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MISSION NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA LUZ & PRESIDIO SAN AGUSTÍN DE AHUMADA:  
The Orcoquisac Historic District in Chambers County, Texas

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ABSTRACT

During 1979, the Center for Archaeological Research of the University of Texas at San Antonio conducted archaeological survey, testing, and historical research in the Wallisville Lake area of Chambers and Liberty Counties, east of Houston. One aspect of this project was the identification and analysis of Spanish Colonial sites in the area; the little-known Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz and the Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada. Based on the UTSA-CAR research and work by Curtis Tunnell, Dick Ambler, and members of the Houston Archeological Society, the history and archaeology of these relatively short-lived Spanish Colonial sites is now better known. The following article summarizes the history and archaeology of these sites; the information is a revised version of a longer report published earlier (Fox, Day, and Highley 1980) involving all the sites (prehistoric - late 19th century) in the Wallisville Lake area.

INTRODUCTION

In the middle 18th century, Spanish Texas encompassed the eastern half of present-day Texas and a part of western Louisiana. By 1731 Spain, fearing French expansion into this area, established military posts and missions in the region. The capital of the province of Texas was Los Adaes which was erected west of the Red River, opposite the French settlement at Natchitoches. Other military posts and missions included Nacogdoches, San Antonio, and La Bahía (Figure 1).

In 1745 rumors concerning active French trading in the lower Trinity River area prompted a sudden new interest in the coastal area of eastern Texas. To curb French aggression, Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada was established on the lower Trinity River in 1756, and plans were made for a civil settlement. Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz was established to serve the Orcoquisac Indians who lived along the lower San Jacinto and Trinity Rivers (Bolton 1970:325-374; Casteñeda 1939:46-98).

The presidio and mission were abandoned in 1772 after a brief, stormy existence. The location of the site was an overriding factor in the failure of the project. The Spanish residents had to contend with a swampy, insect-infested region that caused constant medical problems; natural calamities such as floods and hurricanes, added to the setbacks suffered by the community. The extreme isolation of the site resulted in a constant lack of supplies, including food, clothing, arms, and ammunition (Rader 1971: 106).

Because of administrative incompetence and internal dissention, the proposed civil settlement never developed beyond the planning stage. Contrary to the normal mission pattern, the Orcoquisacs were not brought into the mission but continued to live in their own village; this lack of institutional manpower severely impeded the economic and sociopolitical development of the community. In 1770 and 1771, troops were recalled to San Antonio to help defend that community, leaving only three soldiers and the missionaries at El Orcoquisac. In early 1772, the remaining Spaniards left the area, effectively abandoning the mission and presidio (Casteñeda 1939:98). By the end of the century, Louisiana had passed from France to Spain, effectively ending the French threat in the area, and the presidio and mission were never reestablished.

THE INDIANS

Various Atakapan-speaking Indian groups were present in the lower Trinity River region in the mid-1700s when the Spanish became interested in the area. The Orcoquisac

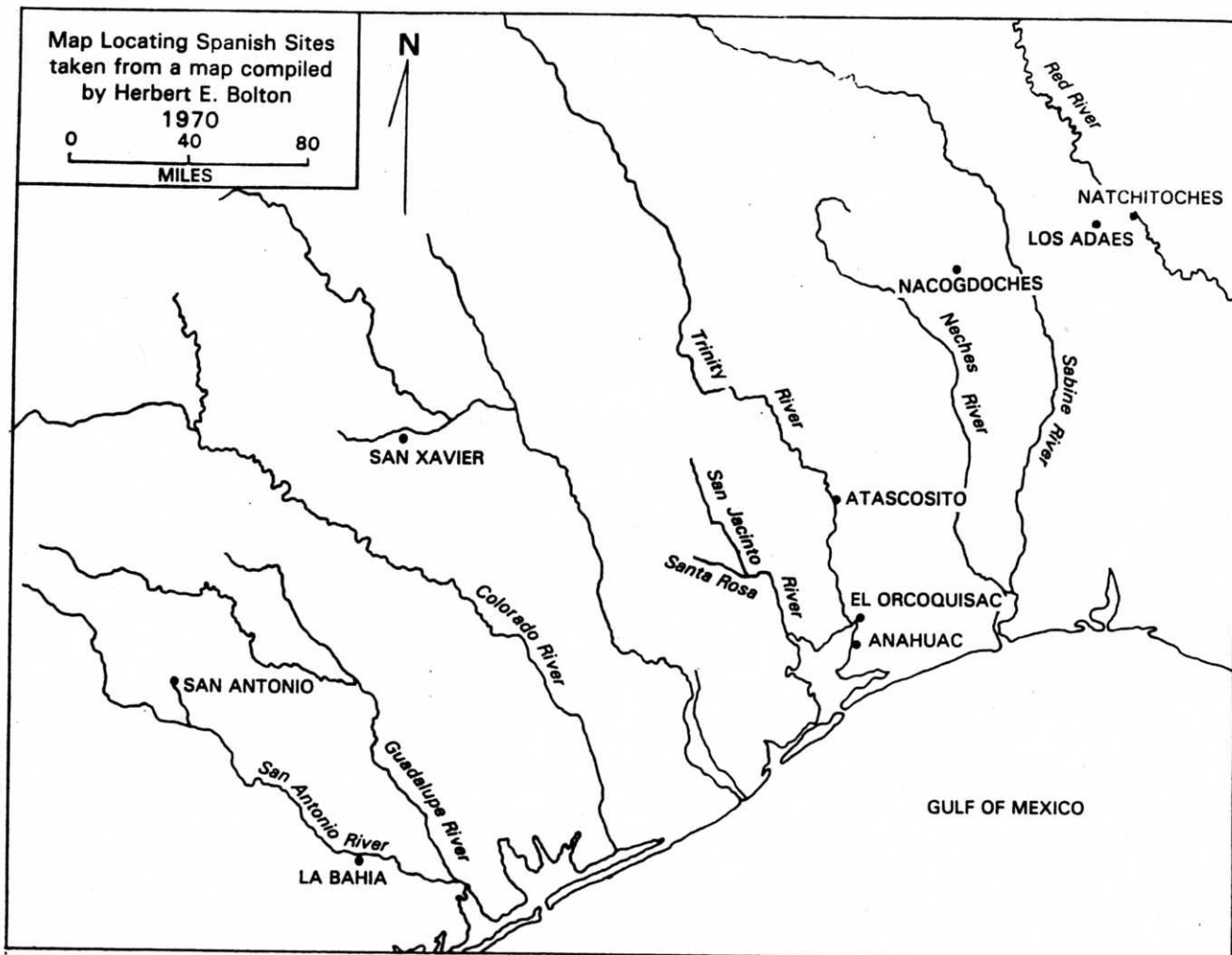


Figure 1. Location of Spanish Colonial Sites in mid-18th Century Texas. (Adapted from Fox, et al. 1980:Figure 14, p. 38. Courtesy of the Center for Archaeological Research of the University of Texas at San Antonio.)

became the best known group when the mission and presidio were established in their area. The Orcoquisacs were related to several other Atakapan-speaking groups; the Bidais lived north of the Orcoquisacs along the middle Trinity River and the upper San Jacinto River (Mayhall 1939:97). Ethnohistoric accounts suggest strong cultural, social, and political ties to the Orcoquisacs. The Deodoses lived north of the Bidais, while the little-known Patiris lived in the San Jacinto River valley north of the Orcoquisacs (Newcomb 1961:316).

