Archaeological Monitoring for Ashley Road Project, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
Antonia L. Figueroa

Texas Antiquities Permit No. 7589

REDACTED

Principal Investigator
Paul Shawn Marceaux

Prepared for:
Adams Environmental, Inc.
12000 Crownpoint, Suite 120
San Antonio, Texas 78233

Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249
Archaeological Report, No. 451

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Abstract:

In March and June of 2016, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) conducted archaeological monitoring of the construction associated with the Citywide Bridge Program Ashley Road Project located in South Bexar County, Texas. The archaeological investigations and construction monitoring were conducted under Texas Antiquities Committee (TAC) Permit No. 7589 with Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux serving as the Principal Investigator and Antonia Figueroa as the Project Archaeologist.

The goal of archaeological monitoring was to identify any historical properties or features that might be present in the project area. To achieve this goal, CAR staff members monitored all below-ground construction excavations. One feature was identified on the west bank of Sixmile Creek, and CAR staff documented it as a site (41BX2138). The site is a small historic trash dump dating to the early twentieth century. CAR does not recommend further work on the site or in the Area of Potential Effect, and CAR recommends construction proceed as planned. All collected artifacts and project associated documentation are permanently curated at the CAR facility.

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Table of Contents:

Abstract iii
List of Figures vii
List of Tables ix
Acknowledgements xi
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
  The Project Area 1
Chapter 2: Project Area Environs and Previous Investigations 3
  Project Area Environs 3
  Previously Recorded Sites near the Project Area 3
  Redacted Image 4
Chapter 3: Archaeological Field and Laboratory Methods 5
  Field Methods 5
  Site Recording and Identification 5
  Laboratory Methods 5
Chapter 4: Results of the Archaeological Investigations 7
  Archaeological Monitoring: East Bank 7
  Archaeological Monitoring: West Bank 9
    Feature 1 (Site 41BX2138) 9
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations 13
References Cited 15

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List of Figures:

Figure 1-1. Project APE (outlined in red) on the Southton USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle map 1
Figure 1-2. Project APE (outlined in red) on satellite imagery..... 2
Figure 2-1. Aerial image of previously recorded archaeological sites with 500 m of the APE..... 4
Figure 4-1. The banks of Sixmile Creek within the APE, taken from the east bank along Ashley Road..... 7
Figure 4-2. Grading of east bank of the creek for riprap 8
Figure 4-3. Concrete riprap on the east side of the creek 8
Figure 4-4. Drilling of holes for pier installation on the west bank..... 9
Figure 4-5. Photo of Feature 1 on west bank of Sixmile Creek, north side of East Ashley Road 9
Figure 4-6. Location of 41BX2138 (outlined in red) on aerial photograph of project area 10
Figure 4-7. Gebhardt Chili Powder bottle recovered from Feature 1 11
Figure 4-8. Phillips'® Milk of Magnesia bottle collected from Feature 1 11
Figure 4-9. Grading of slope on east bank of Sixmile Creek..... 12
Figure 4-10. Asphalt and base removal at the corner of Ashley Road and Acequia Road 12
Figure 4-11. Picture of APE taken on June 27, 2016 (facing west)..... 12

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List of Tables:

Table 4-1. Artifacts Collected from Feature 1 11

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Adams Environmental, Inc. (AEI) was instrumental in the administration of the project. Thanks to Charles Winters and Ursula L. Villarreal of Winters Construction, Inc. for coordinating with the CAR on construction schedules and plans. Theresa Larson and Veronica Barefield with TCI were also an integral part of the project coordination. Thanks go to Kay Hindes with the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation and Mark Denton with the Texas Historical Commission.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) under contract with Adams Environmental, Inc. (AEI) and in response to a request from the City of San Antonio (COSA) conducted archaeological monitoring for construction activities associated with the Citywide Bridge Program Ashley Road Project in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1-1). Archaeological monitoring of the project was conducted in March and June of 2016. This archaeological investigation was performed under TAC Permit No. 7589, with Antonia L. Figueroa serving as the Project Archaeologist and Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux serving as the Principal Investigator.

