

**An Archaeological Survey of the Bailey Commercial Property
and Site Assessment of 41BX1709, Southwest San Antonio,
Bexar County, Texas**

By

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SUBMITTED TO

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Abstract

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a pedestrian archaeological survey of the 7.869 acres and backhoe testing and site assessment of 41BX1709, a prehistoric archaeological site. The property borders the I-35 corridor north of the Medina River in southwest Bexar County. This Phase I investigation was designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area. Site 41BX1709 is a very light scatter of prehistoric cultural refuse of unknown age that extends from the surface to about 60 cm. The deposits are not concentrated and no clear stratification was present. A surface scatter of historic (20th century) trash also was recorded at the site. Neither the prehistoric nor historic components merit nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. No further archaeological work is recommended.

Introduction and Background

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants (AAC) conducted a pedestrian archaeological survey of the 7.869 acres and site assessment of 41BX1709, a prehistoric archaeological site (Figs. 1 and 2). The property borders the I-35 corridor north of the Medina River in southwest Bexar County. This Phase I investigation was designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area. The field work was carried out by the author on September 12, 2008 and included a 100% pedestrian survey of the 7.869 acres and backhoe testing of site 41BX1709 to determine the site's extent and stratigraphic integrity. The work was conducted in accordance with the "Archeological Survey Standards for Texas" to insure that no archaeological or historical resources eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are damaged or destroyed due to the planned construction.



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the Bailey Commercial properties and the project area (shown in green).

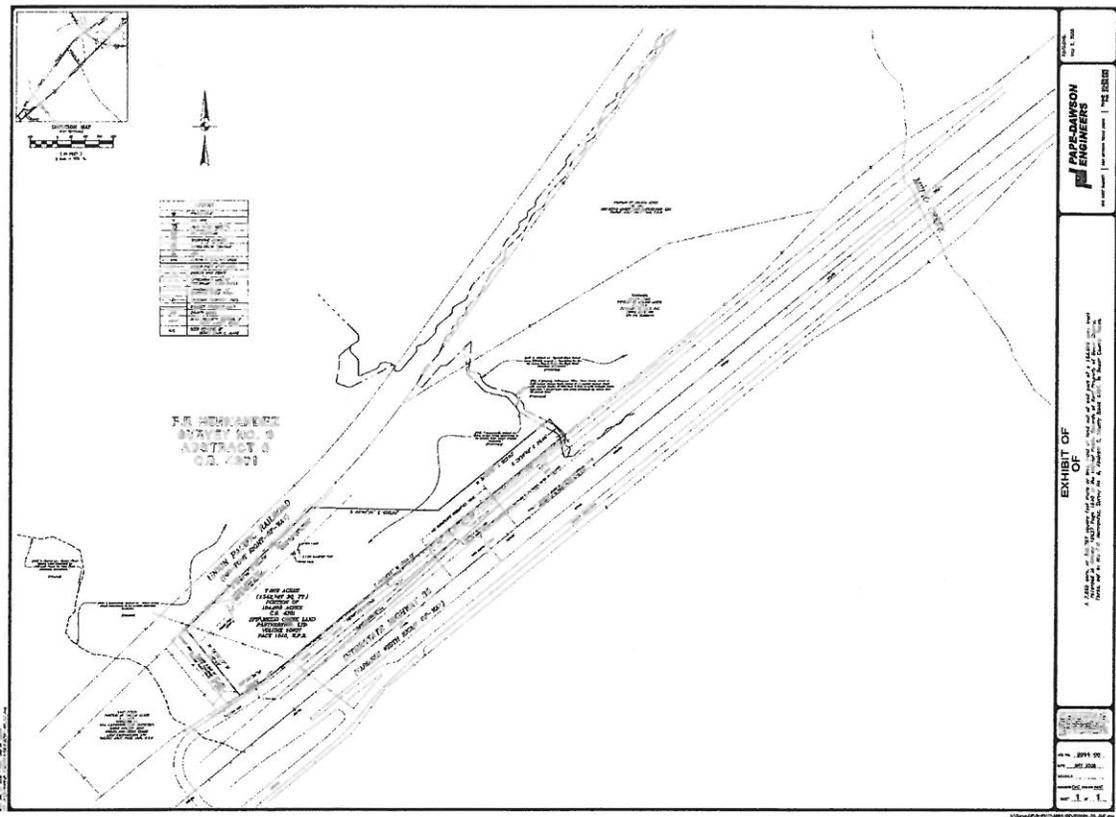


Figure 2. Plat showing the location of the Bailey Commercial property bordering I-35 south in Bexar County.

