

Archaeological Investigations for the Alamo Inn and Suites, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
Antonia L. Figueroa



REDACTED

Principal Investigator
Paul Shawn Marceaux

Prepared for:
Mr. Rakesh Vazir
2203 East Commerce Street
San Antonio, Texas 78203



Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249
Archaeological Report, No. 471

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Abstract:

On January 7, 2019, The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), in response to a request from 1718 Architecture, LLC, conducted archaeological investigations in the form of exploratory backhoe trenching in advance of proposed improvements to the Alamo Inn and Suites located in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The project is subject to the review authority of the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation (COSA-OHP) under the COSA Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article 6, Sections 35-630 Designated Archaeological Sites to 35-634 Cemeteries). Paul Shawn Marceaux served as the Principal Investigator, and Antonia L. Figueroa served as Project Archaeologist.

The proposed improvements to the Alamo Inn and Suites consist of the addition of 20 rooms east of the existing retail shop and three rooms north of the existing rooms. Archaeological investigations conducted by CAR resulted in the excavation of three backhoe trenches. During backhoe trenching, a limestone foundation associated with a domestic structure and dating to at least 1890 was encountered and recorded as site 41BX2273. CAR recommends no further archaeological work, as there was a lack of archaeological deposits associated with the documented foundation. However, COSA-OHP recommended that construction avoid impact to the foundation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) conducted archaeological investigations in the form of backhoe trenching for the

Alamo Inn and Suites project in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1-1). The project area was located east of downtown San Antonio on the corner East Commerce Street



Figure 1-1. Location of the APE with satellite imagery.

and North New Braunfels Avenue. This work was in response to a request from 1718 Architecture, LLC and the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation Office (COSA-OHP). The project required review under the COSA Unified Development Code. The project required no regulatory review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Antonia L. Figueroa was the Project Archaeologist, and CAR Director, Paul Shawn Marceaux, served as Principal Investigator.

The goal of the exploratory backhoe excavations was to identify and document all prehistoric and/or historic archaeological sites that may be impacted by the proposed improvements. The COSA-OHP was especially interested in the foundations of a structure depicted on a 1912 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* (Sanborn 1912). During the archaeological work, CAR staff monitored the excavations of three backhoe trenches. The foundations of a structure shown on the 1912 Sanborn map was documented and recorded as site 41BX2273. The CAR recommended no further work on the foundations, and the COSA-OHP concurred with the recommendation. The COSA-OHP also advised the foundations not be impacted by construction, if possible.

Project Description and Area of Potential Effect

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is located at 2203 East Commerce Street east of downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, and covers an area of 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres). The proposed improvements to the Alamo Inn and Suites consist of the addition of 20 rooms east of the existing retail shop and three rooms north of the existing rooms. Archaeological investigations concentrated on the southeast lot within the APE. The APE is depicted on an ESRI topographic map in Figure 1-2.

Report Organization

This report consists of five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the project setting, which includes the physical environment of the APE, a brief culture history, and the previous archaeology conducted within 500 m of the APE. The field, laboratory, and curation methods for the project are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 documents the results of the archaeological investigations, and Chapter 5 provides a summary and recommendations based on the project findings.

