

CHRONOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION OF LAKE CREEK FOCUS/COMPLEX:  
INFORMATION FROM THE SWIFT HORSE SITE

by  
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Published in "In the Light of Past Experience: Papers in Honor of  
Jack T. Hughes", Beryl Cain Roper, editor, pp. 105-115. Aquamarine  
Publications, Clarendon, TX. 1989

### INTRODUCTION

The Lake Creek focus was first introduced in 1962 on the basis of excavations at the Lake Creek Site (Hughes 1962). At that time, Lake Creek was thought to represent a predecessor of the Panhandle Aspect. This notion has persisted to as recently as 1986 (Lintz 1986:226). A cursory reexamination of the Lake Creek focus/complex in 1986 (Briscoe 1987) pointed out that Lake Creek not only lacks the material cultural complexity to be a direct antecedent of the Panhandle Aspect, but also has been dated at the Swift Horse Site (34Rm-501) to between 700 and 1000 years before the Panhandle Aspect.

It is proposed that Lake Creek represents an early Plains Woodland manifestation (ca. A.D. 1 to 450) which was either replaced by or evolved into the parent culture of the Panhandle Aspect during the later Woodland period (ca. A.D. 450 to 1050). The later Woodland culture remains unidentified.

### THE LAKE CREEK FOCUS/COMPLEX

Lake Creek was originally identified by Hughes (1962) as a focus and later by Lintz (1986) as a complex. As a cultural expression, the focus/complex consists of fairly intensely inhabited camps or villages located on prominent knolls or terraces near major tributary streams, primarily adjacent to the Canadian River Valley. These sites are generally intensive foraging camps which were occupied at least seasonally over long periods of time.

Lake Creek peoples apparently concentrated on hunting local game and seem to have been very proficient at it. Faunal remains from Lake Creek sites includes bison, deer, antelope, rabbit, gopher, large to small birds, snakes, turtles, fish and mussels. Hunting equipment includes darts, the bow and arrow, bifacial and flake knives, prepared scrapers (end, side, and incidental) and choppers. Gathering is represented by a limited number of ground stone (manos and basins) and nutting stone artifacts and appears to have been a minor activity as suggested by our present information.

Pottery includes a locally produced cordmarked variety with rough exterior cordmarking and crushed stone and quartz grain temper. A single rim sherd from Lake Creek shows incising along the slightly everted rim. Vessel shape is not known but Hughes (1982:71) suggests that the pottery may belong to the Panhandle Aspect ceramic tradition. Also found on Lake Creek sites are brownware sherds which appear to have been imported from the south or southwest. Brownware ceramics were possibly being acquired through trade with others in more direct contact with the probable Southwestern source of the ceramics.

Other traits of the focus/complex include rock-lined hearths, isolated burials and a possible structure of unknown configuration (Couzzourt 1982; Lintz 1986). The culture appears to represent an early, if not the earliest, ceramic tradition in the

Southern High Plains which is essentially similar to the preceding Late Archaic in the region.

#### THE SWIFT HORSE SITE

The Swift Horse Site (34RM-501) was first examined in 1984. At that time a great deal of cultural material (bone, fire-cracked rocks, flakes, etc.) was noted eroding out of the banks of a terrace overlooking a small canyon tributary to Croton Creek which flows about two kilometers to the east. Test excavations were conducted in 1986 as a cooperative effort between the Forest Service (administrators of the property) and the Anadarko Basin Museum of Natural History to determine the condition and potential importance of the site. It was noted prior to testing that the site was probably Woodland in nature and showed more similarity to Woodland components further west (viz Lake Creek) than to manifestations to the east. The position of the site on the extreme eastern edge of the High Plains geomorphic province was also thought to be worthy of note.