The Setting

The property is in a plowed field north of and on the second (?) terrace of the Medina river along the western border of the Blackland prairie (Figs. 3, 4). The I-35 corridor borders the property on the east, Union Pacific Railroad borders it on the north, and an unnamed gravel road provides the western boundary (Figs. 2, 3).

The Medina Valley is dominated by deep alluvial soils of the Venus and Lewisville series, while uplands are dominated by soils of the Houston black clay series (Taylor et al., 1991). Venus soils (1 to 3% slope) occur on the property (Fig. 5). The underlying geology is composed of the Eocene Midway and Wilcox groups.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 3. Topographic setting of site 41BX1709 and the Bailey Commercial property in relation to I-35 south and the Medina River.



Figure 4. Views of the Bailey Commercial property looking north (left) and south (right) across the plowed field.



Figure 5. Soils maps showing the distribution of the Venus clay loam within the project area.

Archaeological Background

Cultural History

The archaeological record of southwestern Bexar County fits into the regional cultural framework extending back at least 11,200 years (e.g., Hester 2004). The first occupations occurred in the Paleoindian period during the last part of the Pleistocene, indicated by the one major archaeological site (41BX52 or Pavo Real; Collins et al., 2003) and the occurrence of scattered diagnostic projectile point types and other artifacts of the Clovis and Folsom periods. Groups were likely small and highly mobile. Clovis peoples (9200 B.C.) hunted Ice Age mammals, such as mammoth and large extinct species of bison, and the later Folsom bands (8800 B.C.) emphasized bison (buffalo) and smaller game. As modern environments began to emerge around 10,000 years ago, Paleo-Indian populations were more numerous, and there is widespread evidence of occupation throughout the region. The hunting and gathering patterns of this early time frame, involving modern species of animals and plants, began to be intensified by 8,000 B.C., leading to the development of Archaic cultures. This way of life lasted for thousands of years, reflected by regional specialization and locally distinctive types of projectile points, knives, and other stone tools. It was not until about 500 A.D. that this long-lived

tradition began to change. The introduction of the bow and arrow marked the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period. For over 10,000 years, the ancient hunters had used the spear and spear thrower as their main weapon, and this began to be replaced by the bow and arrow around 1000 years ago. The most distinctive archaeological indicator is the presence of tiny arrow points, and later, around A.D. 1300, and intensified hunting of buffalo. With the arrival of the Spanish in the region in the late 17th century, the native peoples of the Historic period began to go into the missions. The raids of invading Lipan Apache bands spurred this transition. One group who occupied the Medina Valley and surrounding area that followed this pattern was the Payaya, a hunting and gathering band indigenous to the area (Campbell 1988). Armed with the bow and arrow, Payaya hunters preyed on deer and bison (American buffalo). Their settlements were concentrated along the pecan-rich environments of the Medina and San Antonio rivers, and pecans were a major fall food source for these people.

Archaeological Setting

Bexar County, unlike many areas of south Texas, is archaeologically well known. Nearly 1800 archaeological sites have been documented in Bexar County, and numerous sites have been documented in the southwestern portion. Most of the data are derived from cultural resource surveys for various state and federal agencies. Archaeological surveys and excavations have shown that the Median Valley itself has a long archaeological record and prehistoric archaeological sites occur all along its banks and terraces.

The most significant site thus far investigated is the Richard Beene Site (41BX831) in the once proposed Applewhite Reservoir in the nearby Median River Valley (Thoms et al., 1996; Thoms and Mandell 2005). The deep Medina Valley alluvial deposits contained a stratigraphic record of nearly 9,000 years of human occupation. The Richard Beene Site is not only significant with regards to the stratigraphic record and cultural sequence, but also provides an indication to archaeologists which terrace deposits of the Medina are high probability areas for buried archaeological sites.

