

Archaeological Investigation of the San Antonio River Authority San Pedro Creek Operational Facilities, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas



by
Sarah Wigley

Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8848

REDACTED

Principal Investigator
Paul Shawn Marceaux

Prepared for:
San Antonio River Authority
600 East Euclid Avenue
San Antonio, Texas 78212



Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78249
Archaeological Report, No. 475

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Abstract:

In March of 2019, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) excavated three exploratory backhoe trenches for the San Pedro Creek Operational Facilities Project in downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The CAR was contracted by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) to conduct an archaeological investigation of a potential historic site, identified by Matthew Elverson of the City of San Antonio (COSA) Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), located on SARA property on the site of the San Pedro Creek Operational Facility. At the municipal level, the project falls under COSA's Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634). The project requires review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) under the Antiquities Code of Texas, and CAR was issued Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8848 prior to commencement of archaeological investigations. Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux, CAR Director, served as the Principal Investigator, and Sarah Wigley of the CAR served as the Project Archaeologist. All artifacts collected and all records generated during the course of this project are permanently curated at the CAR.

Three backhoe trenches were excavated within the 1.4-acre project area. Two of these were terminated early due to obstructions. In the third trench, a small amount of historic cultural material, including ceramics, glass, metal and shell, was encountered. Excavation of this trench resulted in the documentation of a previously unrecorded historic site, 41BX2285.

Site 41BX2285 has limited research potential due to the limited quantity of diagnostic artifacts, lack of architectural features associated with the site, and the abundance of data recovered from the late nineteenth-early twentieth century in Texas (THC 2019a). The CAR recommends site 41BX2285 is ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or for designation as a State Antiquities Landmark.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On March 29, 2019, CAR staff excavated three exploratory backhoe trenches for the San Pedro Creek Operational Facilities Project in downtown San Antonio, Texas. The CAR was contracted by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) to conduct an archaeological investigation of the site of the San Pedro Creek Operational Facility. The project was funded by SARA and located on SARA property. As public municipal property, undertakings that might affect archaeological or historical sites are subject to regulatory review. At the municipal level, the project falls under COSA's Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634). The project requires review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) under the Antiquities Code of Texas. As required, CAR obtained Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8848 prior to commencement of archaeological investigations. Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux, CAR Director, served as the Principal Investigator, and Sarah Wigley served as the Project Archaeologist.

Area of Potential Effect

The project area is located on the eastern side of the intersection of Guadalupe Street and Laredo Street (Figures 1-1 and 1-2). The APE encompasses an area of 1.4 acres bounded to the northeast by Guadalupe Street, Laredo Street to the northwest, and urban development to the southeast and southwest. The San Pedro Creek is located approximately 130 meters (m) to the east.

The COSA-OHP requested archaeological investigation of the property due to concern about the potential impact of the San Pedro Creek Operational Facilities Project on the footprint of a small adobe structure shown on historic maps of the area (Sanborn Map Company [Sanborn] 1904, 1912).

One previously undocumented historic site, 41BX2285, was located to the south of the modern San Pedro Creek Operational Facility building in a backhoe trench. The site consists of a small historic feature and a scatter of historic artifacts, including ceramics, glass, and metal. The limited amount of cultural material, lack of architectural features, and the large quantity of data available from this time period in Texas (THC 2019a) suggest that the site has limited research potential.

Report Organization

This report includes four chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter provides a discussion of the natural environment, a brief overview of historical background, and a review of the previous archaeology conducted within 500 m of the APE. The third chapter discusses the lab and field methods employed by the CAR during this project. The fourth chapter provides a discussion of the results of archaeological monitoring, and the fifth chapter discusses CAR's summary of findings and recommendations.



Figure 1-1. Area of Potential Effect (red outline) shown on a Google Earth aerial image.



Figure 1-2. Area of Potential Effect (red outline) on an ESRI aerial image.

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Chapter 2: Background

This chapter presents a background discussion of the project in order to provide context for the findings of the investigation. The discussion includes a description of the natural environment, a brief historical background of the area, and a review of previous archaeological investigations near the APE.

