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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF THE  
PALAFOX MINING AREA,  
WEBB COUNTY, SOUTHERN TEXAS

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with the collaboration of Thomas R. Hester

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Center for Archaeological Research  
The University of Texas at San Antonio  
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The report has been edited by Jane Smith.

## INTRODUCTION

In November 1978, the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, contracted with Farco Mining Company of Ft. Smith, Arkansas to perform an archaeological reconnaissance of its Palafox mining area in northwest Webb County, Texas. Since mineral rights to the mining area are owned by the State of Texas, an archaeological survey was required as part of the preparation of an environmental impact statement. The survey zone was divided into two sections where there was the possibility of future mining activity: (1) the Farco Mining Operations Area and Disturbed Area, and (2) parts of the Palafox Historic District.

The project was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Thomas R. Hester, Director, and Jack D. Eaton, Assistant Director, Center for Archaeological Research. The field work was conducted by Thomas C. Kelly and D. William Day.

### THE AREA AND THE SURVEY

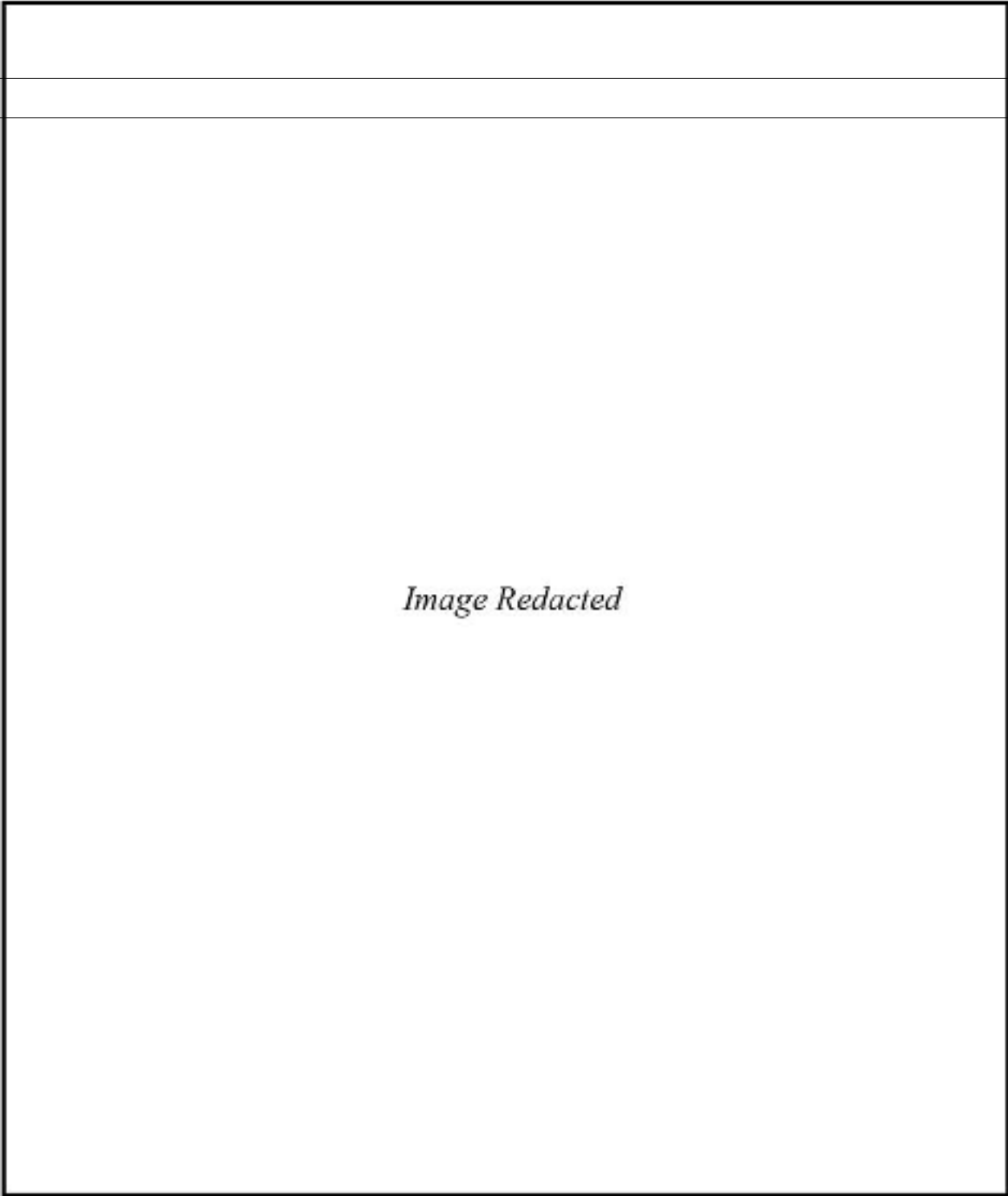
The area leased by Farco Mining Company is located to the east and northeast of the site of the old village of Palafox, approximately 28 miles up the Rio Grande from Laredo. A bend in the river in this vicinity has created a broad, grassy floodplain (or vega) on the Texas side. The uplands overlooking the floodplain are brushy range land drained by the Carricotos Creek system.

Prior to the survey reported here, little scientific archaeology had been done in this section of Webb County, although intensive relic-collecting has occurred in the area for decades. Other surveys in northern Webb County have included the work of Shiner (1969), Saunders and Saunders (1978), Hester (1978a; ms.) and Beasley (1978). In the area around Laredo, archaeological research has been done by Hall (1973), Mokry (1976) and Fox and Uecker (1977).

The purpose of this survey in the Farco Mining Company area was to provide a general reconnaissance and initial assessment of both historic and prehistoric cultural remains. This involved survey within the Palafox Historic District, created in 1972, and on ranches to the east and northeast of the district. The primary objective of the survey was to evaluate the nature of the cultural resources within this area (see Fig. 1), in order to aid Farco Mining Company in its planning of future activities.

### FARCO MINING OPERATIONS AREA AND DISTURBED AREA

The initial field work was conducted within the present Farco Mining Operations and Disturbed Area (located within the project boundaries shown in Fig. 1). The major impact from Farco's operation over the next 10 years will be on this portion of the lease. The area to be disturbed is above the 500' contour line and will be confined to highland areas. This area is approximately two miles north-south by one mile east-west, encompassing 1905 acres. This area will be surface mined, and all surface features will be disturbed. The operations area is bounded on the east by the new FM 1472, overlaps the San Jose de Palafox Historic/Archaeologic District (on the National Register of Historic Places; the district is herein referred to as the Palafox Historic



*Image Redacted*

Figure 1. *Map of the Survey Area.*

District) on the south, and is bounded by a new entrance road to Farco Mining on the north. This area will be occupied by rock crushers, loading and weighing facilities, headquarters buildings, etc. It is expected that cultural resources in the area will be disturbed.

The survey area was too large to be thoroughly covered in the time allotted in this initial reconnaissance. Thus, the main effort was concentrated on both sides of San Pedro and Carricotos Creeks where archaeological sites might be expected to occur; the upland areas were sampled by scattered transects. The sites found during the survey are described below.

