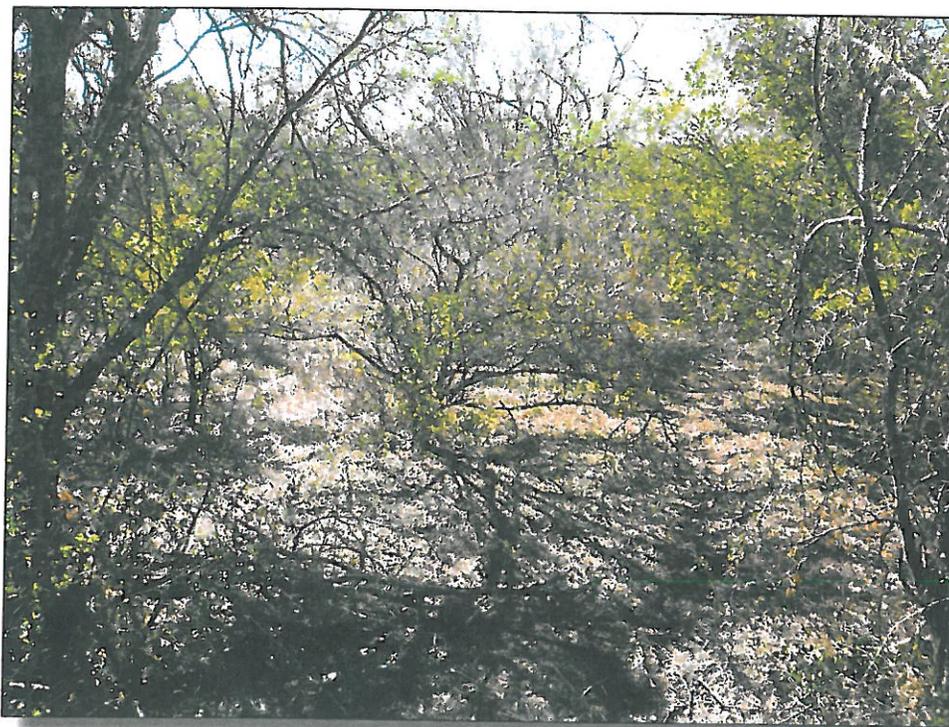


**ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
OF A 164-ACRE TRACT ALONG  
GROSENBACHER ROAD IN  
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS**



**Jon J. Dowling**

*Ecological Communications Corporation*



**January 2012**



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by  
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Austin, Texas



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Ecological Communications Corporation Project No. 124-004

*Cover photograph: Typical View of Project Area*

## ABSTRACT

In November of 2011, Ecological Communications Corporation carried out an archeological survey of an undeveloped 164-acre tract of privately owned land in western San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. Ecological Communications Corporation performed the work under the City of San Antonio's Unified Development Code. Archeological survey work included visual inspection of the project area supported by the 62 shovel tests. None of the shovel tests contained any archeological material. EComm's investigation documented several isolated historical artifacts on the ground surface, the ruins of a late 1960s homestead, and one archeological site. EComm recorded 41BX1900 as a nineteenth century homesite consisting of two limestone cisterns, hewn side by side into the underlying bedrock. One of them bears a date of 1889. However, the site lacks integrity, and archival research suggests it is not associated with any significant persons or events in Bexar County's history. Since no cultural resources were identified that meet eligibility requirements for the National Register of Historic Places or as a State Archeological Landmark, additional archeological work in connection with the proposed undertaking is not recommended.



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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the results of the archeological survey carried out by Ecological Communications Corporation (EComm) in response to a request by Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc. to conduct cultural resources evaluation of an approximately 164-acre tract of privately owned land in western San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The project's location is found on the Culebra Hill, Texas—7.5 Minute Series USGS Quadrangle sheet (Figure 1). The project area consists of a 164-acre tract of land between Groesenbacher Road and Madrona Street, north of IH 90. It is situated just south of the Coolcrest subdivision. This land is privately owned and no federal or state funding is involved with the proposed development of this area. The current land owner, Milestone Potranco Development LTD, proposes to develop property within the project area for a residential community.

The survey was undertaken in compliance with the City of San Antonio's (COSA) Unified Development Code (UDC) that requires review by the COSA Office of Historic Preservation of any property with the COSA Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) prior to development. Since the project area consists of privately owned land, neither the Antiquities Code of Texas, nor Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act applies. However, all archeological work performed during this survey adhered to or exceeded the archeological survey standards developed by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Council of Texas Archeologists (CTA) for purposes of conducting surveys in Texas. These standards require one shovel test every three acres for projects of 100–200 acres in size. Investigators assessed resources for their potential research significance and recommended them for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or as a State Archeological Landmarks (SALs).

A 100-percent pedestrian survey of the entire project area was conducted, accompanied by 62 shovel tests. All shovel test excavations were negative and no subsurface cultural materials were exposed. Pedestrian survey revealed a late 1960s homestead, several isolated historic artifacts on the ground surface, as well as a historic site (41BX1900) that consists of two cisterns hewn into bedrock. Archival work suggests that 41BX1900 is not associated with any significant persons or events. The site has also been disturbed by later landowners who used the cisterns for burning refuse. Research significance, therefore, is limited and further work at 41BX1900 is not recommended.

This report is divided into five chapters. The environmental setting, cultural overview, and previous archeology are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes the field methodology used during the project, and the results of field investigations are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the summary and recommendations.