Environment

San Antonio is located where the southernmost Great Plains meets the Gulf Coast, demarcated by the Balcones Escarpment. It is also located near a significant climate boundary, partitioning a humid-subtropical from an arid zone (Petersen 2001), that divides Central Texas. The city's location near these significant geological and climactic boundaries results in a varied resource base. The area contains a number of reliable freshwater sources, including the San Antonio River, freshwater artesian springs, and the Edwards Aquifer. The growing season lasts 270 days on average (Petersen 2001:22). The average annual rainfall is approximately 76.2 centimeters (cm) and peaks in the spring and fall, but it is highly variable both seasonally and annually (Petersen 2001:22).

The soils within the APE are Branyon clays (HtA), with zero to one percent slopes. These soils are located on stream terraces. They are moderately well drained, reach depths of more than 203 cm and are prime farmland (Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] 2019). The APE is located within the Southern Blackland Prairie ecoregion. Natural vegetation in this region is primarily tall perennial bunchgrasses (NRCS 2019). The current environment is urban and heavily developed.

The project area is located in central San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The APE is bounded to the northeast by Guadalupe Street, Laredo Street to the northwest, and urban development to the southeast and southwest. San Pedro Creek is located approximately 130 m to the east. It has been artificially channelized (Texas State Historical Association 2010). The creek rises in springs located in north central San Antonio and flows southeast for 3 km to its confluence with the San Antonio River.

Culture History

Though San Antonio's culture history includes a significant prehistoric component (see Collins 2004 for a review of the prehistoric culture history of the region), this review will

focus on the historic period, beginning in 1528 and ending around 1900, as no prehistoric materials were documented during the course of this project. A number of prehistoric archaeological sites are associated with the San Pedro Creek, which runs to the east of the APE. These sites include San Pedro Springs Park, a Late Archaic-Late Prehistoric site, (41BX19; Mauldin et al. 2015; Meissner, ed. 2000; THC 2019b), a buried prehistoric site (41BX2057; McKenzie 2014), and two multicomponent sites (41BX2255 and 41BX2256) in which both historic and prehistoric material were documented (THC 2019b).

In Central Texas, the historic period begins with the first documented arrival of Europeans as early as 1528 AD. Although interactions between Europeans and indigenous populations were infrequent, the indigenous populations were still impacted by disease and the arrival of Native American groups from other regions of North America fleeing European incursions (Foster 1998; Kenmotsu and Arnn 2012).

Spanish colonial settlement of San Antonio began in 1718 with the establishment of the Mission de Valero, which was originally located along the San Pedro Creek (de la Teja 1995:8). The San Antonio de Bejar Presidio, or fort, was established that same year (Moorhead 1975:29). The Mission San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo was founded in 1722 (de la Teja 1995: 9). In 1731, three more missions (Nuestra Señora de la Purisma Concepción, San Juan Capistrano, and San Francisco de la Espada) from East Texas were relocated to San Antonio, and a group of Canary Islander colonists founded the town of San Fernando de Bejar adjacent to the Presidio (de la Teja 1995:10). The town, with its diverse population, maintained steady growth during its first 80 years (de la Teja 1995:17). The town that would become San Antonio during this period was dependent on subsistence agriculture (de la Teja 1995:75). Ranching was also a prominent industry, and as the town grew, artisans and merchants contributed to a diversifying economy (de la Teja 1995).

Archaeological sites dating to the colonial period in San Antonio are often characterized by the presence of irregular limestone architectural features, Spanish Colonial ceramics, Native American ceramics, and faunal bone (Figuroa and Mauldin 2005; Hanson 2016; Kemp et al. 2019; Mauldin and Kemp 2016). Sites in San Antonio dating to this time period include 41BX2170, a multicomponent site with features related to the Siege of Bexar, the Veramendi site (41BX2164), a historic home dating to the Spanish Colonial

period (Kemp et al. 2019), and the various missions (Fisher 1998), including Mission de Valero (41BX6; Anderson et al. 2017; Cox 1997; Fox 1976; Zapata 2017).

The secularization of the missions and redistribution of their lands began in 1793 (Cox 1997). From 1811-1813, San Antonio participated in a failed rebellion against the Spanish government (de la Teja 1996). In 1821, San Antonio became part of an independent Mexico following the Mexican Revolution. During this period, increasing numbers of Anglo-American settlers from the United States began to establish themselves in the city. These settlers often conflicted with the Mexican government over a variety of political, economic, and cultural issues, and their increasing numbers contributed to the Texas Revolution in 1835 (Tijerina 1996). Texas became a part of the United States in 1846, but in 1861 it seceded to join the Confederacy during the Civil War. After the Civil War, San Antonio’s growth was limited until the arrival of the railroad in 1877 (Cox 1997). The arrival of the railroad contributed to commercial development in the city, which brought significant expansion and infrastructure development in the next few decades (Cox 1997). Characteristic artifact assemblages from sites dating to this period include metal, glass, and white earthenware (Mauldin and Kemp 2016), and similar material was recovered from a historic site (41BX619) near the current APE (Fox 1983; THC 2019b).