Other prehistoric and historic archaeological sites were recorded and tested within the boundaries of Applewhite Reservoir in addition to the major excavations at the Richard Beene Site (Carlson 2005; Hindes and McCollough 2005; McCollough et al., 2005). Also, a number of archaeological surveys in the proximity have yielded information on both historic and prehistoric sites (EH&A 1985; Fox 1977; Galan 1998; Shafer and Hester 2007, among others).

Several archaeological sites have been reported very near the Bailey Commercial property. Site 41BX343 and 344 are prehistoric sites; both were recorded at the western end of Applewhite Reservoir by the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio (Texas Archaeological Sites Atlas). Site 41BX343 is a prehistoric site of unknown age along Medio Creek northeast of the property, and site 41BX344 is a multi-component Archaic-age site buried in a terrace of the Medina River east of the project area. Site 41BX1776, immediately to the northwest of 41BX1709 along the Median River-Medio Creek divide is a thin scatter of cultural material probably

representing multiple campsites. 41BX1776 was recorded by the CRM firm of Anthony and Brown Associates (Texas Archaeology Sites Atlas).

The project area has been farmed for several generations. Old farmsteads and windmills were once present across a landscape now subject to urban sprawl. Some of the handfuls of archaeological surveys that have been done in this part of southwestern Bexar County have noted historic remains of late 19th and early 20th century vintage, but none have been recommended for further research (Boyd and Freeman 1990; McCollough et al., 2005; Shafer and Hester 2004).

A little known, but historically very important battle took place in the early 19th century somewhere in the proximity of the project area. This was the battle of the Medina. According to the *Handbook of Texas On-line*, the battle took place on August 18, 1813 between the Republican Army of the North which had recently won the Rosario Creek Battle and declared independence of Mexico from Spain. The on-line passage reads as follows:

“...bearers of the green flag of the Republican Army of the North, fighting to uphold the declared independence of Mexico from Spain, met defeat in the battle of Medina at the river southeast of San Antonio de B exar. Hundreds of rebel troops were killed by forces under Spanish general Joaqu n de Arredondo.”

Santa Ana’s army also camped along the Median River. *The Handbook of Texas On-Line* goes on to say:

“At the same site on March 2, 1836, Gen. Antonio L pez de Santa Anna^{qv} paused in his march from the Rio Grande in order to gather forces for the final approach to Bexar and the engagement with Texans in the Alamo.^{qv} Diarist Jos  Enrique de la Pe a mentions resting at the river, the making of plans, and carrying out such tasks as assigning horses to dragoons. In the midst of the excitement over impending battle, Pe a still took note of "the little stream whose banks were rich with pecan trees" (*Handbook of Texas On-line*: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/rnm2.html>).

Neither the site of the Battle of Medina River nor Santa Anna’s encampment have been located and verified archaeologically. However, continued development in this area of the valley needs to be aware of these historic sites and search to identify artifact evidence.

Scope of Work

The research design called for the following tasks to be completed.

Task A: Conduct a 100% surface inspection of the 7.869 acres.

Task B: Document any archaeological sites and isolated finds encountered in the survey by obtaining GPS coordinates on the location and plotting the resources on a project map.

Task C: Conduct backhoe testing of that portion of site 41BX1709 that has been previously documented on the property to determine the site boundaries and assess the integrity of any buried cultural deposits.

Task D: Provide a written report detailing the area surveyed, methods used, archaeological background, survey findings, and recommendations. The report will be produced in conformance with the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation which will be submitted to the Texas Historical Commission Archaeology Section for review.

Diagnostic artifacts encountered during the course of the survey or testing were to be digitally photographed for recording. A no collection policy will be followed unless unusual finds are encountered. If any collections are made, the artifacts will be curated at the Center for Archaeological Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Field Work

Pedestrian Survey

The field work consisted of both a pedestrian survey on the Bailey Commercial property and backhoe testing of 41BX1709. The survey conditions were ideal in that the field has been recently plowed, providing excellent visibility on the distribution and density of prehistoric cultural material on the surface. The pedestrian survey provided surface indication of the site's extent. The distribution of cultural material including fire-cracked rock, chert flakes, and mussel shell is shown in Figure 6. The surface scatter was at most light, but was slightly more concentrated in the southwest corner of the field. The cultural material decreased northward away from the river.

