CHAPTER 2 – REGIONAL HISTORY

East Texas Prehistory

A variety of cultural remains indicate that early humans occupied portions of Texas at least 11,200 years ago. These remains consist of any evidence that humans have visited an area and took advantage of its plant and animal resources. Research has divided the Texas prehistorical record into four general periods: Paleo-Indian (9200 B.C. - 6000 B.C.), Archaic (6000 B.C. - 200 B.C.), Ceramic Period (200 B.C. - A.D. 700), and Late Prehistoric (A.D. 700 - 1600) (Hester and Turner 2012).

Paleo-Indian (9200 B.C. - 6000 B.C.)

The earliest evidence of human activity in East Texas is represented by the Paleo-Indian period (9200 B.C. - 6000 B.C.). There is little evidence of mammoth hunting in East Texas as has been documented elsewhere; rather, a broad-based subsistence pattern appears to have been practiced until the Late Prehistoric period. Paleo-Indian peoples are often thought to have been organized small groups of a few dozen individuals that practiced a nomadic subsistence and settlement pattern. The distribution of Paleo-Indian artifacts suggests these groups were highly mobile and frequently settled within valleys of major stream basins as well as other resource rich areas (Hester and Turner 2012).

Archaic (6000 B.C. - 200 B.C.)

The beginning of the Archaic period is thought to have been onset by climatic warming and drying trends. These climate changes reduced the amounts of large game animals in much North America, forcing Archaic peoples to diversify their food sources to include smaller game animals and wild plants. The primary hunting weapon during this period was the atlatl, as the bow and arrow had not been introduced. Life in East Texas does not appear to have been affected by changing climatic trends as much as other parts of North America. Large game animals, such as mammoth, were not utilized extensively as a food source, as a result the generalized hunting and gathering pattern continued throughout the Archaic period (Hester and Turner 2012).

The Archaic period is generally subdivided into early, middle, and late phases. The Early Archaic (6000 B.C. – 2500 B.C.) is characterized by low populations of scattered and highly mobile peoples, although the least is known about this phase. The Middle Archaic (2500 B.C. – 1000 B.C.) is characterized by significant population increases, with a large number of sites and numerous artifacts being present. It is thought that this period is when Archaic cultures became more specialized on a regional basis, with different regions having distinctive types tools and points. Also in the Middle Archaic phase, cemeteries containing large numbers of burial sites began to appear, possibly indicating establishment of territories by some hunting and gathering societies. The Later Archaic (1000 B.C. – 200 B.C.) is characterized by the continuing of hunting and gathering societies with additional types of projectile points and stone tools. In East Texas, around 500 B.C., the first pre-Caddo settled villages began to appear (Hester and Turner 2012 & Perttula 2005).
Ceramic Period (200 B.C. - A.D. 700)

The Ceramic Period (200 B.C. - A.D. 700), also known as the Woodland period, was still characterized by populations of hunter-gatherers, although these peoples lived in increasingly larger groups and in the same place for longer amounts of time. Artifacts from this period generally consist of ceramic bowls, axe heads, smaller and thinner dart points, and later in this period, corner-notched arrow points. The use of ceramics during this period varies depending on location, indicating regional differences in dietary habits and food processing techniques. Some evidence suggests that Early Ceramic groups were practicing some level of horticulture activity, possibly cultivating squash and other native plants. Burial mounds from this period have been documented in the Neches and Sabine River bottoms (Perttula 2005).

Late Prehistoric (A.D. 700 - 1600)

The Late Prehistoric Period (A.D. 700 - 1600) is notable for the introduction of the bow and arrow. Although hunting and gathering continues in the Late Prehistoric as in earlier periods, the material culture, hunting patterns, settlement types and other facets of the era mark a distinctive break with the past. In East Texas, the Late Prehistoric period is subdivided into four prehistoric Caddoan periods (Formative, Early, Middle and Late) (Hester and Turner 2012).

Prehistoric Caddoan Culture

Caddoan period groups show increased reliance on cultivated crops such as maize and squash, along with several other native plant species. By roughly 1450 A.D. maize comprised more than half of the Caddo’s diet, with food obtained by hunting and gathering constituting the remainder. Artifacts found from this era include distinctive ceramics made for a variety of uses, as well as tools, clothing, baskets, and ornaments such as beads, ear-pendants, pipes and figurines. Most of these artifacts were made from locally occurring materials; however some non-local materials and goods were obtained through the development of long-distance trade networks. The Caddo lived in modest structures most commonly consisting of a framework of log poles with a covering of either thatched grass or earthen material (Perttula 2012).