### The Sites

41 WB 40 (416700 E, 3081350 N\*). The coordinates are those of San Pedro Hill, the most outstanding landmark in the area. The site is located slightly east of the hill and has a north-south axis of approximately 1500 meters and an east-west axis of approximately 1000 meters. This area is a major lithic resources procurement area containing an abundance of Uvalde Gravel (and probably Rio Grande Gravel) cobbles of many colors, sizes and differing qualities of chert. The entire area is littered with thousands of broken and unbroken bifacially worked cores. No projectile points, finished tools or interior flakes in any quantity were found. The flakes seem to have been the end product, with the cores being unwanted discards. Two small hills, one located 0.5 miles north east of San Pedro Hill, the other 0.3 miles southeast of San Pedro Hill in the San Pedro Creek basin, bore the only observed concentrations of cores. The rest of the cores seemed to be rather uniformly distributed. A lone camping area (burned sandstone and chert in a scattered hearth) was located on the southeasternmost edge of the area on the south bank of San Pedro Creek; it contained numerous flakes but no diagnostics.

An example of lithic resources procurement areas with similar cores found in profusion is reported by Kelly and Hester (1975:8) in Comal County. However, the authors know of no similar site in south Texas that even approaches 41 WB 40 in size. A selective sample of 37 cores was randomly collected over the area for future analysis.

The site lies partially in the Chimenea Pasture, named for a prominent chimney at the western end of the pasture, strategically overlooking the Rio Grande. This was examined for possible inclusion as a historic site. However, the late 20th century debris, the lack of outbuildings, and the inscription "John Puser 1936," embedded under the soot of the fireplace mantle, would indicate that this was probably a fairly recent deer-hunters' cabin.

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\*Site locations are given in Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates (in meters). Throughout this report, contour elevations are given in feet (to correspond with the topographic map that covers the area) and site dimensions are given in meters. Longer, linear distances are expressed in miles.

41 WB 41 (414400 E, 3078500 N). The site is located between two flat hills west of a trail 0.7 miles northwest of the Farco weighing station that leads to the Puser chimney. The site, at 580 feet in elevation, provides a good overlook of a portion of the Rio Grande and has an outcrop of Uvalde and Rio Grande Gravels. Debitage, cores, scrapers, thick and thin bifaces and traces of hearths indicate a multi-purpose campsite of undetermined period. All diagnostic artifacts have been previously collected, probably by a ranch foreman who is said to have amassed a considerable collection. Time did not permit subsurface testing, so the presence of subsurface deposits is undetermined.

41 WB 42 (417850 E, 3078450 N). The site is located on the north bank of Carricotos Creek, 200 meters west of FM 1472 and 200 meters south of the new Farco entry road just upstream from a small branch. Erosion has exposed a yellow clay soil and four small scattered hearths lying in an area of 4 x 6 meters. Thin bifaces, cores, preforms and one unidentified arrow point are indicative of the Late Prehistoric period. The site is on the immediate creek bank at the 540-foot elevation, and there is a small sinkhole with some water where the branch creek intersects Carricotos Creek.

41 WB 43 (417750 E, 3077623 N). The site is on the east side of Carricotos Creek, 500 meters west of FM 1472 and 0.7 miles south of the new entrance road to the Farco Mining Company Operations Area. Elevation is between 500 and 520 feet. An area of more than 100 meters east-west by 50 meters north-south has eroded to a yellow clay and is covered withdebitage and thin bifaces. Three triangular projectile points were found (Fig. 2,a-c). The site is large enough that there are almost certainly some undisturbed subsurface deposits.

41 WB 44 (417450 E, 3077000 N). The site is on the west side of Carricotos Creek, immediately north of a small branch creek 0.8 miles south of the new Farco entrance road and 800 meters west of FM 1472; the elevation is 540 feet. An area roughly four meters in diameter is eroded to the underlying yellow sandy clay and is covered with lithicdebitage. An arrow point of undetermined type was found associated with small scrapers, cores and several thin bifaces. A sandstone hearth was recorded. Carricotos Creek at the site is eroded to a solid sandstone bottom, is steep walled and has several deep seep pools of water.

All three of these Carricotos Creek sites are attributable to the Late Prehistoric, and, possibly, Late Archaic periods, and all shared a close proximity to the creek banks. They are very similar to Hester's (1978b) Chaparrosa Ranch riparian zone sites.

41 WB 45 (415310 E, 3075710 N). The site is located on a flat-topped bluff that is below and west of an outstanding hill 300 meters west of the southern Farco mining area. It overlooks the Rio Grande and the vega. A roughly oval area 200 x 150 meters is strewn with lithic knapping debris and is also a source of Uvalde Gravels. One scraper and several small cores were noted. No diagnostic artifacts were found. There is almost no soil depth because of erosion.