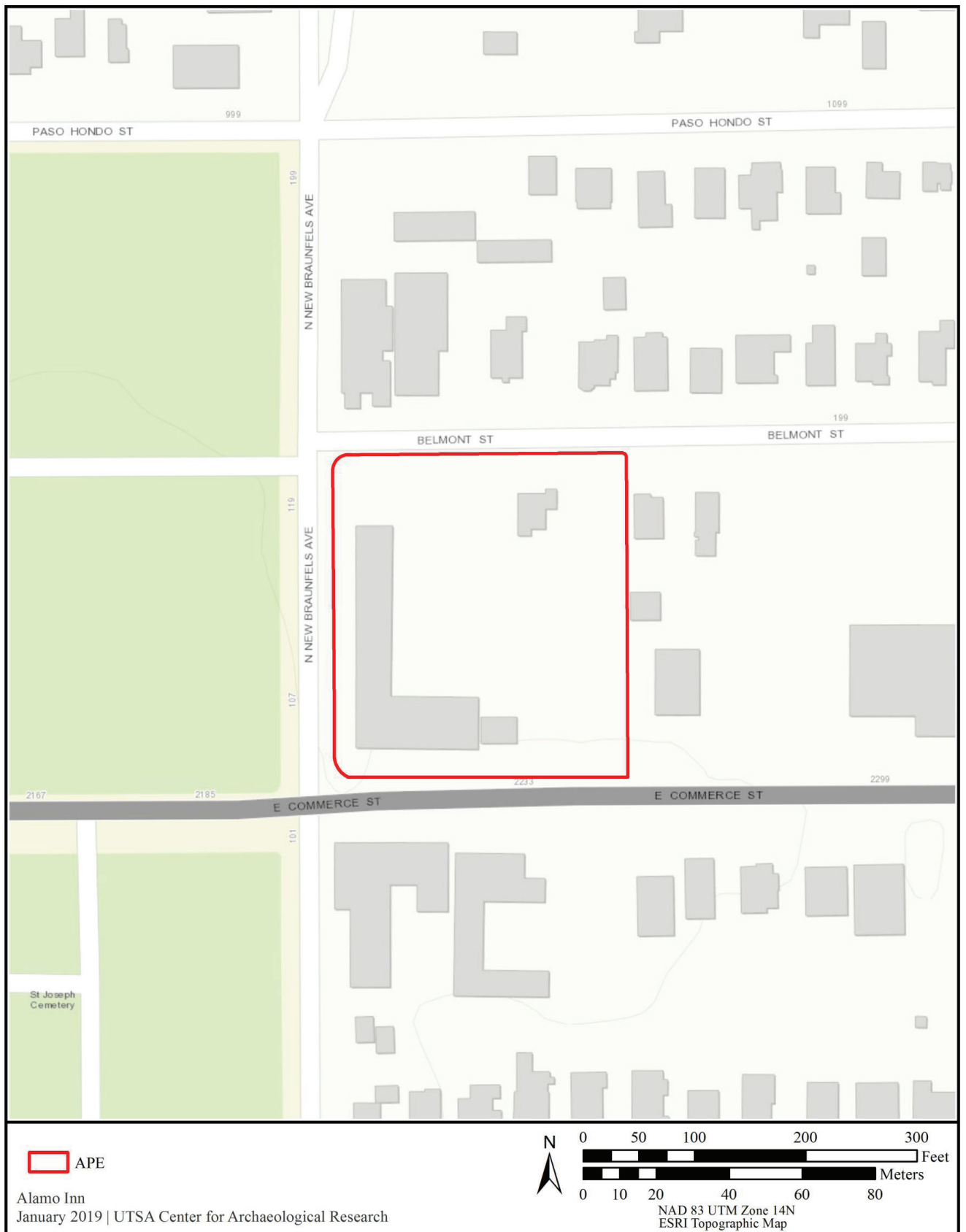


Figure 1-2. The APE depicted on an ESRI topographic map.

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Chapter 2: Project Setting

This chapter presents a brief description of the project area's physical environment and provides a discussion of the culture history of San Antonio that begins with the Protohistoric period and ends with the early twentieth century. The chapter concludes with a brief description of previous archaeological investigations conducted within 500 m of the APE.

Environmental Setting

The San Antonio region is described as a moderate, subtropical, humid climate with generally cool winters and hot summers (Norwine 1995; Taylor et al. 1991). The average high temperature reported for San Antonio in 2017 was 69.6° F, and the average low was 45.5° F (U.S. Climate Data 2019).

The two soil types present in the APE are Rock outcrop-Olmos complex (HgD) and Houston Black clay (HuB; Natural Resources Conservation Service 2018). The Rock outcrop-Olmos soil series is shallow and described as gravelly loam overlaying the caliche/limestone bedrock. The Houston Black clay soil is described as gravelly clay that occurs on top of the limestone bedrock.

Culture History

This section summarizes the culture history for San Antonio region. No prehistoric resources were recorded or observed during the project; therefore, a discussion of the prehistory of the region will not be provided. The reader may consult Collins (2004) for a detailed summary of the prehistory of Central Texas that begins during the Paleo-Indian period (11,500-8800 BP) and ends with the Late Prehistoric period (1200-350 BP). One historic site was recorded in the project area (see Chapter 4), and a brief culture history of San Antonio is provided. Multiple sources, including previously published CAR reports, were consulted to compile this section of the report (Cox 1997; Figueroa and Mauldin 2005; Fox et. al 1997; Tennis 1995).