San Antonio’s Mexican Quarter

The project area is located within a section of the city known as Laredito, or the Mexican Quarter (Marquez et al. 2007). This is apparent on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of the area, which depict the structures in the area as “Mexican dwellings” (Sanborn 1904) or “Mexican tenements” (Sanborn

1912). *Jacale* (mud, clay, and grass structures) and adobe structures in these parts of San Antonio persisted well into the early twentieth century (De León 1982:114). Menger (1913:269), in his observations on the city of San Antonio, describes “large rows of Mexican dwellings” along the San Pedro Creek and Alazán Creek.

The city’s 1840 census records indicate that at that time Tejanos, individuals born in Texas of Mexican descent, owned 85 percent of town lots, but by 1850, census records show Tejanos claiming only 9 percent of real estate (Marquez et al. 2007:295). San Antonio’s division into four wards (political subdivisions) contributed to a neighborhood structure in which 80 percent of Tejano residents were located in the portion of city west of downtown (Marquez et al. 2007:295.) After 1860, inequality increased between Tejano and Anglo residents (Marquez et al. 2007:296).

Previous Archaeology

Two archaeological sites have been recorded within 500 m of the APE (Table 2-1, Figure 2-1). Site 41BX619 (the Rummel Store) is a historic commercial site recorded during a survey by CAR in 1983 (Labadie 1987). Ceramics, glass, and metal were documented during shovel testing (Labadie 1987; THC 2019b). Site 41BX2057 is a prehistoric site recorded within a backhoe trench in 2014 by the CAR (McKenzie 2014). Debitage, expedient lithic tools, charcoal, and a core were documented from 40-120 cm below the datum (McKenzie 2014; THC 2019b). A survey conducted about 90 m southeast of the project area by Raba-Kistner Environmental, Inc. did not record any sites in the vicinity (Clark et al. 2013). In general, the section of the city west of the San Pedro Creek is not well documented archaeologically due to a lack of archaeological projects in the area.

Table 2-1. Sites Located within 500 m of the APE

Site	Name	Type	Recorded by
41BX619	Rummel Store	Historic: commercial	CAR (Labadie 1987)
41BX2057	San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) Prehistoric Site	Prehistoric: located between San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek	CAR (McKenzie 2014)



Figure 2-1. Previously recorded archaeological sites within 500 m of the APE shown on an ESRI aerial image.

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Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter details the field and laboratory methods employed during this investigation. This discussion includes analytical definitions, methods of excavation, laboratory processing methodology, and curation standards.

Field Methods

For the purposes of this investigation, an archaeological site was defined as containing: (1) five or more surface artifacts within a 15-m radius (ca. 706 m²); or (2) a single cultural feature, such as a hearth, observed on the surface or exposed in backhoe trenching; or (3) a positive backhoe trench containing at least five artifacts.

Although the scope of work prepared for the THC proposed a minimum of two backhoe trenches within the project area to target the footprint of the historic house identified by the COSA-OHP as an area of concern, three backhoe trenches were excavated during the course of the investigation. Backhoe trenches (BHTs) 1 and 2 were excavated within the footprint of the adobe house as plotted using georeferenced Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (Sanborn 1904, 1912). A third backhoe trench (BHT 3) was excavated along the southern edge of the APE in order to locate potential privy deposits.

Backhoe Trenches 1 and 2 had to be abandoned due to cement slabs encountered just below the surface and debris from a previous auto shop located in the area, which presented a possibility of hazardous materials. Only BHT 3 was excavated

to a depth of 150 cmbs (cm below the surface). No backdirt was screened, but it was examined for evidence of cultural material. The soil stratigraphy was examined, and the trench walls were examined for artifacts. Both walls of BHT 3 were photographed, and a 1-m segment of the north wall was profiled. All backhoe trenches locations were mapped using a GPS unit and hand sketched onto an aerial photograph.

