The Sayersville Historical Association Visits the Elgin Quarry Site (41BP995), formerly the Hogeye Site

By David Glen Robinson

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Background

The Sayersville Historical Association (SHA), a local Bastrop County historical society, had for years heard of a prehistoric site in northern Bastrop County rich in artifacts; there are many such in the region. One stood out—a site known as Hogeye, said to have yielded a prehistoric cache of Clovis bifaces. The name Hogeye is conflated with cemeteries, stage stops, and hamlets, so the name was not much help geographically in locating the site.

Then archeologists at Texas A&M published a well-illustrated book on the prehistoric cache, naming it The Hogeye Clovis Cache (*The Hogeye Clovis Cache.* Waters, M.R. and T. Jennings. 2015. Texas A&M University Press). The Clovis people date earlier than 10,600 B.C. Waters and Jennings attributed the cache to the Hogeye Site, somewhere in Bastrop County.

The SHA had to know more. In archival work later, SHA found that the site was known from the 1920s as a commercial sand quarry to supply the Butler brick plant and named the Elgin Quarry site. From that time, too, it was known as a place to collect prehistoric stone tools.

On June 13, 2022, Sayersville Historical Association member David G. Robinson visited the prehistoric Elgin Quarry/Hogeye Site, 41BP995, in northern Bastrop County, southeast of Elgin near the Butler brick plant. A colleague of Robinson's at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, Alan M. Slade, had met the owner of the site property at a gun and artifact show in Waco not long before and had garnered an invitation from him to visit the site. Slade invited Robinson on the visit and the date, June 13, was set.

Importance of the Prehistoric Site

Any site with a large cache of unfinished spearpoints dating to 10,600 B.C. is important. Beyond that, such a site with thousands of additional artifacts and two more smaller caches datable to later Archaic sub-periods and a location in and around two spring-fed streams magnifies the importance and significance of the site. The large Clovis cache is only part of the story. The spearhead the landowner showed Slade in Waco is certainly a Clovis biface from the Clovis cache, demonstrating that not all members of the cache have been discovered as of the current date.

As this *Bulletin* was being finished in early 2024, additional major finds from the Elgin Quarry Site were coming to light. Many years, perhaps decades, prior to the current ownership of the site, a collector unknown had made a major find of a cache of Clovis blades on the site, perhaps 20-25 specimens. The

blades are all gray chert, several probably struck from the same core. The blades are flakes two to three times longer than they are wide, their edges sharp as razors.

The Elgin Quarry Site is the only known site in North America with both a Clovis biface cache and a Clovis blade cache. By these measures, the site is literally unique.

Visit to the Prehistoric Elgin Quarry/Hogeye Site, 41BP995

When the June 13 party arrived at the site, the landowner showed the visitors many artifacts in cases in his house that he had collected over the years. The types and styles of the stone artifacts confirmed that the site had been a center of prehistoric camping and life from ancient Clovis times throughout the prehistoric period to the beginning of historic times.

As well, the landowner displayed framed, illustrated pages from the Waters and Jennings book.

The site is private property, and the landowner sells artifacts from the site and allows digging for a daily fee. Importantly, the landowner has first right of refusal for the removal of any artifacts from the site. This is a filter that probably secures the finds of any more Clovis points that come out of the site. All this is without legal liabilities to the landowner.

He gave the visitors a ride to the heart of the large site in his truck that would not bog down in the deep, loose sand—for that is the soil layer of the entire site, going down at least 14 feet.

The spring fed streams on the site, that flow together near the southern end, are potentially the most significant features of the site. They may be the single most important variable in explaining the site location. The even earlier Gault Site in Bell County is situated along the spring-fed Buttercup creek. Like Hogeye, the site has yielded thousands of artifacts dating through all periods of prehistory.

The site lies in the Post Oak Savanna, the titular oaks of which grow nearby. Riparian growth shades the waters of the creeks. Pecan trees grow in abundance. A nutting stone, a ground stone artifact type conventionally considered a mortar for hulling nuts, was observed on the site.

Elsewhere, concentrations of burned rock and charcoal bits in scatters at least a meter in diameter are common on the site according to the landowner; but such concentrations were not actually observed by Slade and Robinson. These cultural features would have marked hearths and work areas of the ancient people.

Stone artifact flaking debris and burned rock is abundant everywhere on the site. Finished stone tools diagnostic of every prehistoric period are also common. Stratigraphic and spatial relations in the ancient camping areas are probably impossible to determine now due to the advanced relic hunting. The lists of artifacts and cultural materials show amply that the site was a domestic habitation site for thousands of years. The total estimated site area is 1.5 million square feet.

An interesting class of artifact found at the site is engraved flint flakes and chunks. They were collected over years by the landowner, a keen observer, who commented that most of the relic hunters don't recognize the stone pieces as artifacts or art and merely discard them on their backdirt piles.

The engraved rocks have carefully wrought patterns of narrowly spaced parallel lines in the hard quartz material and the softer cortex material that forms on it. Some pieces have only a single long carved line. One observed piece had two fields of lines at off-angles to each other. Another has cross-hatched fields set parallel to each other with additional unoriented scratched lines elsewhere on the stone. None of the lines or fields intersected.

Very similar craft-worked items are known from the Wilson-Leonard site in Williamson County and the Gault site in Bell County. Some of the engraved stones are estimated to hail from the Early Paleoindian period, probably Clovis. Other sites have yielded them from later contexts. The Waters and Jennings book lacks any mention of engraved stones. Thus, this article is the first report of that rare artifact class at the Elgin Quarry Site, 41BP995. Closeup photos of the recovered engraved stones can be seen at the end of this article.

The visit to the site did not end on the site. The return to the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory saw the beginning of the exact locating of the site on the state site maps at Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The landowner gave the visitors the latitude and longitude of the site, and from that the map location on the Elgin East quadrangle map could be plotted, and of course the UTM coordinates (GPS, for Global Positioning System) could be determined. None of this important baseline information on the site nor an official Smithsonian Trinomial registration had been requested or provided by Waters and Jennings or any previous visitors to the site.

The trinomial, 41BP995, was established on June 13, 2022, through the kind offices of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory and Jean Landrum Hughes, head of the State Site Atlas at Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The State Site Atlas is the official registry of Texas historic and prehistoric sites, created and maintained by the Texas Historical Commission.

And then we found out through continuing research that the site had been known historically, and named, the Elgin Quarry site. The sand quarry had supplied that resource to the brick plant southeast of the quarry, since at least the 1920s. Given the priority of the earlier name, the site name became officially the Elgin Quarry site, 41BP995.

Since the biface cache was named separately, it retains the name Hogeye Clovis Biface cache. The site's Clovis Blade cache is called conventionally "Hogeye" but a better name might be the Elgin Quarry Clovis Blade Cache.