The Orcoquisacs were not agricultural but relied on fishing, hunting, and gathering for their subsistence. They apparently lived in relatively permanent villages when not engaged in seasonal migration. Perhaps because of a better geographic location, the Bidais, Deodoses, and Patiris practiced agriculture or at least limited gardening (Story 1981:147) although hunting was also an important activity in their culture.

The Orcoquisacs were divided into four or five groups, each under a different leader. At the time of initial Spanish contact, the group leaders included Canos,

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El Gordo, Mateo, and Calzones Colorados. The Bidais were divided into several groups which may have totaled as many as seven separate bands; Antonio and Tomás were the only Bidai leaders known to the Spaniards (Bolton 1970:332-336, 341).

#### THE SPANISH ERA

In 1745 the captain of the presidio at La Bahía, Don Joaquín de Orobio y Bazterra, wrote to the viceroy in Mexico about rumors of French activity along the lower Trinity River. Orobio was ordered to explore the area to determine French aggression and to gather information regarding the Indians of the region (Bolton 1970:328). Orobio left La Bahía with 21 men on December 6 and finally arrived in early January at the Spanish presidio at Nacogdoches, hoping to find a feasible route to the lower Trinity from there (see Figure 1 for relative locations). At Nacogdoches, Orobio learned that 15 shipwrecked Frenchmen had passed through on their way from the coast to the French settlement at Natchitoches (ibid.:329-330).

Leaving on February 7, Orobio followed the Bidai trail to their territory and on March 6 arrived near the Trinity River at a place he called Santa Rosa de Viterbo. Seven Bidai *rancherías* were located at this site; the Bidai were familiar with French traders who came every year with guns, cloth, and knives as trade goods. Some French traders came by sea while others traveled overland from Pachina Indian territory (from the Sabine east to the Mississippi River) where they had been living. The Bidais reported that the French had recently selected a site for a permanent trading post in Orcoquisac territory.

Orobio traveled 30 leagues southwest from Santa Rosa de Viterbo and on March 15 arrived at a place he called San Raphael, which Bolton (1970:330) identifies as present-day Spring Creek. Two Orcoquisac *rancherías* were located at the site, and the Indians were familiar with the French who were expected to return in the summer. Orcoquisac leaders reported that there were no French settlements among the Cocos, Cujanes, or Karankawas who lived southwest of Orcoquisac territory, but that three or four French families were among the Pachina nation (east of the Sabine River). Several Frenchmen had recently been lost among the Cujanes, to the southwest. On March 23 Orobio visited the proposed French site on the Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu (the present-day San Jacinto River); he decided the site lacked the natural resources necessary to build and maintain a sizeable settlement. On April 6th, he returned to La Bahía and reported the extent of French encroachment to the viceroy (ibid.).

On May 3, 1747 and again on October 2, 1747, a group of Orcoquisacs journeyed to La Bahía to request that a mission be established in their territory (Rader 1971:26). In January 1748, the viceroy ordered Orobio to explore the coastal region from the Guadalupe River to the Trinity in order to locate possible sites for a Spanish settlement (Casteñeda 1939:49). In June, Orobio visited the Trinity River area, about 15 leagues from its mouth. Orcoquisac Indians contacted him there and took him and his party back to their village by canoe. The Spaniards camped near the Orcoquisac village and distributed food, tobacco, and trinkets to the Indians. Orobio returned to La Bahía on July 4th and reported his findings to the viceroy (Casteñeda 1939:50-51).

On December 23, 1747, the viceroy chose to establish three missions along the San Xavier River in central Texas (see Figure 1) and deferred action on the Lower Trinity area. The San Xavier (now called the San Gabriel) River area was selected to counter the more immediate problem of the *Ranchería Grande* aggregate of various Indian groups from northeastern Coahuila, led by the Erviapiame. Other Indians of the *Ranchería Grande* included Mayeyes, Deadose, Yojuane, and Tonkawa groups. They ranged mainly between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers, perhaps on the Little River. The clustering of groups, which may have numbered as many as 2,000 persons, was troublesome, and the San Xavier missions were probably established to help curb them. Negotiations with several groups during 1745 - 1746 had led to the establishment of a mission by Father Mariano, who met with Yojuane, Deadose, Mayeye, Yerbipiame, and Cocos groups at the site in early 1746. The viceroy's approval in December 1747 was followed by the king's approval in early 1748 (Gilmore 1982:3-5).

The second San Xavier mission was Mission San Ildefonso; it was created in late 1748 and early 1749 about one league east of the original mission. San Ildefonso was created for 65 families of 96 Orcoquisacs, 88 Bidais, and 55 Deadose; these groups were placed together since they spoke a similar language and intermarried freely, according to Father Benito (Gilmore 1982:5). A third mission was reserved for the Cocos and their relatives from the coast, and by 1749 there were 71 individuals at Candelaria, which had not yet been formally founded as mission (*ibid.*).

Mission San Ildefonso (and the other San Xavier missions) were not successful. Smallpox left 40 dead in San Ildefonso in May 1750. The missionary, Father Ganzabal, reported a surviving population of 65 Bidais adults, 10 Pastias, and 32 Orcoquisacs. The Bidais had three distinct groups, each with a separate chief; the Orcoquisacs had five groups. Conditions at the San Xavier missions continued to deteriorate due to crimes by the presidial troupes and their commander, due to bad weather, and the continued lack of food and supplies. By the summer of 1753, many soldiers and Indians had died of an epidemic, and the remainder were seriously ill; the commander requested permission to move. By 1755, the San Xavier missions were abandoned (see Kathleen Gilmore's report on the San Xavier Missions in the January issue of *La Tierra* for a more complete discussion of their failure).

During the years of the San Xavier experiment, the governor of Texas, Jacinto de Barrios y Jáuregui, devised an illegal trade network which extended into the Bidai and Orcoquisac territories of eastern Texas (1751-1759). Among his agents were some of the soldiers stationed at Los Adaes. Guns and ammunition were bought from the French at Natchitoches in direct violation of the viceroy's orders; the Indians traded horses, corn, and hides to the Governor's agents for the European trade goods. The Governor, using Spanish funds, purchased the corn and horses for the garrison from himself. The hides were either sold illegally at Natchitoches or shipped to Saltillo, Mexico (Casteñeda 1939:52-53; Rader 1971:28-29).