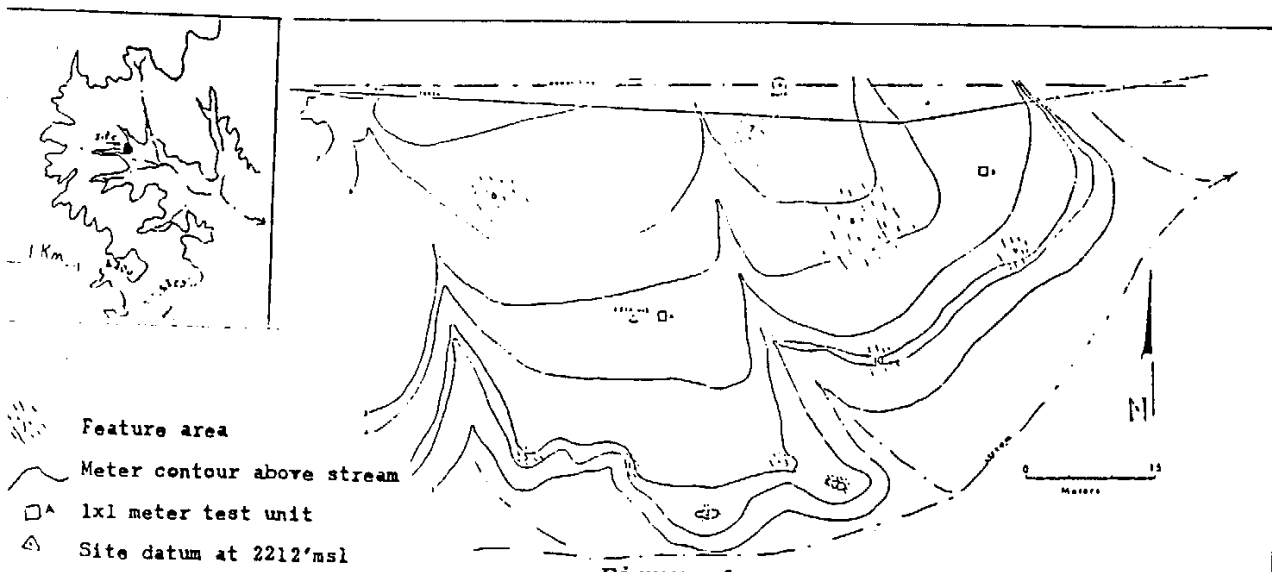


Figure 1.

The primary focus of the 1986 testing centered on Soil Feature 2, a remnant of what was later identified as a band of midden deposits which originally ringed the south edge of the site. Nearby road construction and uplands flood prevention projects started in the 1930s have begun an accelerated erosion which has destroyed or otherwise affected over 90% of the site. Soil Feature 2 was an earthflow remnant that has slipped downhill 3m to 5m. Aside from post-earthflow erosion, the deposits remained intact and undisturbed prior to excavation.

Feature 2 midden consisted of a black humic earth fill about 70 cm deep containing a dense deposit of cultural material and charcoal. A pit roughly 20 cm deep was located at the base of the

## Artifact Proveniences

ARTIFACT	TOTALS	FEATUURE 2										TEST A			SURFACE			
		SUR	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	PIT	BALK	L1	L2	L3	GEN	F1	F3	F7
PROJECTILE																		
POINTS																		
DART	7	2				1	2	1		1								
ARROW	1			1														
BIFACES																		
UTILIZED	1	1																
KNIFE	1				1													
HEXAGON	1					1												
FRAGMENTS	2	1												1				
MISCELLANEOUS																		
UTILIZED PREFORMS	2							1										
CORE TOOL	1	1																
SCRAPERS	5			1		1		1	1					1				
FLAKE TOOLS	25	4		2		3	3	3	1	2				6				1
SHERDS	3							1						2				
GROUND STONE																		
FRAGMENTS	5					1	1		1						2			
ANVIL	1													1				
PRODUCTION DEBRIS																		
BIFACE FLAKES	745	59	16	47	102	94	109	120	95	65	24			10	3			
CORE FLAKES	244	33	11	10	17	33	26	18	27	19	4	1	1	1	25	6	5	7
DECORAT. FLAKES	124	14	7	8	15	24	19	15	11	13	2							
CORES	11	1		1		1	2	1	1					2	1	1		
PREFORMS	11	5		1	3			1						1				
FRAGMENTS	1		1															

FIRE CRACKED ROCKS • NOT COUNTED

Table 1.

midden deposits extending into the yellow sandy clay subsoil. One corner-notched arrowpoint fragment, seven dart points, three Lake Creek cordmarked sherds, four bifacial knives, five ground stone fragments, one anvil stone, one core tool, 25 flake tools, five scrapers, two utilized preforms and quantities of knapping debris and fire-cracked rocks were recovered during the investigations. A single hexagonal biface (of local chert) similar to Southwestern geomorphs was also recovered.