A thin scatter of historic (20th century) trash was noted over much of the field, especially in the north central portion (Fig. 6). The soils map (Fig. 5) shows a structure, probably an old farm house, on the property in the areas of the historic scatter but all traces of this building have long since been removed. The trash observed is not old, maybe in the mid to late 20th century, and the glass seen was not patinated. This trash may have been associated with the historic structure.

A dense deposit of recent construction debris in the form of concrete fragments, clay and concrete sewer pipe sherds, glass, asphalt, metal fragments, and brick was scattered over one section of the site (Fig. 6). The construction debris was apparently dumped onto the property as fill and incorporated into the plowed field.

IMAGE RESTRICTED

Figure 6. Site map showing the location of each backhoe trench (1-5), the approximate site area based on surface indication, and the construction debris concentration.

Backhoe Testing a Site 41BX1709

Site 41BX1709 was first recorded by SWCA in 2004 during the course of an archaeological survey along I-35 south for the San Antonio Water System. The site is described as an “unknown prehistoric lithic scatter”. The site form on the Archeological Sites Atlas describes the site as “consisting of an abundant scatter of chert cobbles and fragments on the surface of a plowed field. Upon trenching cultural materials were observed between 76 and 90 cm below surface.”

Further investigations were carried out by AAC to investigate the site’s extent and condition in the field proper. Five backhoe trenches were excavated by AAC to examine the subsurface depth and integrity of the cultural deposits on the Bailey Commercial property (Figs. 6, 7). Backhoe work was conducted by Dale Morris of Boerne, Texas and supervised by the author. The procedure included excavating the trenches to a depth of about one meter, troweling both sides of the profile to examine for traces of prehistoric cultural material, and taking Munsell soil color readings on the profile from below the plow zone to the bottom of the trench. Each trench was then digitally imaged with a scale divided in 10 centimeter increments, and the profile recorded. GPS readings were taken for each trench and the location was plotted on the site map (Fig. 6). One meter depth was chosen because construction will unlikely exceed that depth. These tests, which are described below, revealed that the cultural material was encountered in BHT#1, 2, and 4, and was more concentrated in the upper 40 cm but reached a depth of

60 cm in BHT#1. No cultural material was observed in the profile in either back dirt of BHT#3 or 5.



Figure 7. Backhoe testing in progress at site 41BX1709.

BHT#1. GPS Location: 14 0535190E/3240466N

Located in the southwest corner of the field where the density of cultural material was seen as slightly higher, this trench reached a depth of 1.1 meters and was 2.5 meters long. The profile, shown in Figure 8, is described as follows:

0 to 20 cm. Loose disturbed plow zone.

20 to 45 cm. Dark brown loamy soil (Munsell 7.5YR4/2) with a trace of cultural material (two flakes, two fire-cracked rock, one mussel shell observed in back dirt). A few rounded limestone gravels and chert cobbles were present.

45 to 75 cm. Brown loamy soil (Munsell 7.5YR5/4) with a trace of cultural material. Charcoal was observed at a depth of 65 cm. No gravels were observed.

75 to 110 cm. Reddish brown loamy soil (Munsell 7.5YR6/6). Some calcium carbonate nodules were present. No cultural material or gravels were observed.

Summary of BHT#1. A trace of cultural material was observed in the back dirt and profile, but no definable cultural layer or evidence of anthropogenic soil was noted. The soil profile appears natural.