Laboratory Methods

All cultural materials and records obtained and/or generated during the project were prepared in accordance with 36 CFR part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. Artifacts processed in the CAR laboratory were washed, air-dried, and stored in 4-mm, zip-locking, archival-quality bags. Materials needing extra support were double-bagged. Acid-free labels were placed in all artifact bags. Each label contained provenience information and a corresponding lot number written in archival ink, in pencil, or generated using a laser printer. Tools and ceramics were labeled with permanent ink over a clear coat of acrylic and covered by another acrylic coat. In addition, a small sample of unmodified debitage from each lot was labeled with the appropriate provenience data. Artifacts were separated by class and stored in acid-free boxes. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper, labeled with archivally appropriate materials, and placed in archival-quality sleeves. All field forms were completed with pencil. Upon completion of the project, all project-related documentation and collected materials will be housed at the CAR.

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Chapter 4: Results

The CAR’s investigation of the APE was prompted when Matthew Elverson, Assistant City Archaeologist of COSA-OHP, expressed concern about the impact of the San Pedro Creek Operational Facilities Project on the footprint of a small adobe house shown on the 1904 and 1912 Sanborn maps (Figure 4-1; Sanborn 1904, 1912). The earlier Sanborn map (1904) shows the house as part of a loosely grouped cluster of houses labeled “Mexican dwellings.” The 1912 map shows the house as still present, but the area is much more densely populated with small wooden structures. The nearby houses are described on the 1912 map as “Mexican tenements.” The CAR undertook an investigation of this area in order to identify potential intact deposits associated with the structure. While other structures of similar construction are shown in the area on the two Sanborn maps, a comparison with modern aerials suggests these structures appear likely to have been more heavily impacted by modern development. This chapter details the results of this investigation of the property, including the fieldwork and lab analysis of recovered artifacts.

Three exploratory backhoe trenches (BHTs) were excavated within the project area to target the area of concern identified by COSA-OHP (Figure 4-2). Backhoe Trenches 1 and 2 were

located over the footprint of the historic house, as identified from georeferenced Sanborn maps (1904, 1912), in order to investigate deposits potentially associated with the house. Unfortunately, these trenches had to be abandoned due to obstructions encountered near the surface. The third backhoe trench (BHT 3) was located along the southern boundary of the APE and was intended to target potential privy deposits associated with the house. While the first two backhoe trenches did not identify any cultural resources, BHT 3 contained a small concentration of historic artifacts within the first 55 cm; however, no privy feature or other architectural features were identified.

Backhoe Trench 1

Backhoe Trench 1 was a roughly north-south oriented trench intended to explore the footprint of the historic house identified by the COSA-OHP. The trench extended 2.9 m in length and 1.0 m in width. The trench was terminated at 15 cm due to a cement slab obstruction (Figure 4-3). An attempt was made to relocate the trench to the east, but the same obstruction was encountered. The trench could not be attempted further south due to an existing driveway and fence. Before the trench was terminated, modern trash, including metal, glass and plastic were observed.

