

## Archeological Investigations at the Caplen Site, Galveston County, Texas

by **T. N. CAMPBELL**  
*The University of Texas*

### INTRODUCTION

In early historic times a large strip of territory in southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana was occupied by Atakapan-speaking Indians, the principal groups being the Bidai, the Akokisa, and the Atakapa (Swanton, 1946: Map 11). The Bidai and the Akokisa were confined to the Texas portion of the Atakapan area; the Atakapa occupied southwestern Louisiana but also extended west of the Sabine River into Texas. The cultures of these groups are classed as Southeastern, but not typically Southeastern because of their marginal position on the western periphery of the Southeastern cultural province. These Atakapans probably occupied this area for a very long time. Swadesh (1954: 362), using the technique of lexicostatistics, or glottochronology, has produced a tentative date for the separation of the Chitimacha (southern Louisiana) and Atakapa languages. The date is 4,700 years ago, or about 2750 B.C. As Quimby (1954: 364) has pointed out, this suggests that the culture of the Atakapa was in existence for nearly 5,000 years.

The archeology of the western or Texas portion of the Atakapan are is still very imperfectly known. The earliest reference to archeological materials seems to be that of Simmons (1903), who briefly reported burials, pottery, and shell beads in a stratified shell midden that was completely destroyed by commercial operations in the 1890's. This site was located at the mouth of Clear Creek on the western shore of Galveston Bay.

The earliest excavations were done in the 1930's by Pearce, who worked in sites around Galveston Bay (the Caplen site is one of them), but he published no site reports, only brief references in general articles (Pearce, 1932a, b, c). Sayles (1935: 41, 124, 136), who made use of Pearce's field data, recognized but only vaguely defined an "Atacapan Phase," a term that has not been used by later investigators.

Woodbury (1937) presented metric data on a small series of crania from the Caplen site, comparing it with two other Texas series and noting the physical distinctiveness of the Caplen people.

The only adequately published excavations in southeastern Texas are those of Wheat (1947, 1953) in the Addicks Basin west of Houston. Nine sites were investigated that yielded evidences of human occupation from Archaic to early historic times. The culture represented in this continuum has a general Southeastern character, and Wheat has suggested that this cultural tradition may possibly be that of a prehistoric Atakapan people. Seven skeletons from two of the Addicks Basin sites have been studied by Newman (1953).

On the basis of Wheat's data, Suhm *et al.* (1954: 128-130) have defined a Galveston Bay Focus for the coastal strip extending from the Brazos to the Sabine River. This is the only cultural unit thus far defined in the western Atakapan area, and it covers only the post-Archaic materials in Wheat's Addicks Basin sites. Recently Walley (1955) has described materials from what appears to be a Galveston Bay Focus site in Fort Bend County, just west of the Brazos River.

The archeology of the eastern or Louisiana portion of the Atakapan area is not much better known than the western or Texas portion, but investigators in that area have had the advantage of the well-established cultural sequence of the Lower Mississippi Valley. The work of Ford and Quimby (1945), Wauchope (1947), and especially McIntire (1954) has shown that in southwestern Louisiana all prehistoric stages of the Lower Mississippi Valley sequence are represented.

The purpose of this paper is to make available the archeological data from the Caplen site and to indicate its present significance. Now that Wheat's investigations have been fully published and a Galveston Bay Focus has been defined, it is possible to relate the Caplen site to known cultural manifestations in the western Atakapan area.

As noted above, the Caplen site was excavated by Pearce some twenty-five years ago. Although a site report has never been published, Caplen has figured to a certain extent in anthropological literature. Jackson (1935: 14-15, 18, 22) has described some of the ornaments from Caplen. Woodbury (1937) has studied a small series of crania from the site and found the Caplen people to be different from other Texas Indians. He was told that the Caplen site was located in the Atakapan area and that it yielded European artifacts in association with Indian materials. He therefore called the Caplen people Atakapa, and so the Caplen skeletal material has passed into the literature of physical anthropology as specifically Atakapa. Neumann (1952: 21-23) has recently developed a new classification of North American

Indian physical types and has identified the Caplen people as Walcolid, a highheaded, mesocranic variety of Indian that was distributed widely over the eastern United States (and elsewhere) in fairly late prehistoric times.

#### LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Caplen site is located on Bolivar Peninsula about 25 miles northeast of the city of Galveston. This locality lies in the West Gulf Coastal Plain (Fenneman, 1938) of extreme southeastern Texas. Bolivar Peninsula is a long, narrow peninsula which, with Galveston Island to the southwest, almost succeeds in closing off Galveston Bay from the Gulf of Mexico. The site takes its name from Caplen station on the Santa Fe Railway some 1.5 miles to the southwest. The Caplen site is not situated near a beach, but is inland on the peninsula, the shore of Galveston Bay being 2 miles to the north and the shore of the Gulf about 1.5 miles to the south. The site consists of a low, brush-covered knoll which rises about one meter above the surrounding level terrain. This knoll is almost round and has a diameter of approximately 15 meters. In the literature this site has been referred to as "Caplen Mound" (Jackson, 1935: 14, 18, 22; Newman (1953: 264-265; Woodbury, 1937: 9-16), but there is no indication that it is an artificial mound. It is a midden in which a large number of burials have been placed.

#### EXCAVATION

The Caplen site was partially excavated by a small field party from The University of Texas in August, 1932. The leader of this party was A. M. Woolsey, who worked under the direction of J. E. Pearce. For years this site had been known as an "Indian cemetery" by the local inhabitants, and Pearce's attention was drawn to it by reports that collectors from Beaumont and Port Arthur had been removing burials for the sake of the mortuary objects that were included. Woolsey found the site covered by pits and debris resulting from these operations, and he estimated that at least two-thirds of the total area had been disturbed. From the remaining area he salvaged 66 burials, 23 of which were fragmentary as a result of disturbance, and 364 objects showing human use or handiwork. These objects are made of a variety of materials—stone (27 specimens), bone (3), shell (198), glass (2), asphalt (2), pigment (22), and pottery (110 potsherds).

The field record of this excavation is incomplete in many respects. There is no map showing the horizontal distribution of the burials excavated. There are no profiles showing stratigraphy, although two

layers are briefly described—an upper layer of dark soil having a maximum thickness of about 50 cm., and a lower layer of mixed sand and shell, thickness unspecified. As no grid system was used, stratigraphic control of the artifacts not associated with burials is now impossible. Presumably artifacts were found in both layers, but nowhere in the field record is there a statement to this effect. Perhaps the excessive disturbance of the Caplen site by collectors made it inadvisable to apply the usual methods of excavation control.

The paucity of artifacts in the soil surrounding the burials suggests that the main occupation area was elsewhere in the vicinity. It is difficult to believe that a group of people could live on this site long enough to bury at least 80 individuals without leaving more evidence of their occupation.