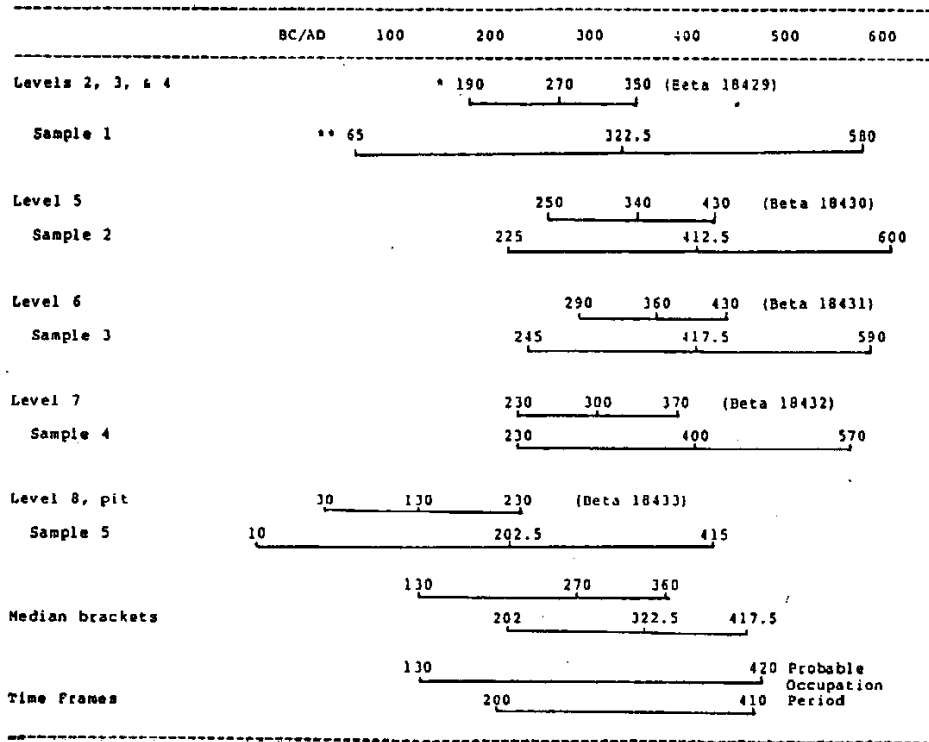
Five radiocarbon dates were obtained from Feature 2 which sequentially and stratigraphically date the deposits between about A.D. 130 and 420.

	Totals		Percent of			
	Totals	Mammals	Size Type	Birds	Reptiles	Fish
Mammals	1,461	61.9	100			
Unidentified	223	9.4	15.3			
Large	391	16.6	26.8			
Unidentified	139	5.9	9.5	35.5		
Bison	232	9.8	15.9	59.3		
Deer	13	.5	.9	3.3		
Antelope	7	.3	.5	1.8		
Medium	579	24.5	39.6			
Unidentified	577	24.4	39.5	99.6		
Dog	1	--	--	.2		
Badger	1	--	--	.2		
Small	268	11.4	18.3			
Unidentified	94	4.0	6.4	35.1		
Rabbit	116	4.9	7.9	43.3		
Cotton Tail	22	.9	1.5	8.2		
Jack Rabbit	34	1.4	2.3	12.7		
Gopher	2	.1		.7		
Birds	389	16.5				
Unidentified	56	2.4				
Large	78	3.3		14.4		
Medium	257	10.7		20.0		
Small	2	.1		65.0		
				.5		
Reptiles	39	1.6				
Unidentified	1					
Turtle	23	1.0			2.6	
Snake	15	.6			59.0	
					38.4	
Fish	3	.1				
Catfish	3	.1				
Unidentified	469	20.0				100

Table 2.

