Texas Historical Commission Staff (CW), 7/13/77, revised 12/1/77;

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker without post
Kerr County (Order #4983) to attach to stone
Location: FM 1341, 10 mi.E of Kerrville

INDIAN SITES*
ON CYPRESS CREEK***

NAMED "STURDY OAK FARM" FOR AN
ANCIENT LIVE OAK,THIS PROPERTY HAS
BELONGED TO THE LICH FAMILY SINCE
1879•MR.AND MRS.ERNST PERRY LICH
BECAME THE OWNERS IN 1945•THREE
SIGNIFICANT PREHISTORIC SITES
ON THIS PROPERTY INDICATE ITS
IMPORTANCE FOR HUMAN HABITATION
FOR AT LEAST 10,000 YEARS•TOOLS
FROM THE SITES REPRESENT SEVERAL
ARCHEOLOGICAL PERIODS FROM PALEO-
INDIAN THROUGH ARCHAIC TIMES•THE
SITES ARE NEAR SPRING-FED POOLS IN
CYPRESS CREEK•ARTIFACTS DISCOVERED
AT THE THREE LOCATIONS INCLUDE
ARROWHEADS,KNIVES,BEADS,AND STONE
TOOLS LEFT BY NOMADIC TRIBES
THAT ONCE WANDERED THIS AREA•**

(1978)***

*3/4 inch lettering
**1/2 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

APPROVED
Truett Latimer
12-9-77

4983

Indian Life Sites on the Cypress Creek

Sturdy Oak Farm

Glen Ernst Lich*
Southwest Texas State University
and
Lera Tyler Lich*

The valley of the Cypress Creek is situated in the hills of Central Texas, a land characterized by shallow black soil, limestone outcroppings, liveoak trees, and brushy thickets. Sources of water have been the most important factor contributing to the region's inhabitation from prehistoric to pioneer times. The Cypress Creek has its origin in the hills about six miles northeast of Kerrville and flows southeastwardly twelve to fifteen miles through Kerr County to its confluence with the Guadalupe River near the town of Comfort.

Along the upper creek there are several deep "fishing holes" or watering holes which have been known since the days of the German pioneer settlers as permanent sources of water — the only places where water can be found in times of drought within a 7 to 10 mile radius. Near these spring-fed holes on the Sturdy Oak Farm of Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Perry Lich are at least three Indian life sites of significant size. A large liveoak

---

*Glen Ernst Lich is the son of the site discovers, Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Perry Lich, and perhaps participated in some of the discoveries. Lera Tyler

tree over 300 years old is situated in a stand of oaks on the second Indian life site, and this oak has given the farm its name. The creek runs one and one-third miles from Site I to Site III, and in this distance the creek bed drops about 45 feet. Site I (the Long Field) is a hillside site located 75 yards from the creek at an elevation of 25 to 30 feet above the creek bed. Site II (the Sturdy Oak Farm Homestead) is a wooded meadow site 50 yards from the creek sitting atop a small bluff 30 feet above the creek bed. Site III (the Old Water Well) is a wooded knoll and hillside site 275 yards from the creek and 20 feet above the bed, which at that point is about 45 feet below the elevation of the creek bed at Site I. Sites I and II have largely been disturbed by cultivation. Site II on which the Lich farmhouse is built has been a garden for over 30 years. Only limited parts of Site III have been cultivated.

German and Anglo-American pioneers had been in the Hill Country for a decade when the first settlers reached the Cypress Creek.[1] No Indians were living permanently in the region,[2] but these early German farmers — Wiedenfelds, Saurs, Steves, Lichs — were aware of numerous arrowheads along the creek.[3] The land on which the three Indian life sites were later discovered was purchased in 1879 and has been in the family since that date. Kendall County Commissioner Louis Lich and later his brother Ernst Lich held title to the property before the Sturdy Oak Farm came into the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Perry Lich in 1945.