European exploration and Historic Caddoan Culture

The first European visitors to travel through East Texas were likely with the Moscoso Expedition in the early 1540s. The Moscoso Expedition was a continuance of Herando DeSoto’s expedition that landed in present day Florida in 1539 to explore the southeastern coast of present day United States and to obtain riches from the Native Americans. During their journey west, DeSoto died of a fever at the Mississippi River, and Moscoso took command of the expedition. The goal following DeSoto’s death was to find an overland route back to New Spain (now Mexico). Accounts of the route Moscoso and his men took through East Texas vary, although most theories have them traveling through some portion of East Texas, on their way west and stopping at a major river, before turning around and heading back east to the Mississippi River. An account published in 1939 has the expedition entering Texas through Sabine County, traveling...
south to present day San Augustine, and traveling west to the Navasota River before turning around. This account has Moscoso’s expedition traveling through the Attoyac Bayou Watershed, and possibly crossing the Attoyac Bayou in roughly 1542. Other accounts conclude that the expedition entered Texas further north of Shelby County in differing parts of northeast Texas, and traveling south to either Nacogdoches or Shelby County before heading west. None of these routes are conclusive, however it is apparent that Moscoso’s expedition came through portions East Texas and was very close, if not within portions of the Attoyac Bayou Watershed. Moscoso’s expedition through East Texas did encounter Caddo Indians, and documented important aspects of their daily life and culture. However, European contact with the Native Americans remained extremely limited until the late 1600’s (Bruseth 2012).

The next venture into Texas was made by the French expedition led by La Salle. The goal of La Salle’s expedition was to “to establish a colony sixty leagues up the river (Mississippi River) as a base for striking Mexico, afflicting Spanish shipping, and blocking English expansion, while providing a warm-water port for the Mississippi valley fur trade” (Weddle 2012). La Salle’s expedition was riddled with misfortune, including sailing past the Mississippi River and eventually landing on the Texas coastline. In trying to establish a settlement on the Texas coast, many of LaSalle’s men succumbed to malnutrition, exhaustion, Indian attacks, or were lost in the wilderness. La Salle was killed by one of his own men while on a march east to find the Mississippi River. The settlement was eventually overcome by Indians, and was found in ruins by Spaniard Alonso De Leon in 1689. La Salle’s expedition was a failure for the French, but it did entice the Spanish to undergo efforts to colonize and establish missions in the area that is now East Texas (Long 2011 & Weddle 2012).

In the late 1600’s and early 1700’s the route that would become the Camino Real, or Old San Antonio Road, was carved out of the Texas and Louisiana forestland. Portions of the route were old Indian trails used for trade routes, while other portions were new trails blazed by early Spanish explorers. The route was an important artery through East Texas, and is now State Highway 21 that passes through the southern portion of the Attoyac Bayou Watershed (Long 2011 & McCroskey 2011).

Spaniard Domingo Ramon ventured into East Texas in 1716 to find several villages of Caddo Indians in what is now Nacogdoches County. In an effort to convert the Native Americans to Christianity, three missions were established in present day Nacogdoches County, one at the site of present day Nacogdoches (named after the Nacogdoche Indians who resided there). The mission was temporarily abandoned in 1719 due to a French invasion of Texas, but was in operation until 1773 when the French ceded Louisiana to the Spanish. After the cession of Louisiana, all the settlers were ordered to move to San Antonio or the Rio Grande communities. Led by Antonio Gil Ibarvo, the settlers petitioned the government to return to their former homes, and in 1779 began to rebuild the town of Nacogdoches (Long 2011).
The Caddoans up to this time experienced continual pressure from both French and Spanish efforts to control the Native American tribes. The desire of the French and Spanish to control the Native Americans was threefold: gain control of their territory, establish trade, and convert them to Christianity. With the cession of Louisiana to the Spanish in 1773, the Caddos became subject to Spanish Indian policy. Initial relations with the Spanish government were unstable at best, but eventually the Caddo became loyal to the Spanish and pledged to maintain peace by not engaging in trading of arms and munitions with hostile Native American tribes (Glover 1935).
19th Century

The 1800’s were a volatile time in East Texas history. Early in the 19th century, much of East Texas was abandoned due to fighting associated with the Mexican Revolution. Many residents of East Texas fled across the Sabine River and much of the area was deserted by 1818. Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, and East Texas began to re-populate once again. Immigrants came pouring in from the United States causing further problems for the Mexican government. It was during this time that Mexican restrictions forbade settlements within 20 leagues (roughly 60 miles) of the Texas boundary. The primary purpose was to avoid military contact with the United States, but this “neutral ground” became a haven for squatters and fugitives further causing unrest in portions of East Texas (Long 2011 & Harper 2011).