Protohistoric (ca. 1528-1700)

Researchers (Wade 2003) have stated that the Protohistoric period may coincide with the end of the Late Prehistoric period. However, proving this is problematic, as there is a lack of cultural material at most sites. Archaeological sites that are identified as Protohistoric may have Late Prehistoric and/or Historic artifacts associated with them with supporting

radiocarbon dates to confirm their Protohistoric designation (Mauldin et al. 2004). The most widely accepted description of this period begins with the early Spanish explorations in Texas with the Narvaez expedition (ca. 1528) and concludes with the establishment Spanish missions and settlements in the region in the late 1600s and early 1700s (Krieger 2002). Contact between native populations and Spanish explorers was sporadic during the Protohistoric period.

Spanish Colonial Period in San Antonio (ca. 1700-1800)

The establishment of Presidio San Antonio de B  xar and Mission San Antonio de Valero near the headwaters of San Pedro Creek in 1718 marked the beginning of a Spanish presence in the San Antonio region (Chipman 1992:14; Hoffman, translator 1937). The main goals of the presidio were to provide protection to the surrounding area and its inhabitants, as well as to serve as a way station along the Spanish Camino Real between Mexico and the East Texas settlements (McGraw et al. 1991).

During the last part of the eighteenth century, the missions in San Antonio began to decline due to a shortage of clergyman and a decrease in the number of native field hands to maintain the agricultural fields associated with the missions. As a result, in 1790, the College of Zacatecas, which oversaw the missions, recommended that Mission San Antonio de Valero be secularized. In 1794, all of the missions that were still functioning in San Antonio were secularized, and the surrounding mission lands were divided and distributed to the remaining inhabitants (Habig 1968).

Early Texas (1800-1836)

San Antonio and its inhabitants became susceptible to threats from native raids and cattle smuggling during the early nineteenth century. The early nineteenth century was a turbulent time as conflicts between New Spain and Spanish Texas flourished at this time (Campbell 2003). By 1821, Mexico became independent from Spain, and Texas and Coahuila were united into one Mexican state.

After gaining independence, the newly formed Mexico awarded land grants for the northern regions, which included the area that would become Texas, to attract settlers to the sparsely populated area. However, the Texas region was placed under heavy control of the Mexican military (Cox 1997), and tensions grew between the Mexican government

and the settlers fueling the Texas Revolution. In 1832, some areas of Texas were placed under martial law, and several citizens were arrested (Cox 1997) leading to a rebellion. In an attempt to make Texas a separate entity, Stephen F. Austin asked for support from San Antonio in 1833, the same year Santa Anna became the President of Mexico. In 1835, Santa Anna ordered General Cós and Mexican troops to settle civil unrest in the Texas region, where the Mexican troops had been pushed out of San Antonio (Cox 1997). In March 1836, the Mexican army, led by Santa Anna, defeated Texas troops in the Battle of the Alamo. Santa Anna and his troops continued to move across Texas, but they were finally defeated by the Texans at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836 (Fox et al. 1997).

Republic of Texas (1836-1845)

After defeating Mexico and gaining independence, the Republic of Texas was formed. The boundaries were delineated for the newly formed republic with the Rio Grande to the south and Louisiana to the east (Nance 2004). Under Sam Houston, the first elected president of the Republic of Texas, populations continued to grow in Texas and the San Antonio region. It is suggested that the population in Texas increased by 269 percent due to influx of immigrants (Campbell 2003). Political tensions continued to exist between Mexico and Texas because Mexico refused to recognize the independence of Texas. In 1842, Mexican soldiers marched into San Antonio and continued to present-day Seguin to declare Texas was still under Mexican law (Cox 1997). Finally, in 1844, a truce was called between Mexico and Texas (Fox et al. 1997).

San Antonio and Statehood (1845-1900s)

Texas was admitted as a state to the Union in 1845. This act along with a dispute about boundaries led to the war between the United States and Mexico (1846-1848). As a result, General Zachary Taylor and his troops advanced to the Rio Grande in May of 1846, an area of land that the Mexican government viewed as its own, and war was declared. The ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 established the Rio Grande as a boundary, and the United States was given additional territories in return for monetary compensation (Bauer 1974; Wallace 1965).

During the Civil War, Texas sided with the Confederacy, but it did not suffer as much economically as the rest of the

Union as the Texas economy was not focused on slavery. Finally, in June of 1865, Confederate generals serving in the Texas region surrendered signaling the end of the Civil War (Campbell 2003; Fox et al. 1997).