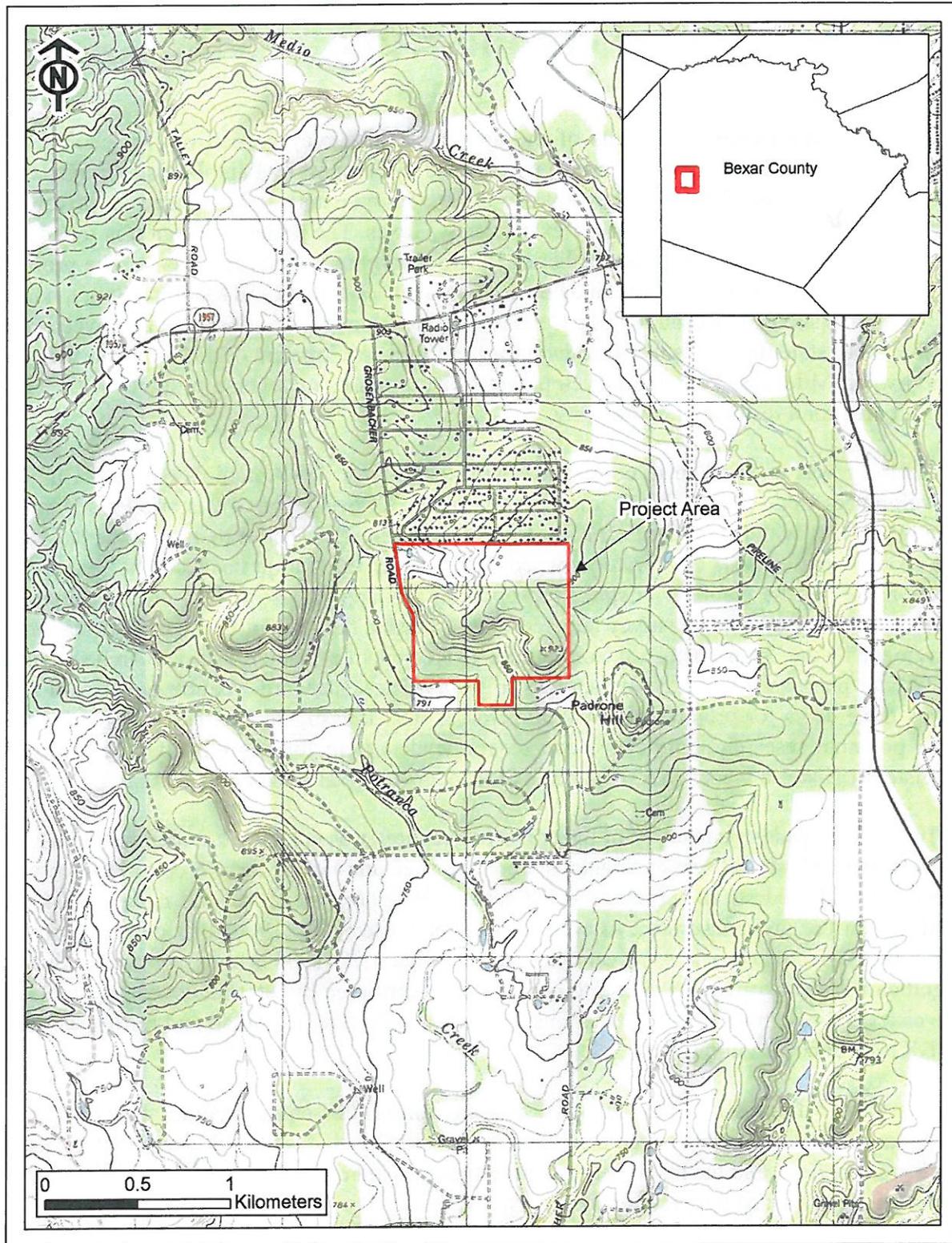


Figure 1. Project area location.

## CHAPTER 2

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The geographic region encompassing the project area is referred to as South Texas. This broad and diverse landscape includes the Edwards Plateau to the north, the Rio Grande River to the south, the Gulf of Mexico coastline to the east, and the Lower Pecos region to the west (Norwine 1995:138). The environmental and cultural development of Bexar County specifically has been greatly shaped by its position on the edge of the Edward's Plateau. This ecotonal region provided by the Balcones Escarpment has generated diverse biotic resources, long utilized by the prehistoric inhabitants of present-day San Antonio. Of the seven biotic provinces of Texas provided by Blair (1950:112), the San Antonio area lies on the southern edge of the Balconian Province. The proximity of two neighboring provinces, the forested Texan and the arid Tamaulipan, increases resource variability that would have been available to prehistoric inhabitants.

Numerous springs, aquifers, and rivers are interspersed in and around the Balcones Escarpment due to the hinge line faulting along the Paleozoic Ouachita structural belt (Foley and Woodruff 1986). The large underwater reservoir of the Edwards Aquifer lies in west-central Texas, where water percolates through Lower Cretaceous limestone that rests on virtually impermeable pre-Cretaceous formations (Barker et al. 1994). Excellent potable water sources arise as a result of this percolation. Springs created from the Balcones Escarpment give birth to several rivers in Bexar County. Rivers generated by the Balcones Escarpment springs include the Guadalupe, Comal, San Marcos, Blanco, and San Antonio rivers. The Medina River, the closest river to the project area, is a short, narrow river that is reminiscent of the Upper Guadalupe because of the physical nature of its topography. Starting in northwest Bandera County, it extends about 116 miles through Bandera, Medina and Bexar Counties to its confluence with the San Antonio River just southeast of the City of San Antonio. The closest water source to the project area is Potranco Creek, which rests southwest of the project area.