## THE LAKE CREEK CULTURE AREA

Swift Horse appears to represent a "typical" Lake Creek component on the eastern edge of the High Plains. The nearest recognized Lake Creek component to Swift Horse is the Fatheree Site (Hughes et al. 1978) located about 35 miles due west. Both sites are located somewhat out of the area generally assigned to the Lake Creek focus/complex (Lintz 1986:226), which is centered on the Canadian River Valley in the central Texas Panhandle. The presence of the Fatheree and Swift Horse sites suggests that the culture encompassed a wider portion of the Southern High Plains, possibly from far western Oklahoma to far eastern New Mexico (to either edge of the Southern High Plains). The extent north-south is uncertain



\* Libby dates.  
 \*\* Dendro corrected dates.

Radiocarbon Dates from Feature 2

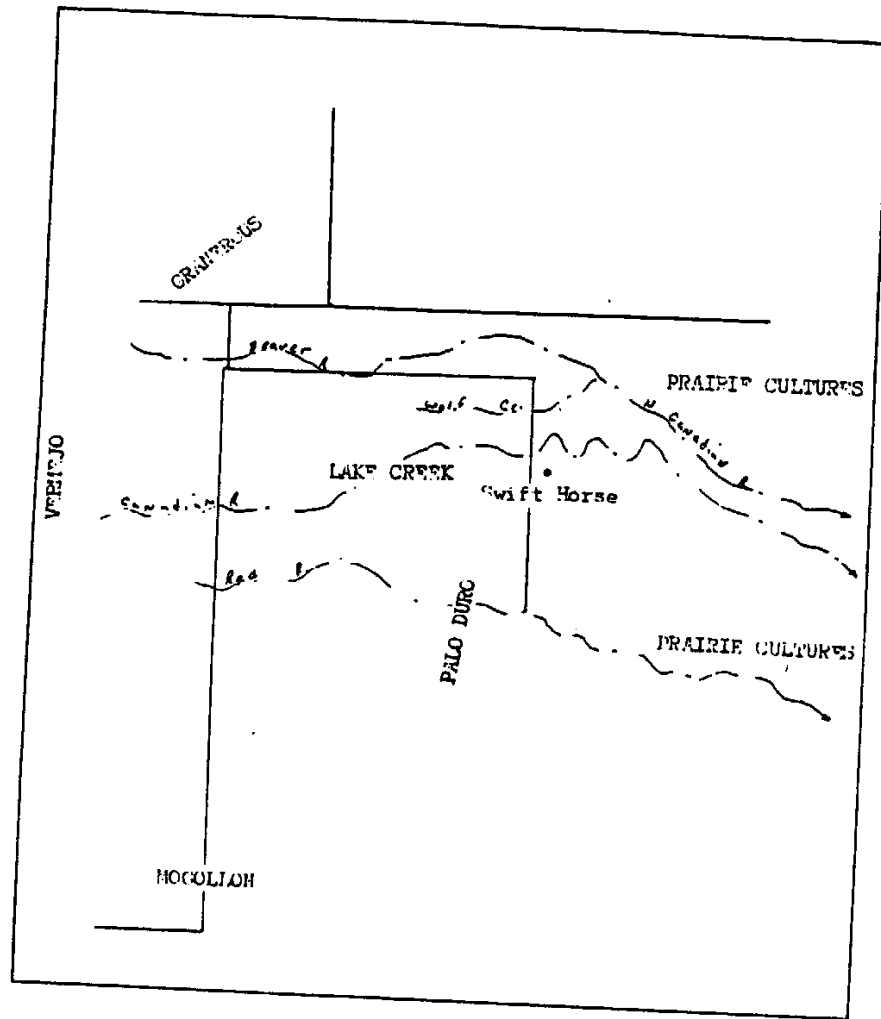
Table 3.

but is definitely bounded by other better recognized manifestations in the surrounding areas.

