

# Archaeological Survey and Testing of PIPELINES AND CONFLUENCE SITE

SAN ANTONIO 201 WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROJECT

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Center for Archaeological Research  
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Archaeological Survey Report, No. 66

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Al McGraw and Fred Valdez cooperated in writing the section of the report on pre-historic survey. The historic survey section and general continuity have been the responsibility of Anne Fox. The maps were compiled from various historic maps and from those provided by the Public Works Department. Final drafting was done by the staff of the Office of Instructional Services of The University of Texas at San Antonio. Jack Eaton, Assistant Director of the Center, assisted with the technical aspects of report publication.

## INTRODUCTION

In March 1978 the Center for Archaeological Research was requested by Mr. Melvin Sueltenfuss, Director of Public Works for the City of San Antonio, to conduct an archaeological survey of sewer line routes linking the Leon Creek, Salado Creek and Rilling Road Sewer Treatment Plants with the proposed new Confluence Sewer Treatment Plant in south San Antonio. An area of approximately 360 acres in the vicinity of the Confluence site, at the junction of the San Antonio and Medina Rivers, was also to be intensively surveyed, and the extent and depth of the prehistoric archaeological site 41 BX 124 were to be assessed. This work is an additional part of the survey and assessment of archaeological resources in drainages and treatment plant areas currently being carried out by the Center for the City (Fox 1977).

Field survey and testing were carried out by A. J. McGraw and Fred Valdez in April and May 1978, while historical research and survey were conducted by Anne Fox, the project being under Fox's direction. Center Director, Dr. Thomas R. Hester, was Principal Investigator.

## THE PREHISTORIC SURVEY

### Methodology

Except at 41 BX 124, all work consisted of survey of the selected locations as they were defined on USGS topographic maps, based on information provided by the City. Areas covered ranged from about 150 to 200 meters on either side of the proposed sewer lines. Actual survey coverage varied, dependent upon density of ground cover or degree of modern disturbance or alteration. Only diagnostic artifacts were collected; all site information, features, etc., were recorded on standard site survey forms used by the Center for Archaeological Research. Any collected materials were placed in paper or plastic bags and labeled as to temporary site number, date, type of collection, level where applicable and collector's name. Upon returning to the laboratory, a permanent site number was assigned to each site and recorded with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin.

### Description of Surveyed Areas (see Fig. 1)

#### *Salado Creek Treatment Plant to Confluence*

The survey recently completed by the Center in the vicinity of the treatment plant found no archaeological sites to be present (Fox 1977:17). The topography throughout the pipeline area, except in the densely vegetated flood plain of a small, intermittent stream, is heavily altered by chain-dragging, modern gravel pits, homes and land-clearing efforts. Evidences of a moderate to spatially large prehistoric site occurs at ca. 10 cm below the surface in erosional cuts and along a dirt road that crisscrosses the area near the steep banks of the San Antonio River. Site dimensions are poorly defined since a major portion appears buried beneath light soil cover. This site (41 BX 330) may be as large as 250 m along the eastern bank of the river and may extend at least that distance inland away from it. Eroded cuts were littered with fire-reddened cobbles, lithic debris and occasional lithic artifact fragments. No diagnostic projectile points were recovered, although a small medial biface fragment was noted, and a small ceramic rim sherd tentatively identified as *Goliad* ware was discovered on the bank above the river. No further work is recommended at this site, since portions of it appear to be heavily disturbed, and it appears to be outside of the pipeline right-of-way. However, should the route of the pipeline cross this site, additional work will be required.

#### *Leon Creek Treatment Plant to Confluence*

Portions of the affected area had previously been covered during the 1977 survey, in particular the areas immediately around the Leon Creek Plant and across the south end of Mitchell Lake. No sites were found during that survey (*ibid.*:17).

Densely overgrown with brush or altered by modern waste-water treatment facilities, the area near the confluence of Leon and Comanche Creeks still has potential for containing archaeological resources. One site (41 BX 333) was found in this area, above the confluence of the two creeks. Dense brush often precluded intensive survey operations. No diagnostic artifacts were noted, although a medial biface fragment was recovered. An intensive lithic scatter along the bluff face in

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this area suggests the prehistoric site will require further work in the form of limited test excavations to further delimit its size and depth. Although no other sites were noted along the right-of-way, heavy ground cover often impeded the efforts of surface survey.