The Edwards Plateau, Blackland Prairie, and South Texas Plains converge, creating a mosaic of vegetation communities in Bexar County (Gould 1969). The Balcones Escarpment deviates sharply from the thin-soiled limestone uplands and the wide coastal plains. Mixed live oak, ashe juniper woodlands, and sporadic grassy openings comprise the bulk of upland vegetation. Tree canopy closure, for the most part, is generally low, and ashe juniper is most prevailing in density. Texas oak and cedar elm also occur in low densities. In upland areas, shrub density varies from low to dense. Low-density species include Texas persimmon, agarita, prickly pear, and mixed grasses. The Blackland Prairie and South Texas Plains have a gently rolling topography that sustains hickory, red oaks, and hackberry that accompanies an understory of big bluestem, switchgrass, Virginia creeper, and green briar (Gould 1969). The majority

of trees observed within the project area consisted of elm and juniper trees, in addition to mountain laurel.

This area of Texas has a sub-humid climate as a result of moderate rainfall and fairly warm temperatures (Bomar 1983:208–222). The annual average rainfall for San Antonio is 29.13 inches of precipitation, with the rainiest months being May, June, and September (Bomar 1983:222). Precipitation in this area of Texas stems from the tumultuous transition between arctic and Gulf of Mexico air masses. Average San Antonio temperatures range from 39.0–61.7°F in January to 74.3–94.9°F in July.

Soils within the project area are summarized in Table 1. The majority of the soils encountered within the project area consist of Eckrant cobbly clay (approximately 63 percent) which is described as well drained, deep clay containing numerous cobbles. A typical soil profile of Eckrant soils consist of 0 to 10 inches of cobbly clay, 10 to 18 inches of extremely stony clay loam followed by 18 to 25 inches of bedrock. Whitewright clay and Whitewright-Austin Complex soils make up the approximately 23.9 percent of the soils within the project area. Whitewright soils are described as well drained, deep clay with cobbles and have a typical soils profile of 0 to 6 inches of clay loam, 6 to 15 inches of silty clay, followed by 15 to 20 inches of bedrock. Whitewright-Austin Complex soils are very similar to Whitewright soils and have a nearly identical soil profile. Krum clay soils form the remained of the soil types found within the project area (approximately 13.1 percent). Krum soils are made up of deep, well drained soils with a typical soil profile consisting of 0 to 62 inches of clay (Web Soil Survey Website 2011).

Table 1. Soils within the Project Area.

Map Unit	Map Unit Description	Acreage	Percent of Project Area
BpC	Whitewright clay loam 1 to 5 percent slopes	29.8	18.2
BsC	Whitewright-Austin complex, 1 to 5 percent slopes	9.4	5.7
Kr	Krum clay, 1 to 5 percent slopes	21.5	13.1
TaB	Eckrant cobbly clay, 1 to 5 percent slopes	83.0	50.6
TaC	Eckrant cobbly clay, 5 to 15 percent slopes	20.3	12.4
<i>Totals Project Area</i>		<i>164.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

## **REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

The project area is situated on the cusp of Central and South Texas. This culture history will reference primarily Central Texas regional patterns, but will also include relevant South Texas trends and developments. Once a culture chronology for this region of Texas has been

summarized, a brief overview of archeological work in proximity to the project area will be provided.

## **Paleoindian**

The arrival of humans in the New World occurred during the Paleoindian period, which dates from 11,500 to 8800 BP (Collins 1995). As the Pleistocene ended, diagnostic Paleoindian materials in the form of Clovis, Folsom, and Plainview projectile points began to enter the archeological record. These points were lanceolate-shaped and fluted for hafting to wooden spears. Using the launching momentum from atlatls (spear-throwers), large game such as mammoth, mastodons, bison, camel, and horse were frequently taken (Black 1989). In addition to megafauna, Paleoindian groups likely harvested less daunting prey including antelope, turtle, frogs, etc. Stylistic changes in projectile point technology occurred during this later portion of the period, eventually shifting to Dalton, Scottsbluff, and Golondrina traditions. While widespread in geographic range, these types occurred in high densities in the High Plains and Central Texas (Meltzer and Bever 1995). One of the oldest confirmed Clovis sites in North America is arguably the Aubrey Clovis Site (41DN479) in Denton County, Texas, with a carbon date assay of 11,550 BP (Ferring 2001). Environmental studies suggest that Late Pleistocene climates were wetter and cooler (Mauldin and Nickels 2001; Toomey et al. 1993), gradually shifting to drier and warmer conditions during the Early Holocene (Bousman 1998). As megafauna gradually died off during the shift to warmer climates, subsistence patterns shifted toward smaller game and plant foraging.

## **Archaic**

The Archaic period, broadly divided into the Early, Middle, and Late Archaic sub-periods, signifies a more intensive reliance on local floral and faunal resources with an increase in the number of projectile point styles (Collins 1995). The archeological record begins to indicate more widespread use of burned rock middens, a wider variety of site functions, and more localized geographic distributions of these materials.