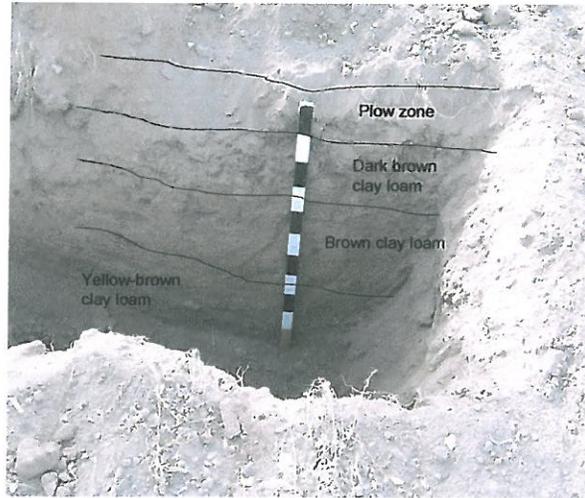


Figure 8. Profile view of BHT#1 showing loamy soil and lack of a defined anthropogenic soil horizon.

BHT#2. GPS Location: 14 0535216SE 3240437N

This trench, shown in Figure 9, was located in the southeast portion of the field where only a very light evidence of prehistoric occupation was observed. The trench reached a depth of 1.1 metres and was 2.5 meters long. The profile is described as follows:

0 to 20 cm. Loose disturbed plow zone.

20 to 40 cm. Dark brown loam with a trace of cultural material (one fire-cracked rock, one flake)(Munsell 7.5YR4/2). Charcoal fleck in profile. Light occurrence of limestone and chert gravel.

40 to 65 cm. Transition to brown loam (Munsell 7.5YR5/6). No trace of cultural material. Decrease in gravel.

65 to 110 cm. Yellowish brown loam with some calcium carbonate (Munsell 7.5YR6/6). No cultural material.

Summary of BHT#2. No definable cultural horizon was observed in this trench, and the paucity of cultural material seen in the trench correlates with that seen on the surface.

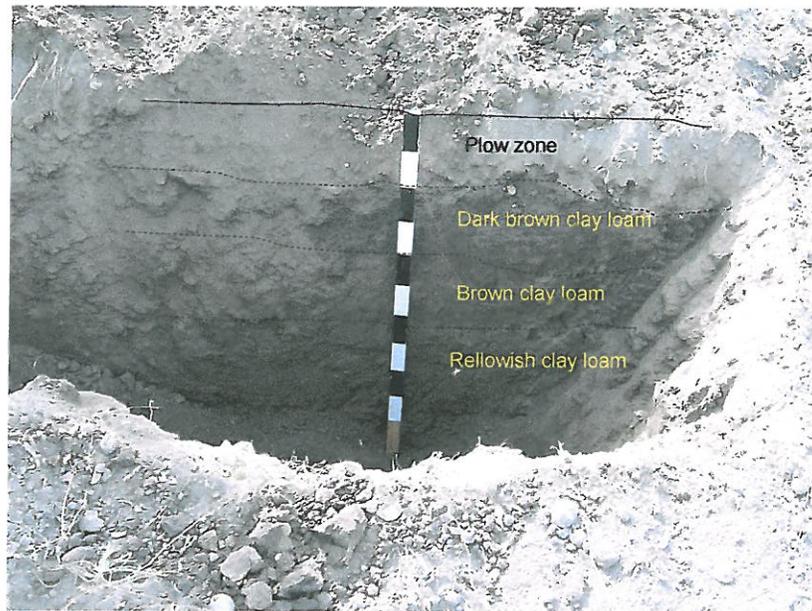


Figure 9. BHT#2 profile.

BHT#3 GPS 14 0535265 E3240446N

This trench, located north of BHT#2 and near the I-35 corridor, reached a depth of 1.0 meter. The soil profile was similar to that observed in BHT#2 except that no cultural material was observed in the walls or in the back dirt. The profile, shown is Figure 10 can be described as follows:

0 to 20 cm. Disturbed plow zone, loose brown loam.

20 to 45-50 cm. Dark brown clay loam (Munsell 10YR4/2). No cultural material observed.

45-50 to 63-65: Brown clay loam (Munsell 7.5YR5/4).

65 cm to 1.0 m: Yellowish brown clay loam (Munsell 7.5YR6/4). No cultural material was observed.

Summary of BHT#3. Unlike BHT# 1 and 2, no prehistoric cultural material was observed in this trench.

