

**ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE
RITTIMAN ROAD BRIDGE OVER SALADO CREEK,
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS
WBS Element: 40-00008-04-02
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ABSTRACT

In September 2009, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., conducted an archeological and historic resources survey of approximately 1.53 acres of existing bridge and road right of way along Rittiman Road at Salado Creek in San Antonio, Texas, for the proposed replacement of the existing bridge. The work was performed for the City of San Antonio and Adams Environmental, Inc., of San Antonio. No archeological sites were observed within the project area. The archeological resources project area is disturbed by bridge and road fill sections, drainage ditches, and buried utility lines. It has no potential for intact buried prehistoric features or components and does not contain important information. One historic-age bridge was documented in the historic resources study area. The bridge is recommended as not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or for listing as a State Archeological Landmark, since it is not an excellent representative of its type, bears no sufficient design or engineering complexity, and has no known local historical associations. The proposed project will have no effect on significant archeological or historical resources, and no further work is recommended.

CURATION

No artifacts needing curation were collected during the survey. Project records and photographs will be kept on file at Prewitt and Associates, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2009, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., conducted an archeological and historic resources survey of approximately 1.53 acres of existing bridge and road right of way along Rittiman Road at Salado Creek in the City of San Antonio for the proposed replacement of the existing bridge (Figure 1). The survey was authorized by the State of Texas Antiquities Code (Texas Natural Resource Code of 1977, Title 9, Chapter 191, VTCS 6145-9) and conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 5389. The work was also conducted under the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634), Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). The survey was performed to identify, document, and evaluate archeological and historic resources to provide sufficient documentation for determining the presence of significant properties in compliance with the Texas Antiquities Code and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The project area is west of Interstate Highway 35 and north of the U.S. Army's Fort Sam Houston military installation. Bridge replacement impacts will consist of paving the eastern and western bridge approaches on Rittiman Road and constructing bridge abutments and vertical support columns on the Salado Creek floodplain. This will impact an area approximately 350 m (1,160 ft) long and approximately 30 m (100 ft) at its widest point. The construction will permanently disturb 0.18 acres of the floodplain, although the depths of these impacts are not currently available. Paving the bridge approaches will permanently impact 1.35 acres. No new right of way or construction easements are needed for this project. For the archeological survey, the Area of Potential Effects is restricted to the footprint of the bridge itself and the adjacent approaches, since these are the only areas that will be disturbed. Since the proposed bridge replacement is along an existing transportation corridor, the historic resources study area consists of the existing roadway and bridge and 150 ft beyond the existing right of way.

Field records for the survey were kept in a standard format and consist of the project notes, digital photographs, and photograph log. No artifacts were collected and therefore no materials require curation. All records produced from this project are on file at Prewitt and Associates, Inc.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Bexar County is in south-central Texas and straddles the Balcones Fault Zone, which separates the Edwards Plateau from the Blackland Prairie of the Gulf Coastal Plain to the southeast (Arbingast et al. 1973:6; Bureau of Economic Geology 1983). The Edwards Plateau margin has been heavily dissected by stream downcutting and headward erosion, resulting in a rugged landscape of limestone hills and canyons, whereas the Blackland Prairie is typically rolling tall grasslands underlain by soft limestones, marls, and chalks.

The climate of the Blackland Prairie region can be classified as modified humid subtropical with Gulf-influenced hot summers and continental-influenced mild winters; the Edwards Plateau region is subtropical steppe with low summer humidity (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:10–12). Summer temperatures can exceed 100°F, and freezing temperatures can occur during the winter months, although such extremes are more frequent in the Edwards Plateau region. The mean annual precipitation for Bexar County is 29.1