San Antonio saw a surge in population growth during the years following the Civil War. The increase in population was mostly attributed to the arrival of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway in 1877 (Cox 1997). The arrival of the railroad prompted economic growth in mercantile and saloon businesses in San Antonio. The development of city waterworks also began during this time as the city continued to expand (Heusinger 1951).

The city cemetery located in the center of town was not sufficient to accommodate the increasing population of San Antonio (Tennis 1995). In 1850, the City Council appointed a committee to look at areas outside of the city near Powder House Hill as locations for additional public cemetery space (Cox 1997; Tennis 1995).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the population of San Antonio was just over 53,000 (Cox 1997). San Antonio was expanding to the east side of the city limits and encroaching the public cemetery lands. As a result, there are eighteenth century domestic habitations on the east side and later neighbor developments (Fox et al. 1997) directly adjacent to the still present cemeteries.

Previously Recorded Sites

There is only one site within 500 m of the APE. Site 41BX2152 is 500 m to the southwest of the APE. The site was recorded in 2016 and identified as the site of the Spanish Colonial Powder House and Watch Tower (Elverson 2018). Ground penetrating radar, pedestrian survey, and shovel testing were used to investigate the site that is located within City Cemetery Number 2. Artifacts indicated the site dated from the Spanish Colonial period to the early 1900s (Elverson 2018). The cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places because it is included in the Eastside Cemetery Historic District (Old San Antonio City of Cemeteries Historic District) that dates from 1850 to 1974 and consists of 31 burial grounds (THC 2019).



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Figure 2-1. Previously recorded site 41BX2152 located within 500 m of the APE.

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Chapter 3: Field and Laboratory Methods

Field Methods

The fieldwork for the project consisted of exploratory backhoe trenching focused on the southeast portion of the APE. CAR staff selected the location of two backhoe trenches based on a 1912 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* with the aim to encounter the foundation and/or any features associated with a structure depicted on the map. The backhoe trenches were 5-6 m long and 0.6-1 m wide. The trenches were from 1-1.2 m deep. Archaeologists completed a standard form to record detail about each backhoe trench, and they produced measured drawings of the stratigraphy including a description of soil types and any artifacts within the matrix or wall of backhoe trenches. If trench walls revealed the same stratigraphy, then only a 1-m representative segment of the trench was profiled to avoid redundancy. All backhoe trenches were recorded with a Trimble handheld GPS unit.

All activities observed were documented with photographs and recorded in a photographic log. A Trimble handheld unit was used to collect GPS data. During backhoe excavations, remnants of a foundation were encountered, and after consultation with the City Archaeologist, a third backhoe trench was excavated to investigate the feature. The trench was 9-5-m long, and its maximum depth was 1.1 m.

Laboratory Methods

All field notes, forms, photographs, and drawings were placed in labeled archival folders. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper and placed in archival-quality page protectors. All records generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulation 36 CFR Part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. All project related materials, including the final report, will be permanently stored at the CAR curation facility.

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Chapter 4: Results of the Field Investigations

On January 7, 2019, the CAR conducted exploratory backhoe trenching concentrated on the southeast portion of APE (Figures 4-1 and 4-2). The backhoe trenches were placed in an attempt to locate the foundations of the structure seen on the 1912 Sanborn map and any features (such as a household

midden) that may have been associated with the structure. Remnants of a limestone foundation were encountered in Backhoe Trench 2 (BHT 2). The COSA-OHP was notified immediately, and based on consultation with the City Archaeologist, CAR excavated a third backhoe trench to

