

# A Preliminary Archeological and Documentary Study of the Womack Site, Lamar County, Texas

R. K. HARRIS, INUS MARIE HARRIS, JAY C. BLAINE, AND  
JERRYLEE BLAINE

## ABSTRACT

Intermittently over the past 35 or so years, amateur and professional archeologists have been collecting artifacts and other scientifically valuable data from the Womack Site, an important historic Indian village on the Red River, Lamar County, Texas. This paper, the first to report in any detail on the site, is concerned exclusively with an analysis of those artifacts and documents which are most useful in placing the Womack Site in a meaningful historic context. The findings indicate that it can be identified as a component of the Norteño Focus, very probably being the Quidehais (Kichai) village contacted by Du Rivage in 1719. If correct, this interpretation is contrary to the widely held view that Wichita-speaking Indians did not come south to the Red River until the middle 1740's. *Date: 1700 - 1740.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Womack Site lies in the northern part of Lamar County, Texas, on a high bluff overlooking the Red River. It consists of midden debris, burials, and probable house remains buried in a sandy layer which appears to average about 18 inches thick. Below this zone is a red clay stratum which is devoid of occupational refuse but does occasionally preserve the outline of certain structural features. Covering an area of about 30 acres, most of the site has been under cultivation for a number of years, and some parts are considerably eroded. The uncultivated portions of the site support a fairly luxurious growth of cedar, bois d'arc, persimmon, ash, willow, hackberry, dogwood, pecan, several species of oak, hickory, sycamore, and grass, and the wild Cherokee rose. A grove of tall, slim, straight cedars, which could well have furnished poles for house construction, grows near the northern edge of the site. More than ample water for the domestic needs of the villagers could have been obtained from the Red River, or from the numerous springs that outcrop at the base of the bluff.

Despite the archeological importance of the Womack Site, it has

BULLETIN OF THE TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY VOL. 36

1965

AUSTIN

pp. 287-363

side all three, and it appears that these specimens constituted a bell, possibly an item of horse paraphernalia. All three of these tinklers are of 19 gauge brass. The other 74 specimens include 42 of 25 gauge brass, 21 of 22 gauge brass, and 11 of 19 gauge brass.

In examining collections from other historic sites, the authors have noticed that the tinklers from Womack and Angola Farm are loosely rolled, while those from later historic sites are tightly rolled. Also there are no iron tinklers known from the Womack Site, but they are common at the later Norteño Focus site of Spanish Fort.

### EUROPEAN-MADE ARTIFACTS

Objects of European origin and design make up an important segment of the collection from the Womack Site. Most apparently represent items the Europeans exchanged for native goods and favors, or simply gave to the Indians to win their friendship. Included are glass trade beads, gun parts, various specimens of iron, brass, lead, pewter, and clay.

#### *Glass Beads*

The 2,123 beads from the site examined by the authors are believed to be of considerable importance in determining the dates of the historic Indian occupation. Hence, in the sections which follow, they are classified in detail, and several pertinent documentary materials are reviewed. In analyzing the beads the authors have employed the same terminology of structure and size as Duffield and Jelks (1961: 40-50). Included are *simple* beads which have a monolithic structure, *compound* beads which have two different structural components, and *complex* beads which have three or more component parts. The sizes range from *large* (greater than 6 mm. in diameter) and *medium* (4 mm. to 6 mm. in diameter), to *small* (less than 4 mm. in diameter). Documentary evidence (Du Pratz—quoted in Swanton, 1911: 56) suggests that the larger beads were used mainly on necklaces, while the small and medium-sized ones were used principally on skins, garters, and the like.