The Project Area

The Citywide Bridge Program on Ashley Road was included in work from Roosevelt Avenue to Acequia Road. The project area is within the Mission Parkway Historic-Archeological National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) District, just south of Stinson Municipal Airport (Figure 1-2). Construction activities included the following: removal of the concrete box culvert, wing walls, and riprap at Sixmile Creek. In addition, new pavement, curbs, and gutters were to be placed at the Ashley Road and Acequia Road intersection. The COSA is the sponsoring agency, and the survey corridor is located on COSA-owned lands.

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is located 600 m (1,968.5 ft.) east of the intersection of East Ashley Road and Roosevelt Avenue, to the east and southeast along Ashley Road, and ends just past the intersection with Acequia Road. The APE is approximately 0.66-km (0.41-mi.) long and 19.81-m (65-ft.) wide for a total of 0.90 hectares (3.23 acres). The construction impacts occurred mostly on the creek banks and in association with road and base removal.

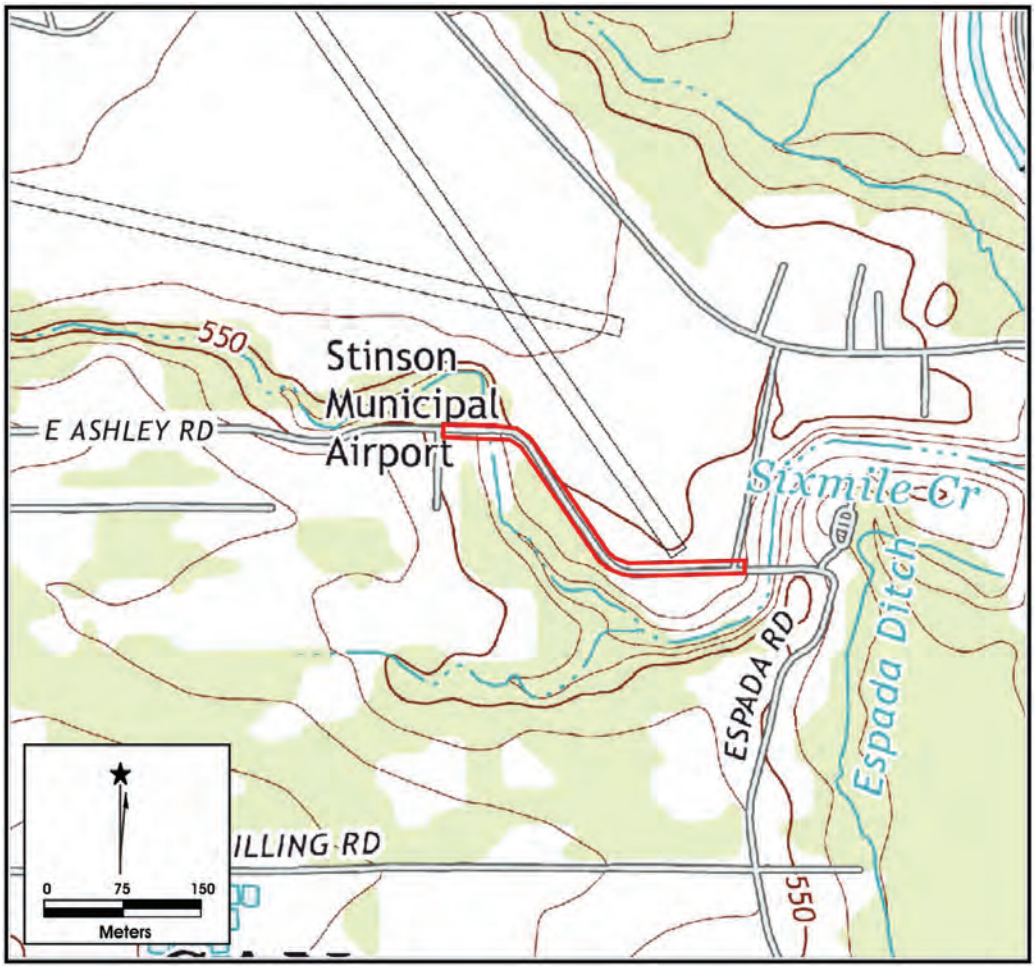

Figure 1-1. Project APE (outlined in red) on the Southton USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle map.