#### BURIALS

The 66 burials removed from the Caplen site lay at depths ranging from 20 to 79 cm. below the surface. There is a correlation between the stratigraphic position of the burials and the conditions of preservation. The skeletal remains which lay in the lower shell and sand layer were in good condition, whereas those which lay in the dark soil above were in a poor state of preservation. Twenty-three of the burials were badly disturbed. A large part of this may be attributed to the previous excavators, but undoubtedly some of it is attributable to the Caplen people themselves. So many burials were placed in this small area that later burials sometimes must have disturbed earlier ones. The single instance of a secondary burial may represent reburial of a skeleton that had been disturbed in this way. Several isolated skulls were found, as well as a number of skeletons without skulls; and many burials had various other skeletal parts missing. Skeletal remains of approximately 80 individuals seem to be represented.

The Caplen cemetery population consists primarily of adult individuals. Two are infants, three are juveniles, and three are adolescents. Further age data are not available. Of the adult individuals that can be sexed, eight are male and fourteen female. Judging from these meager vital statistics, it would appear that child mortality was not notably high. If the sex ratio of the Caplen population was near normal, some of the males must have died away from home.

*Burial 1.* Adult female. Fully flexed on left side; forearms crossed between legs. Head pointed east. Encircling the pelvic region were 46 cylindrical shell beads made from the columella of the conch. See Fig. 1, A.

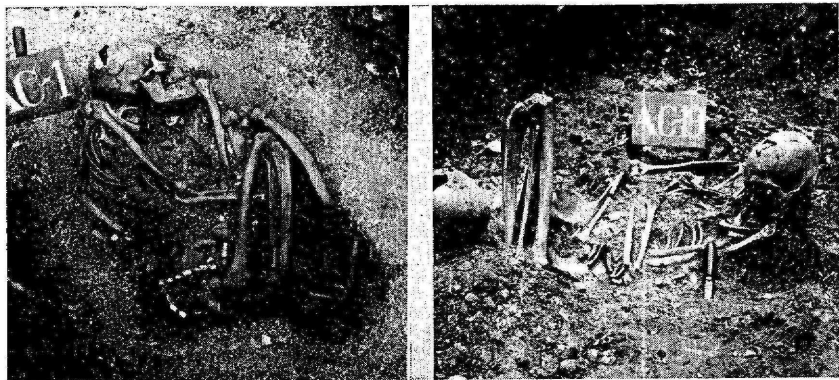


Fig. 1. Burials from Caplen site. A, Burial 1, fully flexed on left side, with beads encircling pelvis; B, Burial 19, semi-flexed on back, arms folded across abdomen.

*Burial 2.* Adult female. Semi-flexed on right side; hands near face. Head pointing west. The bones and the surrounding earth were heavily stained with red ochre, and a round lump of red ochre, eight inches in diameter, lay near the right side of the skull. Underneath the ball of ochre were three large clam shells. Because similar clam shells occurred in the surrounding soil, it is questionable that these three shells constitute a part of the burial furniture. Located between the skull and the lump of ochre were two small flat stones, and lying on the stones were 14 small chipped-stone drills (Fig. 3, F-I), two small prismatic flint flakes (Fig. 3, E), and two small flint dart points (Fig. 3, B-C). Nine large beads made from conch columella, three of them without longitudinal perforation, lay between the right humerus and the thorax.

*Burial 3.* Adult female. Fully flexed on right side. Head pointing east.

*Burial 4.* Disturbed. Mandible, vertebrae, and pelvis missing. Remaining bones disarranged. Adult female.

*Burial 5.* Disturbed. Skull and some of the small bones missing. Bones not in anatomical order. Adult. One bead was associated with this burial.

*Burial 6a.* Disturbed. Represented by mandible, vertebrae, ribs, and a few long bones. Adult.

*Burial 6b.* Adolescent. Fully flexed on right side; forearms crossed at abdomen. Head pointing west.

*Burial 7.* Disturbed. Body bones disarranged. Adult female.

*Burial 8.* Disturbed. Represented by mandible and miscellaneous bone fragments of several individuals.

*Burial 9.* Juvenile. Poorly preserved. A few bones of an adult were

included. Thirty-two beads of shell were found in the neck region.

*Burial 10.* Disturbed. Bones disarranged. Adult.

*Burial 11.* Disturbed. Calvarium missing. Adult. Fully flexed; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing east. Two beads accompanied the bones.

*Burial 12.* Infant. On right side. Head pointing east. At the neck were beads of bone, shell, and glass, and in the chest region was a tortoise shell rattle (Fig. 3, S). This rattle was complete, having both carapace and plastron, and inside were two small pebbles.

*Burial 13.* Disturbed. Represented by fragments of six adult skulls. Several beads were found nearby.

*Burial 14.* Disturbed. Represented by a skull and a few disarranged long-bone fragments. Adult. Three beads were associated with the skull.

*Burial 15.* Adult. Fully flexed on side; hands at face. Head pointing west. One bead in association.

*Burial 16.* Adult. Fully flexed; hands at face. Head pointing east.

*Burial 17.* Disturbed. Represented by a humerus, a few ribs, and part of the pelvis. Adult.

*Burial 18.* Adult. Semi-flexed on back; legs to right of body; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing south.

*Burial 19.* Adult male. Semi-flexed on back; flexed legs and head both in vertical position; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing northeast. See Fig. 1, B.

*Burial 20.* Disturbed. Skull and many long bones missing. Adult.

*Burial 21.* Disturbed. Two adult individuals represented by miscellaneous bones.

*Burial 22.* Adult. Fully flexed on side; hands at face. Head pointing northeast.

*Burial 23.* Adult female. Superposed over Burial 19. Semi-flexed on left side; legs crossed; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing east.

*Burial 24.* Disturbed. Adult female with infant; pelvis and legs of adult missing. Apparently the adult female was flexed on right side. Head pointing west. Twenty-two shell beads encircled neck of adult female.

*Burial 25.* Disturbed. Skull missing. Adult. Semi-flexed on right side; hands near face. Head pointing west. Thirteen pigment stones scattered on both sides of lumbar vertebrae (Fig. 3, J-M).

*Burial 26.* Disturbed. Skull and arm bones missing. Adult. Fully flexed. Head pointing southeast.

*Burial 27.* Disturbed. Arm bones missing. Adult. Fully flexed on back; knees below chin. Head pointing west.

*Burial 28.* Disturbed. Represented by pelvis and leg bones. Adult. Semi-flexed. Head pointing west (?).

*Burial 29.* Disturbed. Ribs and arm bones missing. Adult. Flexed (?) on left side. Head pointing west.

*Burial 30.* Disturbed. Lower part of vertebral column, pelvis, and leg bones missing. Adult. On back; forearms crossed on abdomen; skull in vertical position. Head pointing west.

*Burial 31.* Disturbed. Calvarium missing. Poorly preserved. Adult. Apparently flexed.

*Burial 32.* Adult female. Semi-flexed on left side; left hand at face; right forearm across abdomen. Head pointing west. Four beads and some potsherds lay near the bones but were not clearly associated. See Fig. 2, A.