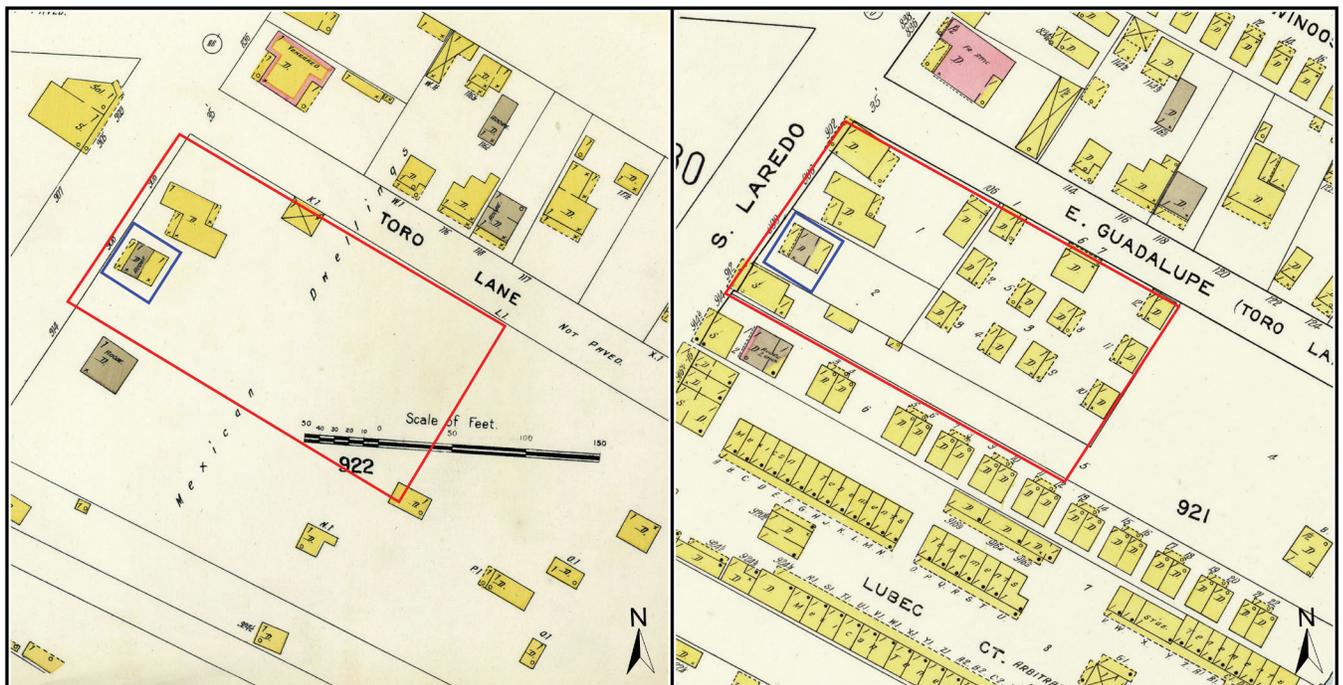


Figure 4-1. The location of the adobe house (outlined in blue) within the APE (outlined in red) on the 1904 (right) and 1912 (left) Sanborn maps.



Redacted Image

Figure 4-2. Backhoe trench locations on a Google Earth aerial image.



Figure 4-3. Backhoe Trench 1, facing northwest.

Backhoe Trench 2

Backhoe Trench 2 (Figure 4-4) was a roughly east-west oriented trench, at a right angle to BHT 1 (see Figure 4-2), and was intended to explore the footprint of the historic house identified by COSA-OHP. The trench extended 2.3 m in length and 1 m in width. The trench was terminated at 12 cm due to encountering the same cement slab obstruction and potentially hazardous debris from an auto shop previously located on the property. The trench could not be relocated due to the existing driveway, as well as a fence and gas lines. Before the trench was terminated, a large quantity of rusting ferrous material and dark, greasy soil that appeared to be heavily oil-stained was observed.

Backhoe Trench 3: Site 41BX2285

BHT 3 was a roughly east-west oriented trench intended to target potential privy deposits associated with the historic house (Figure 4-5). The trench extended 3.9 m in length and 1 m in width, and it reached a maximum depth of 1.5 m. Table 4-1 provides a description of the trench's five zones, and Figure 4-6 depicts the northern profile. Zone 1 extended 0-25 cmbs and consisted of clumpy, very dark gray (10YR

3/1) clay with some gravels. Cultural material was recovered from this zone, including a small historic feature containing ceramics, nails and 20-25 glass fragments (Figure 4-7) located 10-20 cmbs in the southern portion of the trench. Zone 2 extended 25-55 cmbs and consisted of a blocky, black (10YR 2/1) clay, containing some cultural material and charcoal. Zone 3 was a caliche intrusion in the northern portion of the trench extending from 45-55 cmbs. It consisted of a gray (10YR 6/1) sandy clumpy clay. This layer contained no cultural material. Zone 4 extended from 55-150 cmbs, consisted of black (10YR 2/1) blocky clay, and contained no cultural material. Zone 5 extended from 120-150 cmbs and consisted of white (10YR 8/1) clumpy clay, and it contained no cultural material.

The artifacts recovered from BHT 3 fulfill the criteria of an archaeological site as defined in the scope of work, and it was designated 41BX2285 (Figure 4-8). Only temporally diagnostic artifacts were collected, with the exception of a representative sample of glass. The feature measures 40 cm in length and 5 cm in height. It contains 20-25 glass fragments, a few ceramic sherds (which were collected) and a few fragments of unidentified metal. The soil within the feature was consistent with the soil in the stratigraphic layer. In addition to the material found within the feature, glass,



Figure 4-4. Backhoe Trench 2, facing northwest. Note auto shop debris and cement.



Figure 4-5. Backhoe Trench 3 location, facing southeast.

