



**An Archaeological Survey
of the Two Acre Coker Methodist Church Tract
Along the Linear Creekways Project,
North San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas**

By

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SUBMITTED TO

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Abstract

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants conducted a Phase I archaeological survey along Panther Springs Creek on the Coker Methodist Church tract of the Linear Creekways Project in north San Antonio, 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 project area is on private property and no Texas Antiquities Permit is required. The survey was carried out at the request of the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation. No cultural resources were observed or recorded on the property, and no further archaeological work is recommended.

Introduction

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants (AAC) conducted a Phase I archaeological survey along Panther Springs Creek on the Coker Methodist Church tract of the Linear Creekways Project in north San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Fig. 1). Work included a 100% pedestrian survey. The work was carried out 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. This Phase I investigation was designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area. The project area is on private property and no Texas Antiquities Permit is required. The survey was carried out at the request of the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation.

The Setting

The survey tract lies along the lower elevations of Panther Springs Creek drainage (Figs 2 and 3), as the creek winds its way southeast to its confluence with Salado Creek. The Coker tract area lies wholly within the Trinity-Frio soils (Tf), as defined in Taylor et al. (1991). This zone is narrow and prone to frequent floods. The channel of the creek becomes poorly defined, the floodplain irregular in outline, and the repeated flooding scours and shifts the materials in and adjacent to the channel.

Archaeological Background

Regional Culture History

The following is a very brief outline of the culture history of northern Bexar County and adjacent areas. Major time periods and site types are noted here. Details on much of this section can be found in Turner and Hester (1999).

The Paleoindian period, 9,200-6,800 B.C., has distinctive chipped stone spear points used in hunting mammoth and other late Ice Age mammals early in the period. Other spear types appear with a shift to bison, deer and other game after the Ice Age ended around 8000 B.C. Known site types in northern Bexar County are campsites with flint-chipping

debris from stone-tool making and repair. One site of Clovis age (9,200 B.C.) was excavated near FM1604 and Leon Creek. A later site, dating around 7,500 B.C., was investigated on the grounds of St. Mary's Hall on Salado Creek.

Sites of the following Archaic period are common in northern Bexar County. These peoples were hunters and gatherers as in the earlier Paleoindian period, but lived in an environment very similar to those of modern times. Projectile points used to tip spears (often erroneously called "arrowheads") change in shape through time, from 6,800 B.C. to 500 A.D. Archaeologists use these forms to recognize more specific time frames within the Archaic (e.g., Early, Middle and Late Archaic). In northern Bexar County, the most distinctive Archaic site is the burned rock midden. These large accumulations of fire-cracked limestone result from the use of earth-oven cooking starting around 3,000 B.C. (Black et al. 1997). Such features were part of larger campsites, with large amounts of flint debris from tool-making; sometimes, animal bone (dietary remains) and charcoal that can be used for radiocarbon dating. Other Archaic site types include lithic procurement areas (where flint cobbles eroded out of the Edwards limestone and were processed), lithic scatters (lightly-used areas probably representing short-term hunting and gathering activities), and rarely, sinkhole burials.

By 700 A.D., there began to be some changes in the long hunter-gatherer life way. The Late Prehistoric is first seen with the introduction of the bow and arrow. The stone arrow points are very small (mistakenly called "bird points"), but could be used in hunting game of any size. By 1300 A.D., the economy emphasized buffalo-hunting. Most sites of this era include campsites, often in areas previously used by Archaic peoples, lithic scatters of this age; and the lithic procurement areas of earlier times continued to be used.

During the Historic period, the best known archaeological remains are ranch and farm houses of cut stone, dating from the 1840s through the 1880s. Stacked- stone fences also occur. Such sites, including those without surviving structures, are recognized from 19th Century pottery fragments, artifacts of glass and metal, etc. Later Historic houses and farmsteads, through the early 1900s, are also found.

Nearby Sites

The survey encompassed a small part of the Panther Springs Creek drainage. This drainage, in areas just north of the Coker tract, has seen a great deal of archaeological research since the mid-1970s. Much of the area north of West Avenue was the Ganahl Walker Ranch, with some Historic period structures and with a wealth of prehistoric sites. As the Walker Ranch was broken up in the late 1970s, the San Antonio River Authority, and later, the National Park Service, funded extensive excavations at the Panther Springs Creek site (41BX228), published by Black and McGraw (1985). It dates to Early Archaic times, at least 7000 years ago, and includes as one feature of the site, a burned rock midden. This highly important site was located just about 1 mile northwest of the Coker survey area. Well over 40 documented sites lie within that area north of West Avenue and south of Bitters Road.

Another major project in the same drainage, and near 41BX228, was initiated during the planning of the Wurzbach Parkway in 1992. The Higgins site (41BX184) was extensively excavated. A large Archaic burned rock midden at the site provided key clues to the study of burned rock midden function. This locality is about .8 of a mile northwest of the Coker survey tract. Several volumes have been published on the work along the Parkway in the Higgins site area, e.g. Black et al. (1998).

It was during the 1992-1993 survey related to the Wurzbach Parkway that an archaeological site was recorded on the northwestern part of the Coker Methodist Church property, about was about 300 meters from the 2011 Coker tract survey. The site was recorded as 41BX1062. Test pits found cultural remains (burned rock from cooking, flint chips, and animal bones) to a depth of 80 cm below the surface. However, no time-diagnostic artifacts were recovered and the antiquity of this site remains unclear.

Given the rich archaeological record along Panther Springs Creek, any disturbance of the terrain should be preceded by a detailed survey.