The first discovery (Site II) was made by Mrs. Ernst Perry Lich in the same year the farm became their homestead. While cultivating a garden, she found not only arrowheads but, over a period of several years, a number of heavy hand tools which led her to surmise correctly that their home was situated on an old Indian campsite. Site I was discovered by the family in the 1950's. Not until a flood in 1960, when the highest water level in over a century was recorded,[4] was Site III found — far beyond the flood stage.

Mrs. Lich, a member of the Texas Archeological Society for nearly 20 years, carefully collected, mounted, and labeled each relic found on their property. The three sites have yielded a rich collection of Indian artifacts which include paint pigments, sea shells, charred stones, flint blanks, projectile points, drills and awls, manos and metates, tiny shards, necklace beads, sinkers, axes, knives, and scrapers. Among the most interesting items are crude design scratchings and animal-shaped stones with "eyes," which Mrs. Lich believes are a form of Indian art in the Hill Country.[5] All artifacts are surface finds in cultivated areas, and no excavations have been undertaken; for this reason, no formal dating has been established for these Cypress Creek life sites, although archeological type comparisons indicate that a preponderance of the artifacts are from the Archaic Period (4000 BC - AD 1000).

The Indian artifacts are exhibited in the farmhouse of the Ernst Perry Lich family. Fourteen framed cases (40 sq. ft.)

and 21 feet of shelf space display cataloged artifacts in a near-perfect state of preservation. In addition, 40 containers (70 cu. in. each) hold other identified pieces. 95% of the items are from the three sites on the Sturdy Oak Farm, and the bulk were uncovered between 1957 and 1960.

The three sites on the Cypress Creek were home to a people whose culture and history is unrecorded. The life sites, naturally, are not distinguished in the landscape and a prehistoric heritage remains hidden in the ground, yet through the artifacts found and displayed by the Ernst Perry Lich family, a better local understanding of the culture of the Indians of Central Texas has come about. The collection has been featured at county fairs, by news media of the area, and in 1962 at the Battle of Nueces Centennial Celebration in Comfort. Schoolchildren from Comfort are regularly driven out to see the artifacts of the first Americans. Organizations which have viewed the display since 1960 include 4-H clubs, church youth groups, Home Demonstration clubs, and Girl and Boy Scout troops from Comfort, Center Point, Fredericksburg, and Kerrville. Kendall and Kerr county soil conservation technicians and county agents have also visited the exhibit.

Identifying the nomadic Indians who lived in Central Texas in pre-Columbian times has been a problem to the cultural historian and to the archeologist.[6] Likewise, the relics of the Indians along the Cypress Creek present a fascinating mixture

of prehistoric culture. Independent bands of Indians appeared in the area 3,000 years ago; these people, known as the Maravillas culture,[7] were primarily hunters and food-gatherers from the west searching for a wetter climate in times of drought. As more distinct cultures developed in the Southwest, the Plains, the Western Gulf Coast, and in northern Mexico, Central Texas became the meeting ground formany Indians,[8] and the life of the people who inhabited the area was the "product of many borrowings from different places at different times."[9] The varied types of artifacts found in the Cypress Creek life sites testify to this transitional status. When the Spaniards first explored the region the scattered bands had slowly evolved into a people known as the Tonkawas.[10] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tribes of Lipan-Apaches from the mountains to the west and later Commanches from the Plains to the north moved into the Edwards Plateau, and the Tonkawas were forced eastward. When German and and Anglo-American settlers arrived in the Hill Country, the area was claimed by the Lipan-Apache and Commanche Indians as hunting grounds, but seldom was used as a permanent camp. The study of prehistoric Indian culture is baffling, and artifacts found in life sites such as the ones along the Cypress Creek may contribute important clues in the understanding of these peripheral cultures.

The Indian voice is silent in the Hill Country. Along

evidence of the past remains preserved in artifacts and hidden in the soil. Ernst Perry Lich and Susan Woolfley Lich, a grand-niece of the Smith brothers[11] who were captured by Apaches and Commanches in 1871, wish to mark three Indian life sites along the Cypress Creek of Kerr County. The grounds that once were home to the first inhabitants of the state and to a people who have made significant contributions in the development of Texas should be recognized, and a culture now gone ought to be commemorated.

