

## A SECOND HISTORIC CADDO SITE AT NATCHITOCHE, LOUISIANA

BY C. H. WEBB

Comparatively few sites have been found in the historic Caddo territory which exhibit the association of native artifacts and European trade materials, despite the extent of this territory and the existence of trade contact with Caddo tribes for over a hundred years in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This is particularly true of historically identified sites. The obvious importance of such materials in delineating the artifact types of the historic Caddo tribes and establishing their relationships to the materials found at the hundreds of pre-historic sites in the area justifies the present report of a second Natchitoches site.

In 1935 Walker<sup>1</sup> described the burials and artifacts which had been discovered during construction of the Fish Hatchery on Cane River one mile below Natchitoches, Louisiana, noting that in all probability the site was that of the Natchitoches Indians during the existence of the French fort at this town, which was established in 1714. Trade beads and metal tools were found in burials with native pottery. A marked similarity was noted by Walker between the engraved Natchitoches ware and numerous vessels illustrated by Moore<sup>2</sup> from the Keno and Glendora sites on Bayou Bartholomew and the Ouachita River above Monroe, Louisiana. He states that this similarity is explained historically by Henri de Tonti's account of finding the "Ouasita" and "Nachitoches" together at the latter's village and also by La Fon's map of the Territory of Orleans in 1806, on which the old trading path from Natchitoches to the villages on the Ouachita is shown. Walker cites other historical details of the early white contacts with the Natchitoches Indians and the Doustiony, a related tribe, both of whom lived at various places on Cane and Red Rivers near Natchitoches until after 1805.

Walker quotes Dunn<sup>3</sup> as explaining the maze of rivers and bayous in this vicinity (Plate 9) by stating that the Natchitoches island known to the early French explorers, about 50 miles long by

3 or 4 miles wide, was formed by Cane River on the west and Rigolette de Bon Dieu on the east. Originally flowing through a channel now referred to as Old River (see Plate 9) Red River cut through into Cane River about 1765 and then in 1832 broke into Rigolette de Bon Dieu, which it follows today as far as the town of Colfax.

Nicholas King's<sup>4</sup> map of Red River in Louisiana, embodying the findings of the Freeman-Custis expedition of 1806, shows the main channel of the river at that time to course through the present Cane River in agreement with Dunn's statement. A north branch is shown corresponding to the Rigolette mentioned by Dunn and following the present channel of the Red River.

Walker<sup>1</sup> states that St. Denis described the old village of the Natchitoches as being on an island formed by the separation of the river into two branches which reunited farther downstream. No indication is given whether this island is the early "Natchitoches Island" between the present channels of Red River and Cane River or the island between Cane and Old Rivers (Red River channel before 1765). It will be noted on the map (Plate 9) that the Fish Hatchery site and the Lawton site to be described are to the west of Cane River, hence on the island between it and Old River, but not on "Natchitoches Island."

#### *The Lawton Site*

During the summer of 1944, Mr. A. G. Lawton of Natchitoches was engaged in constructing a cotton gin on his plantation situated on the west bank of Cane River, eight miles below Natchitoches, between Natchez and Bermuda (Plate 9). Excavations for the foundation struck some six or seven burials, several of which contained Indian pottery or glass beads. These were found only across the southwest corner of the gin (Plate 10, No. 1) almost paralleling the shore of Cane River and about 200 feet from the stream. Mr. Lawton states that the burials were almost in direct line, with practically all of the heads directed toward the southeast. One vessel was stated to have been alongside the chest, the others all near the heads. Several groups of beads were found, generally at the neck, although a workman states that a few were found at the wrist of one skeleton.

healed osteo-periostitis or infected fracture. The tibiae showed no evidence of syphilitic infection.

Burial 2, an adult (probably female), 62 to 64 inches in length, was about 8 feet west of the gin wall, lying supine and fully extended with the head toward the southeast. The skull was struck and badly crushed. Above and to each side of the skull were a small bottle (Plate 11, No. 2) and fragments of a bowl (Plate 11, No. 3).

Burial 3 was that of a child, apparently 3 to 4 years of age, fully extended in the supine position with the head directed northwest. A group of 12 trade beads was found at the neck and a single pottery vessel (Plate 11, No. 4) was above and to the right of the skull. The vessel had been intact but the neck was carried away by the scraper and could not be found. The bones which remained showed no evidence of disease.

Burial 4 was that of an infant, found near Burial 3, and was so badly disturbed that details of artifact placement are not definite. Fragments of two pottery vessels, both showing old breaks, were found near the skull. These were a redware bowl (Plate 11, No. 5) and the body of a bottle or jar (Plate 11, No. 6). A group of 20 beads was found at the neck.

### *Artifacts*

It is to be noted that no objects of metal, stone or shell were found, differing from the Fish Hatchery site, where Walker<sup>1</sup> reports the finding of shell beads, stone arrow points and celts, metal scissors, hawkbells, bracelets and an iron spike. The limited number of burials so far uncovered at the Lawton site may account for this difference.