Table 4-1. Stratigraphic Zones in BHT 3

Zone	Depth (cmbs)	Color (Munsell)	Description
1	0-25	10YR 3/1	clumpy clay and gravels, feature
2	25-55	10YR 2/1	blocky clay, some artifacts, charcoal
3	45-55	10YR 6/1	caliche intrusion; sandy clumpy clay, sterile
4	55-150	10YR 2/1	blocky clay, sterile
5	120-150	10YR 8/1	caliche, clumpy clay, sterile

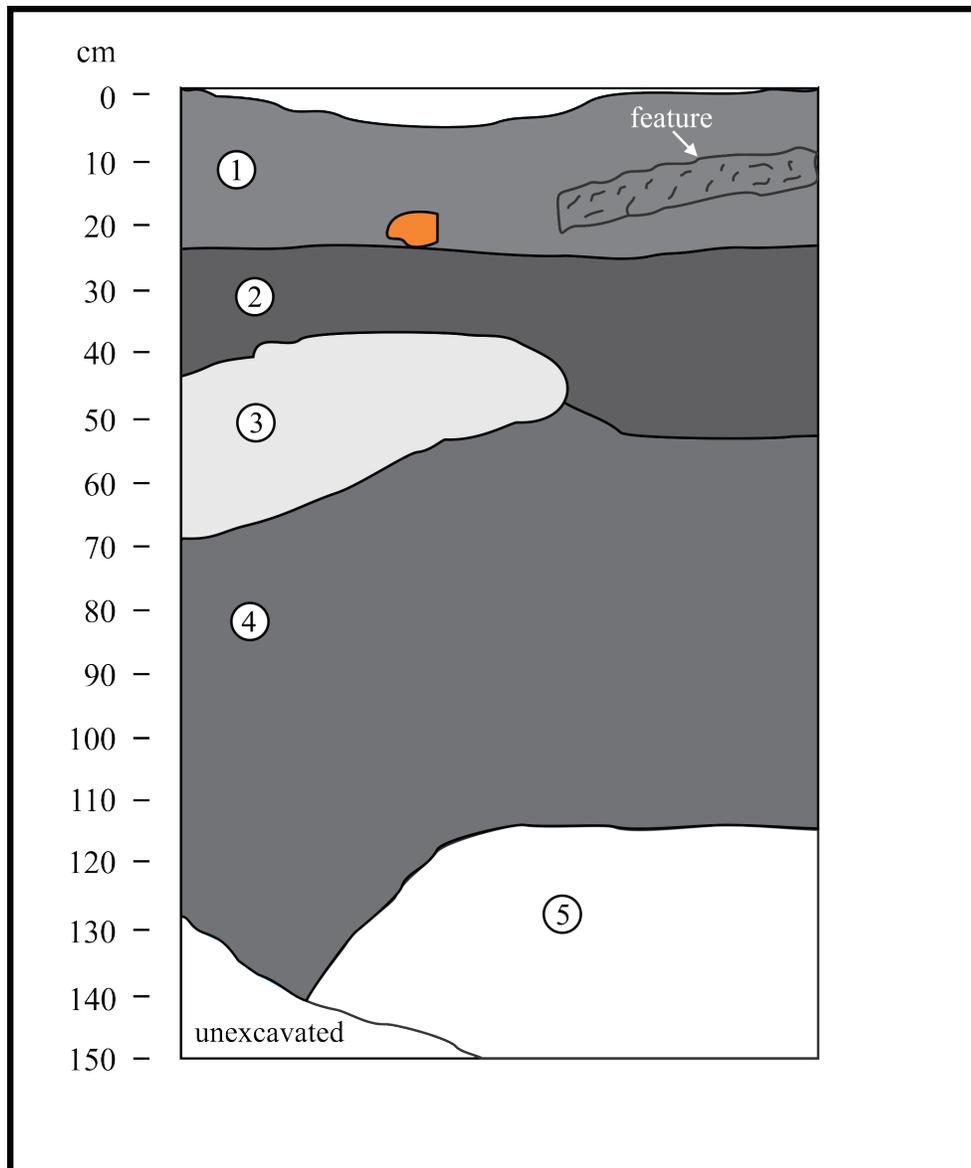


Figure 4-6. Profile drawing of the north wall of BHT 3. Note metal in orange (upper left) and feature artifact concentration (upper right).