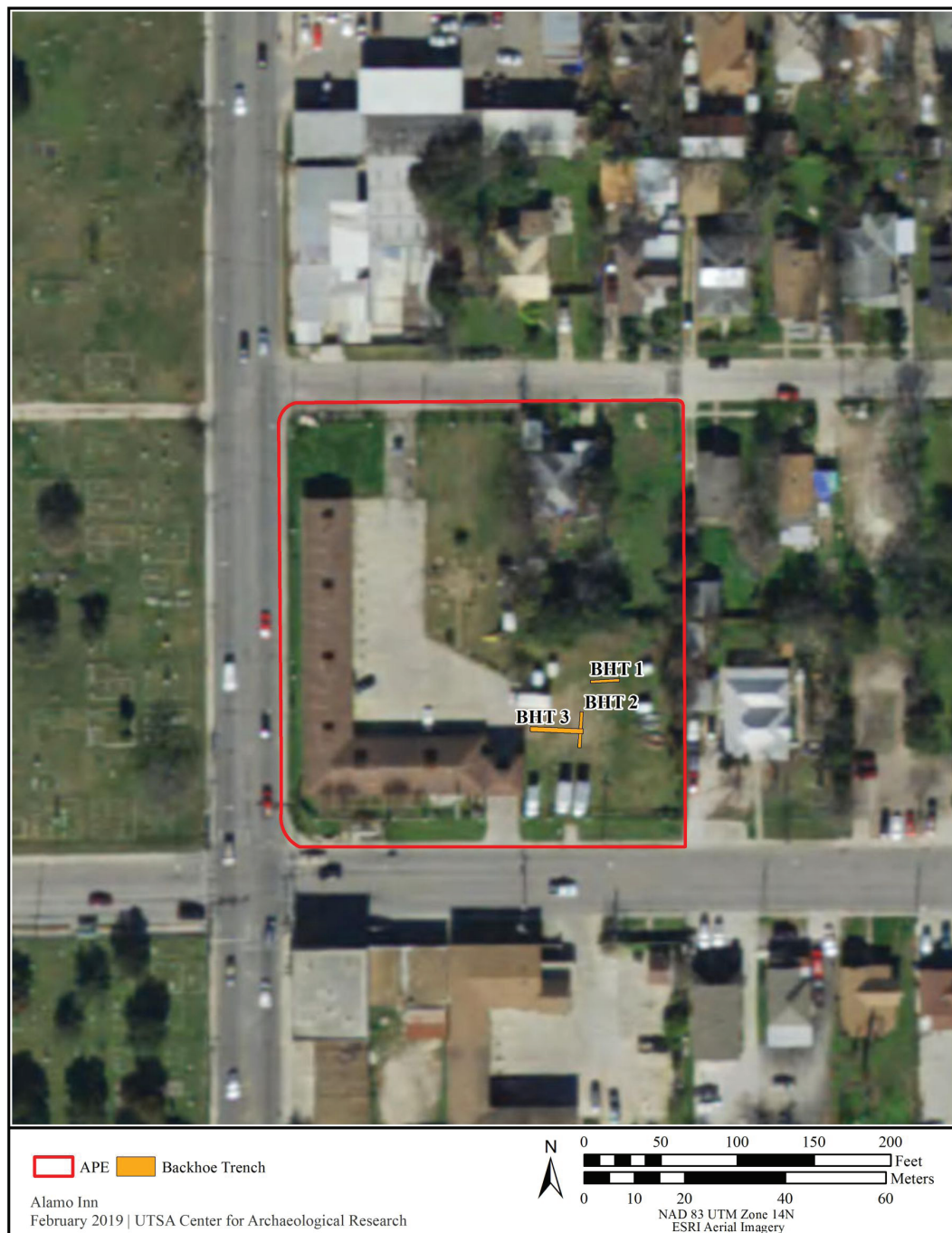


Figure 4-1. Aerial map of APE with backhoe trenches.



Figure 4-2. Backhoe trench locations.

expose more of the foundation. The foundation was recorded as site 41BX2273. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the details of the backhoe trenches and the site 41BX2273, including the deed history of the property.

Backhoe Trenches

As seen in Figure 4-1, three backhoe trenches were excavated in the southeast portion of the APE. Backhoe Trench 1 was orientated east/west, and it was 5 m long and 0.6 m wide. The maximum depth of the backhoe trench was 1.2 m. The upper 30 cm of the backhoe trench contained fragments (red brick, a metal can, and clear glass) of modern cultural material. The profile of the north wall of BHT 1 revealed five stratigraphic layers (Figure 4-3). The first three layers of the profile were disturbed, and it appears only layer four (clay) was intact.

Backhoe Trench 2, excavated southwest of BHT 1, was orientated north/south (see Figure 4-1). The trench was 6 m long and 0.6 m wide. A limestone foundation was encountered in the backhoe trench at 50 cm below the surface (cmbs). Construction debris and asphalt were found within the upper 50 cm of the trench, but no other cultural material was observed. The limestone wall was 55 cm wide and was orientated east/west (Figure 4-4). In consultation with COSA-OHP, CAR staff excavated BHT 3 along the limestone foundation to determine the length of the feature.