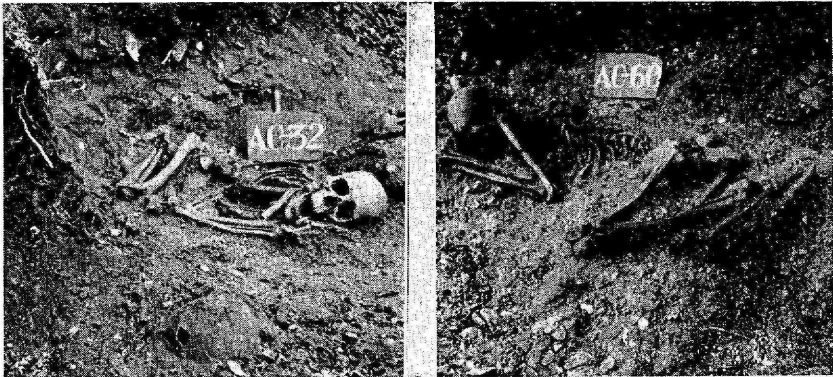


Fig. 2. Burials from Caplen site. A, Burial 32, semi-flexed on left side; B, Burial 60, semi-flexed on right side.

*Burial 33.* Disturbed. Represented by skull only. Adult female. Skull in vertical position.

*Burial 34.* Adult. Semi-flexed on right side; forearms across abdomen; head in vertical position. Head pointing east.

*Burial 35.* Adult female. Semi-flexed on back; legs to one side of body; forearms across abdomen; skull in vertical position. Head pointing west.

*Burial 36.* Adult. Semi-flexed on right side; right hand at face; left forearm across abdomen; skull in vertical position. Head pointing west.

*Burial 37.* Disturbed. Represented by pelvis and leg bones. Adult. Legs semi-flexed. Apparently head pointing west. The bones and surrounding earth were stained with red ochre.

*Burial 38.* Disturbed. Arms, ribs, and some of vertebrae missing. Adult. Semiflexed; skull in vertical position. Head pointing southeast.

*Burial 39.* Disturbed by Burial 38. Represented by calvarium only. Adult.

*Burial 40.* Adult female (?). Secondary burial.

*Burial 41.* Adolescent (?). Poorly preserved. Semi-flexed on back, legs to one side; skull in vertical position. Head pointing west.

*Burial 42.* Disturbed. Skull, arms, and most of ribs missing. Adult. Semi-flexed on right side. Head pointing west. A pigment stone was associated with this burial.

*Burial 43.* Adult female. Flexed on right side. Head pointing west.

*Burial 44.* Adolescent female (?). Flexed (?) on right side. Head pointing southwest. Ninety small beads were around the neck vertebrae, and thirteen large beads, some undrilled, were concentrated in a small area near the center of the chest. Near left parietal was an incised bone pendant (Fig. 3, Q).

*Burial 45.* Disturbed. Represented by a calvarium and a sacrum. Adult male. Four beads were found near the skull.

*Burial 46.* Disturbed. Most of long bones missing. Adult male (?). Apparently flexed on back; head in vertical position. Head pointing west.

*Burial 47.* Disturbed. Skull, vertebral column, left arm and leg bones missing. Adult.

*Burial 48.* Disturbed. Represented by skull only. Adult male. Skull in vertical position.

*Burial 49.* Disturbed. Represented by skull and a few miscellaneous small bones. Adult. Skull in vertical position. Three beads were nearby but not definitely associated with the burial.

*Burial 50.* Disturbed. Skull and miscellaneous bones of two individuals, both adult. Three beads were near but not clearly in association.

*Burial 51.* Disturbed. Consisted of a skull and a few miscellaneous bones that were not in anatomical order. Adult male.

*Burial 52.* Disturbed. Pelvis and leg bones missing. Adult. Flexed (?) on left side. Head pointing northwest. One bead lay near the right arm.

*Burial 53.* Adult male. Semi-flexed in prone position, with legs to right of body; right arm parallel to body, but left forearm across abdomen. Head pointing north. The bones and surrounding soil were stained with red ochre.

*Burial 54.* Disturbed. Pelvis, arm and leg bones missing. Juvenile. On right side. Head pointing southwest. The soil around the bones was stained with red ochre, and a lump of orange-colored pigment was included. Eight large beads encircled the neck vertebrae.



*Burial 55.* Infant. Poor state of preservation. Four large conch columella beads were beneath the skull.

*Burial 56.* Slightly disturbed. Arms missing. Adult. Legs semi-flexed; skull in vertical position. Head pointing south. Two large shell beads accompanied this burial.

*Burial 57.* Adult (?). Semi-flexed on back, with legs to left; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing northwest. An unidentifiable dark flaky substance was noted at the shoulders and in the abdominal region.

*Burial 58.* Adult. Semi-flexed on right side; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing west.

*Burial 59.* Disturbed. Cranium and arm bones missing. Adult. Legs flexed.

*Burial 60.* Adult male. Semi-flexed on right side; hands at left side of face. Head pointing northwest. See Fig. 2, B.

*Burial 61.* Slightly disturbed. Calvarium missing. Adult. Semi-flexed on left side; forearms crossed on abdomen. Head pointing south.

*Burial 62.* Adult male. Right arm missing. Fully flexed on back; head in vertical position; left forearm across abdomen. Head pointing north.

*Burial 63.* Disturbed. Adult. Head pointing west (?).

*Burial 64.* Adult female. Semi-flexed on back; legs to left of vertebral column; skull in vertical position. Head pointing west. Earth around bones stained with red ochre.

*Burial 65.* Disturbed. Juvenile. Pelvis and leg bones missing. On back; arms flexed, with a hand on each side of the face; head in vertical position. Head pointing west. Near this burial were three adult skulls unaccompanied by long bones.

The burial custom at the Caplen site may be summarized as follows. Flexed burials, either fully flexed or semi-flexed, are the rule. The flexed bodies were placed in pits in a variety of ways—six were on the left side (Fig. 1, A; Fig. 2, A), 13 were on the right side (Fig. 2, B), 11 were on the back (Fig. 1, B), and one was prone. The bodies were evidently put in rather small pits, which is best shown in the eleven burials that were placed on the back. In these burials the skull had a vertical position, and in most of them the flexed leg bones also had a vertical position (Fig. 1, B).

The orientation of these burials was predominantly east-west. Of the 42 burials in which orientation could be recorded, 26 were westerly and eleven easterly. A curious linkage of sex with orientation may be noted. Only a few identifiable male burials occurred at the Caplen site, and of the few in which orientation data could be secured, all were

oriented in a northerly direction. This number is small (3 cases) and probably no significance can be attached to it.

The objects associated with the burials were principally ornaments, shell beads being particularly common, but there were a few beads of bone and glass. Two objects of special interest associated with burials were a bone pendant (Fig. 3, Q) and a tortoise shell rattle (Fig. 3, S). Flint drills (Fig. 3, F-I) and projectile points (Fig. 3, B-C) were associated with one burial. The available data indicate that the females were buried with more ornaments than the males. All the infants and juveniles were accompanied by ornaments of some sort. Powdered red ochre was used in five burials, and the bones and surrounding soil were heavily stained. Lumps of red ochre and pigment stones (Fig. 3, J-M) also occurred in a few burials.