Figure 1-2. Project APE (outlined in red) on satellite imagery.

Chapter 2: Project Area Environs and Previous Investigations

This chapter begins with a brief description of the project environment, including, soils, vegetation, and hydrology. The second part of this chapter provides a brief summary of previously recorded sites in the area.

Project Area Environs

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS 2016), the project area is set in the Chalky Ridge ecological zone, characterized by tallgrass prairie. Two soil units (NRCS 2016) are found in the project area, including Patrick (PaC) soils and the Rock outcrop-Olmos complex (HgD). The PaC soil unit is clay loam and gravelly sand with three to five percent slopes. The soil is well drained and is described as clayey alluvium. The Rock outcrop-Olmos complex (HgD) is described as very gravelly loam with five to 25 percent slopes.

There are four vegetation communities in the project area: Tallgrass/Midgrass Prairie, Midgrass Prairie, Midgrass/Shrub, and Shortgrass/Midgrass/Shrub (NRCS 2016). Sixmile Creek is part of the Upper San Antonio River watershed (Kibler 2015) and is located approximately 2.4 km (1.5 mi.) from the Mission San Francisco de la Espada dam.

Previously Recorded Sites Near the Project Area

There are five sites within 500 m (0.3 mi.) of the APE (Figure 2-1). Sites discussed here are all within the Mission Parkway Historic-Archeological NRHP District. The Mission San Francisco de la Espada dam, ditch, and aqueduct are located only 0.26 km (0.16 mi.) northeast from the project area. Franciscans constructed the Espada Aqueduct (41BX281) in 1745 to serve the lands of Mission Francisco de la Espada (Cox 2005). It is the only remaining Spanish aqueduct in the United States. These important features date to the Spanish Colonial period and are recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark.

The second site, 41BX249, is an area with scattered lithics north of the Espada *acequia* and above Piedras Creek. Artifacts observed on the site included flakes, a broken point, a hammerstone, a core, and shell fragments. There are also reports of projectile points found at the site (THC Site Atlas 2016). Less than 50 m to the southwest of 41BX249 are remains of the Huron House (41BX250). Named for Cazetano Huron, the earliest occupant, the remains consist of the foundation of a one-room stone house. Artifacts collected during the Mission Parkway survey included glass, ironstone, and porcelain.

Site 41BX260 is an adobe house recorded around 300 m southwest of the Espada Aqueduct (THC Site Atlas 2016). The one-room stucco structure is reportedly incorporated into a larger wooden structure, currently occupied, and in good repair.

Site 41BX2010, Airport Captain's House, is west of the project area, approximately 0.5 km (0.3 mi.). The site consists of a stone house and affiliated outbuildings that date to 1925. The main structure is a one-story bungalow. The property has been investigated by Geo-Marine, Inc. (Fullerton and Allday 2011) and Prewitt and Associates (Kibler 2015). Artifacts were recorded on the surface and subsurface (approximately 20 cmbs; 7.9 in.) during shovel testing. Material recovered included historic artifacts, such as glass, ceramics, and metal items (Kibler 2015). No further archaeological investigations were recommended at the site.

Redacted Image

Figure 2-1. Aerial image of previously recorded archaeological sites with 500 m of the APE.

Chapter 3: Archaeological Field and Laboratory Methods

Field Methods

The CAR staff monitored construction activities during the removal of the asphalt and base of Ashley Road and during excavations associated with the riprap and drilling. When cultural remains and/or features were encountered during the course of the monitoring, CAR archaeologists halted the excavations in the vicinity until the deposits and/or feature were documented. The documentation consisted of digital photography, sketch drawings, and GPS recordation of locations. Only temporally diagnostic artifacts were collected, with appropriate provenience information, and returned to the CAR laboratory for processing.