In a way, this illegal activity led to the founding of the Orcoquisac mission and presidio. In mid-1754, the Governor learned that four French traders and two Spaniards were established near the mouth of the Trinity in Orcoquisac territory. On September 20, 1754, he dispatched Lt. Marcos Ruiz (one of his agents) and 25 men to inspect the lower Trinity region and arrest the Frenchmen. Ruiz recruited Bidai Indian support by distributing trade goods among them and promising their leader, Tomás, a horse if they succeeded (Arias 1754, Cordova 1754). Similarly, the Orcoquisacs were given gifts and recruited for the expedition. On October 10, 1754, Joseph Blancpain, Elias George, Antonio Dessars, and two Black slaves, Bernardo and Joseph, were arrested at their camp situated two leagues above the mouth of the Trinity River. The Orcoquisacs living nearby informed the Spanish that Lacreu, a French trader, had recently left Blancpain's camp to return to New Orleans for 50 French families waiting to settle in Texas.

The Governor urged the viceroy to establish a presidio at the mouth of the Trinity to prevent further French incursions. In addition, the Orcoquisacs had recently visited in Nacogdoches, San Xavier, San Antonio, and La Bahía to request that a mission be established for their nation. Reports of the soldiers of the cooperation of the Orcoquisacs during the expedition suggested that the Indians were peaceful, although addicted to thievery, and that their leader was most inclined to Spanish endeavors (Arias 1754; Cordova 1754).

On February 12, 1756, the new viceroy of Mexico, Don Agustín de Ahumada Villalón Mendoza y Narvaez, Marqués de las Amarillas, ordered the immediate occupation of the lower Trinity to forestall further French encroachment. The site of Blancpain's post was to be occupied by a company of 30 soldiers, who, upon completing their six years of military service, would become the basis for a civilian settlement. A mission was to be established to serve both the Bidais and Orcoquisacs. The initial location of the presidio and mission would be temporary; after an adequate site for the proposed civil settlement was established, the presidio and mission would be moved near the colony (Amarillas 1756).

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On May 16, 1756, Lt. Marcos Ruiz and 30 soldiers left Los Adaes with horses, cattle, oxen, arms and ammunition, equipment and supplies. They established the presidio on May 26 at the site of Blancpain's camp and named it San Agustín de Ahumada in honor of the viceroy. In the latter part of 1756, Fray Bruno Chavira and Fray Marcos Satereyn arrived at El Orcoquisac and established the Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz. The Governor did not approve of the missionaries; the older missionary died and the younger left due to illness before Barrios could have them removed by royal decree. The replacement missionary was not impressed with the conditions of the mission and asked to be removed, or to have the mission moved. He recommended a more habitable place called El Atascosito several miles north of the present mission (see Figure 1) but the move was never authorized and the missionary was replaced (Casteñeda 1939:75).

One proposal was to move to a western branch of the San Jacinto River called the Springs of Santa Rosa (present-day Spring Creek) since it appeared a suitable location for a colony. It was also near the village of Canos, a major leader among the Orcoquisacs. The site was located in the center of the Orcoquisac nation, which then consisted of five villages or *rancherías* ranging from Santa Rosa to the San Jacinto with one village on the Trinity River (Miranda 1757). The authorities in Mexico agreed to the removal but the move never took place. Many factors were responsible, but a major one was the inability to find 50 families willing to go to such a remote frontier settlement. Several alternate sites were considered but in early 1758, government officials in Mexico abandoned the idea and recommended that no further action be taken to establish a civil colony at El Orcoquisac (Casteñeda 1939:85).

A new governor of Texas was appointed in early 1759, Don Angel Martos y Navarrete, who tried to reenergize the project. Fray Abad opposed moving the mission, and wrote to the viceroy on the advantages of remaining at El Orcoquisac (*ibid.*:86-87). He reported that the mission had recently been moved a short distance from the presidio and was showing progress. Fray Abad added that the Indians would object to such a move. Despite Fray Abad's appeal, the viceroy sided with the governor and ordered a move. The move, however, never took place (Bolton 1970:355-356).

On November 23, 1763, Raphael Martínez Pacheco replaced Domingo del Río as commander of the presidio. Pacheco was concerned for the lack of conversion of the Indians to a mission life, and urged the Indian groups to enter the mission. He felt he was making progress and appealed to the governor for additional financial support.

Governor Martos did not approve of Pacheco's appointment and in June 1764, he traveled to El Orcoquisac to enforce the move (to Los Horconsitos). An intense confrontation followed for the next month which ended with both the missionaries and the Indians supporting Pacheco by objecting to the move.

By August 28, all but five of the soldiers at Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada had deserted to Natchitoches; they alleged physical assaults by Pacheco against several soldiers at the presidio. According to the deserters, the missionaries and Indians were also preparing to leave El Orcoquisac (Cordova et al. 1764).

Governor Martos sent Lieutenant Marcos Ruiz to arrest Pacheco and replace him as commander of the post. Ruiz and 22 soldiers approached the presidio on October 7, but Pacheco was apparently prepared for a siege; he and three soldiers refused to submit to the governor's arrest order. Pacheco called upon the Orcoquisacs and Atakapas for help against his attackers. After three days of negotiations, Ruiz set fire to Pacheco's quarters, but Pacheco and a companion escaped through a secret door. Part of the church also burned.

Pacheco and his friend were given refuge for a time at La Bahía. Pacheco then traveled to Mission San José at San Antonio, where he was arrested (Casteñeda 1939:92). He eventually traveled to Mexico where he was imprisoned (Bolton 1970:371).

At El Orcoquisac, chaos ensued. Calzones Colorados admitted to being bribed to oppose removal of the settlement to Los Horconsitos. Del Río was implicated and subsequently arrested. In November, Ruiz was arrested for burning the presidio. In 1767 charges were filed against Governor Martos for the burning of the presidio; his trial lasted 14 years and he was heavily fined (Bolton 1970:372).

On September 4, 1766 a hurricane destroyed all of the supplies and severely damaged most of the buildings. The commander asked to move the presidio to higher ground, and it was moved to a low hill a quarter of a league from its original site (Castañeda 1939:94).

In 1767, the Marqués de Rubí, on an inspection of Texas, visited El Orcoquisac and was not favorably impressed. He cited the uselessness of the presidio, the lack of inclination of the Indians to be missionized (noting that since its founding not a single Indian had joined), and poor living conditions. Rubí declared that since Louisiana had been ceded to Spain in 1762, the presidio was no longer needed to counter the French threat (ibid.:95).