#### *Rilling Road Treatment Plant to Confluence*

The area immediately surrounding the Rilling Road Plant was found to contain no archaeological sites during the 1977 survey (Fox 1977:17). While large, relatively undisturbed upland areas were included in this part of the survey, few cultural materials were found in these sections, and only two sites were located. One site (41 BX 332), in a disturbed pasture roughly 150 m south of the pipeline right-of-way and Blue Wing Road, appears to be a lithic scatter. Several fire-reddened cobbles were observed spread over an area of 100 by 150 m along the west bank of an intermittent drainage (Fig. 1). No features or diagnostic artifacts were noted, and no further archaeological work is recommended at this site. However, it is recommended that an archaeologist be present if subsurface alteration or land-moving exposes buried deposits.

Another site (41 BX 331) was found about 300 m south and 25 m west of the radio facility tower as identified on USGS topographic maps of this area. The site extends at least 300 by 250 m in plowed fields, and surface indications suggest occupation as well as lithic workshop activities. Primary distribution of the lithic materials is highly disturbed, and surface indications imply the most concentrated portions of the site lie outside of the pipeline right-of-way. Precluding the finding of new data uncovered by subsurface modification, no further work is recommended.

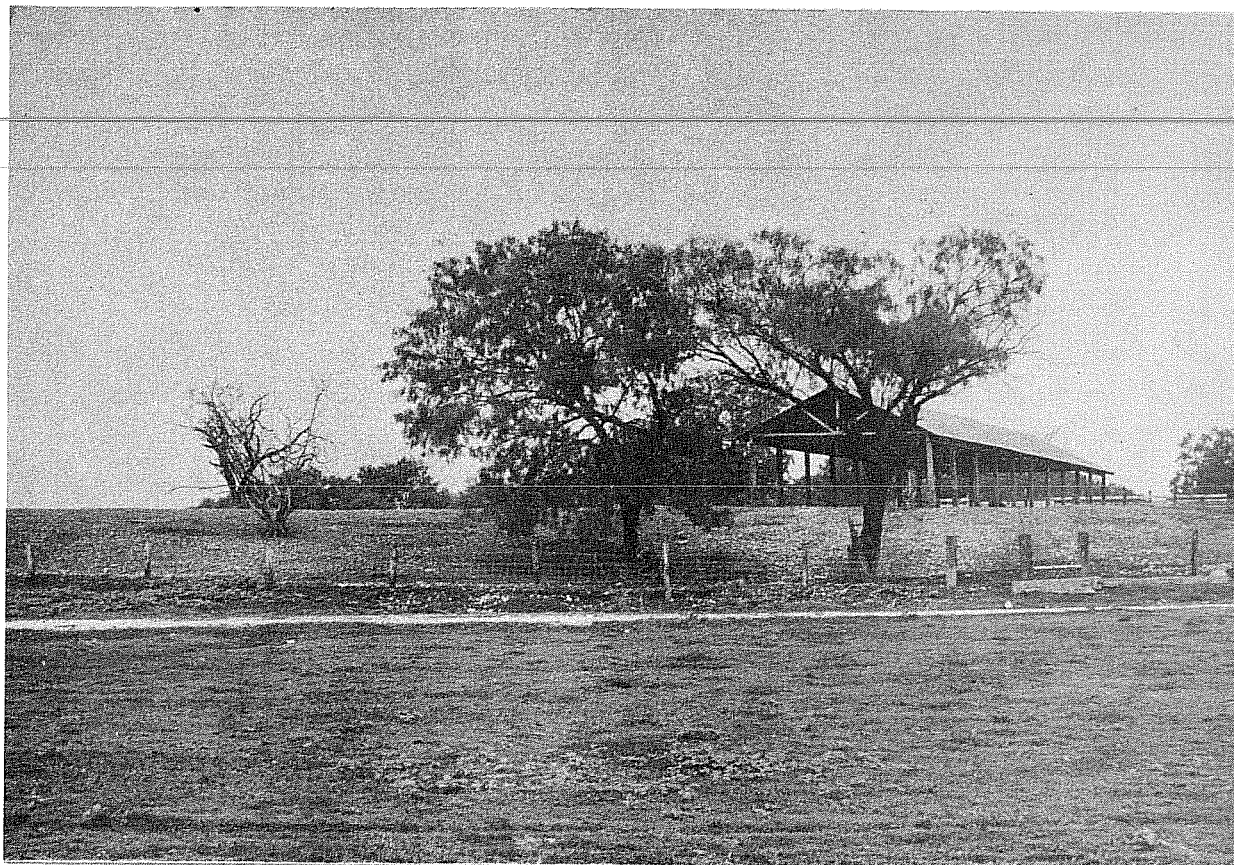
#### *Confluence Site Testing (see Figs. 2 and 3)*