Site Recording and Identification

For the purposes of this project, archaeological sites contained cultural materials or features that are at least 50 years old within a given area. The definition of a site used for this project was as follows: (1) five or more surface artifacts within a 15-m (49.2 ft.^{2}) radius (ca. 706.9 m^2; 7,609 ft.^{2}). When evidence of cultural materials meeting the minimum criteria for an archaeological site were encountered during monitoring, excavations were halted while the Project Archaeologist produced a sketch map of these elements to serve as a backup for the GPS site data. A sample of temporally diagnostic artifacts was collected. Digital photographs were taken of the site, and a Texas Archeological Site form was submitted to THC.

Laboratory Methods

All cultural materials and records obtained and/or generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulation 36 CFR part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. Artifacts processed in the CAR laboratory were washed, air-dried, and stored in 4-mil zip-locking archival-quality bags. Organic materials and heavy items needing extra support were double-bagged. Acid-free labels were placed in all artifact bags. Labels were generated by a laser printer, and each label contained provenience information and a corresponding lot number. Ceramics were labeled with permanent ink over a clear coat of acrylic and covered by another acrylic coat. Artifacts were separated by class and stored in acid-free boxes. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper, labeled with archivally appropriate materials, and placed in archival-quality sleeves. All field forms were completed with pencil. Upon completion of the project, all collected materials were housed at the CAR.

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Chapter 4: Results of the Archaeological Investigations

This chapter presents the results of the archaeological investigations that occurred during the monitoring of the Ashley Road Bridge Project. Monitoring took place in March and June of 2016. Only one feature was recorded within the APE. Feature 1 (41BX2138), located on the west bank of Sixmile Creek, consisted of a small historic trash dump that contained glass bottles, ceramics, and metal.

Archaeological Monitoring: East Bank

Construction efforts associated with the project began on the east bank of Sixmile Creek (Figure 4-1) where the culvert and bridge had been washed out in flooding events. The washed out concrete culvert was removed on March 17, 2016. On March 31, 2016, two holes were drilled reaching a depth of 11.3 m (37 ft.) for piers that would support the newly constructed bridge. The auger bit measured 60 cm (24 in.) in diameter. No cultural material was observed during the drilling of the pier holes on the east bank. As seen in Figures 4-2 and 4-3, the slope of bank was graded for the placement of a concrete riprap to create a six percent slope. Modern material in the form of a cassette tape was noted; however, no historic material was observed during these excavations.

Figure 4-1. The banks of Sixmile Creek within the APE, taken from the east bank along Ashley Road.

Figure 4-2. Grading of east bank of the creek for riprap.

Figure 4-3. Concrete riprap on the east side of the creek.

Archaeological Monitoring: West Bank

Work on the west bank of Sixmile Creek along Ashley Road started on March 23, 2016, with drilling for piers (Figure 4-4). Two holes were drilled to a depth of 12 m (42 ft.) with the same 60 cm (24 in.) auger bit used on the east side of the project area. No cultural material was observed during this time.

Feature 1 (Site 41BX2138)

On March 24, 2016, during excavations associated with the slope grading for the concrete riprap on the northern side of Ashley Road, Feature 1 was encountered 0.9 m (3 ft.) below the asphalt. It consisted of a scatter of bottles, ceramics, and metal. As shown in Figure 4-5, Feature 1, subsequently recorded as site 41BX2138, measured 3 m (9.8 ft.) in length

Figure 4-4. Drilling of holes for pier installation on the west bank.