The various shapes recognized are also essentially the same as those employed in the Pearson Site descriptions, except for some of the larger (necklace) beads where the term *olive-shaped* is used. It is taken from an early 18th century document (Thwaites, 1959: 143) and was apparently widely used by the French to describe certain of the trade beads. A standard color chart (Bustanoby, 1947: 28-29) has been used to indicate the hues of beads. It should be noted that the surfaces

of the beads are frequently altered by age and weathering and it is sometimes difficult to determine the original color. However, the color can be restored by immersing the beads in a weak solution of muriatic acid for about two hours and then washing them in water. It is surprising how many beads that would otherwise have been classified as dirty white turn out to be red, green, yellow, etc. when cleaned. An example of each of the 56 different kinds of beads recognized in the collection is shown in Figure 8. The number which appears opposite each refers to the type designation given below.

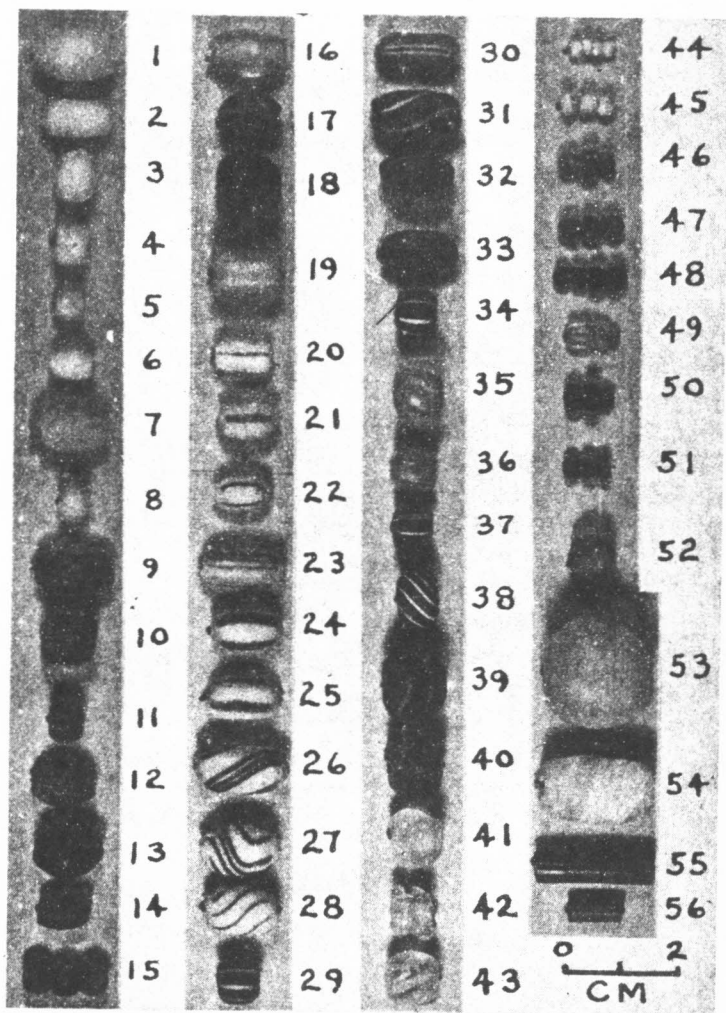


Fig. 8. Glass Trade Beads. Numbers 1-56 refer to the types defined in the text.

## BEAD TYPES

*No. 1:* Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 141 specimens.

*No. 2:* Large, white, opaque, elongated, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 125 specimens.

*No. 3:* Large, white, opaque, round necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 105 specimens.

*No. 4:* Large, white, opaque, barrel-shaped necklace bead of compound construction. The inner layer of glass has a porcelain-like texture, while the outer layer has a slightly frosted appearance. 70 specimens.

*No. 5:* Medium, white, opaque, barrel-shaped garter bead, of compound construction. The two layers of glass in this bead are the same as those described above for type No. 4. 105 specimens.

*No. 6:* Medium, white, opaque, olive-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 75 specimens.

*No. 7:* Large, grayish-white, semitranslucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass has a frosted-like appearance. 31 specimens.

*No. 8:* Large, light grayish-white, semitranslucent, donut-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass has a frosted-like appearance similar to No. 7. 17 specimens.

