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These finds better than hole in one

UTSA teams dig up pieces in golf course area several thousands of years old.

By Scott Huddleston
shuddleston@express-news.net

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Spear points found last month near Brackenridge Park include a complete Angostura point, at least 8,000 years old. FS 152-41BX1396 – a complete Angostura point, at least 8,000 years old. Photo Courtesy of UTSA's Center for Archaeological Research
Photo: Courtesy Of UTSA / Photo Courtesy of UTSA's Center for Archaeological Research



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To some, the artifacts unearthed last month near Brackenridge Park might look like nothing more than pointy little rocks.

But local archaeologists believe the Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio has made a major breakthrough in telling the story of human life in the area several thousands of years ago.

"We have a wonderful opportunity here to better

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understand Texas prehistory," said [Kay Hindes](#), city archaeologist.

During an excavation for light poles for a hike and bike path being built by the [San Antonio River Authority](#), UTSA found a flint woodworking tool on the north end of the [Brackenridge Golf Course](#) in November. The tool, called a Guadalupe adze, is thought to date to about 5,500 years ago.

Teams led by UTSA staff project archaeologists [Jennifer Thompson](#) and [Kristi Ulrich](#) have since found some 500 items, including unique fragments of St. Mary's Hall projectile points thought to date to 8,800 to 9,900 years ago.

But the most significant find, the first of its kind in the San Antonio River basin, was a Dalton spear point usually found in other parts of the country and believed to date to the late Paleo-Indian period, some 10,500 years ago.

Steve Tomka, director of the [UTSA center](#), said charcoal and deer bone fragments are being tested in a [Miami laboratory](#) to confirm the approximate ages of the relics, found four to six feet below the surface.

The excavation was completed last week.

The Dalton point, named after [Sidna P. Dalton](#), a respected judge who found numerous prehistoric sites in Missouri, appears to have come from a spear hurled with a throwing stick known as an atlatl, Tomka said. It was likely used by ancient hunter-gatherers to kill bison and other animals for food. It measures 78.6 millimeters, just over 3 inches.

"That little artifact tells us quite a bit of a story," Tomka said. "There's no question it was the tip of a spear. It had an impact fracture on the tip that suggests it may have hit an animal bone or a rock and was abandoned."

Adding to the significance of the find is that the artifacts were found near other materials from the same period that can be dated, Hindes said.

At other local sites where St. Mary's Hall points were found, including a 1977 UTSA excavation at the St. Mary's Hall campus near Starcrest Drive and Loop 410, the ages of the artifacts were harder to trace.

"In some cases, points have been found in back dirt. But these were found in good stratigraphic context" — a geologic standard in the study of rocks in the earth's strata, Hindes said.

In light of the discoveries, the Brackenridge Park Conservancy and UTSA have begun an archaeology education program with two local schools, [Hawthorne Academy](#) and Lamar Elementary, that includes field trips to the park.

Tomka said he'd also like to work with the river authority or another local entity to display the items temporarily for public viewing.



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