Backhoe Trench 3 was oriented east/west, and the top of the foundation was exposed at 50 cmbs. The trench was 9.5 m long (Figure 4-5). The limestone foundation was 7 m long. The maximum depth of BHT 3 on the west side was 1.1 m. The bottom of the foundation and its depth below the surface was not investigated. The only cultural material (historic) encountered in this trench was a single undecorated white earthenware (not collected).

Site 41BX2273

As discussed in the previous section, remnants of a limestone foundation were encountered in BHT 2 and BHT 3. Figure 4-6 depicts the placement of BHT 2 and BHT 3 on the 1912 Sanborn map. According to an overlay of the Sanborn map and the APE map, the limestone foundation encountered during the backhoe trenching closely corresponds to the interior wall of a domestic structure. CAR staff documented the limestone foundation as a site and recorded it with the THC, which assigned trinomial 41BX2273 to the site. The top of the foundation was found at 50 cmbs in both BHT 2 and BHT 3. The width of the foundation was 55 cm (Figure 4-4).

A search in the Bexar County Deed Records (BCDR) identified the earliest documentation of the property (New City Block 1440, Block 7, Lot 17) dated to 1889 when the

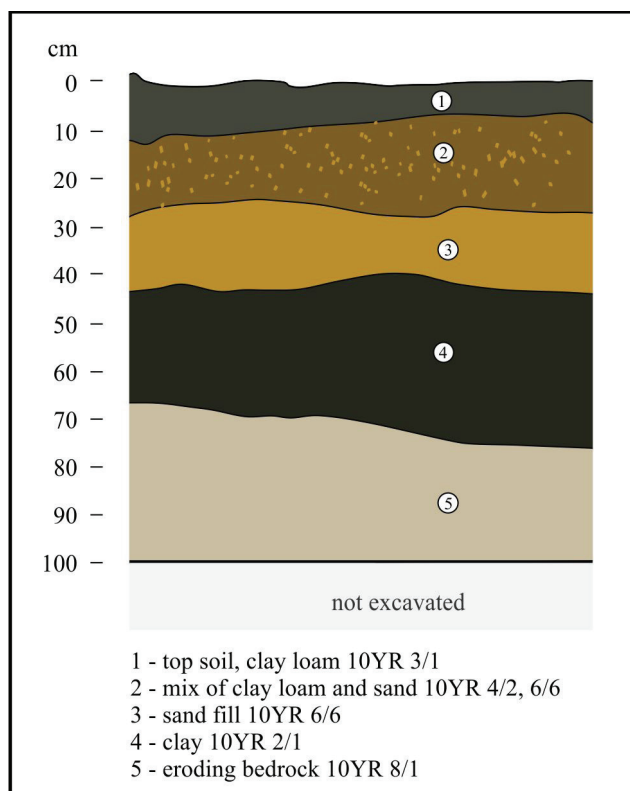


Figure 4-3. Profile of the north wall of BHT 1.



Figure 4-4. Profile of east wall of BHT 2, showing the limestone foundation.

land was conveyed to H. B. Adams and E. D. L. Wickes by C.L. Pope (BCDR 91:83). There is no mention of a structure on the property in the 1889 document. An 1890 Plat of the area depicts the project area property owned by A. W. Walters Real Estate Investment Company (BCDR 72:500-501). The earliest depiction of the structure is found on the 1912 Sanborn

map. The historic cultural material (white earthenware) found associated with the foundation was in BHT 3, and it indicates a late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century occupation of the site. Further archaeological work was not recommended by CAR or COSA-OHP. However, COSA-OHP recommended to the client that the foundation not be impacted.



Figure 4-5. BHT 3, facing west, delineating the limestone foundation.