In 1769, Pacheco returned as commander of the post having been found innocent of all charges. His administration was marked by reconstruction and reform. He personally provided food, clothing, and other supplies at his own expense, including hiring a physician for the presidio. In October 1769, he helped rescue 125 shipwrecked families who were sent to Natchitoches.

In the summer of 1770, the governor of Texas, Baron de Ripperdá, asked Pacheco to send part of the garrison to help defend San Antonio against hostile Indians. In September 1771, Pacheco was required to take the remainder of his men to San Antonio. He left three men with the missionaries to guard the mission, but they, too, left within several weeks (ibid.:98).

This presidio and mission at El Orcoquisac were totally abandoned in 1772. The lower Trinity River region continued, however, to be a focal point for activities aimed at halting foreign aggression. In 1803, Spain returned Louisiana to France, and within a month it was sold to the United States. The United States was viewed as an imminent threat to Spanish control of Texas, and plans were formulated to reestablish military posts and colonies in the area (Clay 1977:87-91).

In 1805, Governor Antonio Cordero sent a Sergeant Urrutia and 50 soldiers to El Orcoquisac to halt illegal activities in the area; smuggling was rife, and horse herds were being driven to Louisiana. Within a few months, Captain Geronimo Herrera established a garrison at Atascosito (near present-day Liberty) having rejected El Orcoquisac as unsuitable for horses and people (Clay 1977:91-92).

In January 1818, 400 French exiles sought refuge in Texas in the same general area. Spanish forces were again called to the area, but friendly Indians warned the settlers who escaped to Galveston Island. A devastating hurricane struck killing many of them; the survivors were given a ship by Jean Laffite, who controlled the port of Galveston, so they could escape to New Orleans. On October 19, 1818, Spanish troops arrived at the abandoned French fortress and destroyed it (Castañeda 1939).

In January, 1835, Santa Ana began his campaign to control Texas, and Mexican military forces established Fort Anahuac. Texan colonists rebelled against Mexican authority, and the Mexican forces were driven out of the area (Harry 1940:14-17).

On August 2, 1858, the area around El Orcoquisac, now a part of the state of Texas, was organized into Chambers County. Wallisville became the county seat. In 1859, it was granted its first post office, and by 1876 had a population of 200. In 1907, the county seat was moved to Anahuac (Partlow 1974:145).

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE PRESIDIO SAN AGUSTÍN DE AHUMADA (41 CH 57)

The site of the Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada (now designated 41 CH 57) is located between the Trinity River and Lake Miller (see Figure 2). Although the site is referred to as the presidio, it is actually composed of a number of prehistoric and historic sites in one location. Joseph Blancpain built his trading post on a shell mound, a place affording good drainage in wet weather, not realizing it had been a prehistoric camp site. Lt. Ruiz dutifully established the presidio on the site of the trading post. The missionaries' house and church were apparently located nearby, perhaps on the slightly elevated area 30 meters east of the presidio (see Figure 3).

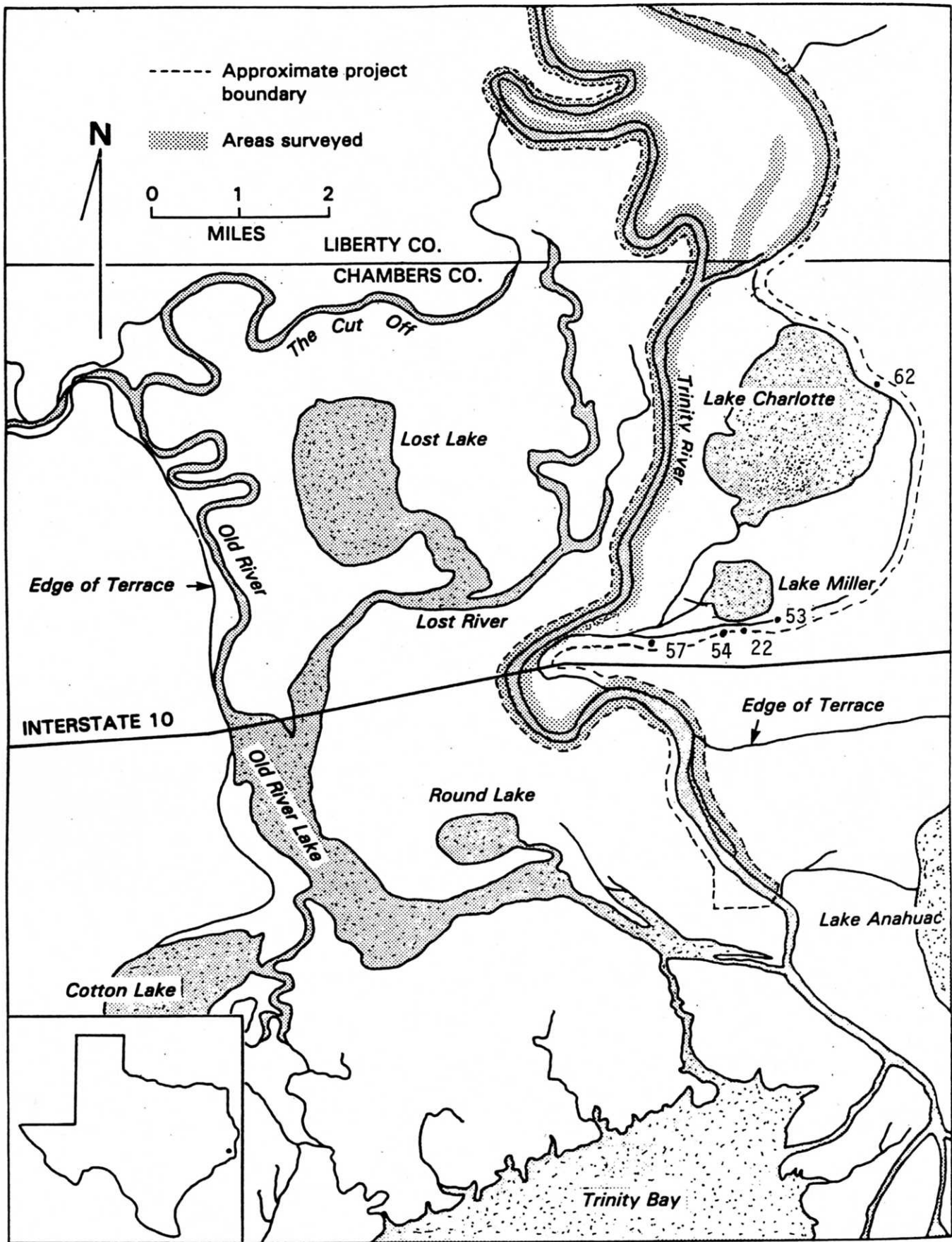


Figure 2. Location of sites in the Orcoquisac Historic District area of Chambers County, Texas. 41 CH 57 - First site of presidio and mission; 41 CH 22 - Orcoquisac camp; 41 CH 54 - Second site of mission; 41 CH 53 - Second site of presidio. (Map adapted from Fox et al. 1980:Figure 14, p. 38; courtesy of UTSA-CAR.)