*No. 9:* Large, Peacock Blue, opaque, elongated olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass has fine lines running lengthwise with the bead, giving it a texture reminiscent of stripped sugarcane. 15 specimens.

*No. 10:* Large, Peacock Blue, opaque, barrel-shaped, necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is the same as No. 9. 45 specimens.

*No. 11:* Medium, Peacock Blue, opaque, barrel-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass is the same as No. 9. 27 specimens.

*No. 12:* Large, Turquoise Blue, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture (3 specimens).

*No. 13:* Large, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is often cane-like in appearance. 9 specimens.

*No. 14:* Medium, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, olive-shaped, garter bead of simple construction. 5 specimens.

*No. 15:* Medium, Gobelin Blue, opaque, barrel-shaped, garter bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 62 specimens.

*No. 16:* Large, clear glass, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is clear but, due to age, sometimes appears frosted. 3 specimens.

*No. 17:* Large, black, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is somewhat cane-like in appearance. 2 specimens.

*No. 18:* Large, black, opaque, round necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in appearance. 3 specimens.

*No. 19:* Large, Dandelion Yellow, opaque, barrel-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The glass is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.

*No. 20:* Large, white, opaque, elongated olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with four dark blue stripes which are evenly spaced and extend along the long axis. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 4 specimens.

*No. 21:* Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with three blue stripes which are evenly spaced and are parallel to the long axis. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 7 specimens.

*No. 22:* Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with two red and two blue alternating stripes. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.

*No. 23:* Large, bluish-white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with three longitudinal sets of three blue stripes spaced evenly around the bead. The bluish-white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 21 specimens.

*No. 24:* Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. Extending longitudinally across the surface of the bead are three sets of stripes, each of which is composed of two red stripes and, between these, a blue stripe. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 4 specimens.

*No. 25:* Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with three sets, each of which is composed of two brown stripes and, between these, a blue stripe. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.

No. 26: Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with three sets of three blue stripes which are twisted in an S-shape fashion around the bead. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 8 specimens.

No. 27: Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with six, more or less evenly spaced, blue stripes which are twisted in an S-shape fashion around the bead. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 2 specimens.

No. 28: Large, white, opaque, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with six, rather evenly distributed, red stripes which are twisted in an S-shape fashion around the bead. The white glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 2 specimens.

No. 29: Large, Emerald Green, translucent, barrel-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The bead surface is covered with eight white stripes, rather evenly spaced and parallel to the long axis. 3 specimens.

No. 30: Large, Brittany Blue, opaque, elongated olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with three evenly spaced sets of stripes, each of which is composed of two white stripes and, between these, a red stripe. 3 specimens.

No. 31: Large, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with five white stripes, twisted around the bead in an S-like fashion. 1 specimen.

No. 32: Large, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. Parallel to the long axis of the bead are more or less evenly spaced crescent-like white stripes. 1 specimen.

No. 33: Large, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with three sets of stripes, each of which is composed of two white stripes, and, between these, a red stripe. 2 specimens.

No. 34: Large, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, barrel-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with eight, evenly spaced white stripes. 1 specimen.

No. 35: Large, clear glass, donut-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. Eight twisted white stripes appear embedded in the body of the glass. In making this bead, a layer of clear glass was used for the core, then the white stripes pressed into the surface of glass, and an-

other layer of clear glass was added to finish the bead. The white stripes are twisted in an S-shaped fashion. 1 specimen.

No. 36: Large, black, opaque, barrel-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with twelve white stripes running lengthwise with the bead. The surface of this bead type, and that of No. 35, sometimes appears frosted, probably due to age. 5 specimens.

No. 37: Large, black, opaque, barrel-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface is covered with eight white longitudinal stripes, spaced more or less evenly. The black glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.

No. 38: Large, black, opaque, donut-shaped necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with eight white stripes twisted around the bead in an S-shape pattern. The black glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.

No. 39: Large, black, opaque, round necklace bead of complex construction. The surface of the bead is covered with six ivory-colored crescent-shaped stripes which run perpendicular to the core. The black glass of the bead is porcelain-like in texture. 3 specimens.