Wheat (1953: 171-173, 181-182) reports seven burials from two Addicks Basin sites that show the same general burial custom as the Caplen site. The Addicks burials are either flexed or semi-flexed on the left or right side or the back, and orientation is predominantly east or west. The main differences are in the absence of powdered red ochre and ornaments in Addicks burials. The Addicks Basin burials are without burial furniture of any kind, with the possible exception of a turtle shell rattle associated with a female. The physical type in the Addicks Basin differs from that at the Caplen site. The Addicks people are mainly dolichocranic (Newman, 1953), whereas the Caplen people are mesocranic (Woodbury, 1937). As the series from both localities are small and fragmentary, the differences in physical type are hard to interpret, a point which has been emphasized by Newman (1953: 257).

#### STONE ARTIFACTS

The relatively few stone artifacts (27 specimens) from the Caplen site are all made of flint. The flint represented in these specimens is not of local origin, for flint does not occur naturally in the sedimentary deposits adjacent to the Gulf coast. The color of the flint used ranges from gray through buff to light brown and reddish brown. The series of chipped flint artifacts includes five small dart points, two knife fragments, 14 drills (and two associated flint flakes), three side-scrapers, and one scraper-graver.

*Dart Points.* One of the five dart points is an unclassifiable distal fragment. The remainder include a Matamoros point (Fig. 3, A), a Kent point with blade alternately beveled on the right (Fig. 3, B), a Gary point (Fig. 3, C), and an unclassifiable stemmed point made from a thin flake and showing very little retouching on the bulbar

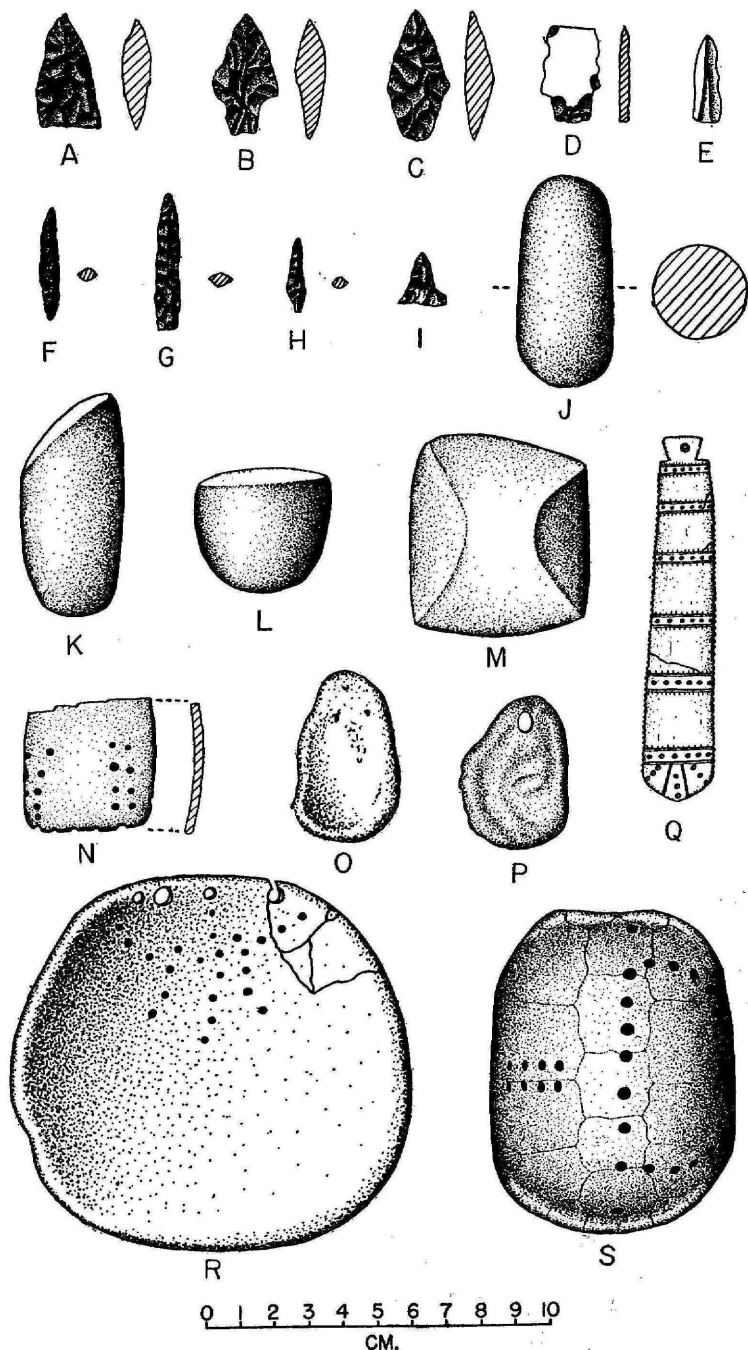


Fig. 3. Artifacts from Caplen site. A-D, dart points; E, flint flakes; F-I, drills; J-M, pigment stones; N, fragment of shell pendant; O-P, oyster shells, perforated and unperforated, possibly used for pendants; Q, decorated bone pendant; R, shell gorget; S, tortoise shell rattle with perforated carapace.

face (Fig. 3, D). The Gary and Kent points were clearly associated with Burial 2, with which a series of drills was also associated. As glass beads of European origin were associated with one of the Caplen burials, a rather late date is indicated for this site. The three identifiable dart points are Archaic types, whereas arrowpoints are characteristic of the Galveston Bay Focus as defined by Suhm *et al.* (1954: 129). However, it is stated that "Gary and possibly other Archaic types survived" into Galveston Bay Focus times (*ibid.*). Elsewhere there is evidence that Gary, Kent, and Matamoros points were used in late Archaic times and continued in use after the introduction of the bow (Suhm *et al.*, 1954: 430, 432, 448).

Of some interest in this connection is ethnographic evidence of the survival of flint dart points into post-Columbian times among the Atakapa of extreme southwestern Louisiana. These people used a flint-tipped spear for shallow-water fishing. Dyer (1917: 3) reports that

They did not use the bow and arrow to any extent in fishing, but depended upon darts and spears, which they were able to fling with unerring accuracy. Graham saw them hit (in the salt water lagoons connecting with the Gulf) small fish but ten inches long at a distance of twenty paces. The darts tipped with bone were used for short distances and floated, while the heavier flint tip harpoon had a wooden floater attached to a thong, which enabled them to retrieve their weapons, as well as tire out a wounded fish.

*Knives.* Two knife fragments were found, one of them in the fill near Burial 13. Both are distal fragments and furnish no data on the original form.

*Drills.* In Burial 2 was found what appears to be a tool kit for use in making conch columella beads. Just to the right of the skull of an adult female were two small flat stones, and on these stones lay 14 drills of chipped flint flakes, and two dart points. The dart points have been described above. The drills are made of buff and reddish brown flint and show a certain amount of variation in size, shape, and quality of chipping. Thirteen are well made, have rhomboidal or thickly lenticular cross sections, and have outlines as shown in Fig. 3, F-H). Two of these are long and narrow (F-G), but the remainder tend to flare in the mid-section, giving them a slender, lozenge-like outline (H). This group of thirteen ranges in length from 18 to 40 mm., in width from 4 to 7 mm., and in thickness from 4 to 5 mm. The last specimen (Fig. 3, I) is fragmentary and has a marked basal flare; the lateral edges near the distal end are worn very smooth from use. The two

flint flakes (Fig. 3, E) are prismatic in form and have the same general outline as the slender drills described above.