The area at the confluence of the San Antonio and Medina Rivers was given a preliminary surface examination as part of the 1977 survey, and it was tentatively determined that the only archaeological site present was 41 BX 124, which apparently covered an area of 150 by 200 m (*ibid.*:22-23). Artifacts recovered over the years by the owner, Marvin Ashley, indicate human occupation from the Archaic period (ca. 6000 B.C. to A.D. 1000) to the Late Prehistoric period (ca. A.D. 1000 to 1600). Recently Mr. Ashley has reported finding *Guadalupe* tools on the site, which could indicate that occupation began as early as the Pre-Archaic period (ca. 7000 to 6000 B.C.).

Investigations at the site in March of 1978 included the use of intensive survey and limited excavation in the form of 50-cm squares excavated by small shovels and screened through 1/4-inch wire mesh. An intensive survey of the area prior to excavation, compared with the earlier survey descriptions, suggests that a major concentration of the prehistoric occupation is centered around the heavily disturbed pig pen on the southern limits of the site. However, it appears that other less disturbed deposits may lie buried beneath a deeper soil deposit about 100 to 150 m to the north and east. Lithic debris and a scattering of fire-reddened rocks in the latter area imply total site dimensions may exceed 200 square meters.

Subsurface tests were done in and around the pig pen area where the major concentration had been observed. The purpose of the tests was to discover the depth





a



b

Figure 2. Views of Confluence Site, 41 BX 124. a, site from flood plain to the east; b, view from the top of site looking south toward the Medina River

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of the cultural deposits, both within the pens and outside in a relatively undisturbed spot. Unit 1, three meters south and outside of the pen fence line, was excavated on the high ground facing the flood plain of the rivers' confluence. Although excavated to a depth of 40 cm, no concentrations of lithic debris were noted and no diagnostic artifacts were recovered. Two soil zones were identified, a medium brown organic and unconsolidated loam above a lighter, calcareous transition zone interspersed with progressively larger cobbles.

Unit 2, situated in the upper center portion of the pig pen, was excavated to a depth of 30 cm, although no cultural materials were noted below 16 cm. Unit 2 lacked the upper soil zone of the previous test unit, and large chert cobbles literally covered the lower levels. No diagnostic artifacts or features were recovered from this unit.

On the basis of the limited subsurface examination, the main cultural concentration at the Confluence site appears badly eroded, with little remaining undisturbed. However, the preliminary testing and surface examination indicate potential for extensive buried deposits to the north and east of the tested area. Because of the extent and variety of artifactual materials previously collected at the site, we recommend the use of backhoe trenching complemented, if indicated, by further excavations in the northern and eastern margins of the site. Other work in large flood plain areas of the San Antonio River (Assad 1978) suggests potential for deeply buried cultural materials in the adjacent flood plain. This should be borne in mind when construction is undertaken in those lower areas of the site near the confluence of the rivers.

### Summary

During the course of current survey operations, four prehistoric sites were located and recorded, and limited subsurface examination and intensive survey were conducted at 41 BX 124. Two sites are recommended for further study:

1. Site 41 BX 333 - limited testing and excavation to determine spatial and temporal extent of this once intensively occupied site.
2. Site 41 BX 124 - the use of backhoe and possible further subsurface examination to most adequately and quickly define site characteristics.

Two sites will need further investigation only if the pipeline is found to impact them:

1. Site 41 BX 330 - sufficient artifactual material remains to warrant mitigation if the site is to be disturbed.
2. Site 41 BX 332 - further work may be warranted if buried deposits are revealed during pipeline excavations.

## THE HISTORIC SURVEY

From the time of the first Spanish settlement in the San Antonio River valley, the lands on either side of the river became divided into farms and ranches. By 1776, ranches belonging to the missions and to private citizens lined both banks of the river from San Antonio to near present-day Goliad (Weddle and Thonhoff 1976:152).

The proposed Confluence Sewage Treatment Plant and the lines which will lead into it are located on two of these early ranches, the De la Garza ranch on the west side of the river, and the Montes de Oca ranch on the east side (Fig. 4). Therefore, it has been important to determine whether construction activities will disturb any 18th century structural remains on these ranches. Archival research has been conducted in San Antonio and Austin in order to locate and document any known structures, with particular emphasis on the De la Garza grant which will be the one more extensively involved.