In 1826, Nacogdoches was home to what is now known as the Fredonian Rebellion. The rebellion occurred as a result of two brothers, the Edwards Brothers that received a grant entitling them to settle as many as 800 families in Nacogdoches and the surrounding area. The brothers informed the existing settlers in the area that they would have to show documentation of their land claim or move off the land. The amount of land in question was very small, and there is only one documented case of someone’s land being sold to someone else; however these assertive actions stirred up conflict between the previous settlers and the new. Due to the ongoing conflict between landowners, as well as conflicts that arose in local governmental elections held in that year, Edward’s grant was revoked. This outraged Edward and with the help of more than thirty of his supporters, they overthrew the local government. When the Mexican authorities heard of the incident, they quickly dispatched over 100 troops to Nacogdoches in order to end the rebellion. Edwards decided to meet the Mexican force in the name of a new republic they termed Fredonia, and declared independence on December 21, 1826. The Mexican forces reached Nacogdoches on January 31, 1827, and the Fredonian Rebellion ended with most of Edward’s men fleeing across the Sabine River. The Republic of Fredonia lasted a mere 41 days (McDonald 2012a).

The Fredonian Rebellion was just the beginning of unrest in Texas, which culminated in the Texas Revolution. The Texas Revolution reportedly began with the Battle of Gonzales in October 1835, but there were many military incidents occurring before 1835, including the battle of Nacogdoches in 1832. The Battle of Nacogdoches occurred when a group of East Texas
settlers refused to surrender their arms to the Mexican government. With the help of surrounding communities of Ayish Bayou, Neches, Sabine, Shelby, and others, the Texans defeated a small force of Mexican soldiers while they retreated to the Angelina River. Although minor, the Battle of Nacogdoches “cleared East Texas of military rule and allowed the citizens to meet in convention without military intervention” (McDonald, 2012b). The Texas Revolution ended with the battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, and the Republic of Texas was established (Barker & Pohl 2012).

The Caddo Indians during this time were experiencing a barrage of changes to their lifestyle, including trading of goods with the Europeans, encroachment of their land by settlers, rampant disease, and raids by hostile Indian tribes. In 1836, the Caddo Indians in the United States reached an agreement to sell their land, in present day Louisiana, for eighty thousand dollars. As part of this treaty, the Caddo Indians were to leave the United States, within one year of signing the treaty. Most of the Caddoan tribes living in Louisiana planned on moving into Texas to join remaining populations of Caddos. This move was interrupted by the onset of the Texas Revolution, and the request that the U.S. not allow the Caddos to move into Texas. After the Republic of Texas was established, relations with the Caddo Indians continued to degrade. The Caddos engaged in some hostile actions against white settlers resulting in an attempt to drive out or exterminate the Caddos that had migrated to Texas. By the early 1840’s most of the Caddo Indians had moved to the Brazos River area in order to avoid repressive measures and colonization efforts. In 1855, the Caddos were placed on the Brazos Indian Reservation where they lived for only four years before being moved to the Washita River in present day western Oklahoma where they reside today (Glover 1935 & Perttula 2012).

The Republic of Texas lasted nearly 10 years, but ended on December 29, 1845 when Texas was annexed as the 28th state in the United States. The annexation of Texas and continual westward expansion of U.S. settlers, were the primary causes of the Mexican war with the U.S that lasted from 1846 – 1848. The U.S. defeated the Mexican army, and in February of 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed by the two governments. The treaty recognized Texas’ annexation to the U.S. and established the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas; the U.S. also gained California, Arizona, New Mexico, as well as portions of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado (Bauer 2012).

In early Texas history, conflict was never far off the horizon. This became increasingly clear as states within the Union began aligning themselves between north and south. Although Texas had strong alignment with the Union that they worked hard to join in 1845, continual attacks on southern institutions from northern politicians, as well as opposition to any interference in the practice of slavery, aligned them strongly with the south. The Civil War began in 1861 and lasted until 1865. There were approximately 90,000 Texans that fought in the war (Wooster 2012).