As stated previously, these drills were probably used in reaming out the longitudinal perforations of conch columella beads. They have the appropriate diameters for this work and, interestingly enough, ten of them show sufficient wear to make the edges near the distal end feel smooth to the touch. With this same burial nine columella beads were found. These lay between the right humerus and the thorax, and three of them are without longitudinal perforations. These facts tend to support the view that the drills were used in making shell beads, so many of which appear in burials at the Caplen site. If this hypothesis is correct, then it may be said that at the Caplen site some women were makers of shell beads.

Small, slender, bi-pointed drills are thus far reported only for the Rockport and Brownsville foci farther west and south on the Gulf coast (Campbell, 1956: 30; MacNeish, 1947: 6). One large bi-pointed drill, however, has been reported from the Addicks Basin (Wheat, 1953: 173).

*Side-scrapers.* Three rather small flint flakes (length range: 23 to 45 mm.) have minutely retouched scraping edges. Two of these are trianguloid in outline, one bearing a concave, the other a convex scraping edge. The third specimen is rectanguloid in outline and has two opposed lateral edges retouched. One lateral edge is straight, but the other bears a small, rather neatly retouched semicircular concavity. These side-scrapers occur in the Galveston Bay Focus components of the Addicks Basin (Wheat, 1953: 224-225).

*Scraper-graver.* One small quadrangular flint flake (length 18 mm.) has a single convex scraping edge and on an adjacent edge is a diminutive beak-like projection that appears not to be fortuitous. Wheat (1953: 227) reports small gravers from all levels of the various Addicks Basin sites.

#### BONE ARTIFACTS

Only three objects of bone were found at the Caplen site, but two of these are of considerable interest. The list includes a bead or tube fragment, a pendant, and a tortoise shell rattle.

*Bead or Tube Fragment.* This is a fragment of a bird bone bead or tube that was found in the debris left by previous excavators. It has been split longitudinally and also broken transversely, so that its original length is unknown. One end is ground to a smoothly rounded edge. Bone beads are reported from Burial 12, but none survives in the present collection.

*Pendant.* A bone pendant, previously described and illustrated by Jackson (1935: 15 and Plate 1, Fig. 2), was associated with Burial 44. It lay near the left side of the skull of an adolescent female (?), which suggests that it may have been some sort of hair or headdress ornament. As shown in Fig. 3, Q, it was found broken into several pieces. The fragment bearing the perforation is now done in plaster reconstruction, and it is not known whether this part was lost after removal from the burial. We are thus not certain about the shape of this pendant at its upper end. It was made from a split mammal long-bone shaft and shows a small amount of transverse curvature; longitudinally it is perfectly straight. The decoration was accomplished by two different techniques, incising and drilling. The design is simple, the basic motif consisting of a band formed by two closely spaced parallel fringed lines between which is a line of drilled pits. These bands are arranged one above the other from top to bottom, but at the lower end of the specimen there is a variation consisting of a short vertical panel flanked by a diagonal line of drilled pits on each side. It may be noted that the pits go in sets of threes or sixes. The lateral edges of the pendant are neatly serrated. The opposite face is undecorated.

*Tortoise Shell Rattle.* Associated with Burial 12, which was that of an infant, was a small tortoise shell rattle (Fig. 3, S). This rattle lay in the region of the thorax and may have been suspended from a neck cord. The plastron had been sealed to the carapace and two small pebbles were inside. Twenty-seven holes in the carapace form the asymmetrical pattern shown in Fig. 3, S. On the plastron are two holes, one at each end, and these seem to pair with the two holes at the front and rear of the carapace. This rattle has a length of 90 mm. and a width of 67 mm. It has been previously illustrated by Pearce (1935, Plate XII).

Similar rattles appear to be indicated at the Kobs site in the Addicks Basin. Half of a small turtle shell with a few pebbles beneath it lay on the chest of an adult female (Wheat, 1953: 181).

#### SHELL ARTIFACTS

At the Caplen site shell artifacts are the most numerous, a total of 198 being recovered. Nearly all of these are beads, but a few pendants and a gorget are represented. The remainder of the shell objects are fragments that show slight traces of having been worked.

*Beads.* Cylindrical beads made from conch columellae are by far the most common, 119 being found in association with burials. The longitudinal perforations were made by drilling from each end, so that the holes meet in the middle (Fig. 4, P). These have been sorted into four size groups. Seventeen are of the very large, heavy type shown

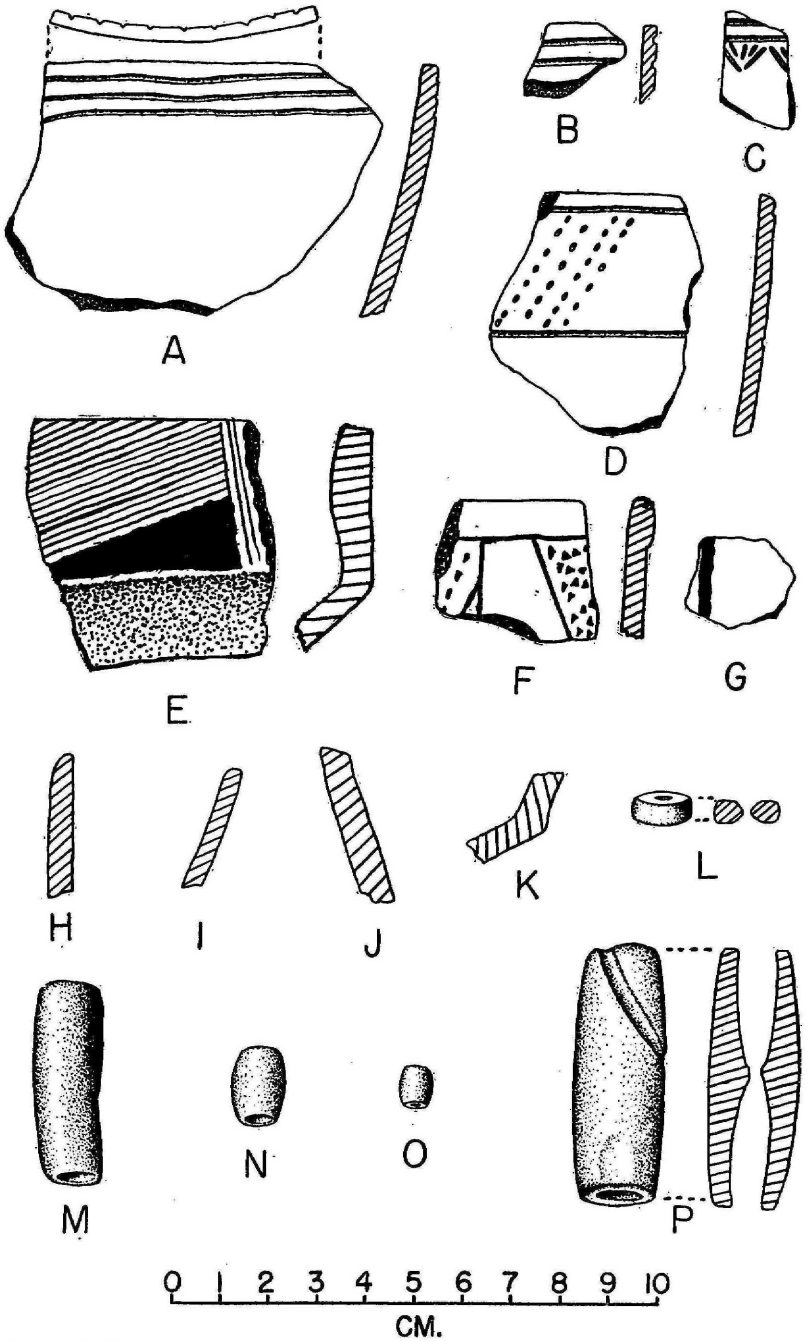


Fig. 4. Artifacts from Caplen site. A-K, pottery fragments; L, shell disk bead; M-P, cylindrical shell beads.