No. 40: Large, Bluebird Blue, translucent, eight-faceted necklace bead of simple construction. The surface of the glass sometimes appears to be frosted, probably due to age. 2 specimens.

No. 41: Large, clear glass, eight-faceted necklace bead of simple construction. The surface of this bead sometimes appears frosted, probably due to age. Both this bead and bead No. 40 are wire-wound and the facets were pressed. 2 specimens.

No. 42: Large, clear glass, barrel-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. This bead is wire-wound with a surface which is pressed into a pattern which resembles that of hobnail glass. This type is often called the "mulberry bead." 1 specimen.

No. 43: Large, clear glass, barrel-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The bead is wire-wound and the surface pressed into six spiral-shaped elements which give a corrugated effect. 1 specimen.

No. 44: Small, white, opaque, donut-shaped garter bead (sometimes called "seed bead") of simple construction. The glass has a porcelain like texture. This is the smallest type of bead found at the Womack Site, and is similar in size to those commonly found at later historic sites. 75 specimens.

No. 45: Small, white, opaque, donut-shaped garter bead of com

pound construction. The two layers of glass in this bead, are the same as those in bead Type 4. 685 specimens.

*No. 46:* Small, Peacock Blue, opaque, donut-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass of this bead has the sugar cane-like texture of bead Types 9, 10, and 11. 201 specimens.

*No. 47:* Small, Gobelin Blue, opaque, donut-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass has a porcelain-like texture. 175 specimens.

*No. 48:* Small, dark Bluebird Blue, translucent, donut-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass in this bead is the same as Nos. 13 and 14. 37 specimens.

*No. 49:* Small, clear glass, donut-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass of this bead is the same as that of Nos. 16, 35, 36, 41, 42 and 43. 5 specimens.

*No. 50:* Small, black, opaque, donut-shaped garter bead of simple construction. The glass of this bead is porcelain-like in texture. 5 specimens.

*No. 51:* Small, red, opaque (outer layer), donut-shaped garter bead of compound construction. The outer layers of opaque glass is brick red, and the inner layer is a translucent light green. This bead is generally referred to as "Cornaline d'Aleppo" (Duffield and Jelks, 1961: 48). 8 specimens.

*No. 52:* Large, amber, translucent, barrel-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The bead is wire-wound. 2 specimens.

*No. 53:* Extra large (19 mm. in diameter), milk-glass, translucent, round necklace bead of simple construction. The bead is wire-wound. 3 specimens.

*No. 54:* Large, milk-glass, translucent, olive-shaped necklace bead of simple construction. The bead is wire-wound. 2 specimens.

*No. 55:* Large, red, opaque (outer layer), tube-shaped necklace bead of compound construction. The outer layer of opaque glass is birck red and the inner layer is a translucent light green. This bead is generally referred to as "Cornaline d'Aleppo," but in this case, the bead stock was broken into tube-shaped beads, instead of the small, donut-shaped beads described under No. 51. 2 specimens.

*No. 56:* Small, but long (bugle type, 9 mm. long and 4 mm. in diameter), Brittany Blue, opaque, tube-shaped, probably a necklace bead, of simple construction. The glass of this bead is porcelain-like in texture. 1 specimen.



Beads Nos. 55 and 56 usually occur on sites dated in the middle 18th century (Jelks, ms.). Inasmuch as only three specimens of the tube beads have come from the Womack Site, they could have been introduced into the site towards the latter part of the occupation.

