AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED POSSUM KINGDOM DAM AIRPORT

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Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
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INTRODUCTION

On November 27 and 28, 1979, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) carried out an archaeological survey of land owned by the Brazos River Authority. A civil airport is planned for this locality, situated on the east side of Possum Kingdom Lake in Palo Pinto County, Texas. The project was carried out under contract between the Center and URS/Forrest and Cotton, Inc., Consulting Engineers (letter dated October 24, 1979). The field work was conducted by Paul D. Lukowski and Curtis Dusek, Center staff archaeologists, under the supervision of Dr. Thomas R. Hester, Director, and Mr. Jack D. Eaton, Associate Director.

THE SURVEY

The limits of the survey area were defined by using a map prepared from the Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the Brazos River Authority, Possum Kingdom Dam Airport. The west boundary for the survey extends along the lease cottage sites access road. The eastern survey boundary is marked by the Brazos River Authority property line. The southernmost boundary is marked by the cottage access road as it veers east to join FM 2353. To the north, land owned by the Brazos River Authority in the vicinity of Long's Camp was surveyed (see Fig. 1).

Initial visual inspection of the proposed airport site indicated that the land could most efficiently be surveyed using parallel transect techniques. Both surveyors walked in a single direction, spaced approximately 100 feet apart, carefully inspecting the ground surface for artifactual evidence. When each transect was completed, the surveyors moved across the edge of the survey area to set up and repeat the process until all of the field had been covered.

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TESTING

Within the area surveyed, a new runway, T-hangers and parking spaces are planned. Upon completion of the survey, a small test pit was placed in the proposed locality of the T-hangers. There are a series of small rolling hills in this area (possibly sand dunes) that were suspected as the most likely place for a prehistoric site. However, no cultural material was recovered from the 50-cm deep test pit.

Inspection of two sand borrow areas in the northern and southern ends of the survey zone indicates soil profiles of virtually undifferentiated sand deposits approximately five feet or more in depth. Based on these observations, no shovel tests were dug. Systematic testing of such deep soils is beyond the scope of this project.

Later conversations with Waymon Moore of the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, in Mineral Wells, revealed that the area surveyed contains mostly Decordova loamy sand, with typical profiles of 88 inches or more. Similar soils in the northernmost section of the surveyed land include Bastrop fine sandy loam and Santo fine sandy loam.

PREHISTORIC REMAINS

Evidence of prehistoric activity was recorded at two locations within the survey area (Fig. 1). The first find consisted of a small scatter of sandstone rocks. Several of these pieces showed evidence of modification by grinding. It is suspected that this scatter of sandstone rocks is the remnants of a broken metate (grinding slab). A single piece of fractured quartzite was the only other archaeological evidence noted in the immediate area. The artifacts were photographed and recorded as an isolated find. Notes on the provenience and descriptions of materials were taken in the field. The location was then

recorded on an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) map copy and also on a USGS Palo Pinto quadrangle topographic map. The location was marked on the west side of a shallow drainage which runs northwest into Possum Kingdom Lake. The artifacts lay approximately 20 feet south of the road that leads into Long's Camp.

The second recorded find was a low density lithic scatter. The find contains fewer than 25 flakes and a single core, all of a very light grayish colored chert within an area of 15 x 20 m. Photographs and detailed notes on the isolated find and its location were fully recorded. Provenience was then plotted on the EIAR map copy and the USGS map. The location of the find is on a low rise on the north side of a shallow drainage running west into Possum Kingdom Lake. The adjacent areas to the north and east of the site have been heavily disturbed by ditch and water tank construction.

Neither of the recorded finds were collected. Because of their small size, removal of any of the artifacts would alter the context of each location and yield a minimum amount of information. Both finds are located in an area that has been cleared and utilized for many years, causing an adverse effect on the *in situ* placement of the surface materials.

The author has examined a topographic map of the survey area on which the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), Austin, has indicated all sites in their records. No sites in the survey area have been previously recorded with TARL, although there are a number of sites present in the Possum Kingdom Lake area.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No significant cultural remains were located during the surface survey of the areas to be specifically impacted by construction activities of the Possum Kingdom Dam Airport runway and facilities. Neither of the two recorded prehistoric finds in the northern survey area around Long's Camp would yield enough significant information to warrant further investigations. Therefore, no additional work is recommended. However, should any archaeological remains be unearthed during airport construction, a qualified archaeologist should be notified.