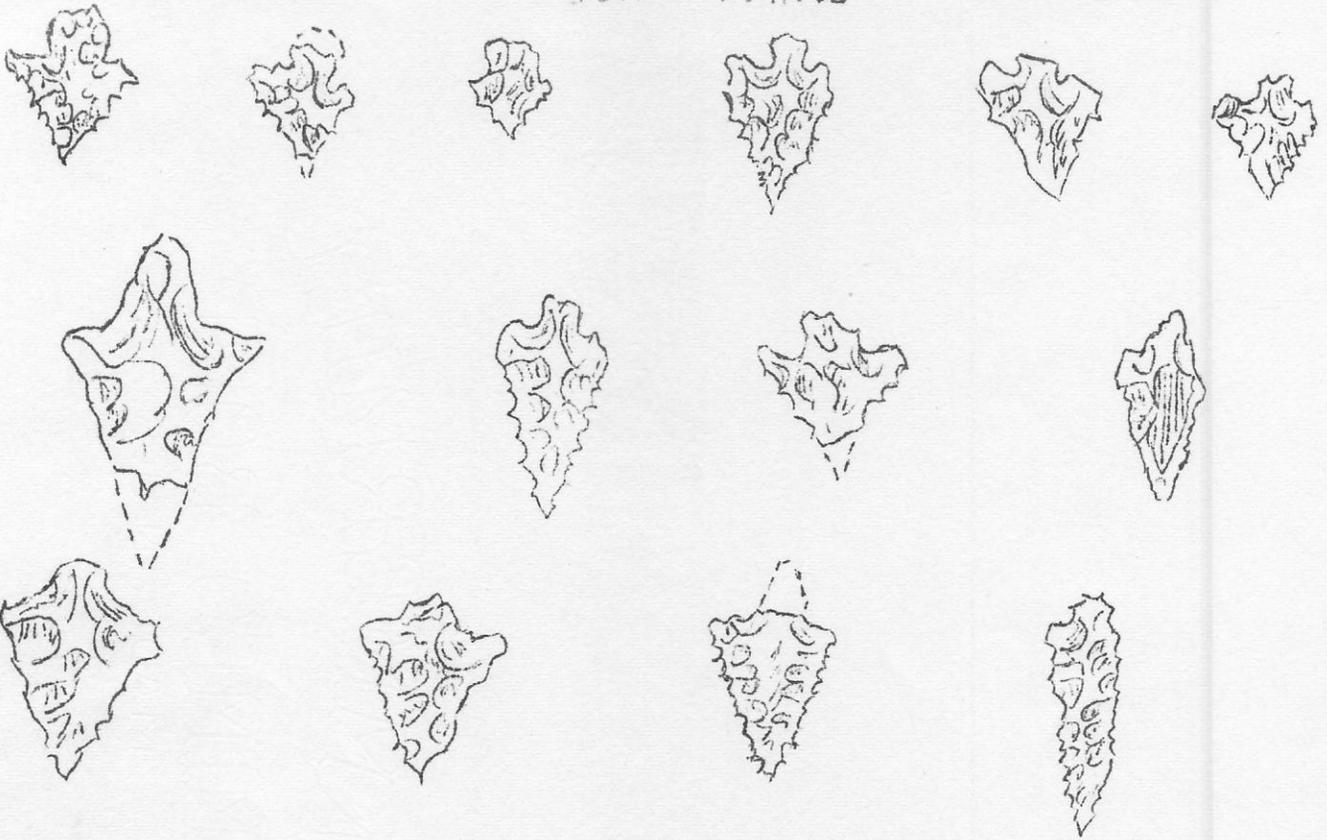
ELE -6"

ELE -10"