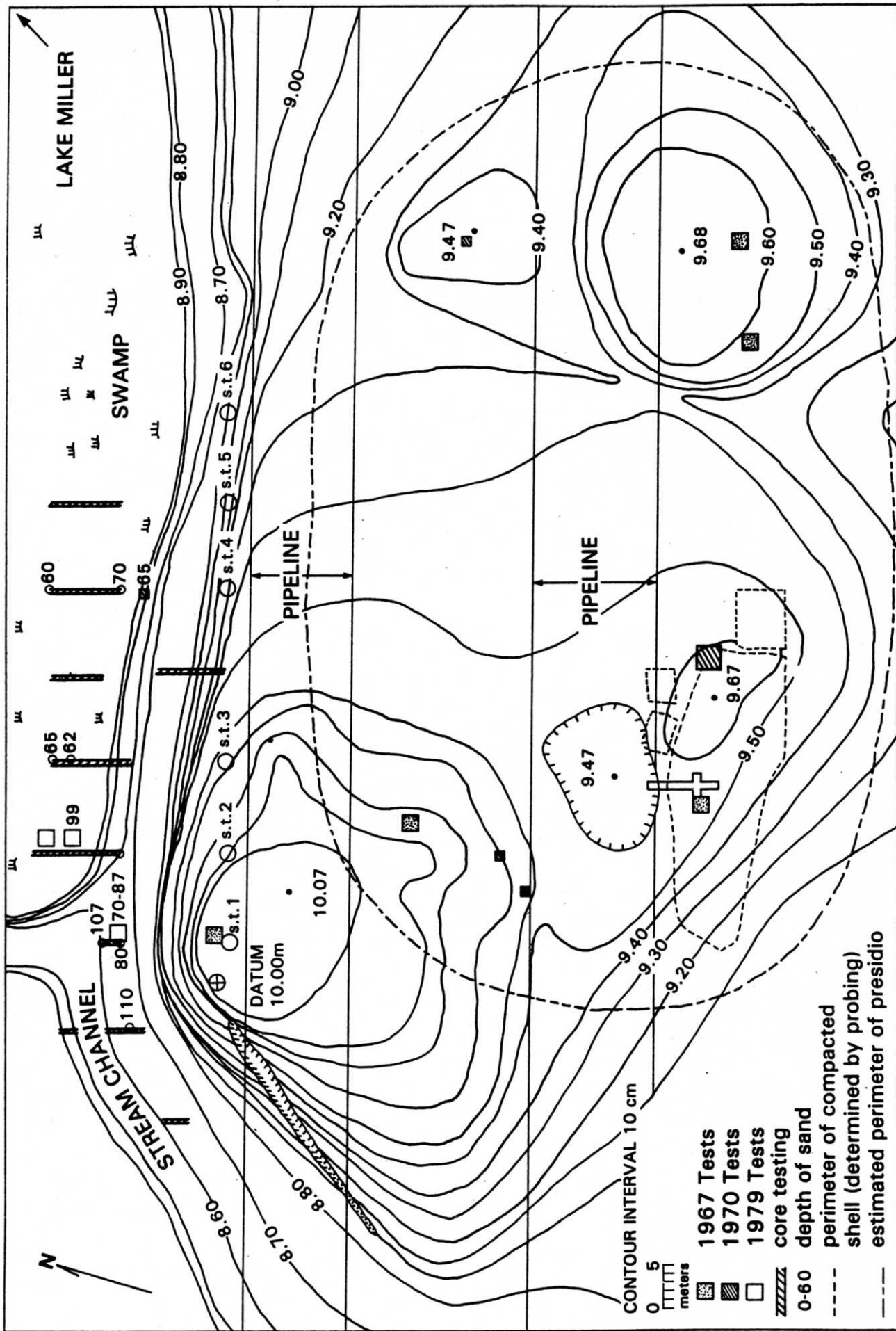


Figure 3. Map of the Initial Location of Mission La Luz and Presidio Ahumada (site 41 CH 57). (Adapted from Fox et al. 1980:Figure 24, p. 84; courtesy of UTSA-CAR.)



During the winter of 1969-1970, members of the Houston Archeological Society, under the direction of W. L. Fullen, conducted extensive surface collecting and limited subsurface testing at the site. The area was mapped and a grid laid out.

The site is located on a low mound on what was once the southwest shore of Lake Miller. The lake has silted-in rapidly in historic times; in the 18th century the site was actually on the lake shore. The area today is overgrown with vegetation, and the former shoreline is a swamp. Several pipeline easements are the only areas which are cleared and mowed regularly.

The testing in 1970 located what appears to be a prepared shell layer into which postholes had been dug about 55 meters south of the lake shore. Surface collections carried out in 1967 and 1970 revealed Spanish and French ceramics concentrated primarily in an area 10 to 60 meters south of the shore line (W. L. Fullen, personal communication). Since this area contains noticeable elevations on the topographic map, it seems likely that the Spanish presidio and mission, and, therefore, the earlier French trading post, were located here.

A concentrated program of testing was carried out by the Center crew with the help of a number of members of the Houston Archeological Society and interested local volunteers. A series of six 30-cm diameter shovel tests were dug along the top of the bank, through and deeply into the shell midden deposit. All soil removed was screened through  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh. A total of 37 unidentifiable prehistoric sherds, four grog-tempered sherds, and 37 sandy paste sherds were recovered from the shovel tests. One flake fragment and one primary flake were the only lithics recovered. Spanish artifacts found were two sherds of blue-on-white majolica, four fragments of a heavily patinated green bottle, and part of a metal buckle (see Figure 4).

Systematic corings were taken through the swamp at the north side of the site. This search and a subsequent cesium alkali vapor magnetometer survey failed to reveal any evidence of the Blancpain sloop or the wharf used by the presidio (which was mentioned in the Spanish documents). A survey using a Heath Kit Metal Locator and a Coinmaster 5,000/D metal detector resulted in the recovery of modern nails, tin cans, and barbed wire. Only one Spanish artifact, the buckle fragment mentioned earlier, was recovered by this method; it probably was from the backdirt of a previous test trench.