Figure 4-7. Feature (outlined in white dotted line) in north profile.

metal, and charcoal fragments were sparsely scattered within the northern profile from 15-55 cmbs. No cultural material was observed in the southern profile of the trench.

The presence of artifacts within the northern profile of the trench suggests that the site boundary may extend further north in the direction of the modern building. Construction of the building has likely impacted the site in that direction. The site may potentially extend to the east and west but is unlikely to extend further south, as that profile showed no cultural material.

Artifacts collected from 41BX2285 included two gilded white earthenware rims, clear and brown body fragments of glass, an aqua glass bottleneck, a wire finishing nail, and an oyster shell (Table 4-2, Figure 4-9). Nearly all the artifacts collected were recovered from the feature. The one item collected from the backdirt, a gilded white earthenware rim, appeared to be from the same vessel as the sherd collected from the feature. Cultural material observed within the backhoe trench profile, but not collected, included unidentified ferrous metal fragments, charcoal, and clear, aqua, and brown glass body fragments.

The artifacts recovered from the site are consistent with a late historic occupation. Wire nails became the dominant nail form in the United States circa 1900 (Fontana and Greenleaf 1962:50). While bottle manufacture is not always an accurate temporal diagnostic (Lindsey 2017), the aqua bottleneck has a tooled finish, indicating a likely date 1885-1920 (Lindsey 2017). Sites containing only refined white earthenwares in Central Texas generally post-date the Civil War (Texas Archeological Stewardship Network 2006). The cultural material recovered shows little differentiation from other San Antonio assemblages dating to this period (Labadie 1987; THC 2019a).

The site does provide some insight into a part of San Antonio that is not well understood archaeologically. The cultural material recovered is consistent with an occupation dating to the approximate time periods depicted on the Sanborn maps of the area. However, the date ranges for the artifacts do not allow the CAR to establish a connection with a particular dwelling. The feature is small, and the other cultural material is sparsely distributed, suggesting that the site was not heavily used by a large group of people over a long period of time.