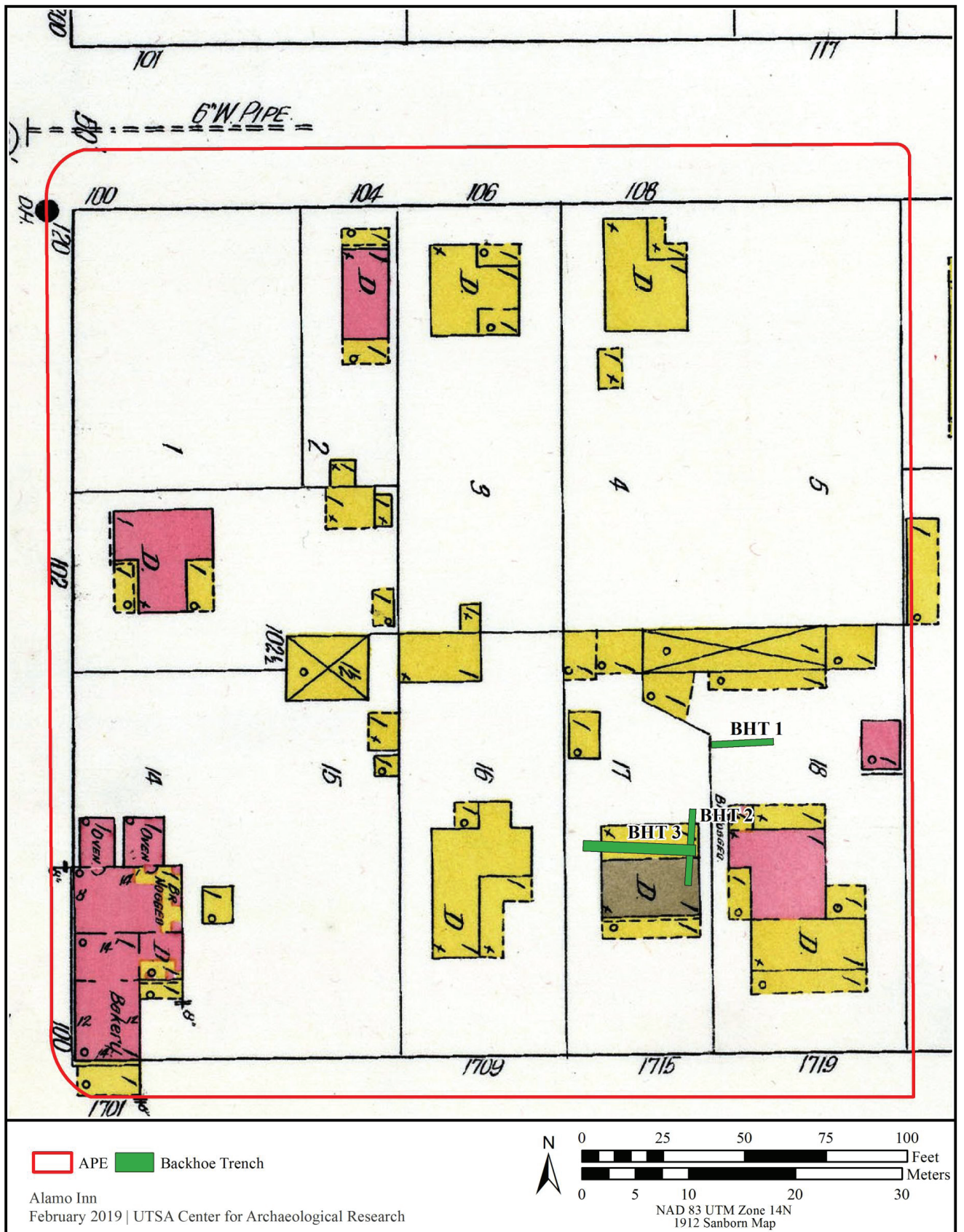


Figure 4-6. A 1912 Sanborn map with the recorded structure (41BX2273) and backhoe trench locations.

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Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

CAR archaeologists performed exploratory backhoe trenching for the Alamo Inn and Suites project on January 7, 2019. The project area is located just east of downtown adjacent to the Eastside Cemetery Historic District on the corner East Street Commerce and North New Braunfels Avenue. Three backhoe trenches were excavated, and one new site (41BX2273) was documented.

The excavation of BHT 1 revealed no features. During the excavation of BHT 2, a late nineteenth- to early

twentieth-century limestone foundation associated with a domestic structure was encountered and recorded as site 41BX2273. After consultation with COSA-OHP, BHT 3 was excavated to delineate the horizontal extent of the feature. Excavations only yielded a single piece of white earthenware ceramic associated with the limestone foundation in BHT 3. CAR recommends no further work, and construction can proceed as planned. COSA-OHP also recommended that the foundation not be impacted, if possible.

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