Faunal remains, other than shell, included 371 bone fragments recovered from the shovel tests and core samples. Fish remains constitute 89 percent of the total and included 110 alligator gar scales; other species included a smaller gar, sheepshead (a type of Drum), and one of the large *Sciaenids* (black drum or spotted weakfish). One turtle fragment of the seven shell fragments was burned; at least two individual turtles were represented since two neural bones recovered were of different thicknesses. Only 13 mammal bones were identified (seven percent of the total sample); eight of the specimens were *Odocoileus virginianus* (white-tailed deer) while the remainder were *Bos taurus* (cow) or a similar large mammal.

Although the site has been disturbed by pipelines and other intrusions, a large percentage of the site remains. The 1979 testing determined that the historic site occupies only a portion of the prehistoric shell midden. No trace of Blancpain's boat or dock was located but may still be in the area. The site is an important historic location and has been admitted to the National Register of Historic Sites, thus coming under the protection of federal law. Some method is needed to protect the site from the higher water level anticipated with the development of the Wallisville Lake project.

#### ORCOQUISAC CAMP AND PREHISTORIC SITE (41 CH 22)

A large shell midden located on the southeast side of Lake Miller is thought to be the site of the Orcoquisac encampment when the Spanish mission and presidio were in operation (see Figure 5). The shell midden was first reported by Shafer (1966); it consists of a high shell mound surrounded by a widespread scatter of shell over a

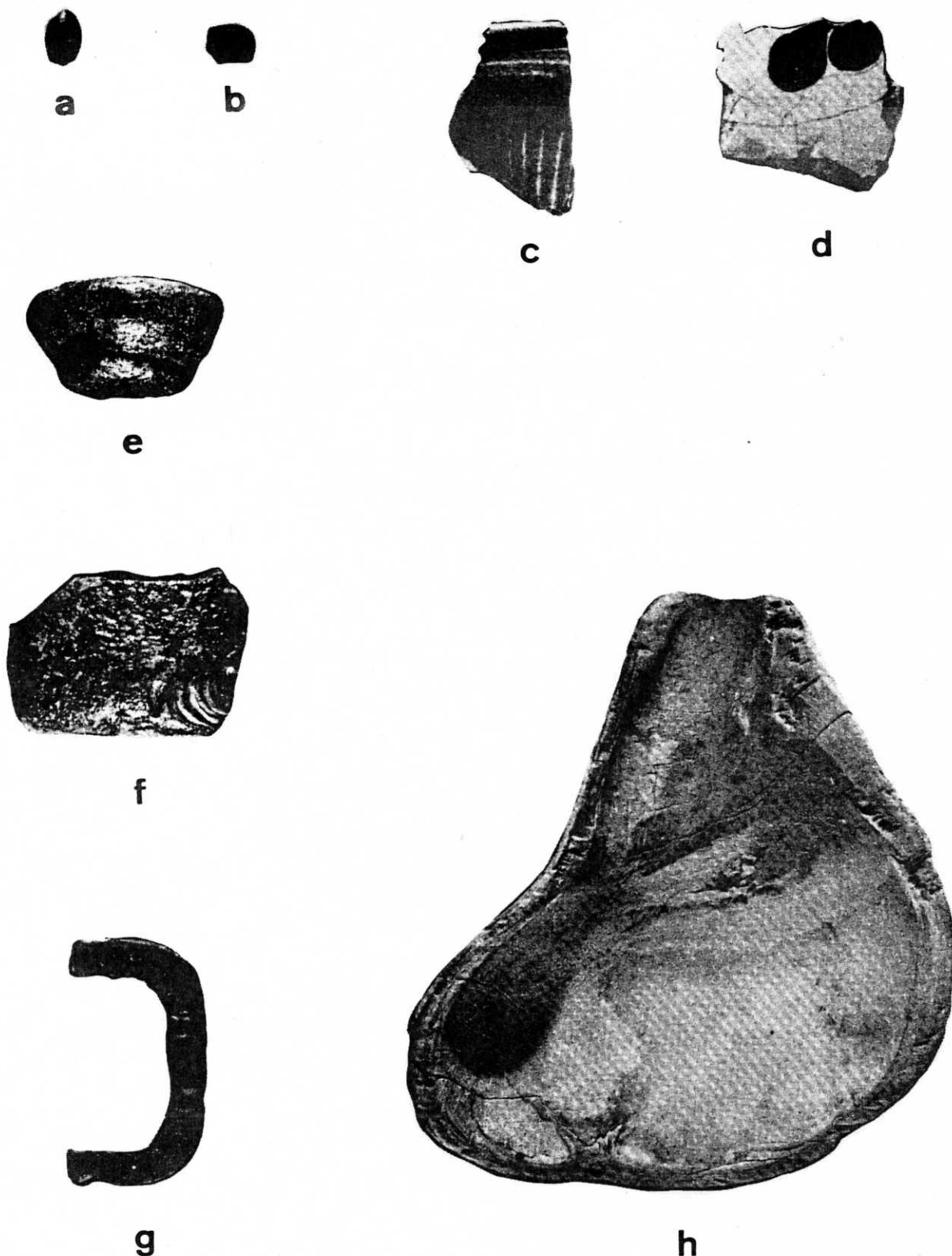


Figure 4. Spanish and Indian Artifacts from the Orcoquisac Historic District. a-b, blue glass beads (b from 41 CH 22 area); c-d, blue-on-white majolica (41 CH 57); e-f, green bottle glass with heavy gold patina (41 CH 57); g, molded brass buckle from 41 CH 57; h, modified conch shell tool (41 CH 62, a multi-component site near Lake Charlotte). (Photo from Fox et al. 1980:89, courtesy of UTSA-CAR.)