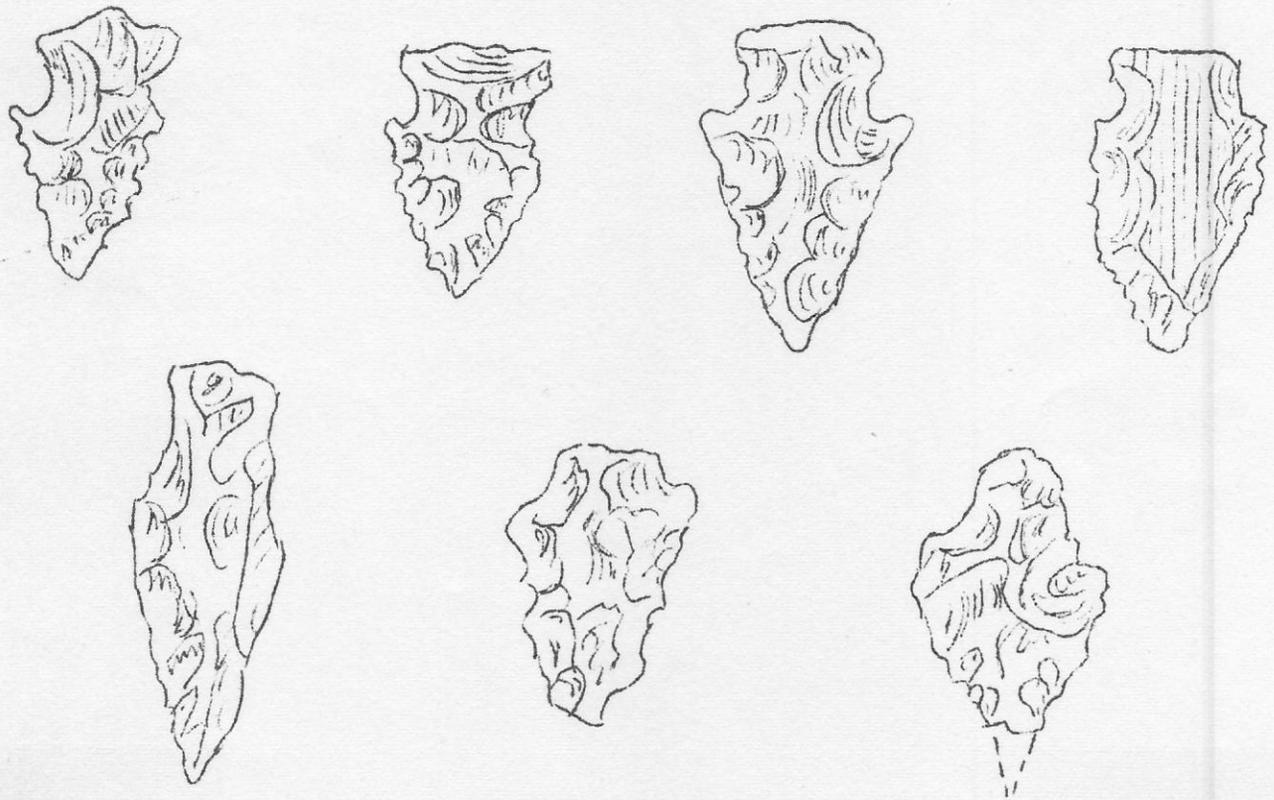
ELE -16"



"Arrow" Points

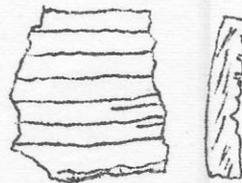
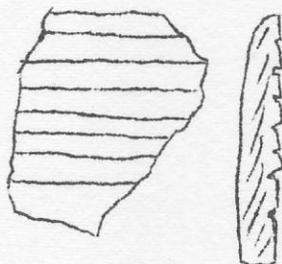
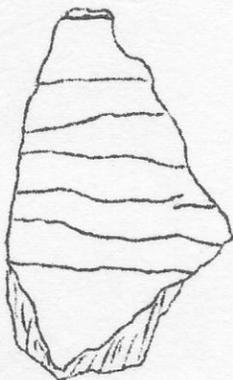
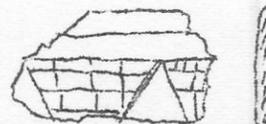
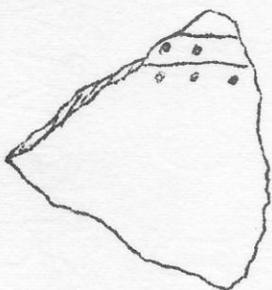
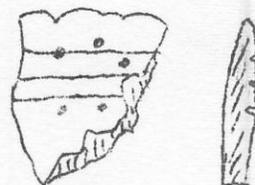
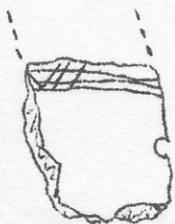
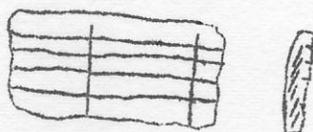
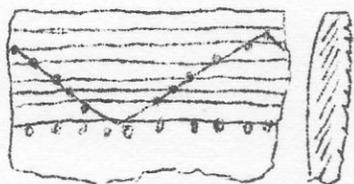


"DART" POINTS



ACTUAL SIZE
OUTLINE TRACINGS *RB.*

POTTERY DECORATIONS GOOSE CREEK INCISED
RIMS, OUTSIDE TO RIGHT



ACTUAL SIZE
OUTLINE TRACINGS *JB*