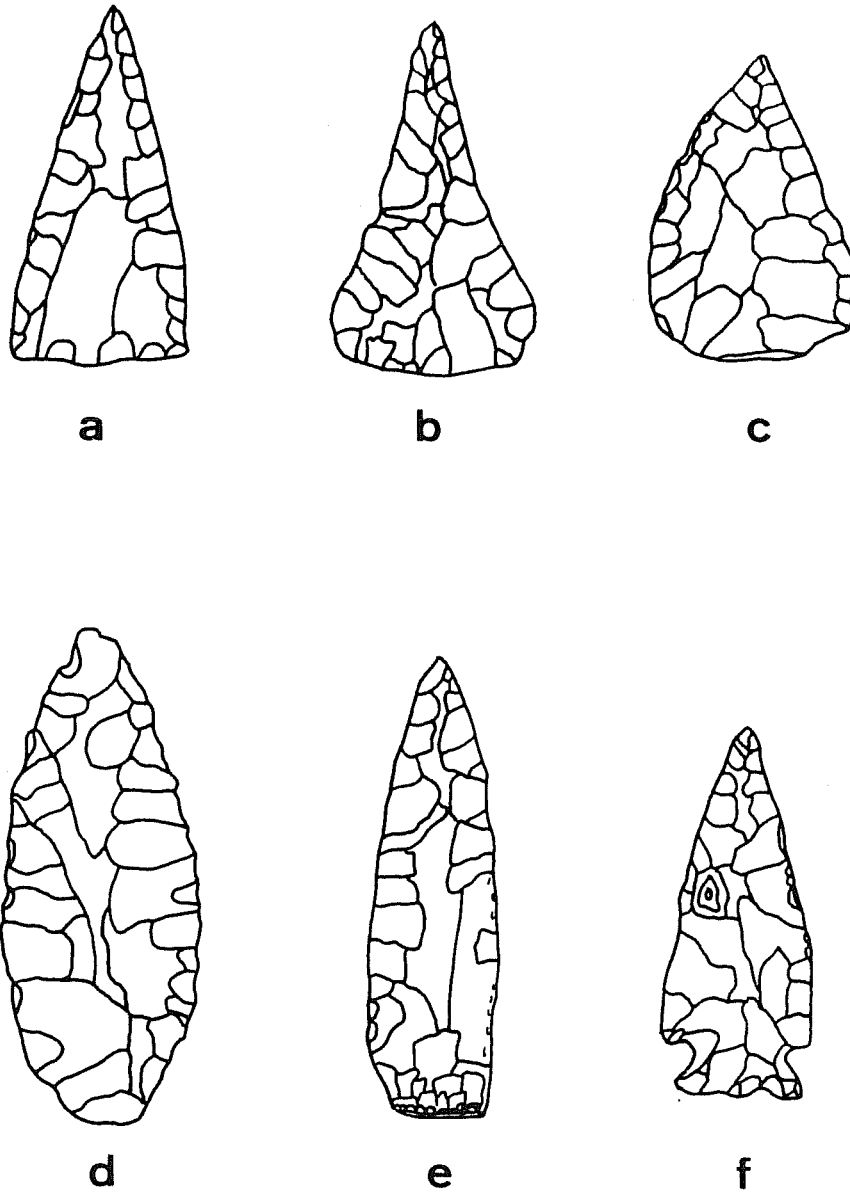


Figure 2. *Artifacts from Sites 41 WB 43 and 41 WB 47.*  
a-c, 41 WB 43; d-f, 41 WB 47.

## PALAFX HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Palafox Historic District, as defined in 1972, constitutes a small portion of the Farco lease (Fig. 1). A preliminary literature search indicated that three historical sites (41 WB 50-52) had been recorded at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin; these sites were recorded by the Texas State Historical Survey Committee in coordination with the nomination of the Palafox Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places (Hume and Jackson 1972).

### Previous Historical Research

As a result of the great Comanche raids in 1818 on the lower Rio Grande, Horgan (1954:434) states that "Villa de Palafox" was depopulated, destroyed and never resettled. Several coal-mining settlements in the same region were also wiped out. Stephen F. Austin's 1824 map of Palafox shows a typical Spanish Colonial town built around a central plaza, while his 1829 map of Texas (Castaneda and Martin 1930:42) notes that Palafox was destroyed by Indian attack. Until 1969, the little Spanish Colonial town midway between Eagle Pass and Laredo was more a mythical name than a historical fact. In that year, Carmen Perry (1971) found and translated some 45 documents for the Laredo archives; so far, this is the only detailed source on the story of Palafox.

The archives are fragmentary and incomplete, but reveal a town seriously troubled by Indian attacks almost from the time of its founding in 1810. Joaquin Galan was the original grantee in 1776, and he conveyed the land to Manuel Garza in 1805. The town's name came from General Don Francisco de Palafox y Melci, a Spanish leader in the war against Napoleon. The town was given the Rio Grande frontage on the east bank from the Galan Bend to San Pedro Creek and extending six leagues inland.

The documents reveal a town too poor to support its priest, and in constant danger of theft, pillage and death at the hands of raiding Comanches and possibly Lipan Apaches. The alcalde of Laredo twice requested the people to come to Laredo for the protection he could not afford them in their isolated location. Still, the town managed to grow: the Webb County census of June 1815 lists a population of 238 compared to a population of 277 on December 31, 1816. A note attached to the latter census stated that, of the 36 male property owners, only 21 had guns.

A gap in the archives occurs after the annual rotation of the justicia of Palafox on January 5, 1817. The next document is in response to Jose Enrriquez's petition for the return to Palafox of 31 former Palafox families and for 18 additional families. It seems evident that most of the families at least escaped the destruction of Palafox at the hands of the raiding Comanches.

The petition and resettlement took place in 1824, and by June the town was asking for a cannon for defense. The townspeople were promised 60 soldiers by Rio Grande military headquarters in April 1826, and from then on the justicia of Palafox was addressed as alcalde. The last communication from Palafox, dated

July 4, 1826, is from Jose Rafael Enrriquez to the alcalde of Laredo requesting action against an Indian, Marcelo, who, with four others, had taken four or five boat loads of lumber intended for soldiers' barracks. One wonders whether the soldiers' barracks and any kind of defenses were ever finished.

Wilkinson (1975), in his history of Laredo and the Rio Grande frontier, does not mention Palafox, but he gives an interesting insight into the difficulties of fighting the Comanches in the early 1800s. The Comanches raided up-river from Laredo in 1811-1812, and Laredo was crowded with refugees (*ibid.*:91). Again, in July 1825, the Comanches attacked five ranches, killing three men and two women, and carrying several women and children into captivity. Sixty soldiers (who were more poorly equipped with guns and horses than the Comanches) and 50 Lipans retaliated, but they were only able to kill one warrior and one woman (Wilkinson 1975:118).

In July 1972, the Texas State Historical Survey Committee (now the Texas Historical Commission) conducted a brief survey of the Palafox area and nominated the San Jose de Palafox Historical and Archeological District to the National Register of Historic Places (Hume and Jackson 1972). Their sketch map identifies a cluster of six buildings southwest of a cemetery as San Jose de Palafox (41 WB 50). The Alexander Ranch House (41 WB 52) is identified as a 1920-1930 period irrigated farm, with speculation that the stone house relates to the 1810-1828 occupation of Palafox. High grass covered the floodplain at the time of their survey, and no mention is made of finding archaeological evidence of the Spanish Colonial period other than the ruins themselves. Mention is made of the great flood of 1954 and its attendant damage to Palafox.

George and Bonnie Carmack (1977) paid a weekend visit to the Palafox area guided by the rancher who leases the area for grazing, Guy Smith. They reported four additional ruins east of the Palafox ruins nestled under the bluffs, a peculiar hidden rock structure behind another major ruin that Mr. Smith believed to be a hideout from Indian attack, and a great cistern beside the largest ruin in the vega. The Carmacks accompanied their story with photographs, but, unfortunately, no locations were given.

### Location and Topography

Two confirmation of title lawsuits filed in the Texas Land Office describe the location of Palafox (Perry 1971:IV, VII). Perry has provided a clear copy of the Daniel Ruggles vs. the State of Texas suit, which was filed in Webb County in 1872. The southwest corner of the land in question is described as a stone monument at El Rinconde de Galan (Galan Bend), and the northwest corner is the mouth of the Arroyo de la Espada where it empties into the Rio Grande. The State of Texas vs. J. A. Ortiz *et al.*, filed in Travis County in 1901 (Perry 1971:IV), describes the original Galan grant as fronting on the Rio Grande Bend to the mouth of San Pedro Creek. It was transferred to Manuel Garza in 1805, and in 1810 a portion including all the river frontage and extending inland for six leagues was condemned to establish the town of Palafox. Garza was compensated by grant of land from San Pedro Creek up the Rio Grande to Espada Creek.

Neither San Pedro Creek nor Galan Bend is shown on any map we could locate, but San Pedro Hill (mentioned as a boundary marker in the Ortiz suit) and Espada Creek are shown on the Army Corps of Engineers Palafox Quadrangle 1923 map. Guy Smith (personal communication), who ranches the area, says that the creek that originates east of San Pedro Hill and empties into the Rio Grande is called San Pedro Creek. The distance from San Pedro Creek to Espada Creek is 4.7 miles, and, assuming that the Spanish government gave Garza stream frontage equal to what was condemned, 4.7 miles downstream is exactly halfway between the two 90° bends. The bend that Palafox is indicated to sit above is assumed to be Galan Bend. This assumption is strengthened by the 1824 Austin map, which shows an arroyo north of the town which corresponds with the arroyo on the 1923 map. So it is fairly safe to assume that the Palafox label on the 1923 map is indeed the same location as the 1810 San Jose de Palafox.