### **Early Archaic**

Hester places the Early Archaic between 7950 and 4450 BP based on Early Corner Notched and Early Basal Notched projectile points (1995:436–438). Collins' dating of the Early Archaic period to 8800–6000 BP is founded on unstemmed point types (1995:383). Around 8000 BP, styles transitioned to stemmed varieties such as the Martindale and Uvalde (Black 1989), but unstemmed Early Triangular points were also in use as well (Turner and Hester 1999). As the extinction of megafauna herds took hold, a subsistence shift towards heavier reliance on deer, fish, and plants became necessary. In the archeological record, this trend equates to greater densities of ground stone artifacts, fire-cracked rock midden features, and task specific tools such as Clear Fork gouges and Guadalupe and Nueces bifaces (Turner and Hester 1999:246, 256). A great deal of Guadalupe Bifaces are recovered near river drainage systems like the San Antonio River, flowing toward the Gulf Coast off Edwards Plateau, and are thought to function

as primarily woodworking tools in a hafted capacity (Steve Tomka, personal communication; Black and McGraw 1985). Most Early Archaic open-campsite concentrations were distributed along the eastern and southern margins of the Edwards Plateau in areas with reliable water sources (McKinney 1981). Population densities were relatively low and consisted of small bands with a fairly high degree of mobility (Story 1985:39). Loeve-Fox, Jetta Court, and Sleeper sites are representative sites of the Early Archaic (Collins 1995).

### **Middle Archaic**

Middle Archaic materials date from about 6000 to 4000 BP, with increased occurrence of multiuse bifacial knives and burned rock middens (Collins 1995:383). Diagnostic points from this period include Bell, Andice, Taylor, Nolan, and Travis. The Tortugas point also appears in Middle Archaic contexts and possibly earlier (Turner and Hester 1999). According to Collins (1995), the beginning of the Middle Archaic still exhibited large-game hunting of bison, and the climate became much drier towards the end of the Middle Archaic, necessitating a heavier reliance on sotol and acorn harvesting (Weir 1976:126). An expansion of oak woodlands on the Edwards Plateau and Balcones Escarpment may have been conducive to the intensified exploitation of certain plants (Weir 1976). This period also experienced population increases, and it is possible that previously scattered bands of hunter-gatherers began to combine harvesting and processing efforts (Weir 1976:126). Panthers Spring Site, Landslide, Wounded Eye, and Gibson sites demonstrate cultural trends of the Middle Archaic (Collins 1995).

### **Late Archaic**

The last sub-period of the Archaic falls between 4000 and 800 BP (Collins 1995:384). Dart point diagnostics of the Late Archaic are somewhat smaller, triangular points with corner notches such as the Ensor and Ellis (Turner and Hester 1999:114,122). Other Late Archaic points include Bulverde, Pedernales, Marshall, and Marcos (Collins 1995). It is not entirely clear whether this period experienced a rise (Collins 1995; Prewitt 1981) or decline (Black 1989) in population numbers, but large cemeteries, grave goods, and exotic trade items are known to occur at this time at sites such as Loma Sandia, Rudy Haiduk, Silo, Ernest Witte, and Morhiss Mound in Central and South Texas. Evidence from the Thunder Valley sinkhole cemetery has suggested that increasing territoriality may have occurred during the Late Archaic, possibly as a result of population increase (Bement 1989). The frequency of burned rock middens increase and open campsites appear to increase. Characteristic Late Archaic sites include the Anthon and Loeve Fox sites (Collins 1995).

### **Late Prehistoric**

There exists some degree of overlap between diagnostic tools that are considered Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric, but the commonly held date for the beginning of this interval is 1200 BP. A hallmark transition for this period is the introduction of the bow and arrow, which enabled prehistoric hunters to harvest prey from greater distances with a lesser need for brushless, wide open spaces required for atlatl maneuverability. The use of arrows is indicated by smaller-sized projectile points such as Perdiz and Scallorn. Another turning point in the Late

Prehistoric period is the first substantial presence of pottery in the northern South Texas Plain and in Central Texas (Black 1989; Story 1985). Inter-group conflicts between various bands of hunter-gatherers may have been an issue, based on evidence of arrow inflicted deaths seen in human remains from various Late Prehistoric cemeteries. Sites with distinct Late Prehistoric components include the Kyle, Smith, and Currie sites (Collins 1995). Interval divisions for this period are the Austin and Toyah phases. Johnson (1994) believes these phases to possibly be two distinct cultures (see Black and Creel 1997).

The Austin phase of the Late Prehistoric may demonstrate the most intensive use of burned rock middens (Black and Creel 1997), and includes the appearance of diagnostic point types Scallorn and Edwards (Collins 1995; Turner and Hester 1999). During this phase, the use of burned rock middens is still quite widespread and may even be on the rise (Mauldin et al. 2003). The Toyah sub-period of the Late Prehistoric suggests interaction between Central Texas and ceramic-producing traditions in East and North Texas with the presence of bone-tempered plainware ceramics (Pertulla et al. 1995). Ceramics were in common usage in East Texas by 2450 BP, but the first Central Texas plainwares did not appear until ca. 650/700 BP. Other technological traits of this phase include the diagnostic Perdiz point, alternately beveled bifaces, and specialized processing kits as an adaption to flourishing bison populations (Ricklis 1992).

## **Historic**

Since the late AD 1500s, Europeans entered South and Central Texas only sporadically, and did not settle there until around AD 1700 (Webb 1952). First European contact on the Texas coast most likely began with the landing of Cabeza de Vaca and the Narvaez expedition survivors in 1528. Later Spanish incursions recorded insightful information on various Native American tribes like the Payaya, collectively referred to as the Coahuiltecan, who at one point lived in the area around modern-day San Antonio. Late seventeenth-century accounts describe these people as family units of hunter-gatherers that resided near streams and springs, in areas conducive to nut harvesting. These camps were revisited on a seasonal basis, allowing interaction with different groups along the way as well as bison hunting in open grassland settings (Campbell 1983:349–351; Hester 1989:80). By the eighteenth century, the cultural integrity of the Coahuiltecan was significantly compromised by European settlers and invasive neighboring Native American groups such as the Tonkawa and the Lipan Apache, made possible through access to European horses. Efficiently skilled Comanche horsemen, in turn, displaced the Lipan Apache culture, effectuating continuous raids on European and Native American settlements alike in Central Texas (Hester 1989:82–83).