Following the Civil War, the reconstruction era in Texas, as in much of the South, represented a time of hardship and turmoil. An economic system that did not utilize slavery had to be developed, social issues associated with freed slaves had to be dealt with, and broken political systems had to be fixed. Railroads continued to expand during reconstruction, further legitimizing the Texas agriculture economy. Cultivation of corn and wheat increased during this
period; however, the main cash crop was cotton. The population in Texas greatly increased during reconstruction, with over 200,000 people immigrating to the state between 1860 and 1870. These immigrants drove the population of Texas to over 1 million by the end of reconstruction (Moneyhon 2012).

Railroads

The introduction of the railroad into East Texas greatly increased the economic viability of the area, turning subsistence farming into for-profit ventures, and allowing widespread timber harvesting by providing an efficient and reliable transportation mechanism. The first railroad to come through East Texas was the Houston East and West Railway (HE&WT). The HE&WT Railway eventually connected Houston Texas with Shreveport Louisiana, and was constructed through Nacogdoches in 1882. The town of Nacogdoches was on the decline before the arrival of the HE&WT Railway, largely due to lack of adequate and reliable transportation, but the arrival of the railway rekindled economic prosperity in the region. The railways changed the face of East Texas by shifting transportation from either river traffic or utilization of poorly constructed and maintained roads to the much more efficient and reliable railways. This caused the decline of river port towns such as Pattiona which was situated near the Angelina River in southeast Nacogdoches County. Many towns, such as Garrison, sprang up due to the construction of railroads and the associated industry needed for supplies. Other railroads constructed near the Attoyac Bayou Watershed during this period included the Caro Northern Railway constructed in 1894 from Nacogdoches County to Mount Enterprise in Rusk County, the Gulf, Beaumont and Great Northern Railroad constructed in 1904 through the central portion of Shelby County, and the Timpson and Northwestern Railway was constructed from Timpson in Shelby County to Henderson in Rusk County in 1909 (Harper 2011, Knapp & Beisele 2011, and Long 2011).

Figure 2.3 – Photograph of Engine #28 which came through Nacogdoches County in 1914.
Source: East Texas Research Center.
Agriculture

Agriculture has always been a critical aspect to life in East Texas. Farming in East Texas began with the Caddo Indians who became increasingly reliant on cultivated crops such as maize and squash. As settlers moved into East Texas, land was cleared and mainly small subsistence farms were established. During the mid-1800’s, cotton and corn were the most important and widely grown crops, and hogs were the most abundant livestock. Other crops grown during this period were mainly for individual family consumption and consisted of wheat, sugar cane, tobacco, and various other vegetables. Although hogs were the most abundant livestock, there were sizeable numbers of cattle and the monetary value of cattle when compared to hogs was generally greater; additional animals consisted if sheep, goats and horses. As with other industries, the arrival of the railroads significantly changed the agriculture economy of East Texas. The trend of subsistence farming declined and cultivation of cash crops, mainly cotton, increased substantially (Harper 2011, Knapp & Beisele 2011, and Long 2011).

Figure 2.4 – Photograph of workers on cotton farm in East Texas.
Source: East Texas Research Center

The end of the Civil War marked a significant change in agricultural practices in the South. With the end of slavery, plantation owners needed a way to ensure they had adequate labor supplies but had very little money due to the war. As a result, forms of tenant farming developed. Tenants were charged a portion of their harvest in exchange for farming land they did not own. As the practice of tenant farming increased, it became a highly systematic and hierarchical institution. At the top were farmers that supplied all the necessary farming equipment except the land; these share or cash tenants typically paid the landlord a third to a forth of their harvest. At the bottom, were the sharecroppers who only supplied their labor; they
typically paid roughly half of the harvest. Directly after the Civil War, most of the tenant farmers were freed slaves, however as time went on the number of white tenants steadily increased. The number of tenant farmers continued to rise into the 1930’s. The census of 1930 recorded that 61 percent of all Texas farmers were tenant farmers (Harper & Odom, 2012).

During the 1920’s cotton prices dropped, as a result most southern farmers increased their production to try and offset the drop in prices. This decline in price, along with the arrival of the boll weevil devastated numerous farms causing many to move to larger cities to find work. During the Great Depression, government programs associated with the New Deal reduced the number of tenant farmers by enacting programs that encouraged tenants to become owners, as well as programs that paid farmers to reduce crop acreage which reduced the amount of labor that was needed. By the 1950’s the number of farms in most East Texas counties dropped by roughly 50 percent from the 1930’s. As cotton production fell, livestock production increased and replaced many other forms of agriculture. By the 1970’s most of the agriculture receipts from Nacogdoches, Shelby and San Augustine and Rusk Counties were from livestock production, mostly cattle and poultry. This trend is still evident today, with Shelby and Nacogdoches counties ranking first and second in the state for broiler (meat chicken) production in the 2007 Census of Agriculture produced by NASS (Harper 2011, Knapp & Beisele 2011, Long 2011 & McCroskey 2011).