Many property changes and landmark alterations have taken place in the area since the 1923 Army Corps of Engineers map was made. Farm Road 1472 from Laredo has been improved and straightened and, instead of terminating at the Perone Ranch, now continues to Eagle Pass. A road to the Farco Mining headquarters runs west (not east as stated in the National Register nomination form) from FM 1472 after it first crosses Carricotos Creek 28 miles northwest of Laredo. The Farco headquarters is only one-quarter mile from the standing and much-photographed ruins of the Perone Ranch. Both stand on hills between 580 and 600 feet in elevation and are part of a high ridge complex that runs north/northwest for three miles. The 580-foot elevation of this ridge contains a 24-inch seam of very hard, clean, cannel coal, which is the object of the present Farco mining operation. A rough trail drops down west from the Fraco headquarters 1.8 miles and crosses the upper floodplain to a group of buildings on either side of the road oriented north-south and continuing 0.4 miles to a cemetery. This cluster of buildings and cemetery is the site 41 WB 50 nominated to the National Register as San Jose de Palafox. This vega is bounded on the east and south by the 480-foot contour line, and the 500-foot contour angles across it from southeast to northwest, with a deep ravine dividing the vega just beyond the cemetery. The vega is only flooded occasionally, as it is 40 to 50 feet above the Rio Grande. There is a lower terrace between 440 and 450 feet elevation, still well above the normal level of the river. Below the south edge of the vega in the Galan Bend, on this lower terrace, are the remains of an old coal-fired, steam-operated pumping station that provided water for irrigation. Grass on the vega was three feet high, but on this lower terrace it was higher than our pickup truck. Navigation by truck or on foot was fairly hazardous, as the area is crisscrossed by irrigation ditches that are invisible in the grass and rattlesnakes are plentiful.

The Alexander Ranch House (41 WB 51) is located at the north end of the vega 0.5 miles north of the cemetery. The vega is constricted here by the high bluffs, but the ranch house has a commanding view up and down the Rio Grande. No irrigation ditches were noted in the pasture north of the ravine. The Rio Grande in November 1978 was clear, deep and swiftly flowing.

Two days of the reconnaissance were allocated to the Historic District. During the field work and in subsequent map and literature research we were able to clear up the locations of several sites previously mentioned and to find two prehistoric and three historic sites not previously recorded. We are indebted to Paul and Patrick Farrell for the initial guided tour into the Palafox vega, as there were

no traces of roads through the high grass and there were plenty of obstacles. The following sites are listed in the order in which they were located (see Fig. 1).

*Pumping Plant* (41 WB 39; 414760 E, 3074750 N). Most of this large stone structure is still standing, but the steel boiler has been washed up against the steep banks. The plant was built on the lower terrace of the Rio Grande south of Palafox in the Galan Bend. There is a huge cistern reaching below the water table to provide a constant supply of irrigation water. Coal clinkers indicate the method of firing. This is probably the great cistern described by Carmack and Carmack (1977) and pictured in Perry (1971:VI, 24). The pumping plant is not shown on the Valdez 1907 map (Fig. 3) but is on the 1923 map. Local informants say that the irrigation project existed in the 1920-1930 era, and it would account for the disappearance of many of the Palafox structures on the vega.

*Two-Room Stone House* (41 WB 46; 414860 E, 3076100 N). This two-room quarried sandstone house (Fig. 4,a) is located on the eastern edge of the vega, just north of the southern fence line of the Alexander Ranch, nestled against steep bluffs. The sandstone was hand-quarried and evidences narrow chisel marks. The structure is 15 x 25 feet in size and has a peaked roof. Glass, pottery, bottles and metal artifacts were plentiful. A Spanish-type bit with copper ornamental insets was found, but all nails recovered were round, machine-made specimens. Bottles were most commonly aquamarine and purple, with a few clear glass and brown beer bottle fragments. Some had raised lettering, and two had the word "RAVEN" on the bottom. Mold marks on the aquamarine and purple bottles stopped below the lip and are characteristic of the 1880-1900 period. Bottles with mold marks through the lip are datable to the 1900-1920 period. Most of the pottery was English ironstone. One fragment had a portion of the English crest with the word "DROIT" legible, and another had "ENGLAN." Most of the fragments were from plates and saucers. Coarse coffee mug handles, an oil lamp shade and teacup fragments with overlay painted patterns completed the inventory. Nothing earlier than 1880 was found, and nothing was found that could be dated later than 1920-1930. The bulk of the collection appears to be in the 1880-1900 period. Considering the geography and the old fence lines, this was probably the home of employees of the Alexander Ranch.

*Prehistoric Site* (41 WB 47; 414300 E, 3076150 N). Three projectile points (Fig. 2,d-f) and two thin biface fragments presumed to be of the Late Archaic period were found eroding out of the south edge of the deep ravine that cuts across the vega from east to west. The road from Palafox (1923 map) to the Alexander Ranch crossed here, 150 meters west of the cemetery; where the road is washing away, these few artifacts were exposed in an area of less than 2 m<sup>2</sup>. The entire area has been heavily collected.

*Small Stone House and Stone Cube* (41 WB 48; 414660 E, 3076420 N). This is a small, 12 x 12 foot, flat-roofed stone outbuilding (Fig. 4,b) of much poorer construction than its near neighbor, 41 WB 46. It is in the Alexander pasture on the south bank of the deep ravine and closely nestled against the bluffs. An unusual feature was a stone cube, 1.3 meters on each side, which was much better constructed than the building. Glass and pottery fragments were identical to those found at 41 WB 46 but were not as plentiful. No functional use could be discerned for the cube. The conclusion is that this is another outbuilding, probably for migrant workers, and a part of the Alexander Ranch.