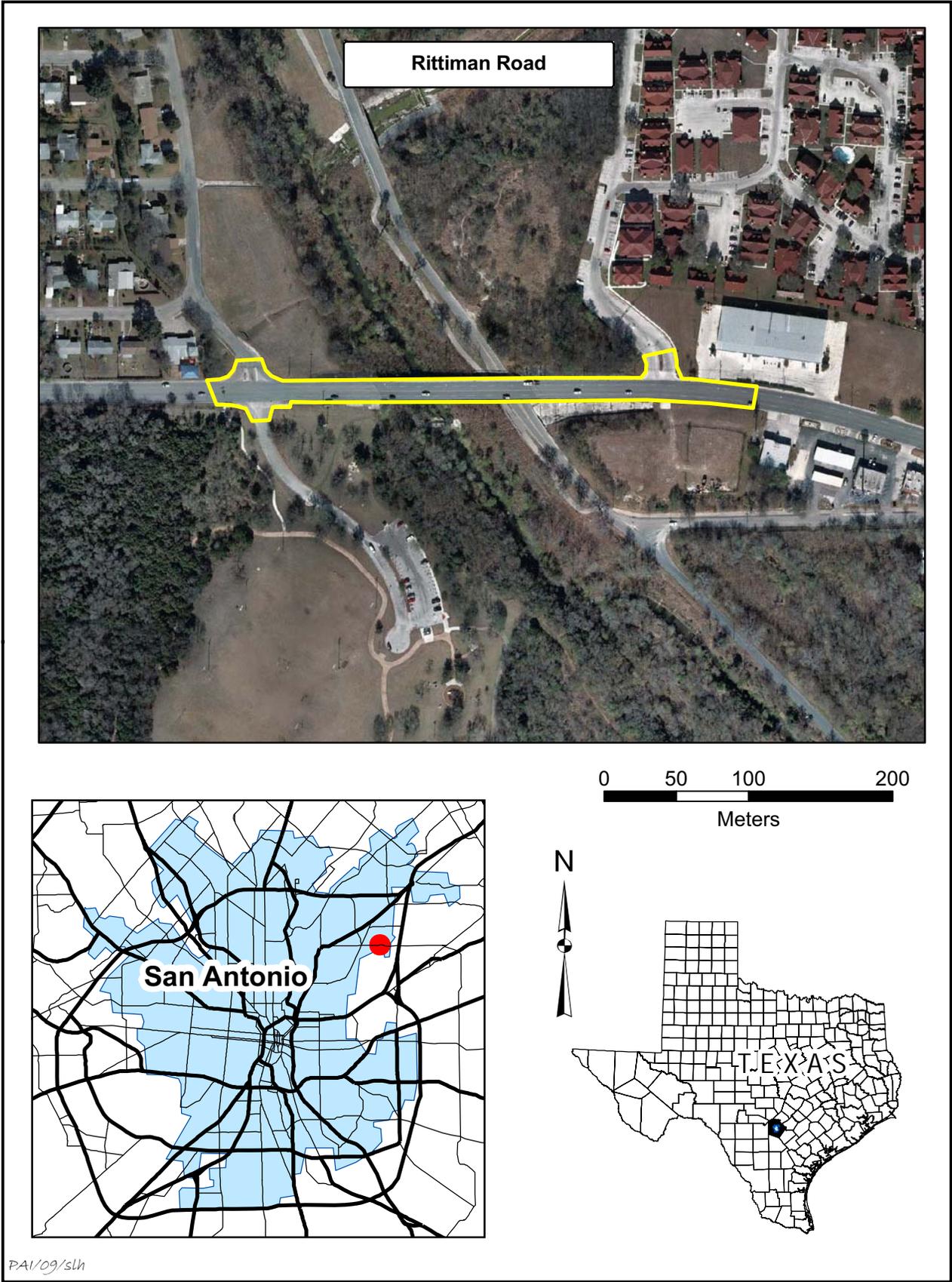


Figure 1. Project area map.

inches (739 mm). Rain falls throughout the year, with slight peaks in the late spring and early fall months (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:49).

Like the landscape and climate, the biota of Bexar County differs from east to west, although there is geographical overlap of some species. The flora and fauna of the Edwards Plateau are defined as Balconian, while those of the Blackland Prairie are characterized as Texan (Blair 1950).

The project area traverses the Salado Creek valley, which is incised in late Quaternary fluvial terrace deposits (Bureau of Economic Geology 1983). Salado Creek is a tributary of the San Antonio River. The valley itself probably contains some Holocene alluvium but not enough to be mapped as a discrete unit on the 1:250,000-scale *Geologic Atlas of Texas–San Antonio Sheet*. Vertisols and Mollisols of the Trinity and Frio series are mapped on the floodplain of Salado Creek, and Mollisols of the Lewisville series are mapped on the adjacent terraces (Taylor et al. 1991).

METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Before field investigations began, a search for previously recorded archeological sites within or near the project area was conducted using the Texas Historical Commission's Archeological Sites Atlas. Although no previously recorded archeological sites occur within the immediate project area, four sites have been recorded within 1.0 km. Sites 41BX294 and 41BX305 are prehistoric archeological sites along the terraces of Salado Creek or adjacent upland surfaces and are within 0.3 km of the project area. The other two sites, 41BX422 and 41BX880, are south of the project area on Fort Sam Houston. A Texas Centennial Marker is north of the project area, and a neighborhood survey form notes a location west of the historic resources study area, but no previously recorded historic resources are in the study area. Both the marker and the survey form are for the September 18, 1842, Battle of Salado, the last Mexican invasion of Texas.

Field investigations consisted of a 100 percent pedestrian survey and surface examination across the 1.53-acre project area. Surface visibility was poor to fair because of vegetation and paved road surfaces.

The floodplain surface of Salado Creek is ca. 3 m below the upland surface. Alluvial deposits below the floodplain surface are heavily disturbed and consist of thin (<2 m) gravelly deposits based on observations of channel bank exposures.

The floodplain surface and the deposits below it close to the bridge have been heavily impacted by utility lines, drainage enhancements and modifications, and construction of the existing bridge. In the southeast quadrant of the bridge, a buried water or sewer line and a concrete-lined drainage ditch are in the right of way. In the northeast corner of the bridge, a buried water or sewer line and power poles and overhead lines are in the right of way. The northwest quadrant is impacted by a large concrete drainage ditch on the floodplain that leads to the channel. The southwest corner has a similar concrete drain on the floodplain, as well as buried power and natural gas lines. The floodplain surface below the eastern end of the bridge has a two-lane paved street and a hike-and-bike trail. The adjacent upland surface within the right of way also is disturbed.

Due to the extensive nature of these disturbances, no shovel tests or trenches were excavated. No archeological sites were observed and, given the extensive impacts and disturbances, the surveyed area has no potential for buried prehistoric sites and features that would yield significant information.

A concrete bridge was identified in the study area (Figures 2–9). The bridge’s construction date is not known, but it is likely to have been constructed before 1965. Sets of 4 precast concrete pillars support 13 concrete cross beams. The 3 easternmost sets of pillars span Holbrook Road, and the next extends over a hike-and-bike trail; the remaining sets of pillars span Salado Creek. The pillars support an asphalt-paved concrete bridge deck with large concrete abutments at each end. The approaches to the bridge consist of four undivided travel lanes of asphalt pavement. These travel lanes extend across most of the existing right of way, save for 2–5 m on either side. The travel lanes are built on fill sections, present at each end of the bridge, that are 3–4 m thick, extend away from the bridge 50–65 m, and are mantled by concrete aprons along their sides.

To be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a bridge should either be an excellent example of its type to be considered significant as a representative example, or it should exhibit exemplary design or engineering complexity to be considered significant as unusual or distinctive. A bridge may also be considered significant for its associations with community development, transportation, or prominent individuals.

Although this bridge retains its integrity of location and materials, its integrity of setting has been compromised with the introduction of the hike-and-bike trail and the aboveground pipeline on its south side. These modern intrusions also infringe on the bridge’s integrity of workmanship, design, and feeling. Because of these infractions, the bridge is not an excellent example of its type. This is a very common bridge type and exhibits neither design nor engineering complexity. The bridge has no known historical associations and consequently lacks associative integrity. For these reasons, the bridge is recommended as not eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and State Archeological Landmark designation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The archeological and historical resources survey of 1.53 acres at the Rittiman Road bridge at Salado Creek consisted of 100 percent pedestrian survey. No archeological sites were observed or recorded. Because of impacts and disturbances related to construction of the existing bridge, drainage modifications and enhancements, and utility lines, the archeological project area has no potential for intact buried prehistoric features or components and does not contain important information. One historic-age bridge identified in the study area is recommended as not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or for listing as a State Archeological Landmark. Thus, construction of the proposed bridge and paving of the existing travel lanes will have no effect on any significant archeological or historical resources. No further work is recommended.



Figure 2. Bridge deck, looking east.



Figure 3. Bridge deck and abutment, looking east.



Figure 4. Bridge deck and abutment, looking west.



Figure 5. Bridge deck and abutment, looking west.



Figure 6. East end bridge abutment, looking northeast.



Figure 7. Bridge over Holbrook Road and hike and bike trail, looking north.



Figure 8. Bridge over Holbrook Road and hike and bike trail, looking south.



Figure 9. Bridge pillars over Salado Creek, looking west.

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