The beads (Plate 10, No. 2) have not been submitted to experts but none has the appearance of native beads, some being evidently glass, others possibly are of a porcelain compound. Of the 36 which I have seen, 27 are of various shades of blue, sometimes with longitudinal white stripes; 7 are white, 4 of these having stripes of various colors; and 2 are red. The cut or worn ends of the red beads show that the body is made of a very dark material with a thin red sur-

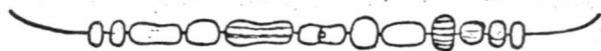
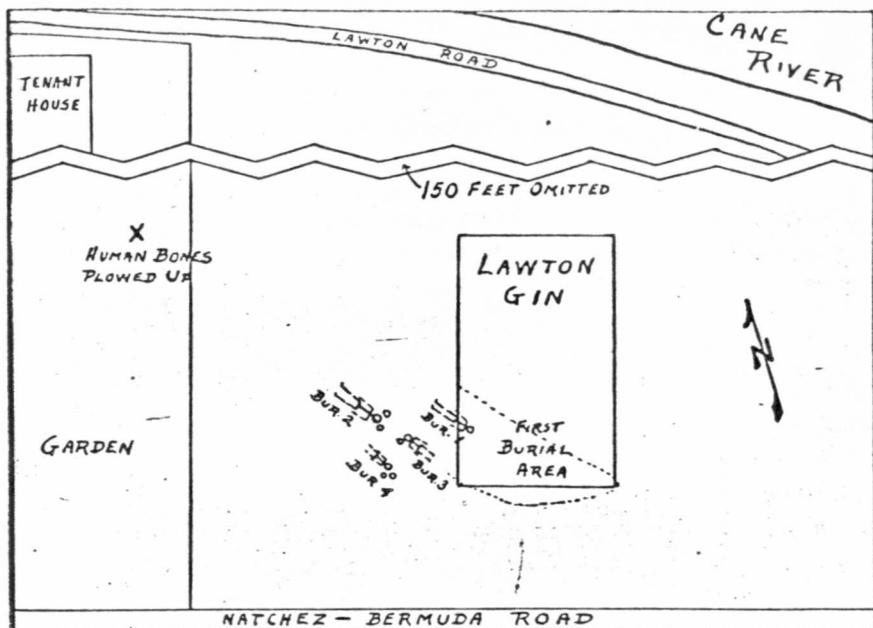
face coating. Most of the beads are round or oval, but two are oblong, 12 to 15 mm. (1-2 to 5-8 inch) in length. Diameters generally average 6 to 8 mm. (1-4 to 5-16 inch) with extremes of 2 mm. and 1 cm.

The eight pottery vessels are all shell tempered, as are four sherds which were found in the soil near a burial. The paste is generally firm or slightly brittle, with surface leaching of the shell to produce a porous or roughened appearance in some instances. Two of the bowls and one bottle are of softer paste, so that they break or suffer leaching more readily. The vessels are light, with wall thickness of 4 to 5 mm., and are comparatively small, the greatest diameter being 16 cm. (6¼ in.). Surface coloration varies from an orange tinted buff to a dark brown, except for the red slipped vessel described below.

One entire vessel and portions of two others were saved by Mr. Lawton from the first burials and were kindly loaned to me for study. The unbroken specimen (Plate 10, No. 3) is a cup, 9.2 cm. in height, 8 cm. in diameter, of firm, slightly porous ware which has a tan surface color. The base is circular and flat; the body is decorated with vertical incised lines; the narrow rim flares moderately. The short neck has a projecting rounded collar bearing two parallel rows of punctates. Vessels of similar shape, often larger, with vertical incised lines have been found at several sites in the hills bordering Red River Valley above Natchitoches, although such vessels or sherds are clay tempered and in association with a punctate-incised ware typical of these sites. Similar vessels, both shell and clay tempered, were found at the Belcher Mound site in Caddo Parish.<sup>5</sup>

A second vessel (Plate 10, No. 4) is represented by the basal half which is 16 cm. in diameter. The small part of the decoration present consists of parallel, curving, roughly engraved lines. It is very similar in appearance to that illustrated by Walker<sup>1</sup> in Plate 5 b, which has a sub-globular body, narrow neck and wide, cup-like rim.

Sufficient sherds of a third vessel (Plate 11, No. 1) were present to warrant its reconstruction. The diameter is 14.8 cm. at the lip, the height 8.7 cm. The paste is firm and very little of the shell

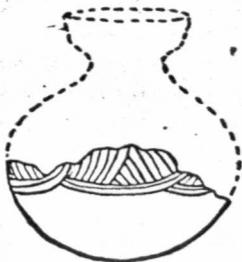


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No. 2 Trade beads from Lawton Site



3



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