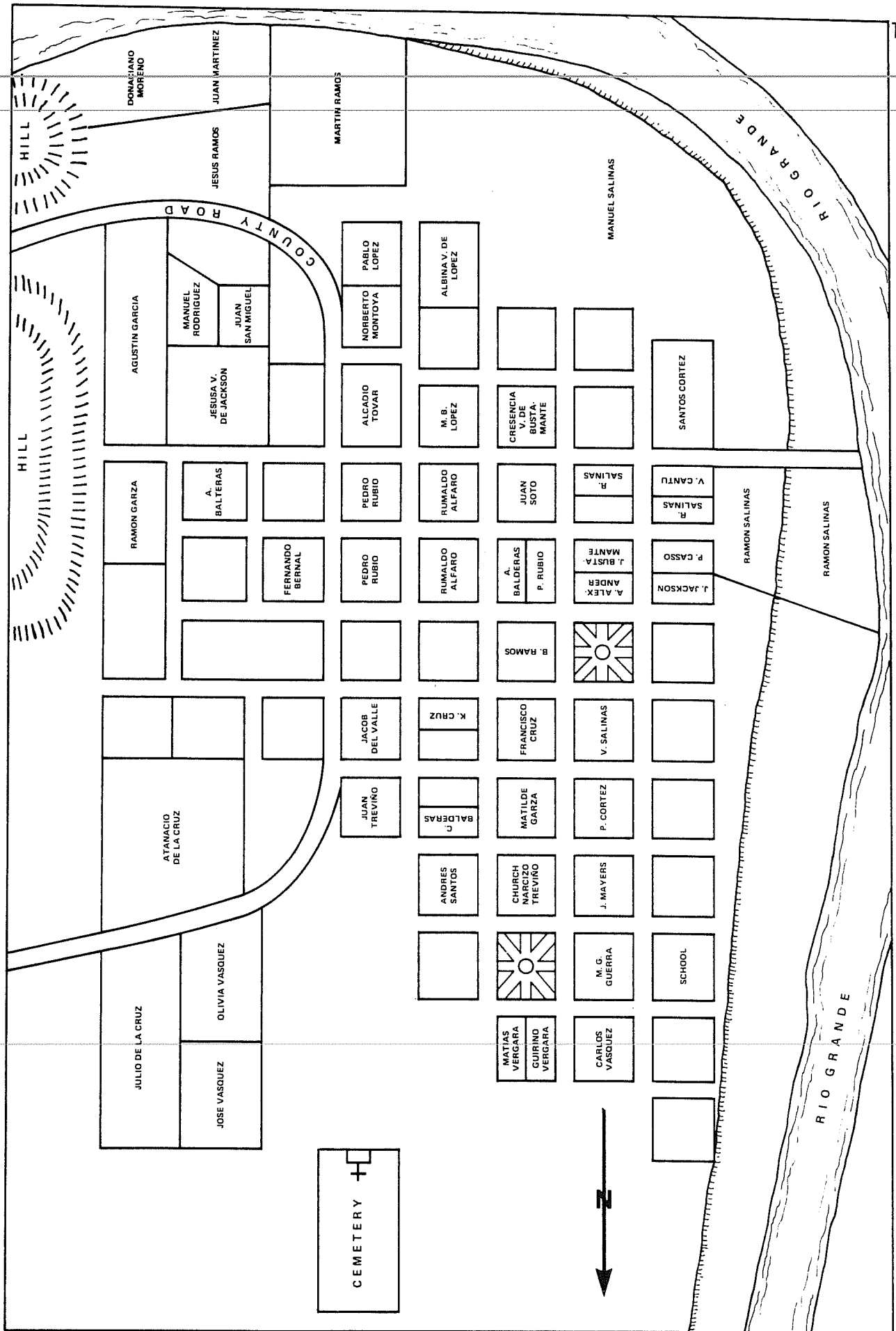


Figure 3. Valdez Map of the Town of Palafox Showing Ownership as of 1907.

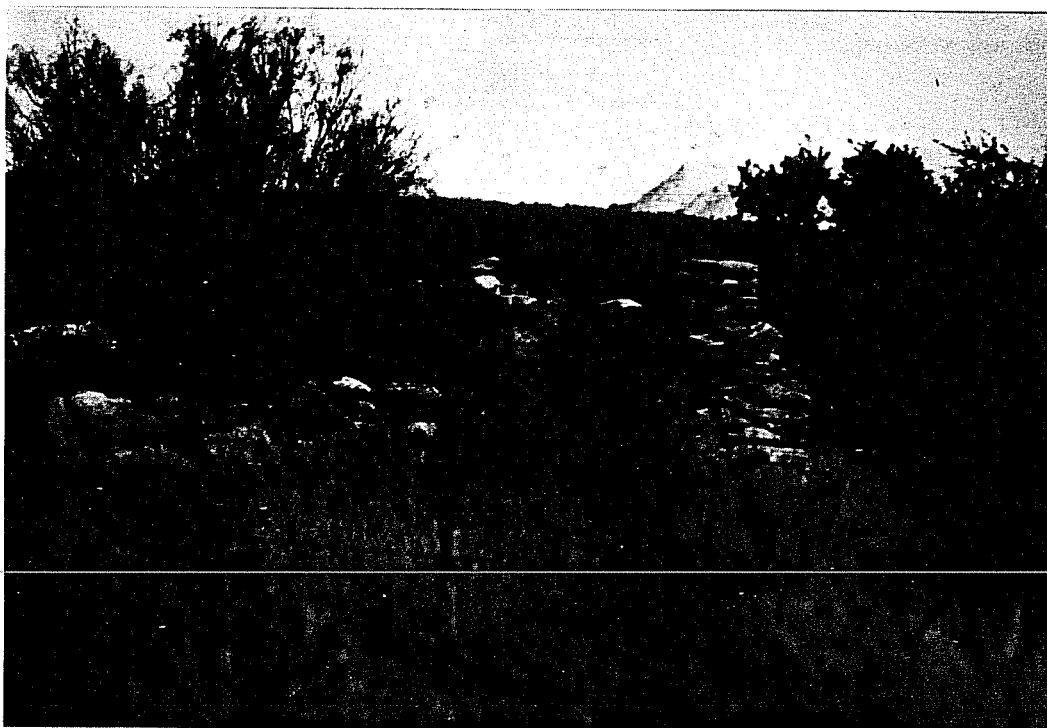
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Figure 4. *Views of Historic Sites.* a, house ruin (41 WB 46) on eastern edge of Palafox vega, looking southwest; b, house ruin (41 WB 48) on eastern edge of Palafox vega in Alexander pasture, looking east toward mining area.

*Large Prehistoric Site (41 WB 49; 415350 E, 3074970 N).* This site (Fig. 5,a) is on small, rolling hills east of the pumping plant along both sides of a fence. The site covers over 150 meters east-west and 50 meters north-south. The vega grasses are thinner here where the land begins to rise toward the bluffs. Lithic debitage is scattered throughout the area. Five blades and one end scraper on a blade indicate a blade tool industry. Six out of eight scrapers were small, finely made specimens normally found associated with the Late Prehistoric period in south Texas. However, collectors have obviously searched this site and only distal tips of arrow points were found. Mussel shell indicates use of riverine resources; a few burned sandstone rocks, a fragment of a grinding stone, arrow point fragments and scrapers indicate a multi-purpose camping site. The search for historic Indian artifacts (beads, metal objects) was unsuccessful. The site was probably chosen for its strategic location, as it overlooks the entire vega north and west and has steep vertical bluffs to the south. Uvalde Gravels provide an unlimited supply of chert from every eroding hilltop. There is probably more than one time period represented at this extensive site, but nothing diagnostic of periods other than the Late Prehistoric was found in the selective sample which we collected.

*San Jose De Palafox (41 WB 50; 414100 E, 3075510 N).* This is the area shown in the National Register 1972 sketch map and also in the 1907 Valdez map (see Figs. 3 and 5,b).

