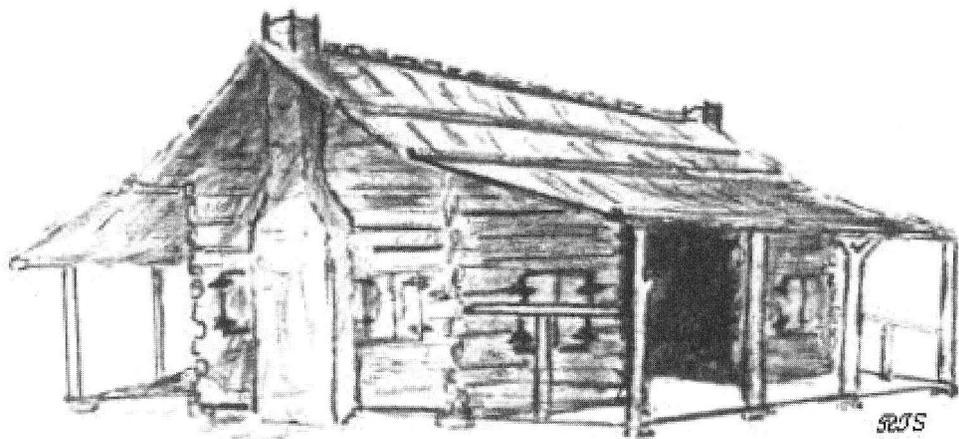
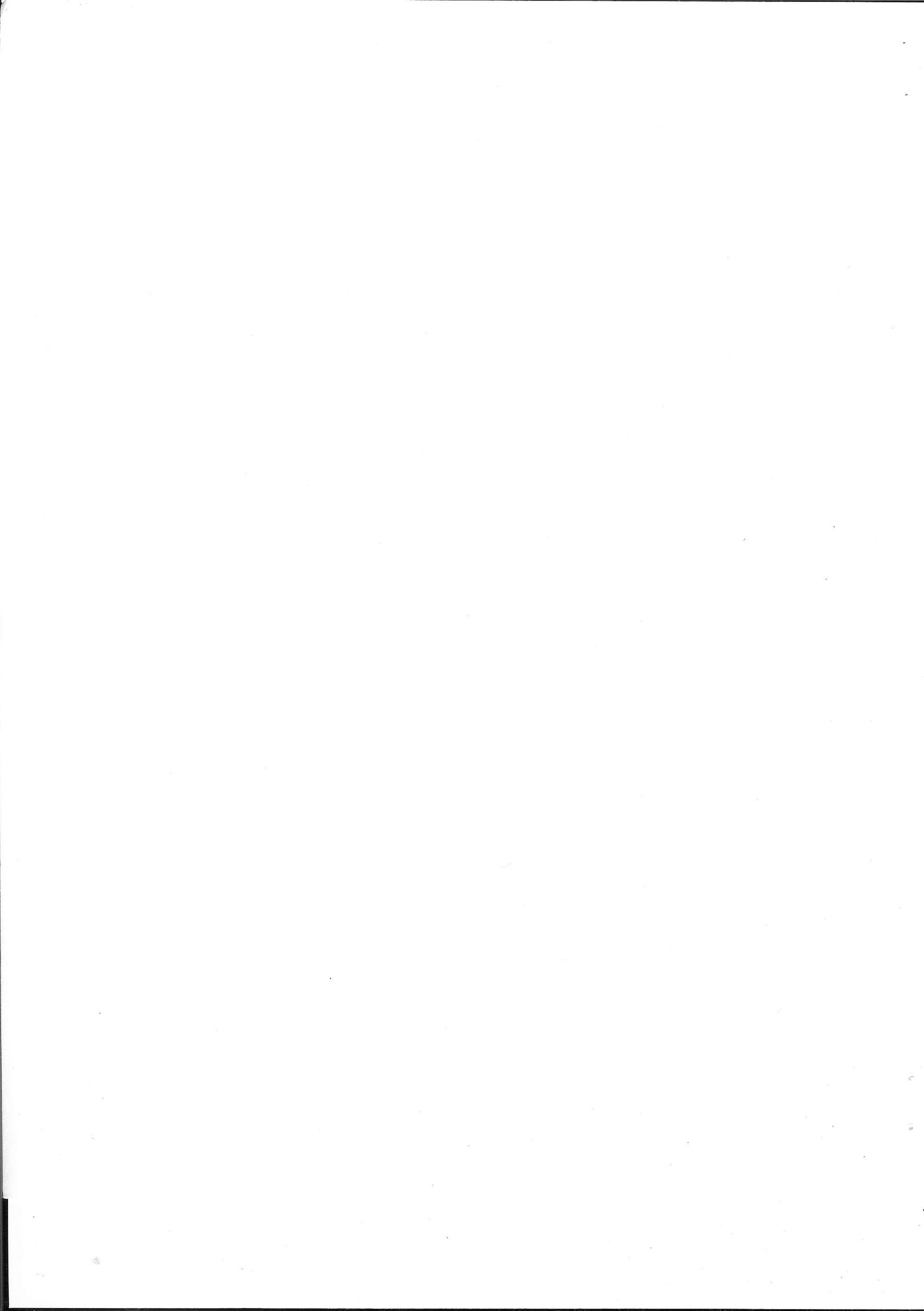