In response to the continuous threat of Apache and Comanche raiders, as well as the French incursion into East Texas, a series of Spanish missions and presidios were erected along the San Antonio River during the eighteenth century. The Spanish governor of Coahuila and Texas, Joseph de Azlor y Virto de Vera, Marques de San Miguel de Aguayo, established San Antonio as the focus of European settlement (Cox 1997).

From its establishment as a Spanish mission in 1718, San Antonio gradually grew as a provincial town. In 1821, Spain lost several continental territories when it recognized the independence of Mexico. At this time, San Antonio mostly consisted of a group of flat-roofed stone and adobe buildings centered around Main and Military plazas. Eventually, the newly independent Mexican government began granting impresario contracts to allow more prominent Anglo settlement to facilitate the town's development. Stephen F. Austin, one such settler, spearheaded a movement by Anglo and Mexican settlers against Mexican authority.

As a sort of crossroads location, San Antonio de Bexar played an integral role in Texas Independence. At its center stood Mission San Antonio de Valero (known commonly as the Alamo), which brandished more cannon than any fort west of the Mississippi. Mission Valero changed hands several times during the fight for Texas Independence, falling victim to Mexican siege in 1836. The many battles took a terrible toll in lives and property, leaving San Antonio nearly deserted for some time (Fox 1979). After becoming the Republic of Texas the same year, following the decisive Battle at San Jacinto, the territory later joined the United States in 1845.

The town slowly grew from a rustic Mexican villa to a lively and fast-paced commercial center. Still a major crossroads, San Antonio served as a key staging area for General Zachary Taylor's mobilization efforts during the War with Mexico. Despite the large numbers of troops that Texas committed to the American Civil War, the Confederate State of Texas was only involved in five engagements with the Union army. San Antonio's main function during the Civil war was that of a shipping hub for supplies imported from Mexico to be shipped to Confederate lines in the early 1860s (Webb 1952). The town also suffered a major cholera epidemic in 1866. In 1877, the first railroad reached San Antonio. After the arrival of railroads, San Antonio property values increased in part due to the land-for-rail policy and the decline of the open-ranching economy, and land around San Antonio was increasingly settled. During the 1886–1905 land boom in Texas, land surveys were conducted hastily according to numerous different methods. Not until the oil boom were land surveys conducted with more precision. Over the decades, immigration and population numbers increased, particularly during wartime of the 1940s. The city of San Antonio eventually developed stable military bases, educational institutions, tourism, and a medical research complex.

## **ARCHEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA**

A review of the Texas Archeological Site Atlas (THC 2011) was conducted to determine the project area's relationship to existing archeological sites in the area. No previously recorded archeological sites are within the project area. Archeological sites surrounding the project area are situated more than a kilometer (0.62 miles) away from the project area and consist mostly of rural historic sites and surficial prehistoric sites. Archeological sites surrounding the project area are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Archeological Sites in Proximity to the Project Area.

Site	Type	Recorded by	Year	Recommendation	Approximate Distance to Project Area
41BX1722	Prehistoric open campsite	John D. Lowe; SWCA Environmental	2007	No further work, site destroyed	> one kilometer
41BX1606	Historic farmstead	Boyd Dixon, Kelley Russell; PBS&J	2004	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX1607	Historic Ranch	Boyd Dixon, Kelley Russell; PBS&J	2004	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX1608	Historic barn and cistern	Boyd Dixon, Kelley Russell; PBS&J	2004	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX1687	Lithic scatter	Rissa Trachman; SWCA Environmental	2006	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX1876	Prehistoric low density open campsite	Joe M. Sanchez and Brandon S. Young; Blanton & Associates, Inc.	2010	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX467	Lithic scatter	A. McGraw; CAR/UTSA	1977	Further testing extent	> one kilometer
41BX466	Lithic scatter	A. McGraw; CAR/UTSA	1977	No further work	> one kilometer
41BX1421	Prehistoric open campsite	Amy M. Holmes; Prewitt and Associates, Inc.	2000	Not assessed	> one kilometer
41BX768	Historic settlement (1930's)	Gregory Sundborg, Dan Potter and Howard Hays; Espey, Huston and Assoc., Inc. Austin, TX	1987	Recommended as eligible for SAL and NRHP listing	> one kilometer



## CHAPTER 3

# SURVEY METHODS

The Grosenbacher Tract consists of a rolling topography, but elevations do not fluctuate high enough to prevent linear transecting as the primary survey method. Personnel were spaced out along nine transects at 100-meter intervals as points of departure to investigate the project area. Investigators deviated from these transects in localities with favorable surface visibility in order to identify potential cultural resources on the ground surface.

Shovel tests were excavated along the nine transects at 100-meter intervals. Since little occupation activity occurs on slopes in the ground surface, shovel tests fell in flat horizontal landscapes with as little exposed bedrock on the surface as possible. EComm's archeological survey adhered to or exceeded the archeological survey standards developed by the THC and CTA. These standards require one shovel test for every three acres. Archeologists excavated 62 shovel tests. During this project, all shovel tests were excavated until contact with bedrock was made, or to 80 centimeters (cm) below surface (cmbs) in areas with deep soils. Soil from all shovel tests was screened through ¼-inch hardware cloth. Shovel tests measured 30 cm in diameter, and were excavated in 10-cm increments.