#### DOCUMENTS AND COMPARATIVE DATA PERTINENT TO BEAD STUDY

The beads from the Womack Site, when viewed as a whole, contrast significantly in shape, size, and variety of stripes with bead types found at the later Norteño Focus sites (Spanish Fort, Pearson, Gilbert, Vinson, Stansbury, and Stone). To be sure, some of the beads recovered from Womack also occur at these later components, but they are much less frequent than at Womack. These comparative data suggest that, shortly after the 1730's, an important change was taking place in the bead industry. Indeed, according to Rogers and Beard (1937: 40) the island of Murano, located in the lagoon of Venice and long famous for the production of glass, in the 1730's began to decline. The fall of Murano, of course, was intimately linked to the fall of the commercial Republic of Venice. Thus by about 1735 what had once been a flourishing enterprise supporting 300 glass houses was quickly reduced to less than 20 glass houses. Because of the secrecy that surrounded the manufacture of beads, it is difficult to unravel the historical details. However, it is quite possible that other glass houses in Europe took over the market served by the Murano bead makers. With this shift in locus of manufacture, there must have been some changes in the types of beads traded to the Indians.

Three documents cited below give some insights into the sizes, colors, and uses of some of the glass beads traded to the Indians by the French in the lower Mississippi Valley between 1700 and 1740. In one of these, an invoice dated March 5, 1702, and addressed to Father Jean de Lamberville (Thwaites, 1959: 29), a Catholic priest ordered certain trade goods for the missions up river, about Fort St. Louis of Louisiana (present day St. Louis, Missouri). Among the items requested are:

Ten livres [probably a pound of 12 ounces] of large glass Beads . . . black, white and striped.

Ten livres of small glass Beads . . . white, green and transparent.

The second document is a letter written from Fort St. Louis of Louisiana, dated February 23, 1708, and signed by Father Jacques Gravier. In this letter he ordered, among other items, ". . . 10 livres of white Beads, olive-shaped and large-sized, 4 livres of small beads . . . blue, green, and white . . ." (Thwaites, 1959: 142).

In the third document, Le Page du Pratz's *The History of Louisiana*, published in 1758, is to be found one of the few early descriptions of trade beads among the Indians:

When they have beads (*rassade*) they make necklaces composed of one or more rows. They make them long enough for the head to pass through. The *rassade* is a bead of the size of the end of a finger of a small infant. Its length is greater than its diameter. Its substance is similar to porcelain. There is a smaller one, ordinarily round and white. They value it more than the other. There is a blue one and one of another style which is banded (*bardelée*) with blue and white. The medium sized and the smallest are strung to ornament skins, garters, etc. (quoted in Swanton, 1911: 56).

The word *rassade* in Old French means "little bits of colored glass," and it was commonly used with reference to the beads traded to Africans (glass beads were traded to Africans long before they were traded to North American Indians). *Bardelée*, on the other hand, comes from the Old French word, *barde*, which during the Middle Ages, referred to a covering of horse armor, sometimes placed in strips or stripes over the horse. *Bardelée* means "the act of covering with strips or stripes."

It is possible that Father Gravier's large, olive-shaped beads are represented by Types 1, 2, 6, 7, 12-14, 16, 17, 20-28, and 30-33 at Womack; while Le Page du Pratz's *rassade* bead with a porcelain-like surface seems to describe Nos. 1-6, 15, 18-28, 37-39, 44, 45, 47, and 56. The *bardelée* bead is mentioned as being banded with blue and white, although Du Pratz does not state whether it was white with blue stripes, or blue with white stripes. At Womack, Types 20, 21, 23, 26, and 27 are white with blue stripes, and Types 31, 32, and 34 are blue with white stripes.

Of the 56 bead types described for Womack, 47 have been found in burials at the Angola Farm, a historic Tunica village in Louisiana, near the mouth of the Red River (Ford, 1936). Thirty-one of the types occur at the Fish Hatchery Site (personal observation; Gregory, 1962), a former Natchitoches Indian village near Natchitoches, Louisiana, and 29 have been found at Fort St. Louis de Kadodachado (the Roseborough Lake Site near present day Texarkana and the probable location of the Nassonite Post established in 1719 by La Harpe; Harris, *et al.*, ms.). As will be brought out in later sections, Womack and these three sites all appear to date from the same time period and, more importantly, appear to have been visited by the La Harpe party during the course of its journey up Red River.