Research Design

Scope of Work

Task A: Conduct a 100% surface inspection of the approximately two acres for traces of prehistoric or historic archaeological resources; shovel tests will be excavated if deemed necessary to determine the presence or absence of buried cultural material. The need for shovel tests will be based on surface visibility, soil conditions, and geomorphic setting.

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: Provide interpretations of the survey findings and assess the significance of any archaeological sites encountered within the project area with regards to their potential for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and as a Texas Archeological Landmark.

Task D: Prepare a written report or a letter report, depending on the results, detailing the area surveyed, methods used, archaeological background, historical background, survey findings, and recommendations for future work. A digital copy of the report will be provided to the client and a hard copy will be provided to the Office of Historic Preservation.

Survey Findings

Field work called for in Task A was conducted by Shafer on April 27, 2011 on the Linear Creek Parkways Project north of W. North Loop Road adjacent to the Coker Methodist Church property. The field work consisted of a pedestrian survey of a linear path along the west and east sides of Panther Springs Creek bordering the Coker property. The area investigated extended from W. North Loop Road along the west side of the creek to the northern extent of the property line between recent survey markers denoting the east and west property lines. The east side of the creek was inspected from the border of the ball field to the creek from W. North Loop road northward, again following recent survey

markers. No evidence of prehistoric activity (chipped stone or fire-cracked rock) was observed. The area consisted mostly of floodplain gravel capped in places with thin soil layer and organic mulch from live oaks and other trees and shrubs. The absence of any evidence of prehistoric activity is likely explained by the low elevation of the surveyed property and its subjectivity to flash flooding, the latter likely removed any previous evidence if indeed it was present at all.

Task B was to document any archaeological sites or isolated finds. No archaeological sites or isolated finds were encountered.

Task C called for interpretations of the survey findings and assessment of the significance of any archaeological sites encountered within the project area with regards to their potential for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and as a Texas Archeological Landmark. Since no cultural resources were noted, no further archaeological work is deemed necessary, and the proposed hike and bike path will not have any impact on cultural resources.

Concluding Statement

The pedestrian survey of the tract along Panther Springs Creek north of W. North Loop Road did not yield any evidence of prehistoric sites or artifacts. No shovel testing was deemed necessary due to gravel exposures and the lack of accumulated soils. The survey area consisted of a linear pathway along the west and east sides of the creek. The area consisted mostly of floodplain gravel capped in places with thin soil layer and organic mulch from live oaks and other trees and shrubs. The absence of any evidence of prehistoric activity is likely explained by the low elevation of the surveyed property and its subjectivity to flash flooding, the latter likely removed any previous evidence if indeed it was present at all. No further archaeological work is deemed necessary, and the proposed hike and bike path will not have any impact on cultural resources.

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Figures

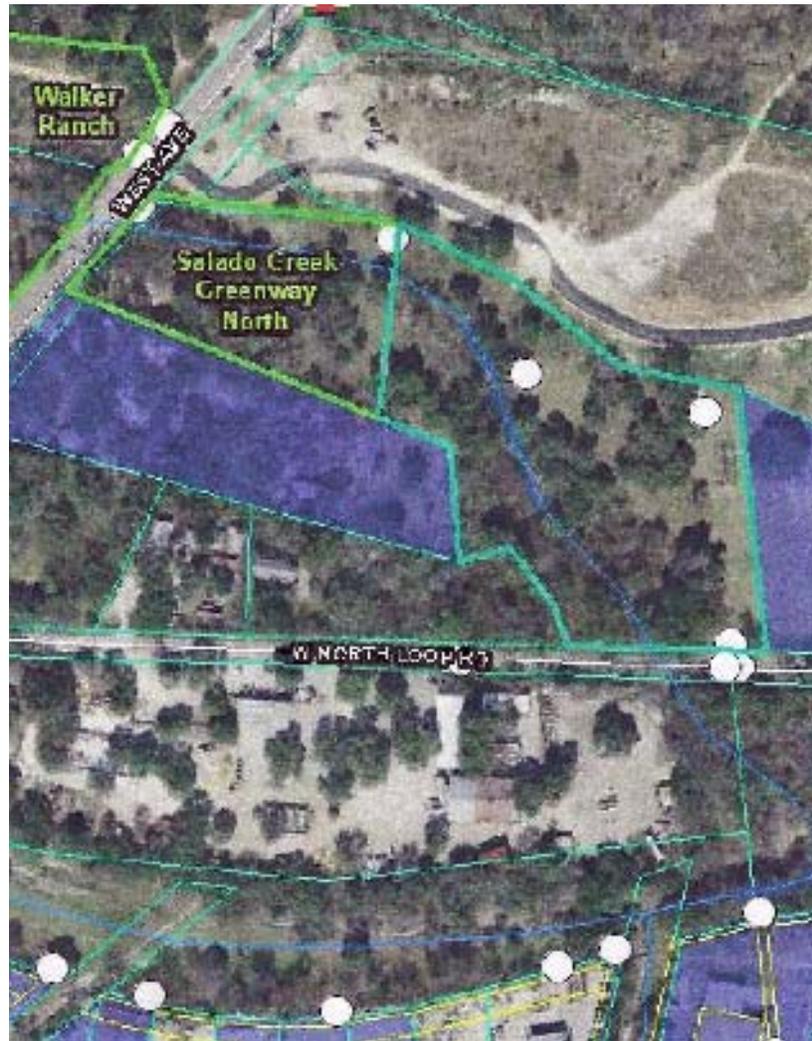


Figure 1: Linear Creekway Survey area outlined in light blue.



Figure 2. Top: Dry Panther Springs Creek as it appeared at the time of the survey. Bottom: View of wooded terrain on the west side of the creek.



Figure 3: Two views of the terrain on the west side of Panther Springs Creek in the Linear Creekways Project area.