The Elizabeth Powell Site (41FB269)

Fort Bend County, Texas



Houston Archeological Society
Report No. 25, Part 1
April, 2007



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Part 1 Authors:

Elizabeth K. Aucoin

Pablo R. Castro

Sheldon M. Kindall

Robert T. Shelby

Editors:

Elizabeth K. Aucoin

Linda L. Swift



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Cover Illustration: A Typical Dogtrot Log House, by Robert T. Shelby

Dedication

This document, HAS Report No. 25, including all its parts, is dedicated to the memory of those members of the Houston Archeological Society who are no longer with us who contributed their time, talent and resources, in varying degrees, to help make the Elizabeth Powell project possible. These individuals include Frank Brezik Jr., Richey Ebersole, Bill McClure, Don McReynolds, Mary K Merriman, Bernard Naman, David Pettus, and Dudgeon Walker.

Acknowledgements

HAS acknowledges Lise Darst, landowner extraordinaire, who allowed access to the site over a 6-year period, as well as Joe Hudgins, who maintained landowner communication and arranged for access when needed, and last but certainly not least, Sheldon Kindall, who served as field site supervisor.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Elizabeth Powell Site

By Elizabeth K. Aucoin

In 1936, as part of the Texas Centennial Celebration, the State of Texas erected an historic marker (Figure 1.1) on the grounds of the Elizabeth Powell homestead. The inscription on the marker indicates that Mrs. Powell “built [her home] sometime before March 21, 1831”, placing it near the banks of Turkey Creek in what is now Fort Bend County, Texas. The Powell home has been referred to as Mrs. Powell’s Tavern, Mrs. Powell’s place, and Madam Powell’s. The homestead later became a significant landmark due to the 1836 Texas campaign for independence.

Historic documents relate that the Mexican Army, under the command of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, stopped at the Powell property during its march from San Felipe de Austin (Moore 2004: 187). On April 25, 1836 several groups of the Mexican Army, under the command of Generals Vicente Filisola, Jose Urrea, Antonio Gaona, Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma, Adrian Woll, and Colonel Pedro Ampudia met at the Powell place for a council of war after Mexican forces were defeated and Santa Anna’s subsequent capture at San Jacinto (Castaneda 1971: 182-184, 247). The Battle of San Jacinto took place on April 21, 1836; Santa Anna was captured on the following day, April 22nd.

The Powell site was known to Joe Hudgins and other members of the Houston Archeological Society for a number of years prior to a decision by the society to begin searching for the actual location of the Powell house. The site (Mrs. Powell’s place) was reported/recorded by

Joe Hudgins in November 1998 and was designated as 41FB269 by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The numeric 41 is for Texas; FB is for Fort Bend County, and 269 represents the site as being the 269th site recorded in the county. It was hoped that investigations would confirm the location of the house on this site, and it was through the courtesy of the landowner, Lise Darst, that this project was begun. During 1999, members of the society began investigations and excavations at the Elizabeth Powell site. A field school was held with participation from Houston, Fort Bend, and Brazosport Archaeological Society members, as well as students from the University of St. Thomas under the direction of Rev. Edward Bader, C.S.B., students from classes at the Houston Museum of Natural Science under the guidance of Pam Wheat, Boy Scout troops, and other interested individuals. Additional fieldwork continued during 2000.

Fieldwork at the site was completed during 2000; lab work on those artifacts was completed in 2002, and initial analysis of the artifacts recovered was begun. The site was revisited in 2004 and 2005 when additional mapping work was completed, a few additional units were excavated, and metal detector/shovel tests were done. In-depth analysis of the artifacts has been a work-in-progress since 2002. Initial work on report preparation by several society members was begun in 2004.