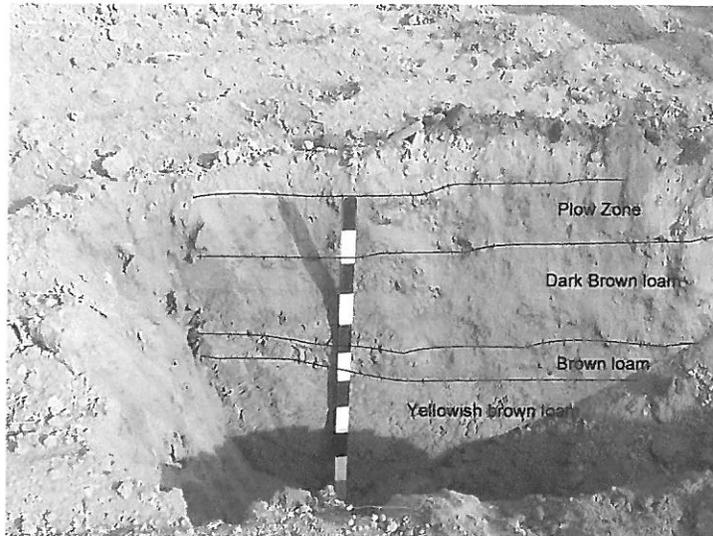


Figure 10. BHT#3 profile.

BHT#4. GPS 14 0535224E 3240491N

BHT# 4 was located north of BHT#1 in the area where cultural material in the form of widely scattered fire-cracked rock, an occasional chipped stone flake, and mussel shell appeared most concentrated on the surface. The trench reached a depth of 1.1 meters and was about 2.5 meters long. A single fire-cracked rock was observed in the profile (Fig. 11). Also, a piece of wattle-impressed daub, one fire-cracked rock, a mussel shell, and a chert flake was also noted in the back dirt approximately at this level. Despite this cultural evidence, there does not appear to be a concentrated cultural deposit in this area of the site.

The profile description is as follows and is shown in Figure 11.

0 to 20 cm. Loose plow zone.

20 to 50cm. Dark brown clay loam with a trace of cultural material (Munsell 7.5YR4/2). Some cultural material (fire-cracked rock, one piece of daub (Fig. 12), a mussel shell)

50-70 cm. Brown clay loam, no cultural material.

70-110 cm. Yellowish brown clay loam with some calcium carbonate. No cultural material.

Summary of BHT#4. The distribution of cultural material observed in BHT#1 and 2 continued northward and was apparent, albeit a trace, in BHT#4. It did not extend below 50 cm. The most interesting artifact was the wattle-impressed daub (Fig. 12). This fragment came out of the back

dirt at about 50 cm level. The daub appears “fresh” in that it does not show any significant evidence of weathering. While it is presumably prehistoric In age, it could just as well be associated with the historic structure indicated on the soils map (Fig. 5); historic (20th century) trash was scattered across the area of BHT#4.

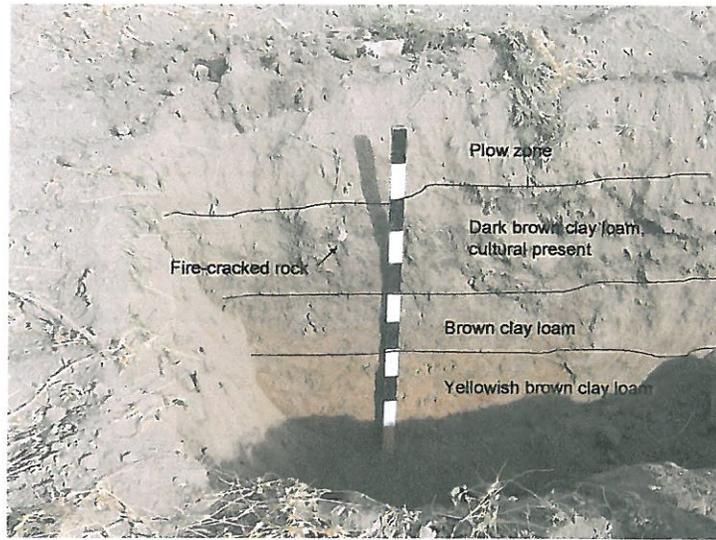


Figure 11. BHT#4 profile.