If cultural material was recovered from a shovel test, the shovel test would have been delineated at 10-meter intervals until two negative shovel tests in every cardinal direction were attained, or until a project area boundary or physical hindrance was encountered. However, none of the shovel tests contained any archeological material. Relevant information for all shovel tests was recorded on a standardized form. This archeological investigation was a non-collection survey. All sites were assigned a temporary field number and recorded on State of Texas forms, photographed, sketch mapped, and plotted on the USGS topographic quadrangle. Archeological sites were delineated by means of no fewer than six shovel tests in order to define site boundaries relative to the project area. Specific site information was recorded on standardized forms and recorded at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) for inclusion in their archives and production of new site trinomial. For the purposes of this survey, an archeological site had to contain a certain number of cultural materials or features older than 50 years within a given area. The definition of a site is: 1) five or more surface artifacts within a 15-meter radius (ca. 706.9 m sq.), or 2) a single cultural feature, such as a historic well or burned rock midden, observed on the surface or exposed during shovel testing, or 3) a positive shovel test containing at least five total artifacts, or 4) two positive shovel tests located within 30 meters of each other.

Historical archeological sites were documented not only through field efforts, but also through survey level archival research. This research included a chain of title search to determine ownership history and land use, census research and map research.

Field forms generated during this investigation were completed with pencil on acid-free paper, and GPS coordinates were captured for all shovel test excavations to ensure adequate coverage of the project area. All survey records are curated at the EComm laboratory in Austin, Texas.

## CHAPTER 4

# SURVEY RESULTS

The terrain within the project area consists of a combination of thickly wooded areas, wide open spaces containing exposed bedrock on the surface (Figure 2), and undulating topography and hill-slopes. Although transects were spaced out at 100-meter intervals, EComm personnel did not limit their investigations to rigid transect bearings and fanned out during pedestrian survey in order to identify possible cultural resources resting on the ground surface. The surface inspection revealed a small



Figure 2. Landscape overview within the project area.



Figure 3. Survey work performed within the project area.

scatter of surface artifacts consisting of historic materials in the southern portion of the project area (Figure 3). These artifact isolates included a ceramic button, a .22 casing, and one cut nail. The surface inspection also revealed the ruins of a 1960's homestead in the northwest portion of the project area. Construction materials of the homestead included concrete blocks, PVC pipe, and asbestos shingles; and it is presumed that the structure was built in the mid-1960s or after. No standing structures are depicted in topo maps from 1953. This homestead included a main residential structure with a collapsed roof and several satellite structures for livestock (Figure 4). Artifacts observed on the surface surrounding the homestead ruins included carnival glass and undecorated white earthenware (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 4. Late 1960s homestead ruins.



Figure 5. Carnival glass artifact isolate.

Finally, the surface inspection also revealed the presence of a two limestone cisterns in the northeastern portion of the project area (Figure 3). EComm recorded these features as Site 41BX1900, and it will be discussed in detail below.

Sixty-two shovel tests were strategically spaced out within the project area to provide adequate coverage for the entire 164-acre tract (Figure 3). Soils were relatively deep around the margins of the limestone landmass at the center of the project area which rises 100 feet above the surrounding terrain in some localities. Shovel tests typically terminated at 80 cmbs outside these margins. Soils within the limestone landmass were shallow and bedrock was exposed in

numerous areas. Shovel tests excavated in these localities terminated between 8 and 30 cmbs. All shovel tests were excavated with negative results and no subsurface cultural materials were exposed.

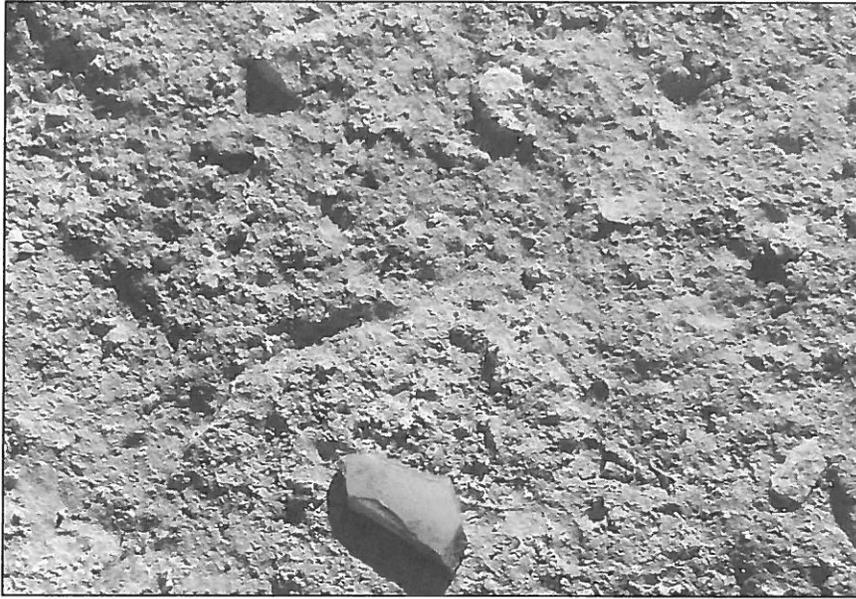


Figure 6. White earthenware artifact isolate.