The following four articles are the first in a series of articles scheduled for publication in reports of the Houston Archeological Society.

Subsequent articles will record members' research on beads, buttons, ceramics, coins, faunal material, glass, militaria (items associated with guns and gun parts, gunflints and ammunition,

and uniform accessories), miscellaneous metal artifacts, and nails, as well as lithics and prehistoric pottery.

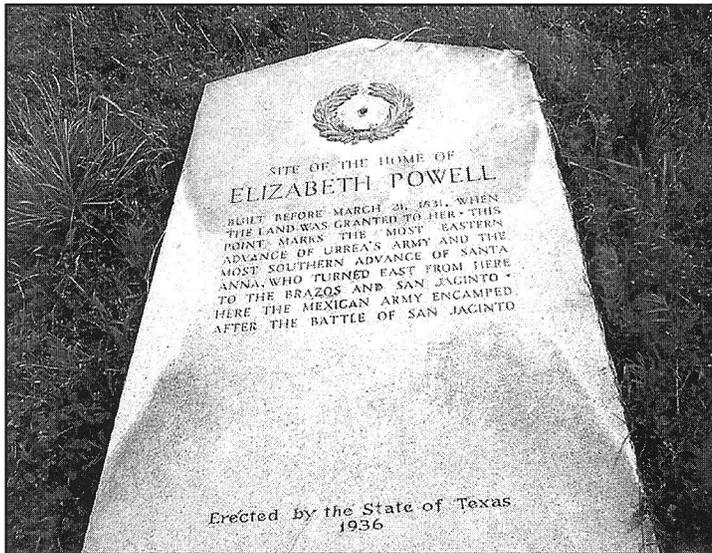


Photo courtesy Elizabeth Aucoin

The marker inscription reads: *Site of the home of ELIZABETH POWELL built before March 21, 1831, when the land was granted to her. This point marks the most eastern advance of Urrea's army and the most southern advance of Santa Anna, who turned east from here to the Brazos and San Jacinto. Here the Mexican Army encamped after the Battle of San Jacinto. Erected by the State of Texas 1936*

Figure 1.1: 1936 State of Texas marker

References:

Castaneda, C. E. (trans. and ed.)

1971 *The Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution* [1836] by the Chief Mexican.

Participants: General Antonio Lopez de Santa-Anna, D. Ramon Martinez Caro (Secretary to Santa-Anna), General Vicente Filisola, General Jose Urrea, General Jose Maria Tornel Secretary of War). Documentary Publications, Washington, D. C.

Moore, S. E.

2004 *Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign*. Republic of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

Chapter 2 Environmental Setting and Site Geology

By Pablo R. Castro

Environmental Setting

This site, 41FB269, is located in the western part of inland Southeast Texas in Fort Bend County on the eastern bank of Turkey Creek. Fort Bend County is in the center of the Gulf Coastal Prairie of Texas. The geography of the general area in the early nineteenth century would have included coastal prairie and woodlands. A variety of fauna and flora would have been available for prehistoric groups. This permitted an abundant food supply for Indians of this area and for subsequent settlers. Examples of large animals would have been deer and occasionally bison. The small animals were gophers, opossum, raccoons, rats, river otters, and squirrels. Examples of flora would have been elm, cypress, oak, native grasses and wild berries. For indigenous groups, a plentiful food supply may have led to other activities, and as a result, there may have developed a greater social complexity, perhaps with structured burial and trade practices during the Late Archaic period. For Colonial-

era settlers, the area provided a fine setting with water and food resources, as well as trees for building structures (Figure 2.1).

Site Geology

The formation of the area began 10,000 years ago in what is now the Beaumont Formation. One can say the classification and soil association is that of Lake Charles-Bernard. The slope ranges from 0-1%, with the soil having a dark and clayey texture. The Alluvial soils are of the Pledger Series which derived from ancient flooding from the Colorado River. The pH is 5.0-6.0 at depths of 0-24 inches. The Beaumont series is a grayish-yellowish color.

One has to take into account the sandy loam with a 1-4% slope in some areas. Also, the classification and soil association is that of Edna-Bernard-Waller. The soil type is mixed sandy and clayey soil. There is loam at a depth of 0-20 centimeters with clay below. There are slight ridges (Figure 2.2).

Reference:

Soil Survey of Fort Bend County, Texas. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. in cooperation with Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. Issued February, 1960.