Footnotes

[1] Glen Ernst Lich, "A History of Cypress Creek," Hill Country (1976).

[2] Bob Bennett, Kerr County, Texas: 1856-1956 (San Antonio: Naylor, 1956), p. 16.

[3] Ernst Perry and Susan Woolfley Lich, interview on 26 November 1976, Sturdy Oak Farm, Comfort, Texas.

[4] Fred Saur, Rainfall Records of Cypress Creek.

[5] Ernst Perry and Susan Woolfley Lich.

[6] Paul S. Martin, George I. Quimby, and Donald Collier, Indians before Columbus: Twenty Thousand Years of North American History Revealed by Archeology (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 218.

[7] Martin, p. 219.

[8] W. W. Newcomb, Jr. in the Introduction of Indian Tribes of Texas (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), iii.

[9] Martin, p. 218.

[10] Dayton Kelley in Indian Tribes of Texas, p. 151.

[11] Clinton L. and Jeff D. Smith are the authors of The Boy Captives, written by J. Marvin Hunter (Kerrville: 1965).

NOTE by Director of Research (DP) regarding the land embraced by this study:: The Sturdy Oak Farm, as it is called,lies in two original grants. Part of the land is in the claim granted to Thomas J. Golightly, who swore that he arrived in Texas in Nov. 1835 as a single man and was entitled to one-third of a league of land; the Board of Land Commissioners of Harrisburgh County awarded him a certificate for his land on Feb. 10, 1838. The Handbook of Texas, Vol. I, p. 706, states that Golightly served in the Texian Army during the Siege of Bexar and up to Jan. 4, 1836, and also after April 23, 1836, helping to bury the victims of the Goliad Massacre, etc. The Handbook alleges that he died Sept. 9, 1840, so obviously his certificate for land was taken up by some assignee, for his land in Kerr County was surveyed on Sept. 6, 1851, and affirmed by the land commissioner of the Bexar District thereafter, in 1852. Gov. P. H. Bell signed the patent. See Kerr County Patent #616, GLO.

The other parcel of land now embraced by the Sturdy Oak Farm was first alienated from public domain under a patent issued by the State of Texas and signed by Gov. O. M. Roberts on May 13, 1881. The patent was given to Edward Schmidt, "by virtue of his affidavit made before the clerk of the County Court for Kerr County Oct. 4th, 1877, under an act for the benefit of actual occupants of the Public Lands, approved May 26, 1873".

Bibliography

Bennett, Bob. Kerr County, Texas: 1856-1956. San Antonio Naylor, 1956.

Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society, 30 (1959).

Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society, 31 (1960).

Hughes, Jack T., ed. "Projectile Point Types of Texas and Bordering States." A chart drafted by Ray Thompson. Canyon, Texas West Texas State University Anthropological Society, 1972.

Lich, Ernst Perry and Susan Woolfley. Interview on 26 November 1976. Sturdy Oak Farm, Comfort, Texas.

Lich, Glen Ernst. "A History of Cypress Creek." Hill Country (1976).

Martin, Paul S., Quimby, George I., and Collier, Donald. Indians before Columbus: Twenty Thousand Years of North American History Revealed by Archeology. Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947.

Ransleben, Guido E. A Hundred Years of Comfort in Texas: 1854-1954. San Antonio: Naylor, 1954.

Rogers, Hugh C. Indian Relics and their Story: A Handbook for Collectors. Ft. Smith, Ark.: 1954.

Russell, Virgil Y. Indian Artifacts. Rev. and enl. Boulder, Colo.: 1957.

Saur, Fred. Rainfall Records of Cypress Creek.

Suhm, Dee Ann and Jelks, Edward B. The Handbook of Texas Archeology: Type Descriptions. Austin: The Texas Archeology Society and The Texas Memorial Museum, 1962.

Winfrey, Dorman H., et. al. Indian Tribes of Texas. Waco: Texian Press, 1971.