in Fig. 4, P; forty-two are smaller, but have the same general proportions (Fig. 4, M); fifty-four are still smaller and tend to be barrel-shaped (Fig. 4, N); and six are quite small (Fig. 4, O). Six unfinished cylindrical beads were also found. Four of these are finished except for the longitudinal perforation; the others show the beginning of perforations at each end, but the drilled pits go no farther than 3 or 4 mm.

Disk-shaped beads (Fig. 4, L) were in a minority, numbering only 46. The smallest of these has a diameter of 5 mm. and a thickness of 2.5 mm.; the largest, a diameter of 15 mm. and a thickness of 4 mm. The smaller sizes are more numerous. In all of these disk-shaped beads the perforations are biconical.

Fifteen beads consist of small *Oliva* shells with the spire removed by grinding. Two small bivalve shells are perforated and may have served as beads.

Beads of sonch and *Oliva* shell are rare on the Texas coast, except for the Brownsville Focus (MacNeish, 1947: 6), but they are widely distributed in the Caddoan area to the north. Wheat found no shell beads in his Addicks Basin sites, but Simmons (1903) reports cylindrical conch shell beads from the Clear Creek site on the western shore of Galveston Bay.

*Gorget.* One slightly damaged conch shell gorget was found at the Caplen site, but its specific provenience is not given. The field record states that it was associated with a burial, but it is not mentioned in the burial descriptions. The gorget (Fig. 3, R) is round and has a diameter of 114 mm. It has four suspension holes of two different sizes located about 5 mm. from the edge. Near the suspension holes is a group of 23 shallowly drilled pits arranged without apparent design. Jackson (1935: 22) has previously described this gorget. Circular gorges made of conch shell have not been reported elsewhere on the Texas coast, but they have a wide distribution in the eastern part of the United States, particularly in late prehistoric cultures.

*Pendants.* One fragment of conch shell appears to be part of a rectangular pendant (Fig. 3, N). It has the same type of decoration as the gorget described above. On its concave surface are two parallel rows of drilled pits. One edge and the adjoining part of another have shallow notches.

A second rectangular fragment of conch shell has one ground edge and a deep, U-shaped notch in the middle part of one end. This may be a portion of another rectangular pendant.

Four small, flat, ovate oyster shells are perforated near one end and look like pendants (Fig. 3, P). The perforations, however, do not look too much like human handiwork; most of them look more like the work of an oyster drill or some type of marine snail. Possibly such



naturally perforated shells were collected and used as pendants. These objects range in length from 35 to 72 mm. Three ovate pieces of shell (two are oyster and one appears to be fresh-water mussel shell) are similar in outline but lack perforations. Their edges are worn or ground smooth. One of these (Fig. 3, O) resembles two unperforated but peripherally ground bivalve shells from the Kobs site in the Adicks Basin (Wheat, 1953: 233 and Plate 47, k and l).

#### GLASS BEADS

Two small glass beads were associated with Burial 12. These are somewhat eroded and the color is close to a turquoise blue. One is short and has the shape of a thick doughnut; the other is cylindrical with rounded ends. The shorter bead has a diameter of 7 mm. and a length of 4.5 mm.; the larger, a diameter of 6.5 mm. and a length of 7 mm. These glass beads constitute the only conclusive evidence that the Caplen site is at least partly historic in date.

#### ASPHALTUM

Two very small pieces of asphaltum were collected during the course of excavation at the Caplen site. The largest piece has a maximum diameter of 1.5 mm. As asphaltum continuously washes ashore on the Texas coast, these small pieces may be of recent origin and have no cultural significance. Some asphaltum-coated pottery occurs at this site, but it is interpreted as intrusive from the Rockport Focus farther west on the Texas coast.

#### PIGMENT

A single lump of red pigment was found in two burials (Burials 2 and 54), and five burials (Burials 2, 37, 53, 54, and 64) had powdered red ochre distributed on and around the bones, apparently indicative of body painting as a part of the burial custom for both sexes. The interior surface of a *Pecten* shell (specific provenience unrecorded but apparently from Burial 2) is heavily coated with red ochre and may be considered as a container for mixing and holding powdered pigment.

Twenty dark brown or reddish brown stones, all apparently concretions of some sort, were also found. One of these was associated with Burial 42, and thirteen others were associated with Burial 25. The remainder came from the surface and from the excavation.

Nearly all of these stones are soft enough to make brown or red marks on paper. That they were sources of pigment seems to be indicated by the abrasion facets that most of them bear. Before use most

of them seem to have been cylindrical in shape, but abrasion has changed this form in various ways.

Three of these stones have their full cylindrical shape, though the ends are bluntly rounded (Fig. 3, J). Two are similar but one end has been ground to a blunt point. Three have diagonally ground facets at one end (Fig. 3, K), and four have similar facets at both ends. Two are short and have one truncated end that shows wear (Fig. 3, L). Another is similar, but the truncated end has a rocker-like facet. Still another is roughly cubical and has three rocker facets that include all six sides of the cube (Fig. 3, M).

The remainder of these cylindrical stones show no effects of abrasion. One of these has a large marine bivalve fossil embedded at one end. Another is broken, showing that the interior contains a soft ochreous material, softer than the outer shell. This soft area bears fine striations made by some sharply pointed tool. One stone in this group is not cylindrical but resembles a sweet potato, having two pointed ends and a swollen middle.

The smallest stone in this series of pigment stones has a maximum length of 34 mm., the largest a length of 54 mm.

Nodular and tabular pieces of pigment, one having abrasion facets, are reported from the Addicks Basin sites by Wheat (1953: 228).

#### POTTERY

The potsherds from the Caplen site are relatively few in number, only 110 being found. Twenty of these were obtained by Woolsey during the course of excavation. The remainder were collected from the surface by Mrs. J. L. Hooks of Galveston, who donated them to The University of Texas. The two collections duplicate each other in general, and a few sherds from one collection actually fit sherds from the other.