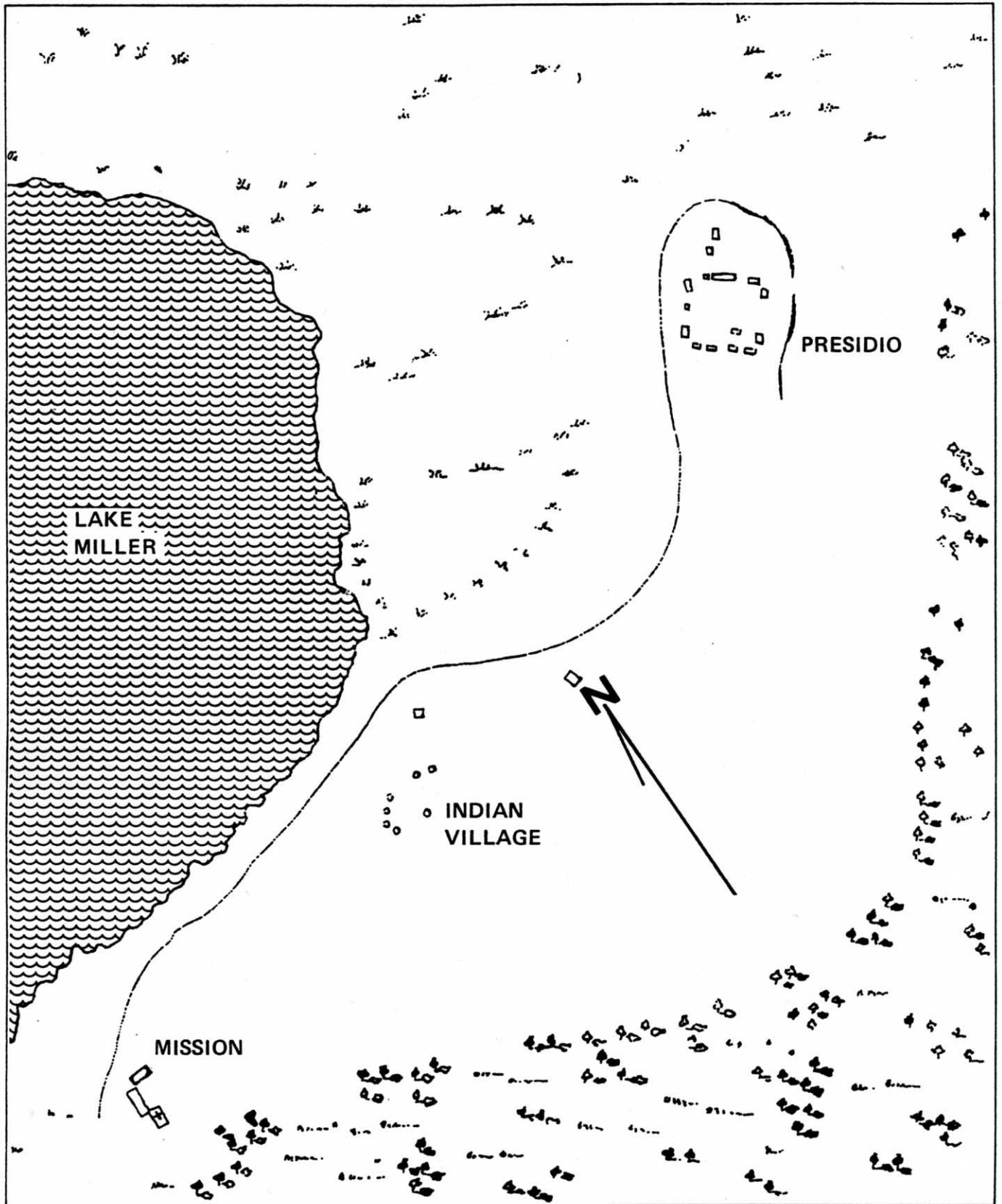


Figure 5. Taken from Map of Spanish Establishments on Lake Miller in 1776. Shown are the second locations of the mission and presidio. Original by Joseph de Urrutia; (redrawn from Hotchkiss 1966). (Fox et al. 1980:Figure 25; courtesy of UTSA-CAR.)

large area. A bank along Lake Miller forms the northern boundary of the site. This bank ranges in height from approximately 0.5 to 2.0 meters. A stand of oak trees forms a canopy which provides shade over a short grass carpet on the mounded area. Two pipelines traverse through or near the site from east to west.

Investigation was begun with a random surface collection to determine the extent of the site. Exposed *Rangia* shells and other cultural remains were used to estimate its extent. Since the second site of the mission is located nearby, and since there was no noticeable break in the surface indications of shell and artifacts, the entire area was mapped as one site (see Figure 6).

Information on cultural remains and depth of 41 CH 22 was attempted with a shovel test in the approximate center of the shell mound, about 50 meters south of the lake shore. Shovel testing proved extremely difficult and time consuming; two crew members worked diligently for four hours and were able to excavate and screen the matrix from only one test area 30 cm in diameter and 50 cm deep. A compact layer of *Rangia* clam shells, 91 bone fragments, 27 prehistoric ceramic sherds (all but nine too small for analysis), and two chert flakes were recovered.

Core tests were conducted to examine changes in soil and cultural remains. As the coring proceeded southward, the midden deposit became thinner, until in Test 7, the shell layer was only surface to eight centimeters. The midden appears to be more than 50 cm thick toward the lake shore and thins out toward the south; a layer of sterile clay underlies the site.

A random surface collection and a 30-cm diameter x 50-cm deep shovel test provided a sample of 62 prehistoric sherds, 21 of which were less than 1 cm<sup>2</sup> and were eliminated from the total sample. Of the sherds large enough to identify (41 total) ten were grog-tempered and 31 were sandy paste ceramics. The sandy paste sherds appeared at all levels but grog-tempered ware appears to be somewhat late in the sequence.

Faunal remains other than the *Rangia* shell, included 70 bone fragments, of which only 27 (39 percent) were identifiable. Fourteen percent of the total bone recovered had been burned. One deer element (*Odocoileus virginianus*) was recovered, along with one fragment of turtle. The remainder of the vertebrate remains were fish including species such as the alligator gar, other gar, catfish, and striped mullet.

One glass bead fragment was recovered from the surface in the pipeline right-of-way. The bead is made of blue glass and represents the only evidence of historic occupation at the site. Eight chert flakes were also collected.

As evidenced by the presence of grog-tempered and sandy paste untempered wares, occupation of the site may have begun as early as A.D. 1000 and continued to the time of Spanish contact. The glass bead was recovered from a spot halfway between the shell mound and the suspected area of the mission. Thus, there is no surface evidence recovered so far which would unequivocally confirm this shell mound as the historic Orcoquisac encampment.

#### MISSION NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA LUZ (Second Site), 41 CH 54

A surface survey was also conducted to locate the site to which the Mission Nuestra de la Luz was removed. A 1966 survey by Fullen of the Houston Archeological Society yielded numerous sherds of majolica and other Spanish artifacts from a limited area on the top of the hill where the mission is presumed to have been located. The present survey, however, failed to produce any Spanish Colonial artifacts.

A map of El Orcoquisac done in 1767 shows three buildings, one of which is identified as the church (see Figure 5). In 1768, Padre José Marenti reported the church to be 12 by 7 *varas*, covered (roofed?) with shingles and plastered mortar, and whitewashed. A house for the padres was 23 *varas* long with a hall, two cells, and a porch, also plastered and whitewashed and covered with shingles. There was also a kitchen building and a cemetery. The mission square was 21 *varas* (or approximately 57 feet or 17 meters) wide (Marenti 1776).