*Cemetery.* The cemetery is enclosed by a barbed wire fence. It measures approximately 20 meters east-west by 15 meters north-south and is located on the south bank of the ravine that divides the vega. Both maps show it as being at the northernmost limits of Palafox. The grave markers have deteriorated badly with only a few exceptions. Wording on those with wooden crosses is entirely illegible. One sandstone and two marble markers are still legible, and we estimated that there were between 15 and 20 graves in the cemetery. Two graves were enclosed in an ornamental iron work enclosure with the maker's name "CINCINNATI IRON WORKS" attached. Aquamarine and purple bottles were the only artifacts found, and they are consistent with the 1880-1900 period. Following are names and dates from the grave markers:

CLOTILDE CANTU ESCAMILLA	14 May 1903	15 January 1907
CLEOTILDE DE LA CRUZ	3 June 1913	20 June 1934
JUAN MANUEL LOZANO	4 April 1877 in Guerrero, Tamps.	
	29 October 1913 in Hildalgo, Coah.	

Checking against the 1815 census (Perry 1971:87) and the 1907 ownership map (Fig. 3), one finds that there were Cantu families in both periods, de la Cruz families in 1907, and Lozanos in the 1815 period. Five other families were present both in 1815 and 1907.

*Standing Ruins (41 WB 50).* Several standing ruins were inspected one-half mile southwest of the cemetery; they correspond to those shown on the 1923 map as being along the road on the western edge of Palafox nearest the Rio Grande. The second structure south of the cemetery was examined closely in a search for Spanish Colonial artifacts. The structure is 12 x 15 feet with the long axis north-south and with one door and window facing west to



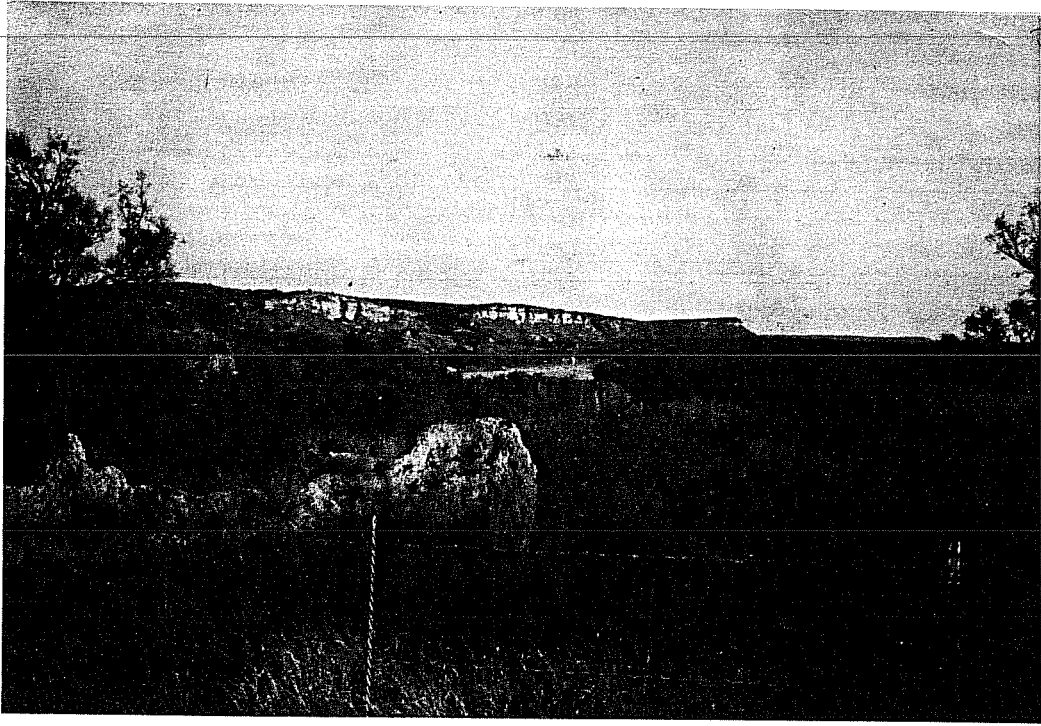
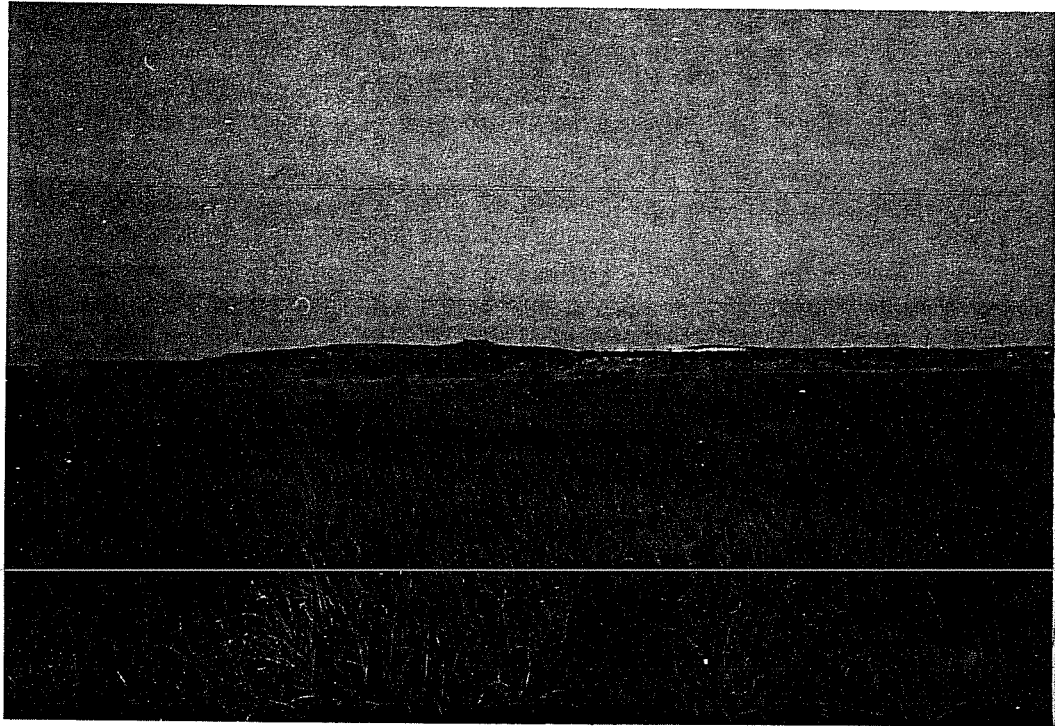
**a****b**

Figure 5. Views of Sites 41 WB 49 and 41 WB 50. a, Late Prehistoric site (41 WB 49) at southeast edge of Palafox Vega looking south down the Rio Grande toward Galan Bend; b, Palafox townsite (41 WB 50) from southwest area looking northeast across the vega. Farco Mining operation is on the skyline.

the Rio Grande. The roof had been peaked, and the stone work was excellent, with sharp square corners, traces of plaster on the outside and only a minimal amount of mortar used in construction. Looking at the doorway, it is apparent that several inches of alluvium have been deposited over the whole area, possibly from the 1954 flood. Grass is growing as thick inside as out. The total artifact recovery consisted of 18 bottle fragments, four pottery fragments and a clear glass sherd. Except for two bottle fragments, all artifacts are of 20th century vintage. Two purple fragments are slightly earlier. Nothing whatsoever resembling Spanish Colonial artifacts was found. A second structure produced even fewer artifacts, all again of the 20th century. Two trips across the vega east and west failed to reveal anything like the structures shown on the 1907 map. Instead, the whole area appears to have been leveled, and it is crisscrossed with deep irrigation ditches and sluice gates. Leveling and ditching were done either with mule-drawn "Fresnos" or with tractor-drawn equipment, judging by the well-engineered appearance.