Most of the pottery (76 sherds) can be identified as Goose Creek ware of the Galveston Bay Focus. Two intrusive pottery types are represented: Holly Fine Engraved (Alto Focus) and Rockport Black-on-Gray (Rockport Focus). Some of the potsherds (15 specimens) cannot be identified as to type, and one sherd is European stoneware.

*Goose Creek Plain.* Three rim sherds of Goose Creek Plain occur, two with clay-grit temper and one with sand temper. The rim profiles of the clay-tempered sherds are shown in Fig. 4, I-J. One (I) has a fairly straight rim with rounded lip, and both surfaces are coated with a red wash or film (Wheat, 1953: 195, found this trait in the Addicks Basin). The other (J) has a flat lip and appears to be from a vessel with incurved rim. The sand-tempered sherd has a straight rim with

rounded lip (Fig. 4, H). The interior of this sherd shows horizontal scoring.

*Goose Creek Incised.* Five rim sherds from a Goose Creek Incised bowl (Fig. 4, A) are sand-tempered, the core having a fine granular texture. Both core and surfaces have the same gray color. The surfaces are smooth and show no traces of tool marks. Wall thickness is 4.5 mm. The rim is relatively straight and the lip is flat. On the inner edge of the lip is a series of light nicks or notches which are spaced 4 to 5 mm. apart. The incised decoration consists of three poorly executed horizontal lines on the exterior just below the lip. These are wavy rather than straight and are spaced about 3 mm. apart.

Three sand-tempered sherds, all badly eroded and possibly from the same vessel, have incised lines parallel to the lip, below which are incised pendant triangles (Fig. 4, B-C). Each triangle has three short oblique lines filling the space. The vessel represented seems to have had a straight rim with flat lip.

Two clay-tempered sherds have incised-punctate decoration. One of these (Fig. 4, D) is buff in color and has a band design on the exterior beneath the rim. Two widely spaced parallel lines frame diagonal rows of punctates. The punctation has been done with a very sharply pointed tool held at an angle, the punctates having an upward direction. This sherd has been imperfectly smoothed, tool marks being plainly visible, especially on the interior. The second sherd (Fig. 4, F) is gray in color and has a thickened rim. The design is similar to that of the preceding sherd, but the diagonal punctates are framed by incised lines. The punctates are triangular and have been made by a tool with either a triangular or quadrangular tip.

*Miscellaneous Goose Creek Sherds.* Sixty-three plain body sherds of Goose Creek ware can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of 19 sherds tempered with clay-grit. Surface color ranges from gray to reddish brown, and wall thickness ranges from 5 to 7 mm. Four of these sherds have a red wash or film applied to both the interior and exterior, and one of them appears to be either from a carinated bowl or a vessel with flat base (Fig. 4, K). In the Addicks Basin Wheat (1953: 285) found two sherds of Goose Creek ware from round, flat-based vessels. The second group consists of 44 sand-tempered sherds. These are exceptionally sandy, and when eroded, as most of them are, have the feel of sandpaper. Wall thickness in this group varies from 2.5 to 6 mm.

*Unidentified Pottery.* Fifteen very thin sherds cannot be identified at present. Seven of these, which appear to be derived from the same vessel, have a slate gray interior and a red-slipped exterior (Wheat, 1953: 195, found no true slip in pottery from the Addicks Basin sites).

The temper seems to be small particles of clay-grit. In spite of the thinness, these sherds are very hard and are difficult to break. The core has a relatively fine texture and is dark gray in color. Both surfaces have been carefully smoothed. Wall thickness ranges between 2 and 3 mm.

The remaining eight sherds, which all fit together to form one large sherd, are similar but the exterior is unslipped and light brown in color. Except for the absence of red slip, these sherds are hardly distinguishable from the group of sherds described in the preceding paragraph.

*Rockport Ware.* A small amount of this ware is present at the Caplen site and is regarded as intrusive from the Rockport Focus. One sherd is definitely from a Rockport Black-on-Gray vessel (Fig. 4, G), for it has a wavy black line on the exterior, and the interior is coated with asphaltum. In addition there are 16 body sherds of what appear to be Rockport ware. Traces of asphaltum coating are evident on two of these sherds, and six others have the fine white inclusions which often occur in Rockport ware. Wheat (1953: 190, 195) found Rockport ware in association with Goose Creek ware in the Addicks Basin.

*Holly Fine Engraved.* A single rim sherd of this ware was collected by Woolsey (Fig. 4, E). It is from a carinated bowl with an engraved design consisting of a solid right triangle and fine lines paralleling its hypotenuse. Holly Fine Engraved, which is associated with the Alto Focus of the Caddoan area, is an early type of pottery that does not appear to have lasted later than about A. D. 1000 (Suhm *et al.*, 1954: 302). Alto Focus pottery has not previously been reported as far south as the Gulf coast, but Stephenson (1948) has reported 34 sites of Alto Focus affiliation in Jasper and Angelina counties some 100 miles north of the Caplen site. Holly Fine Engraved pottery occurs in a number of these sites.

*European Stoneware.* One large, heavily eroded sherd of stoneware has a wall thickness of 14 mm. and was evidently made with the potter's wheel. A complete vessel of European stoneware was found at or very near the Caplen site in 1923. This vessel is in the possession of Mrs. Bruce Reid of Port Arthur and was sent to The University of Texas for examination. It is a large, narrow-mouthed olla (maximum diameter 23 cm.) with a glazed interior.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Caplen site, excavated by The University of Texas in 1932 but never fully reported, is a shallow midden deposit capping a low, sandy knoll on a peninsula located in the eastern section of the Texas coast.

Although the site had been extensively disturbed by collectors, excavation revealed 66 recognizable burials, the skeletal parts of some 80 individuals being represented. Relatively few artifacts were encountered in the midden, but a considerable number, principally ornaments, were found in association with burials.

The Caplen burials were nearly all flexed or semi-flexed, the skeletons lying on the side or back, with orientation either easterly or westerly, principally the latter. Both sexes were accompanied by ornaments, the most common being conch shell beads. Other associated artifacts included Kent and Gary dart points; very small, slender, bi-pointed flint drills; a bone pendant; a tortoise shell rattle; and a circular conch shell gorget. Two European glass beads were associated with shell and bone beads in an infant burial, providing an important chronological clue to the time of occupation.

The midden yielded very few chipped flint artifacts—three dart points, one of them identifiable as of Matamoros type; two unclassifiable knife fragments; several side-scrapers; and a small scraper-graver. No arrowpoints were found at the Caplen site. Pottery (110 sherds) occurred in the midden, the most common types being Goose Creek Plain and Goose Creek Incised, which are indicators of the Galveston Bay Focus. Intrusive sherds included Rockport Black-on-Gray from the Rockport Focus to the west and Holly Fine Engraved from the Alto Focus to the north. One sherd of European stoneware was also obtained from the midden. Since stratigraphic control of the artifacts from the midden is lacking, the relative chronological placement of the intrusive pottery remains in doubt.

