

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT FORT GRIFFIN STATE HISTORIC PARK  
SHACKELFORD COUNTY, TEXAS

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In Memory  
of  
Virgil Hervey  
Born Sept. 5th  
1855  
Died June 15th  
1877  
Aged 21 Years  
9 Months & 21 Days

G. W. Taylor  
Infant Son of  
J. P. & C. J.  
Taylor  
Born  
Aug. 12, 1883  
Died  
Sept. 12, 1883

All data on the markers were recorded. During inclement weather when field work was impossible, a search was conducted in early issues of the *Fort Griffin Echo*, in the county records, and in numerous books on the history of the town in an attempt to identify those buried in the cemetery and to determine when and by whom it was used. As so often happens, this research turned up information on other cemeteries in the area as well, all of which is included in the Appendix.

An interesting facet of the cemetery investigation was the discovery of a mound marked by a number of rodent burrows. In the back dirt of these creatures were found the following articles (see Fig. 11):

		diameter
	2 white, olive-shaped, simple construction	.4 cm
1728	white, opaque, donut-shaped, simple construction	.125-.2cm
70	turquoise, opaque, donut-shaped, simple construction, fragile	.175 cm
40	black, opaque, donut-shaped, simple construction	.175 cm
62	medium blue, translucent, donut-shaped, simple construction	.175 cm
46	blue-green, translucent, donut-shaped, simple construction	.175 cm
2	pale blue, opaque, donut-shaped, simple construction	.175 cm
165	blue, translucent, donut-shaped, simple construction	.125 cm
	2 shell hairpipes with traces of vermilion paint	
	6 hawk bells	
	1 spherical brass button	
	5 square coffin nails	
	2 wood screws	
	4 fragments of human bone	

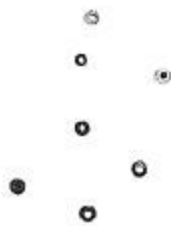
The number, size, and assortment of beads and the presence of the bells and button suggest a late 19th century Indian garment, such as leggings or a shirt. It would be next to impossible to say for sure what tribe is represented, without seeing the design of the

Figure 11. *Artifacts from Burial 50.*

- a, hawk bell
- b, donut-shaped beads, .125 to .175 cm diameter
- c, white, olive-shaped bead, .4 cm diameter
- d, spherical brass button
- e, square coffin nail
- f,g shell hairpipes with traces of vermilion paint



a



b



c



d



e



f



g



beadwork and the cut of the garment. There is no certainty that even this would help, since by the late 1800's beaded garments on the southern plains were heavily influenced by those of the northern plains and frequently were traded among tribes (Word and Fox 1975:57).

The hairpipes could have been part of a breastplate or ear dangles such as were popular among the Kiowa and Comanche in pre-reservation times (Ewers 1957:76). They could also have been suspended on the fringes of a ceremonial shirt, which custom was prevalent among the Western Apache (Fox, personal observation in Witte Museum collections).

There are numerous possible explanations for this burial: an Indian far from his home and tribe, a trapper or trader who preferred Indian dress, the Indian wife of a local man. It does not seem likely that it was a Tonkawa scout, as Indian scouts were usually buried in military cemeteries (Neighbors 1973:101; Dr. John Wilson, personal communication).

The small amount of information gathered so far about this cemetery suggests that it was associated with the town of Fort Griffin, and may have been the local "Boot Hill". Rye referred to "Bootleg Hill" when he described a cowboy being buried there (1967:105). Apparently there was another town cemetery in use at the same time, perhaps reserved for the upper class, or more affluent citizens (see Appendix). The known history of Fort Griffin suggests a great need for a cemetery for transients, gunfighters, and riff-raff of the community. For a number of years it was a wide-open, rip-roaring town, rightfully dubbed the "Sodom of the plains" (Metz 1966:48). Rister in his description of the town states (1956:146):

"Within a period of twelve years, thirty-five men had been 'publicly killed', eight or ten others found dead and officers of the law and the vigilantes had shot or strung up twelve more."

#### THE ARTIFACTS

The majority of the artifacts recovered during the 1976 investigations were undistinguished fragments of glass bottles and window panes, sherds of heavy, white "ironstone" china, rusted nails, and tin can fragments. The more interesting or meaningful objects have been selected for illustration and identification in the following section.

##### AREA A - Pathway Trench A76

- 14 fragments window glass
- 12 fragments glass containers
- 1 fragment thin, rusted metal
- 1 center fire cartridge case (Fig. 12d)
- 1 trunk key (Fig. 12g)
- 1 unidentified iron ring
- 1 plain metal button, 4 holes (Fig. 12c)
- 1 unidentified metal object (Fig. 12a)
- 1 iron swivel (Fig. 12h)
- 14 square nails