While we were unsuccessful in finding Colonial San Jose de Palafox, we in no way proved that some of the ruins are not on this vega. Only a field project with more time (and at a time when the grass is not so high) has a chance of finding anything but the remnants of the Palafox of 1907.

*Alexander Ranch House* (41 WB 51; 414100 E, 3076900 N). The Alexander Ranch House (Fig. 6,a) is located across the deep ravine from Palafox at the north end of the vega. It is the largest standing ruin in the area, being approximately 30 feet north-south by 18 feet east-west with a lean-to 10 feet wide along the north side. The house is constructed of quarried sandstone. The land rises up to the house from both the north and south; an excellent view of a long stretch of the Rio Grande and across into Mexico is available from the windows and doors. Approximately 150 meters behind the house is a very high, steep bluff, and a huge boulder has fallen down to the base of the cliff. A crudely walled stone structure behind the boulder is invisible until one is on top of it. This is Guy Smith's "Indian hide out" described by Carmack and Carmack (1977). It also rests on a prehistoric Indian site, approximately 15 meters in diameter, with quantities of debitage, four scrapers and thin bifacial fragments. There were no diagnostics to determine its time period. Artifacts from the house tended to be mixed with the Indian artifacts. Iron artifacts, including a railroad spike, harness parts, round nails, bottle fragments, clear glass sherds, ironstone pottery fragments and portions of a tin corrugated roof, were present. No artifacts dating prior to 1880 were found; many were of 20th century origin.

The house is the only one observed during the survey that had arched doors and windows (Fig. 6,b), with iron supports for the arches. No irrigation ditches were observed in the northern portion of the vega and we can assume that stock raising was the occupation here.

*The Perone Ranch Building* (41 WB 52; 417110 E, 3074840 N). This site is also labeled *San Samuel* on the 1923 map. Eight buildings are shown on that map. The abandoned pumping plant (1923 map), 0.5 miles southwest on top of the steep cliffs overlooking the Rio Grande, must have been its water source; it had apparently failed prior to 1923. There is only one ruin still standing, and it

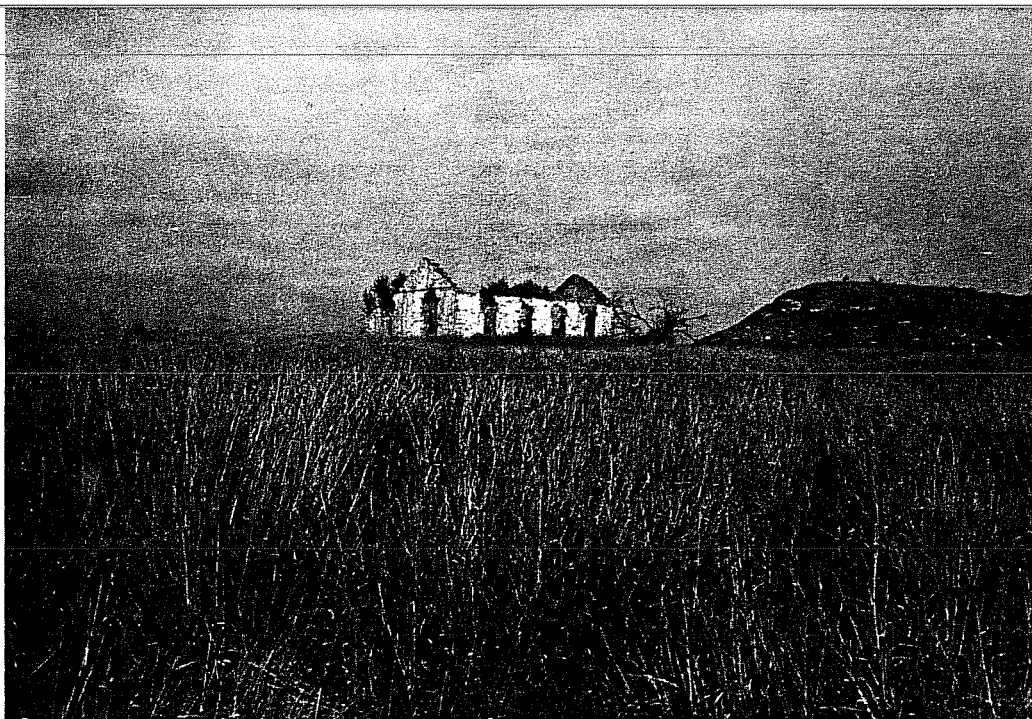
**a****b**

Figure 6. Views of 41 WB 51, the Alexander Ranch House. a, looking northwest; b, looking northeast.

is rather unusual. Photographs of this ruin are shown in Perry (1971:VII, 6; XVII, 66). The stone building is approximately 30 x 20 feet, with a peaked roof 18 feet high. There are high steel-barred windows in each end, a wide door on the south side, a smaller door on the north side, and no windows on the sides. The floor is concrete, and the only logical use of the building would have been for storage of the produce raised on those irrigated plots. No artifacts were found that could have dated before 1900, and the search here was not impeded by grass.

#### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS\*

The archaeological reconnaissance in the area planned for future cannel coal mining operations by Farco Mining Company was accompanied by an examination of the Palafox Historic District, part of which is encompassed by Farco leases. The field survey was designed to provide a general evaluation of the occurrence and nature of prehistoric and historic cultural resources in the area. Because of the proximity of the Palafox Historic District, considerable effort was expended after the conclusion of the field work in map study and literature research.

In the period since the reconnaissance was conducted, Farco Mining Company has refined its plans for a 10-year mining operation (see Fig. 1). The following recommendations, based on the results of the reconnaissance survey, are related specifically to this plan. Future expansion of Farco mining operations, or the development of other mining activities in the region, will necessitate additional archaeological survey.

Within or near the present Farco Operations Area and Disturbed Area, six prehistoric archaeological sites were found. Site 41 WB 40 is judged by us to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places; it is, however, outside of the present 10-year mining zone. Site 41 WB 41 is also of possible National Register significance, but it, too, is outside the mining zone. However, given its close proximity to the zone, Farco Mining Company should take every precaution to avoid damage to the site. Site 41 WB 42 also appears to be an important site and is one which warrants testing. It is located outside the boundaries of the Farco mining zone.