Lake Creek is bounded on the southeast by the Palo Duro complex (Lintz 1986:225; Willey and Hughes 190). The Palo Duro complex is confined to the eastern edge of the Llano Estacado from roughly the North Fork of the Red River southward. Like Lake Creek, Palo Duro is poorly understood as a Southern Plains Woodland manifestation. Palo Duro is possibly the middleman source through which brownware ceramics reached Lake Creek.

Lake Creek is bounded on the east by Prairie Plains Woodland manifestations believed to be ancestral to the Washita River focus (ancestral to the Custer phase). These manifestations have been investigated at a number of sites in western Oklahoma (Ferring 1982; Lawton 1968; Button and Agogino 1986; Barr 1966).

It is unclear how far northeasterly the Southwestern cultures may have extended onto the Llano Estacado. Some degree of contact and influence is presumable by the brownware ceramics from a number of Palo Duro and Lake Creek sites and possibly by a hexagonal geomorph recovered from Swift Horse. Likewise, the extent of the



Early Ceramic Manifestations on the Southern Plains

Figure 2.

Woodland cultures in southeastern Colorado (Campbell 1969) is unknown. Similarities with both areas include dart point forms and crushed Southern High Plains in the Canadian River Drainage, rock pottery in otherwise foraging economies.

At best current estimate, the Lake Creek focus/complex seems to be limited to the to the Southern High Plains along and near the Canadian River Drainage, the Washita River Valley and possibly the Wolf Creek Valley (Hughes 1987:82). It is not unreasonable to assume that Lake Creek covers most of the later Panhandle Aspect area.

#### TEMPORAL PLACEMENT

Based on the information from Swift Horse, there appears to be two separate phases to the Plains Woodland on the Southern

Plains: an earlier phase little changed from the preceding Archaic; and a later phase more transitional to the Plains Village on the Southern Plains. The Palo Duro focus/complex appears to be the one possible exception to this scheme.

The earlier phase begins around the first century A.D. and lasts until perhaps A.D. 400-500. The Woodland cultures of this period, including Lake Creek, are forager-based with an emphasis on hunting similar to the preceding Plains Archaic. The introduction of the bow and arrow and pottery do not appear to have affected the culture to any great extent.

The primary distinctions between the early Woodland phase and preceding Archaic are smaller, more intensely occupied sites during the Woodland (Briscoe 1987:12-14), and near absence or limited amount of bison remains (Dillehay 1974). Hughes (personal communication; Schultz and Rawn 1978:197) and others see this period as one of greater moisture and reduced pasture (due to increased timber cover) which resulted in a lower carrying capacity and fewer bison. Dillehay (1974) argues that this period was one of dryer conditions. In either case, there are fewer bison remains associated with sites of this period, suggesting that fewer bison were available.

Fewer bison to hunt further suggests that groups were forced to disperse into smaller bands who more intensely exploited the wider range of resources in smaller areas. Evidence from Swift Horse, Fatheree and Lake Creek tends to suggest this conclusion.

The second and later phase of Woodland development on the Southern Plains (with the possible exception of the Palo Duro focus/complex) appears to be one of village-like intensification and greater reliance on plant foods (Campbell 1969; Barr 1966). The later phase can be seen as more of a transitional manifestation which begins to resemble the later Plains Village in both material culture and complexity, characteristics clearly lacking in the earlier Woodland phase. There is too little information available from the later component of Dead Man's Shelter (Wiley and Hughes 1978) to assess the character and extent of change in the Palo Duro focus/complex between the earlier and later phases.

Unfortunately, there have been only a handful of Lake Creek sites recognized and examined to date. The majority of these sites fit well into the earlier phase of the early/late Woodland scheme. Equally unfortunate is a near total lack of information from potential later Woodland components in the region. No sites, with the possible exception of components at Courson B (Hughes 1987:57), show the increased complexity or stratigraphic associations with later components in the region.

The radiocarbon dates and material assemblage from Swift Horse support the tentative conclusion that Lake Creek represents an early Woodland phase development on the Southern High Plains. If such proves to be the case, Lake Creek should be renamed the Lake Creek phase of the (to be filled in later) focus.

If this proves to be the case, then the next question becomes one of identifying the hiatus between Lake Creek and the later Panhandle Aspect which occupies the same general area.

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