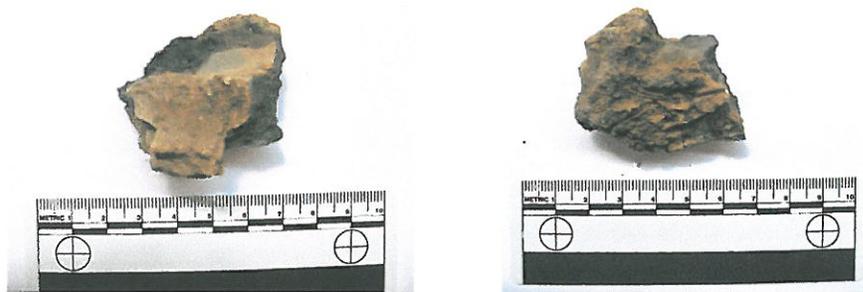


Figure 12. Two views of the wattle-impressed daub from BHT#4.

BHT#5 GPS 14 053520E 3240514N

BHT#5 was the northern most trench excavated. Evidence of scattered prehistoric cultural material was not observed in this area but there was a scatter of historic (20th century) trash (see Fig. 6). The purpose was to test to see if burial cultural material could be detected. No cultural material was found in this test. The profile, shown in Figure 13, can be described as follows:

0 to 25 cm. Plow zone with some historic trash.

25 to 50 cm. Brown clay loam, no cultural material.

50 to 75 cm. Light brown clay loam, no cultural material.

.75-1.00 m. Yellowish brown clay loam. No cultural material.

Summary of BHT#5. No cultural material was observed in the profile or back dirt. This lack of material conforms to the surface indication which shows that the site boundaries probably did not extend this far north.

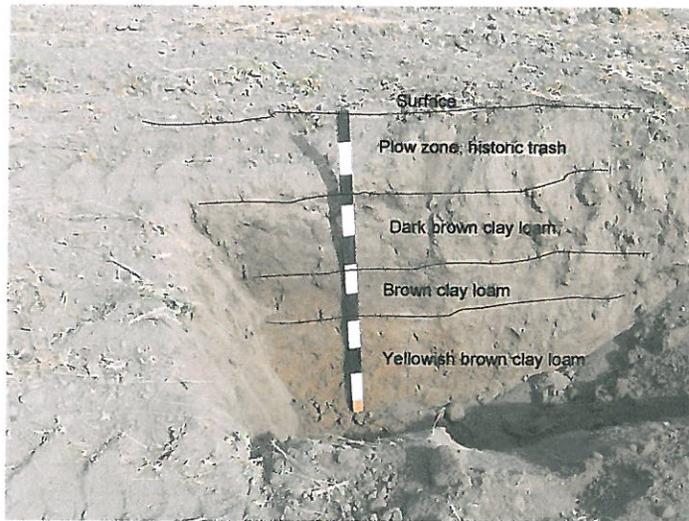


Figure 13. BHT#5 profile.

Assessment and Recommendations

The pedestrian survey and backhoe testing at 41BX1709 confirmed that the site consisted of a light scatter of prehistoric cultural material of unknown age and a light scatter of historic 20th century trash. The historic trash was confined to the plow zone and was most concentrated in the area of BHT#5. No diagnostic prehistoric artifacts were observed that would provide some indication of the period or periods of time the site was

occupied. One interesting artifact recovered, however, was a piece of wattle-impressed daub, usually an indication of a clay insulated pole and thatch structure. This artifact was found in BHT#4 but the profile did not show any daub concentration that would indicate an intact cultural feature. The daub may suggest that a prehistoric structure was once present in this general area of the site although the freshness of the daub, which does not show any significant weathering, is suspect. The daub's condition could also indicate that the daub is historic in age. Evidence of prehistoric structures in open-air settings are indeed rare in central Texas (see Shafer and Hester 2008), but this single artifact would not justify further archaeological attention give its questionable antiquity.

The cultural deposits at 41BX1709 are neither concentrated nor stratified, and no intact or defined cultural features were observed. Due to the thin distribution of cultural material and lack of intact deposits, 41BX1709 does not merit nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, no further archaeological research is recommended.

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