Geronimo de la Garza arrived in the San Antonio area with the Domingo Ramon expedition in 1716 (Chabot 1937:78). By 1840, his grandson, Jose Antonio, had acquired a great amount of property, including 3363 acres, 40 town lots and 170 cattle, according to the census (White 1966:13). The De la Garza lands included two large grants on either side of the San Antonio River in what is now south Bexar County (Fig. 4). Sr. De la Garza built a two-story stone house on a knoll overlooking Calaveras Creek (Carmack 1975:1-B), probably sometime in the mid-19th century. Papers in the possession of the present owner suggest that the family was living in the area for some 40 years before the house was built. However, no earlier structures have yet been recorded on the property. Indian raids were frequent in that area during the early part of the 19th century (Everett 1975:29). The family may not have constructed any permanent buildings on the grants south of town until the danger had passed, preferring to remain in their ancestral home one block north of Main Plaza in San Antonio.

On February 15, 1848, Petra Margarita De la Garza, daughter of Jose Antonio, married James L. Trueheart (Chabot 1934:3). Trueheart had come to Texas in 1838. He was taken captive in the Woll raid in 1842 and imprisoned in Perote Castle. However, by 1844, Trueheart had returned to San Antonio (Chabot 1934:2-3). After his marriage, he was given a portion of the De la Garza grant on the west side of the river, where he built a two-story stone house on a high bluff, probably sometime around 1850 (Fig. 1). Trueheart improved his land and built an irrigation system (Lance, Larcade and Bechtol 1973).

The lands making up the old Spanish grants were gradually broken up among family members and sold to German and Anglo-American newcomers in the late 19th century. The Trueheart property and a parcel to the south were acquired by Carl A. Goeth and a group of sportsmen who built Blue Wing Lake and established a private hunting and fishing club in the early 19th century (Barnes 1956:16-D). Today the lands on either side of the San Antonio River in the vicinity of its confluence with the Medina River are still primarily used for farming and ranching. Modern irrigation methods and breeds of cattle have taken the place of those introduced by the Spanish 250 years ago, but otherwise the area has changed surprisingly little since the 18th century (Fig. 5).

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a



b

Figure 5. *Views of Irrigation Near Confluence.* a, irrigated fields northwest of Confluence site; b, early 20th century control gate in irrigation canal

The areas which will be affected by the sewage treatment facilities have been carefully examined for indication of structural remains or historic site indications, both on the De la Garza and the Montes de Oca properties. No such indications were found. The only historic buildings which are even close to the proposed pipelines are those of the small 20th century settlement of Buena Vista.

### CONCLUSIONS

Historical research and a survey of the area indicate that the proposed sewer line will not endanger any historic sites connected with early Spanish or Anglo-American settlement. Site 41 BX 34 just north of Blue Wing Road (Fig. 1) was the site of a human burial excavated by the senior author in 1968. It has been tentatively dated in the early 19th century, probably a casualty of the Battle of Medina. There is no reason to believe that other such burials will be encountered by the sewer line, since the main battle site was near Gallinas Creek, some distance to the southwest (Coopwood 1898:168).

Apparently the Indian raids abated considerably by the mid-19th century in the countryside to the south and southeast of San Antonio, perhaps as a result of the battle of Plum Creek (Linn 1883:343). A number of two-story stone houses were built in the 1850s by the families of early Spanish ranchers in the area, generally on a bluff over the river or one of the major tributaries. Those identified so far include the Trueheart and De la Garza houses and the Tarin-Seguin house just downstream on the west bank on the old Seguin grant (Fig. 4). Also built at this time was Whitehall, the two-story stone house of Col. Joseph H. Polley north of Sutherland Springs (Goeldner 1974:225). A program of recording and documenting these historic sites should be undertaken in the near future while descendants of the original families are still available for interviews.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of these surveys, we recommend that two prehistoric sites be given further examination. Site 41 BX 333 should have limited subsurface testing to better determine its size and content. Site 41 BX 124 should have further deep testing with the use of a backhoe to adequately determine its extent and state of preservation in areas not yet altered by the present land owner.

If the pipeline will impact them, sites 41 BX 330 and 332 should be monitored by an archaeologist during pipeline construction. Since there is no way to be sure that further archaeological sites will not be encountered beneath the surface, the construction crew should be instructed to notify the Center if any questionable situation should arise.

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