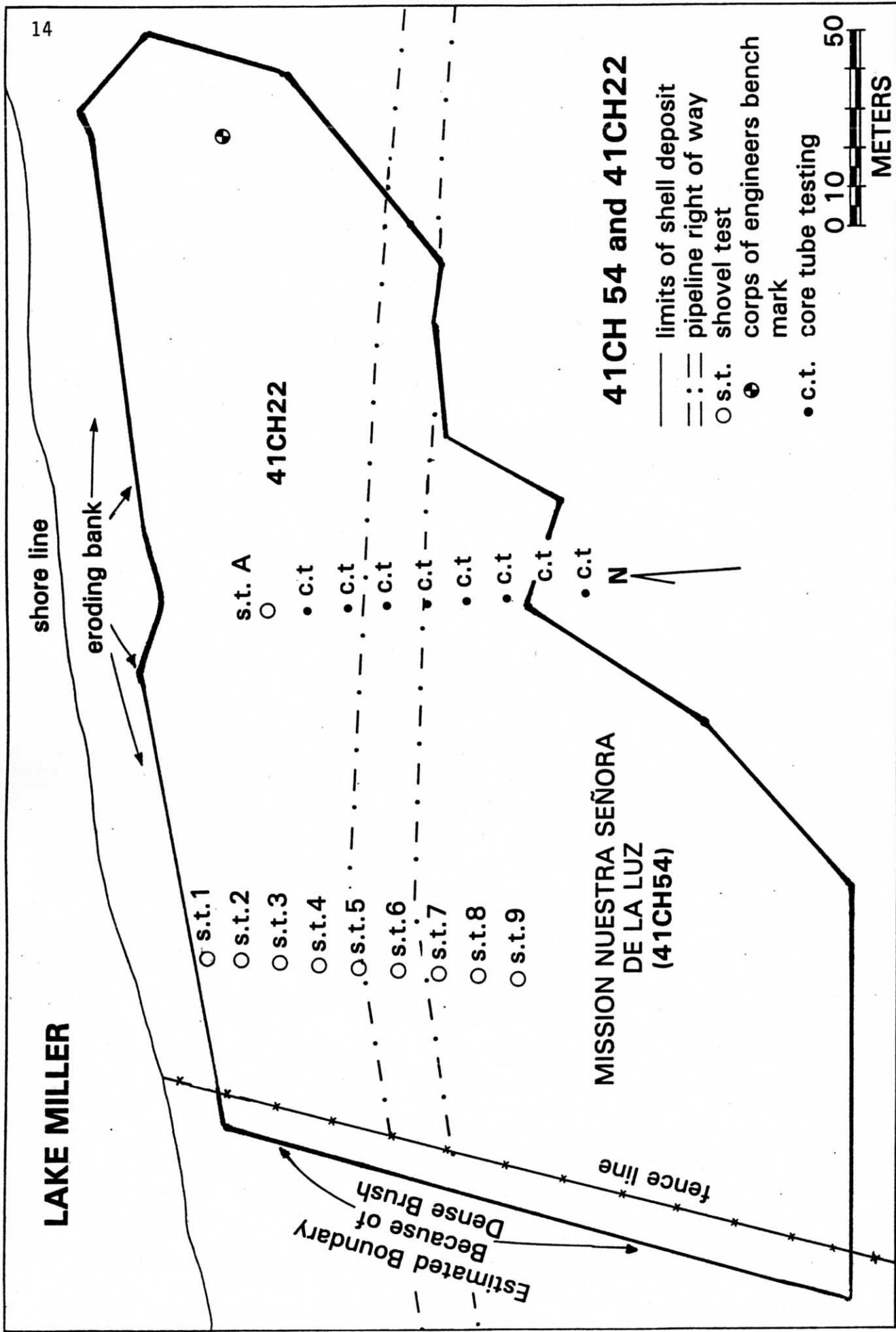


Figure 6. Map of 41 CH 22 (Indian Camp) and 41 CH 54 (second site of Mission La Luz). (Adapted from Fox et al. 1980; Figure 28, p. 96; courtesy of UTSA-CAR).

In order to determine the northern boundary of the mission and to assess what effect the proposed reservoir might have on the site, a row of shovel tests was dug from the high water mark on the edge of the lake south through the pipeline easement and onto the mission site (see Figure 6). The average depth of these tests was 60 cm; in each case, *Rangia* shell was encountered near the surface and continued to about 60 cm on the slope. This tapered off to about 20 cm in the area of the mission.

In shovel tests and surface collections, materials recovered were mostly late 19th century artifacts. Prehistoric sherds recovered from the tests included four unidentified, four grog-tempered, and three sandy paste untempered sherds. Two chert flakes were also found. Sixty bones were also recovered from the shovel tests, including deer, cow, and several species of fish.

#### PRESIDIO SAN AGUSTÍN DE AHUMADA (Second Site), 41 CH 53

In 1966, testing was carried out at the second site of the presidio; this work was conducted under the direction of Curtis Tunnell and Richard Ambler, and its tentative identification as the second location of the presidio was confirmed (Tunnell and Ambler 1967). Much of the site was destroyed when gravel was removed to build Interstate Highway 10. During the present project, no Spanish or Indian artifacts were found on the surface of the site.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological surveys and testing reported here represent a very limited part of a more extensive research program in the Wallisville Lake area of Liberty and Chambers Counties in far southeastern Texas. The project was conducted under contract with the U. S. Corps of Engineers to assess the impact of the proposed Wallisville Lake. The project met its programmed objectives, and recommendations were made on a wide variety of prehistoric and historic sites in the region (for details, see Fox, Day, and Highley 1980).

As one phase of the project, both historical documents and archaeological evidence were studied to clarify the role of the Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada and Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz during Spanish colonial developments in the area. The results of this study indicated that the Spanish colonial sites have an interesting, but short-lived history. Both the mission and the presidio failed, in part due to unfavorable (for the Spanish) environmental conditions, in part due to poor planning and a lack of volunteer settlers, and in part due to poor leadership and the power struggles to control profitable smuggling operations. In the end, as with the San Xavier missions (see Gilmore 1969, 1982), both the Indians and the Spanish could no longer sustain an uneconomical and degenerating settlement. The total lack of converts (some of whom may have had some knowledge of the debacle at San Xavier) made it impossible even for the church to sustain its missionary operation.

Gilmore (1982) asked the question as to why some Spanish settlements succeeded and others failed? There is, of course, no final answer to such a question. In the case of El Orcoquisac, however, it was clear from the first that internal Spanish conflicts among the administrators, the military and the clergy (among those striving to support or exploit the Indians economically and those striving for their souls) doomed the project to failure.

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Cover Illustration by Heidi L. Mitchell

The illustration recreates an event on June 11, 1748, when Don Joaquín de Orobio y Bazterra, Captain of the presidio at La Bahía, acting on instructions of the viceroy, visited the lower Trinity River area. An Orcoquisac Indian leader insisted on taking Orobio back to his village "at the mouth of the Trinity" by canoe (Casteñada 1939:50-51, as cited in Fox, Day and Highley 1980:41). The rest of the Spanish party came overland and camped near the village when they distributed food, tobacco, and trinkets to the Orcoquisacs.