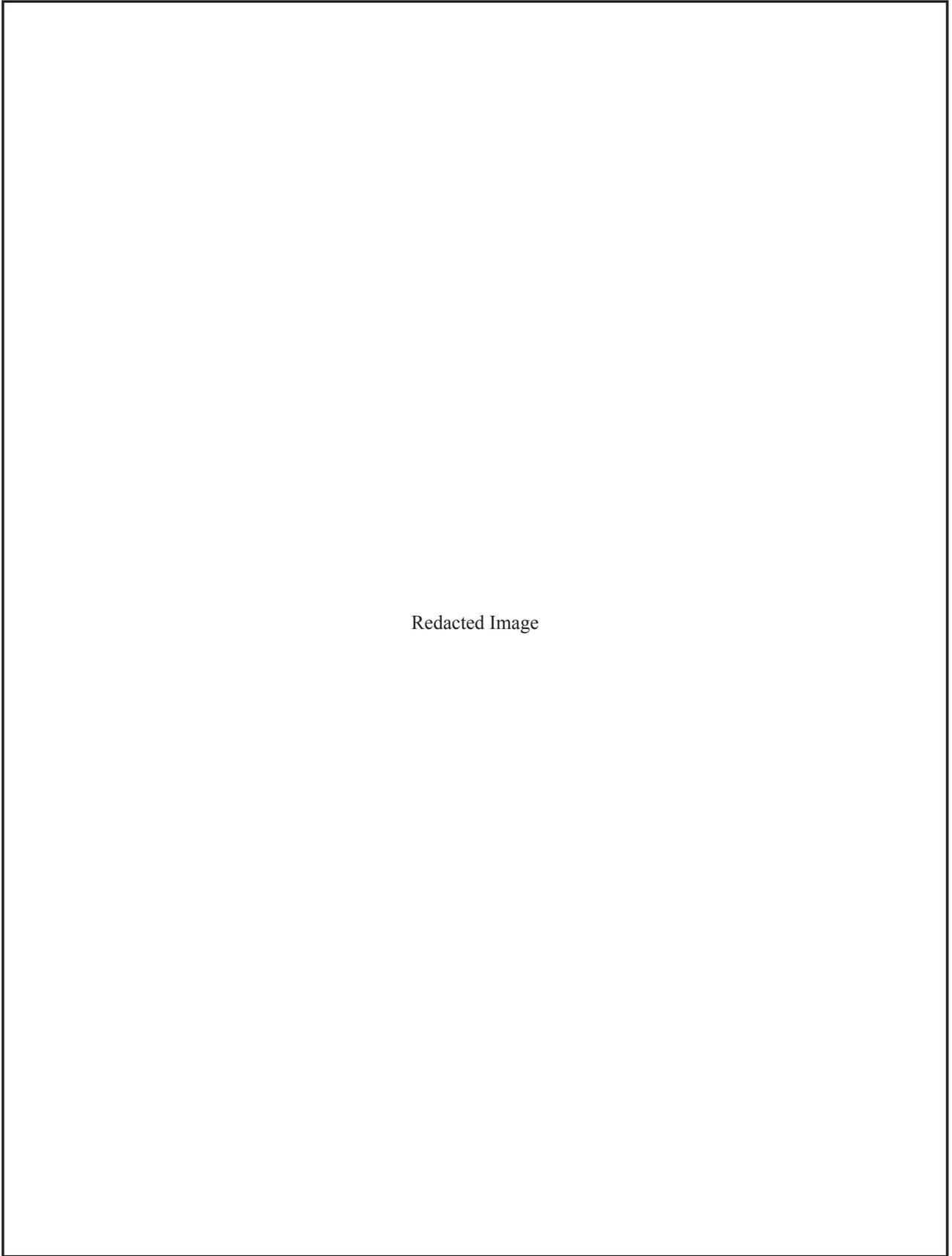


Figure 4-8. Location of 41BX2285 on Google Earth aerial image.

Table 4-2. Artifacts Recovered from 41BX2285

Provenience	Depth (cmbs)	Description	Count	Weight (g)
backdirt	n/a	white earthenware*, gilded rim	1	n/a
feature	10-20	white earthenware*, scalloped, gilded rim	1	n/a
feature	10-20	oyster shell	1	4.7
feature	10-20	finishing nail	1	0.9
feature	10-20	clear container glass	2	n/a
feature	10-20	brown container glass	1	n/a
feature	10-20	aqua bottleneck, tooled finish, beverage bottle	1	n/a

*ceramic pieces appear to be from same vessel



Figure 4-9. Artifacts recovered from BHT 3. Top row, left to right: white earthenware, glass bottle fragment, and oyster shell. Bottom row, left to right: white earthenware, glass fragments, and wire nail.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

In March of 2019, the CAR excavated three exploratory backhoe trenches on SARA property in downtown San Antonio to investigate potential deposits associated with a historic house identified by COSA-OHP. Two of the backhoe trenches had to be terminated due to obstructions located shallowly beneath the surface. The third backhoe trench (BHT 3) was located outside the footprint of the house and was intended to investigate potential privy deposits. A deposit of historic artifacts was located in the upper 55 cm of the trench. The portion of the trench extending below 60 cm was sterile.

Historic artifacts were documented throughout the northern wall of BHT 3 from 15-55 cmbs. No privy feature was identified, but a feature consisting of a small artifact concentration was documented in the north profile. Cultural material observed included metal, glass, ceramics, and charcoal. Artifacts were observed only in the north profile of the trench. Due to the fact that more than five artifacts were documented within the trench, this trench documents a previously unknown historic archaeological site, and the site was assigned trinomial 41BX2285.

Cultural material recovered from 41BX2285 included gilded white earthenware, glass fragments, ferrous metal, an oyster shell, and charcoal. Deposits in this area appear to be intact.

The full extent of the site is unknown due to the limited space available to excavate trenches, and the obstructions encountered on the property. However, the site has few diagnostic artifacts and no associated architectural features, and it appears to have limited research value. The THC guidelines state that in most cases, late nineteenth century and early twentieth century sites are not considered significant due to an abundance of data available dating to this time period and the uniformity of artifact assemblages from these sites due to the adoption of mass production techniques (THC 2019a). Therefore, the CAR recommends that 41BX2285 is not eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places or for designation as a State Antiquities Landmark and that construction proceed as planned.

Obstructions limited the CAR's ability to investigate the footprint of the house itself, which was the original target of the investigation. However, the limited perspectives offered by BHTs 1 and 2 indicate that any deposits present are likely heavily impacted by activities from the auto shop that previously was located on the property. Additionally, SARA confirmed that future development will not remove the concrete slab in the location of BHTs 1 and 2 where the historic building foundation of concern may exist. Therefore, the CAR does not recommend any further work in that portion of the APE.

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