**Logging**

As with agriculture, logging began in East Texas with the Caddo Indians who felled trees to construct their houses and villages and to clear land for small subsistence farms. The impact the Native Americans had on the land was minimal when compared to what was to come with the onset of European settlement. One of the first sawmills to be constructed in East Texas was built in 1829 in Nacogdoches County on Carrizo Creek. Due to the lack of reliable transportation, these early mills remained small and were only able to sell wood to local markets. Some tried to float logs down major rivers, but rivers were commonly clogged with logs and other debris and flows were sporadic. As a result, the vast forests of East Texas could not be profitably exploited and lumber was in short supply in Texas (University of Texas at Austin 2004).

The arrival of the railroad spurred what is known as the “bonanza period” in East Texas logging history. At the same time, innovations such as the band saw made milling safer and more efficient. Corporations began to construct larger and larger mills and mill towns began to pop up all across East Texas and the south. As forest resources were used up in one area, logging operations moved further into remote forests and more towns were built. Trams or logging railroads were constructed deeper and deeper into the virgin forests of East Texas as logging fronts advanced. These trams and cleared routes became the rural transportation system of farm to market and county roads we have now. By the early 1900’s, the Attoyac Bayou Watershed was home to many towns with sawmills such as Garrison and Mayotown in northeast Nacogdoches County, Smyrna in southeast Nacogdoches County, Waterman in southwest Shelby County, and Denning in northwest San Augustine County. Many more mills were likely present within the Attoyac Bayou Watershed and by 1910 there were over 600 mills in Texas (University of Texas at Austin 2004).
By 1920 most of the forest land acquired by the larger mills had been cut over leaving tangled thickets of hardwood re-growth with little to no pine regeneration. Some companies moved on to other areas of the U.S. such as out west where large tracts were still available for cut-and-run logging, while other companies simply went bankrupt. In 1933 the Texas legislature passed a bill allowing the U.S. Forest Service to purchase cutover forest lands in Texas. The U.S. Forest Service began to appraise and buy forest lands that would comprise the National Forests now in Texas. More than 90 percent of this land was purchased from 11 timber companies. Forestry and timber production continue to play a key role in the economy of East Texas and the Attoyac Bayou Watershed (University of Texas at Austin 2004).
Oil & Natural Gas Production

Oil and natural gas production have played an important role in East Texas and the Attoyac Bayou Watershed. The first oil well to be drilled in Texas was done so in Oil Springs located in southern Nacogdoches County. In 1865 Taliaferro Barret and some friends established the Melrose Petroleum Oil Company, and in 1866 at a depth of 106 ft they struck oil. Due to lack of financial support, Barret abandoned his venture and the oil field lay dormant until 1887 when new drilling companies came into the area. By 1889 there were forty producing wells in the oil field around Oil Springs (Folsom 2012).

In the early 1930’s, the largest and most prolific oil field in the continental United States was discovered in Rusk County. The East Texas oilfield is roughly 45 miles north/south and 5 miles east/west and is situated in portions of Gregg, Rusk, Upshur, Smith and Cherokee Counties. Since its discovery, the East Texas Oilfield has produced roughly 5.2 billion barrels of oil from over 30,000 wells. Although situated outside of the Attoyac Bayou Watershed, the East Texas Oilfield had a significant impact on the economy, landscape and culture of East Texas (Smith 2012).

Figure 2.7 – Oil and natural gas wells within and around the Attoyac Bayou Watershed. Source: The Railroad Commission of Texas
As seen in Figure 2.7, most of the drilling in the Attoyac Bayou Watershed is for the exploration of natural gas. Natural gas producing formations in and around the Attoyac Bayou Watershed include the Haynesville Shale, Bossier Shale, Travis Peak, and Cotton Valley formations. Most of the wells in the Attoyac Bayou Watershed are associated with the Travis Peak and Cotton Valley formations in the northern portion of the watershed. However, beginning in 2009 drilling activities associated with the Haynesville Shale formation emerged. Most of the drilling associated with the Haynesville Shale was concentrated in the southern portion of the watershed in eastern Nacogdoches County, northern San Augustine County, and southern Shelby County (Bartberger, Dyman & Condon 2003; Dyman & Condon 2006).