## SITE 41BX1900

During pedestrian survey of the northeast portion of the project area, two nineteenth century archeological features were identified in proximity to the late 1960s homestead. These features were recorded as Site 41BX1900. The site consisted of two cisterns hewn into the sloping base of a prominent limestone ridge.

The dimensions of the two cisterns are fairly comparable to each other, but the southernmost cistern was defined as Feature 1 and the northern most cistern was defined as Feature 2 (Figure 7).

Feature 1 measures two meters wide and four meters deep (Figure 8); however burned garbage and fill within make an exact depth measurement infeasible. The top of the cistern is level with the ground surface, suggesting that uppermost portion of it has been removed. The cistern tapers out slightly at the bottom in the shape of a bell. The lower 3.25 meters of the existing cistern was hewn into the surrounding limestone. The upper 75 cm are composed of rough-hewn rock and sandy paste mortar (Figure 9). The cistern appears to have been carved directly into the edge of the limestone ridge, evidenced by the smoothed and chiseled walls of the ridge around the cistern on its western flank (see Figure 7). A small circular opening is about a meter above the ground surface, at

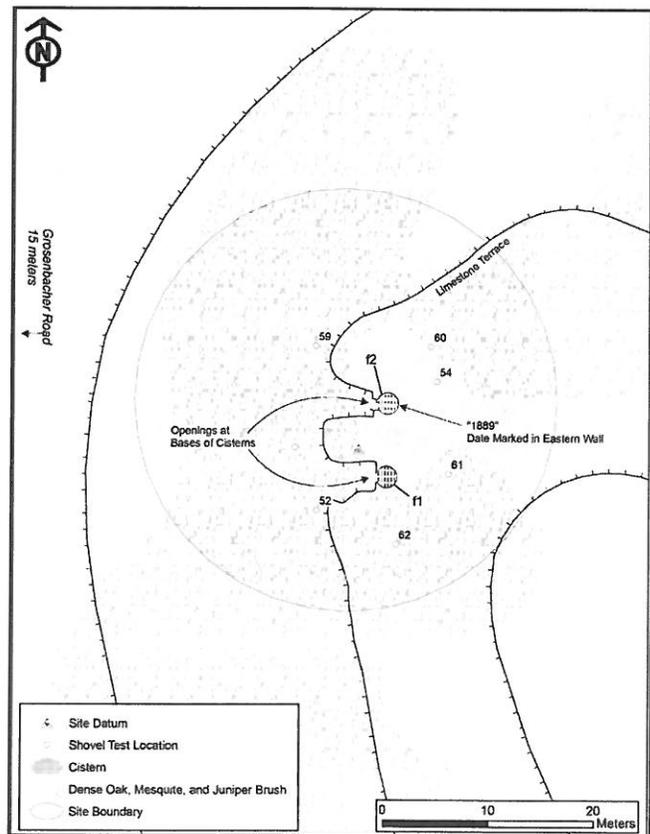


Figure 7. Plan view of 41BX1900.



Figure 8. Feature 1 Cistern.



Figure 9. Upper portion of Feature 1 consisting of rock and mortar.

the base of the cistern (Figure 10), but it does not go all the way through the rock to the inside of the cistern. Therefore, it is not likely for a water pipe. It may have held a lumber support of some sort.



Figure 10. Quarry indentation in Feature 1.

The feature's use as a cistern must have been modified at some point. A large opening is crudely carved into the base of the cistern and its edges appear to be fire-reddened (Figure 11). There is burned

rubble and garbage in the base of the cistern and it seems likely that in more recent times, the cistern was used to incinerate garbage. T-posts and modern barbed wire were at one time put in place to fence off the top of the opening, but these have collapsed into the cistern itself.



Figure 11. Dismantled base of Feature 1.

Feature 2 also measures roughly two meters wide and four meters deep (Figure 12). Like Feature 1, the cistern tapers out slightly at the bottom in the shape of a bell. The lower 3.25 meters of the existing cistern was also hewn into the surrounding limestone bedrock. The upper 75 cm are composed of rough-hewn rock and mortar (Figure 13). The mortar is sandy paste typical of nineteenth



Figure 12. Feature 2 Cistern.



Figure 13. Upper portion of Feature 2 consisting of rock and mortar.

century mortar, and a date of “1889” was etched into the northern wall towards the bottom of the cistern (Figure 14). Like Feature 1, this too has been carved out of the limestone ridge, and the walls of the ridge at the base of Feature have also been smoothed and chiseled. The western wall of this cistern has also been carved away, likely to facility trash incineration.

It is unclear why portions of the land formation west of the cisterns exhibit similar angularly hewn patterns in the sloping limestone, exposing the base of the cisterns. This might have been done to facilitate procurement of water from the cisterns, or it is possible that the structure that these features collected water from was actually located at the base of the hill, rather than the top of the hill and the ridge formed a wall to

the structure. Investigators found no evidence of an associated house or structure that would have fed the cisterns. No standing structures are depicted in the earliest aerial photos of the landscape dating to 1953. The 1904 San Antonio topographical map also does not depict any



Figure 14. "1889" date etched into wall of Feature 2.

structures at this locale. Any homestead associated with 41BX1900 that may have once rested in this locality has likely been destroyed and/or built over. A homestead from the late 1960s is located directly to the east, the residents of which are likely responsible for the more recent incinerating episodes within the elaborately hewn cisterns.

The slope grade surrounding the top of the cisterns is theoretically conducive to directing rain run-off into the mouth of the cisterns, so it is also possible that these rainwater collection features were isolated.

## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

Since historic resources were identified within the project area, a title search was conducted in order to establish the property's chain of title. Property data was obtained online with the Bexar County Clerk's website (BCC 2011). At the time this report was written, the project area belonged to developer Milestone Potranco Ltd. Deed research suggests that the property changed hands a number of times and most likely many landowners did not live on this property.

Site 41BX1900 is located on the Antonio Vasquez survey, originally consisting of 160 acres patented by Vasquez from the State of Texas in 1885 (Table 3). However, this was filing date of the patent. The abstract, which was prepared from an affidavit made by Vasquez, suggests that Vasquez lived on this property for several years prior to that time. Vasquez apparently attempted to sell this property in 1886, as several deed records record that he sold half interests in this property to Oscar Bergstrom and Josepha Rubio in 1886 (BCDR 51/5-6 and 50/414). These two landowners then sold their interest to Leonard Garza who sold the property to Remigio Leal in 1888 (BCDR 39/589). Somehow the land was back in possession of Antonio Vasquez in 1892, however, when he sold all of it, minus 30 acres to Juan de Leal. The Leal family also attempted to sell this land several times, apparently unsuccessfully. Ultimately, it was sold at a sheriff's auction in 1905 to J. R. Norton when Juana de Leal died intestate

(BCDR 280/584). Norton sold the property to Jeff and H. R. Ellison in 1908. In 1917, the Ellison family sold this same property, along with land from adjoining surveys to August F. Schroeder. Schroeder's daughter sold 47.5 acres to Joe and Mary Van de Walle in 1957. The couple in their turn sold this land to MJM Agricultural in 1991. MJM Agricultural sold the land to Milestone Potranco in 2006.

Since Cistern #2 at site 41BX1900 bears a date of 1889, it is likely that these water-control features were created while the Grosenbacher Tract was under the ownership of Antonio Vasquez who owned the property until 1892. Vasquez himself may have built the features, or it is possible that one of the individuals to whom he attempted to sell the land—Oscar Bergstrom or Josepha Rubio may have built these features. Two Antonio Vasquezes are listed in the 1880 census for this region of Bexar County. One was a 55-year old farmer and the other a 40-year old day laborer. They are both listed on the same census page, suggesting they lived in close proximity to each other. Vincent Vasquez (30), Jesus Vasquez (26), and Reyes Vasquez (30) also appear as neighbors on the same census page, so it is reasonable to conclude that all were members of the same family, headed by Antonio Vasquez, Sr. No members of the Vasquez family appear in the census for this area in 1870 or 1900.

Table 3. Chain of Title for Property Containing Site 41BX1900.

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Vol./Pg	Description
State of Texas	Antonio Vasquez	9/17/1885	17/640	Patent for 160 acres south of Medio Creek
Antonio Vasquez	Juan de Leal	10/12/1892	113/265	130 acres of Vasquez Survey
Juana de Leal	Juan Chavez	1895	140/229	130 acres of Vasquez Survey
Juan Chavez	Rosa de Leal	1896	149/605	130 acres of Vasquez Survey
Rosa de Leal	Ferdinand Wurzbach	2/12/1902	189/508	130 acres of Vasquez Survey
Rosa Leal, F. Wurzbach and H. Wurzbach	J.R. Norton	8/1/1905	280/584	130 acres of de Leal estate by Sheriff's deed
J.R. Norton	Jeff and H.R. Ellison	4/4/1908	279/419	130 acres of Vasquez; estate of Juana de Leal, deceased
Jeff and H.R. Ellison	August F. Schroeder	1917	505/41	253.5 acres of Vasquez and portions of neighboring tracts
Augusta Lieck et al	Emma and Albert Lieck	1952	3151/445	253.5 acres; Lieck is Schroeder's married daughter' Schroeder heirs divide estate
Emma and Albert Lieck	Joe and Mary Van de Walle	1/25/1957	3981/29	47.519 acres of Vasquez
Joe and Mary Van de Walle	MJM Agricultural	1991		47.19 acres of Vasquez
MJM Agricultural	Milestone Potranco	2006	5214/0306, 3981/29	



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## CHAPTER 5

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In November of 2011, EComm conducted an archeological resources survey and background research on a privately owned 164-acre tract in western San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. This work was performed under the COSAs UDC. Archeological survey work included visual inspection of the landscape and 62 shovel tests. None of the shovel tests contained archeological material. EComm's investigation revealed the presence of several isolated historical artifacts on the ground surface, the ruins of a late 1960s homestead, and one archeological site. EComm recorded 41BX1900 as a historic site consisting of two cisterns, hewn side by side into a limestone ridge, as early as 1889. It is likely that these water-control features were created while the property was under the ownership of Antonio Vasquez who owned the property between 1886 and 1896 and was the first patent holder.

The integrity of the cisterns has been compromised by modifications that have opened up their base to facilitate garbage incineration and disposal. Though a structure must have once been associated with the cisterns, investigators found no evidence of such a structure anywhere near them. The only structure found nearby was a mid-twentieth century residence built with cinderblocks. Moreover, archival research suggests that 41BX1900 has changed owners many times since 1886, and it is not associated with any significant persons or events in Bexar County's history. Given the lack of associated artifacts and the general lack of structural integrity exhibited by the two features, the Principal Investigator concludes that they have no potential to yield significant new data on development of the area surrounding San Antonio during the nineteenth century. As a result, the site is not recommended for designation as a SAL or for listing on the NRHP. Additional archeological work in connection with the proposed undertaking is not recommended. EComm recommends that development within the Grosenbacher Tract proceed to completion.



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