east-west road parallel to the Río Grande that was laid out by the U.S. Army during the Mexi-
can War in 1846.

With the inevitable development of modern mechanized farming in the lower Río 
Grande valley after World War II, El Capote was slowly abandoned, and the 
houses were torn down as new lands fell under the plow. All that is left of the former community today is a small cemetery that is still 
maintained by descendants of original El Capote families and one standing, though 
raptured deteriorating brick house, located outside the area of the archaeological 
survey. Informants indicated that besides brick, the older houses at El Capote were of adobe or 
plaster (wooden posts with mud plaster construction, while homes built after 1920 were 
known to be torn down or abandoned). Of the 15 or so El Capote house sites that may 
have or are known to have existed in the survey area, only scattered pottery, glass, 
metal, and brick fragments remain.

Before fieldwork began, the archaeol-
gists knew the potential for important prehistoric sites was low and, because of the 
wide extent of agricultural distur-
bances, they did not expect to encounter 
any intact historical remains. They were 
correct in the first assessment, but the 
later assumption turned out to be incor-
rect.

When the survey began, all of the land 
within the one-half mile survey corridor 
on either side of the bridge was under 
cultivation, except for one small plot 
that had never been cleared and was 
overgrown with dense vegetation. During 
the survey of this small plot, the archaeological team discovered the remains of a partially 
subterranean, adobe-walled structure. It 
was recognized as a brick kiln and was 
recorded as an archaeological site (it is 
known as the Guajardo-Vela site, or 
41HO156, according to the state's site 
umbering system). A large depression and the 
many piles of bricks observed were thought to be related to the brick kiln, but, as 
with most archaeological surveys, time did not permit a detailed study of all of the surface 
features and scattered artifacts. Local informants revealed that this was the loca-
tion of a brick plant that was owned and 
operated by Pedro Guajardo, an El Capote 
businessman who lived from 1875-1952 
(these dates were verified by his grave 
marker in the El Capote cemetery). After 
the survey was finished, the archaeologists 
concluded that more archival and archaeo-
logical work was needed to better define 
the history of the brick factory and deter-
mine how much of it remains intact.

Archaeologists from Prescott and 
Associates returned to the Pharr-Reynolds Interna-
tional Bridge in 1993 to conduct the 
next phase of work. This study involved 
more archival and oral history research, 
relating to the community of El Capote, 
additional survey to locate historic sites, 
and archaeological test excavations to 
evaluate the research potential of selected sites. Additional work at the brick kiln site 
also was done at this time and included 
detailed recording of the archaeological 
remains and more historic archival and 
informant research.

Additional former residents of El Capote 
were interviewed, and it was learned that 
the brick factory, or lastrilla, had been 
used by Pedro Guajardo to produce bricks 
that were sold to locals along the old Mili-
tary Road prior to 1922. Informants thought that 
Guajardo might have built the kiln in the 
20th century, but several homes built 
at El Capote in the 1880s were constructed 
of bricks that are identical to some of those 
made at the Guajardo-Vela site, including 
the extant Guapo house located just 
outside the survey area. It is likely that the 
kiln was constructed, probably by some 
of Guajardo's relatives, in the 1880s if not 
sooner. Pedro Guajardo would have been 
25 years old in 1880, and he 
could have taken over the kiln by that 
time. The kiln apparently was not used by