The Caplen site shares a number of traits with the Galveston Bay Focus sites of the Addicks Basin west of Houston, but it is not possible to label the Caplen site as a clear-cut component of the Galveston Bay Focus. Caplen and the Addicks sites share such traits as flexed and semi-flexed burials on side and back with east-west orientation, Gary and Kent dart points, side-scrapers, tortoise shell rattle in burials, Goose Creek Plain and Goose Creek Incised pottery, and intrusive Rockport ware. But a number of Caplen traits are absent at Addicks, such as red ochre in burials, association of ornaments and flint artifacts with burials, small bipointed drills, bone pendants, circular shell gorgets, cylindrical and disk-shaped beads of conch shell, *Oliva* beads, red-slipped pottery, Holly Fine Engraved pottery, and European artifacts. The absence of arrowpoints and intrusive Tche-functe pottery at the Caplen site are also significant. On the basis of present evidence these differences cannot be properly evaluated. The situation at Caplen is complicated by the recent disturbance by col-

lectors, the small size of the artifact series, and the absence of stratigraphic control.

It seems clear, however, that a considerable span of time is represented at the Caplen site. Holly Fine Engraved pottery, believed not to have been used after about A. D. 1000, is chronologically incompatible with European glass beads, which in this area cannot date back farther than 1519, the year of Pineda's voyage along the Texas coast.

The Caplen site is the source of the only skeletal material thus far attributed to the Atakapan-speaking Indians of historic times. Physical anthropologists have commonly referred to the Caplen crania as Atakapa, but it would perhaps be more accurate to refer to them as Akokisa, as this is the most commonly used name for the historic Atakapan group that occupied the area which includes the Caplen site. The ethnic identification of the Caplen skeletons as Atakapa (Akokisa) is based upon two lines of evidence: (a) geographic location of the Caplen site in the Atakapan area and (b) the presence of European materials at the Caplen site. As for the European materials, the only real evidence is the association of glass beads with shell and bone beads in one burial only, that of an infant whose physical type cannot be determined. Thus the identification of the Caplen material as Atakapan is based on presumptive evidence and needs verification by additional archeological investigation.

The Caplen people are described by Woodbury as high-headed and mesocranic, which sets them apart from the surrounding dolichocranic peoples of Texas. They differ from the Galveston Bay Focus people of the Addicks Basin, who are mainly dolichocranic. Neumann has identified the Caplen people as Walcolid (roughly equivalent to Centralid in his earlier classification) and has noted an approach to Walcolid in the Tchefuncte people of southern Louisiana. Snow (1945: 109) has also noted similarities between the Tchefuncte and Caplen series.

What is needed in the western Atakapan area is more investigation in the coastal strip lying between Galveston Bay and the Sabine River, so that the western part of the Atakapan area may be tied in with the eastern and hence with the cultural sequence of the Lower Mississippi Valley. The territory between the Atakapan and Caddoan areas also deserves special attention.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is drawn from a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Ph. D. degree at Harvard University in 1947. The present version has been extensively modified to make it compatible with advances in the archeology of the Atakapan area since 1947.

Data on sex and age of the skeletons from the Caplen site were taken from the osteometric records of Dr. Marcus S. Goldstein. These are on file in the Department of Anthropology at The University of Texas, Austin. The identification of all projectile point and pottery types is based on type descriptions given in the *Texas Handbook* (Suhm *et al.*, 1954).

## LITERATURE CITED

- CAMPBELL, T. N., 1956—Archeological materials from five islands in the Laguna Madre, Texas coast. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. Soc.* 27: 7-46.
- DYER, J. O., 1917—*The Lake Charles Atakapas (cannibals), period of 1817 to 1820.* Galveston, Texas. Privately printed.
- FENNEMAN, NEVIN M., 1938—*Physiography of eastern United States.* McGraw-Hill. New York.
- FORD, JAMES A., AND GEORGE I. QUIMBY, 1945—The Tchefuncte culture, an early occupation of the Lower Mississippi Valley. *Mem. Soc. for Amer. Archeol.* 2.
- JACKSON, A. T., 1935—Ornaments of East Texas Indians. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. and Paleont. Soc.* 7: 11-28.
- MCINTIRE, WILLIAM G., 1954—*Trafficability and navigability of Louisiana coastal marshes. Technical Report No. 5: Correlation of prehistoric settlements and delta development.* Louisiana State University. Baton Rouge.
- MACNEISH, RICHARD S., 1947—A preliminary report on coastal Tamaulipas. *Amer. Antiq.* 13 (1): 1-15.
- NEUMANN, GEORGE K., 1952—Archeology and race in the American Indian. In: Griffin, James B. (editor), *Archeology of eastern United States*, pp. 13-34. University of Chicago Press. Chicago.
- NEWMAN, MARSHALL T., 1953—The Addicks Dam site. II. Indian skeletal remains from the Doering and Kobs sites, Addicks Reservoir, Texas. *Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull.* 154: 253-266.
- PEARCE, J. E., 1932a—The archaeology of East Texas. *Amer. Anthropol.* 34 (4): 670-687.
- , 1932b—The present status of Texas archeology. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. and Paleont. Soc.* 4: 44-54.
- , 1932c—Significance of the East Texas archaeological field. In: *Conference on Southern Prehistory, Birmingham, Alabama, December 18-20, 1932.* National Research Council. Washington, D. C.
- , 1935—Tales that dead men tell. *Univ. Tex. Anthropol. Papers* 1 (1).
- Quimby, George I., 1954—Comment on: Morris Swadesh, Time depths of American linguistic groupings. *Amer. Anthropol.* 56(3): 364.
- Sayles, E. B., 1935—An archaeological survey of Texas. *Gila Pueblo Medallion Papers* 17.
- Simmons, H. J., 1903—Human bones found near Galveston, a letter communicated by Mr. James Douglas. *Bull. Amer. Geog. Soc.* 35(5): 548-549.
- Snow, Charles E., 1945—Tchefuncte skeletal remains. In: Ford, James A., and George I. Quimby, The Tchefuncte culture, an early occupation of the Lower Mississippi Valley, pp. 99-110. *Mem. Soc. for Amer. Archeol.* 2.
- Stephenson, Robert L., 1948—Archaeological survey of McGee Bend Reservoir: A preliminary report. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. and Paleont. Soc.* 19: 57-73.

- Suhm, Dee Ann, Alex D. Krieger, and Edward B. Jelks, 1954—An introductory handbook of Texas archeology. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. Soc.* 25.
- Swadesh, Morris, 1954—Time depths of American linguistic groupings. *Amer. Anthropol.* 56(3): 361-364.
- Swanton, John R., 1946—The Indians of the southeastern United States. *Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull.* 137.
- Walley, Raymond, 1955—A preliminary report on the Albert George site in Fort Bend County. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. Soc.* 26: 218-234.
- Wauchope, Robert, 1947—Notes on Little Pecan Island, Louisiana. *Amer. Antiqu.* 12(3): 213-214.
- Wheat, Joe Ben, 1947—Archaeological survey of the Addicks Basin: A preliminary report. *Bull. Tex. Archeol. and Paleont. Soc.* 18: 143-145.
- , 1953—The Addicks Dam site. I. An archeological survey of the Addicks Dam Basin, southeast Texas. *Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull.* 154: 143-252.
- Woodbury, George, 1937—Notes on some skeletal remains of Texas. *Univ. Tex. Anthropol. Papers* 1(5): 5-16.