Sites 41 WB 43 and 44 are both important sites and are located within the Farco Mining Company 10-year mining zone. Site 41 WB 43 is, in our opinion, of probable National Register quality. A program of testing and mapping should be carried out at the site, well in advance of any planned mining activities, to determine the eligibility of the site and to allow time for the development of a mitigation and/or preservation program. The site is within the "Year 7" zone, and there is sufficient time to develop a plan for the necessary research at the site. Site 41 WB 44 also appears to be an important site and warrants a testing and mapping program designed to make an evaluation in terms of National Register criteria. The site is in somewhat more imminent danger, as it is in the area of the planned location of a "sediment pond" to be built in Years 4, 5 and 6 of the present 10-year plan. A program of investigation at this site should be implemented in the near future. Site 41 WB 45 is judged to be of little significance, and no further work is recommended.

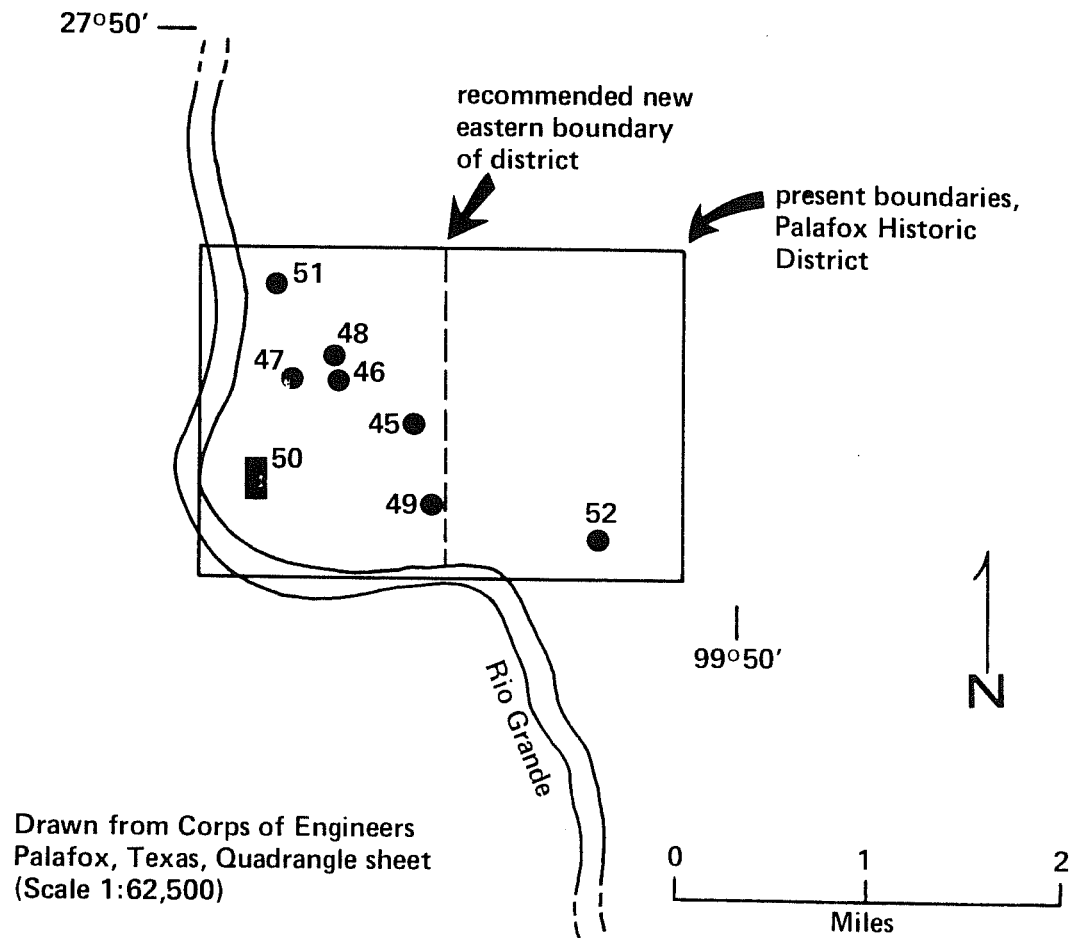
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\*This section was prepared by Thomas R. Hester.

Now that the Farco Mining Company 10-year plan has been fully developed, we suggest that the recommendations for sites 41 WB 43 and 41 WB 44 be implemented in a manner that will allow the archaeological investigations to proceed without conflicting with proposed mining activities. In addition, there are certain areas within the 10-year area that need intensive survey, specifically those areas of Carricotos Creek and its western tributaries that were not surveyed in 1978. Some of these areas will be affected early in the mining operation, while other areas will not be impacted until Years 8, 9 and 10. It is our recommendation that the work at 41 WB 43 and 44, and the needed intensive survey in the other areas, be conducted as a Phase II archaeological study. Testing and mapping will be done at sites 41 WB 43 and 44. Then, an intensive survey will be conducted along those portions of Carricotos Creek and its tributaries within the 10-year mining zone. If a potentially important site is found during intensive survey, it should be tested during Phase II so that National Register criteria can be evaluated. Timing of the field work aspects of Phase II would be contingent on the planning needs of Farco Mining Company.

The reconnaissance accomplished within the present boundaries of the Palafox Historic District provided some important new information. Five new sites were documented, and three previously recorded sites (41 WB 50, 51, 52) were reexamined. Site 41 WB 39 lies outside the 10-year mining zone. Site 41 WB 46 does not require any additional work. Site 41 WB 47 is probably of National Register quality, but lies outside the mining zone. No further work is recommended for site 41 WB 48. Site 41 WB 49 is eligible for the National Register, but lies outside the mining zone. Sites 41 WB 50 (Palafox), 41 WB 51 and 41 WB 52 are all outside the boundaries of the Farco mining area. Site 41 WB 52 is the Perone Ranch; we observed no evidence that it is related in any way to the Palafox townsite and question its inclusion within the National Register District.

When the Palafox Historic District was established in 1972, it encompassed an area 2.5 miles east to west and 1.75 miles north to south. This designated area was based on very limited field work and seems to have been designed to cover a broad area that might have included historic remains pertinent to the Palafox townsite. However, our reconnaissance indicates that the district is much too large, including areas that contain absolutely no evidence of Spanish-Mexican occupation of the late 18th or early 19th centuries. It is, therefore, our strong recommendation that the Palafox Historic District be reduced in size in accordance with more realistic evaluations. We recommend that the boundaries be along the present lines, but that the district be reduced in size to 1.25 miles east-west; the north-south distance would remain the same (see Fig. 7). This configuration would still serve to protect a large area, within which future research could be done to find and investigate the remains of San Jose de Palafox. Those sites encompassed by the revised district would be 41 WB 45, 41 WB 46, 41 WB 47, 41 WB 48, 41 WB 49, 41 WB 50 and 41 WB 51. Although a portion of the Farco mining zone would impinge on the northeastern corner of the revised district, the reconnaissance has shown that no sites are present in that area. Therefore, no adverse impact on that small portion of the revised district would be caused by mining operations.



Drawn from Corps of Engineers  
Palafox, Texas, Quadrangle sheet  
(Scale 1:62,500)

Figure 7. Map Showing Present Boundaries and Recommended New Eastern Boundary, Palafox Historic District.

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