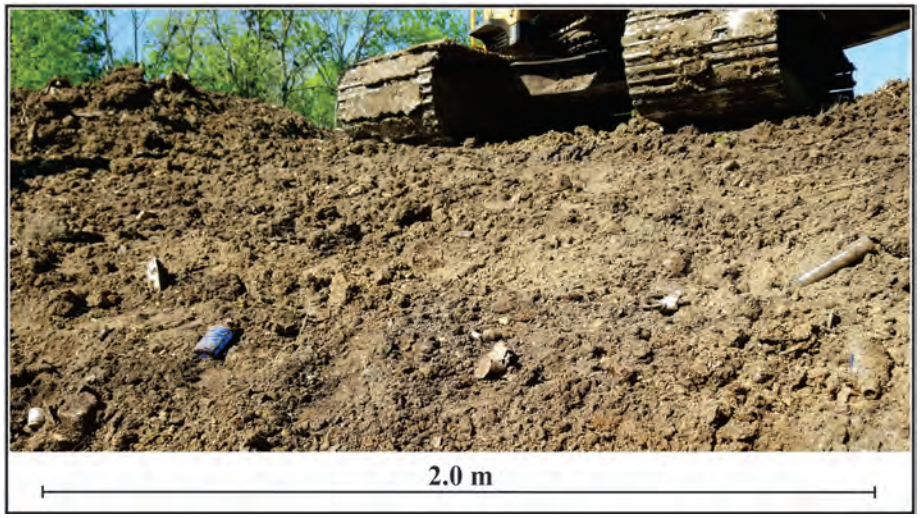

Figure 4-5. Photo of Feature 1 on west bank of Sixmile Creek, north side of East Ashley Road.

by 2 m (6.5 ft.) in width (Figure 4-6). The matrix in which the feature was located consisted of a brown (10YR 5/3) clay loam alluvial deposits. A sample (n=6) of the artifacts from the feature was collected and taken back to the CAR lab for identification. Field Specimen 4 (Table 4-1), the china bowl with a Homer Laughlin Duraprint trademark, dates to 1914 (Restaurant Ware Collectors Network 2016).

Material collected (Table 4-1) from the feature dates to the early twentieth century. Makers' marks were used to conclusively date the material. A Gebhardt Chili Powder glass bottle that dates to the 1920s (Digger Odell Publications 2016) is shown in Figure 4-7. The Phillips'® Milk of Magnesia bottle (Figure 4-8) dates as early as 1906. The material in Feature 1 more than likely represents domestic refuse from the nearby residents.

Redacted Image

Figure 4-6. Location of 41BX2138 (outlined in red) on aerial photograph of project area.

Table 4-1. Artifacts Collected from Feature 1

Specimen	Artifact	Description
1	bottle	cobalt blue, Phillips'® Milk of Magnesia
2	bottle	clear, Gebhardt Chili Powder
3	ceramic	Japanese porcelain, Blue Phoenix
4	ceramic	china, Laughlin Duraprint
5	bottle	clear, condiment
6	glass jar	olive, cosmetic

Figure 4-7. Gebhardt Chili Powder bottle recovered from Feature 1.

Figure 4-8. Phillips'® Milk of Magnesia bottle, collected from Feature 1.

After CAR staff documented the feature, it was removed, and grading of the east bank continued. The southern portion of the bank had been previously impacted by sewer lines (Figure 4-9). On June 27, the final day of fieldwork, CAR monitored the removal of road base along with fill on the east side of Sixmile Creek. On the same day, CAR archaeologists noted the removal of the road asphalt and fill at the corner of Ashley Road and Acequia Road (Figure 4-10). These activities did not require monitoring. Concrete ripraps had also been poured prior to the last day of fieldwork (Figure 4-11).

Figure 4-9. Grading of slope on east bank of Sixmile Creek.

Figure 4-10. Asphalt and base removal at the corner of Ashley Road and Acequia Road.

Figure 4-11. Picture of APE taken on June 27, 2016 (facing west).

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The CAR conducted archaeological monitoring for Adams Environmental, Inc., on behalf of COSA, along Ashley Road in March and June of 2016. Monitoring was required during the construction of a new bridge spanning Sixmile Creek. The previous bridge was washed away by floodwaters. During mechanical excavations in the project area, a single feature was documented by CAR staff. The feature dated to the early twentieth century and represents a small historic trash dump from nearby residential areas. The feature was recorded as a site (41BX2138), a sample of artifacts was collected, and the excavations were allowed to proceed. CAR does not recommend further work on the site or in the Area of Potential Effect, and CAR recommends construction proceed as planned. All collected artifacts and project associated documentation are permanently curated at the CAR facility.

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