

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF
CONVERSE CITY PARK,
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

Ralph Snavelly

Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Archaeological Survey Report, No. 166

1986

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Archaeological Research

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ABSTRACT

On March 3-4, 1986, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), conducted a survey of approximately 25 acres, comprising the Converse City Park on the south edge of Converse in Bexar County, Texas. The survey was required to comply with federal regulations. One area within the development zone was found to have a light surface scatter of cultural materials. This lithic scatter was recorded and assigned a permanent state site designation (41 BX 698). An intensive search of the site area failed to produce any concentration of cultural materials other than the one area. No diagnostic tool types were observed. The cultural resources potential significance located within the survey area were not determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. No further work is recommended.

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INTRODUCTION

During March 3-4, 1986, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), conducted an archaeological survey of the Converse City Park, located on the southwest side of Converse in Bexar County, Texas.

The survey was done under contract between the CAR-UTSA and the City of Converse (letter received February 6, 1986). The survey was requested as part of the requirements for the funding of the park's development. This archaeological field survey complies with the Texas Antiquities Code, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and Executive Order 11593.

The field work was conducted by Ralph Snavelly, CAR staff archaeologist, under the supervision of Thomas R. Hester, CAR director.

The main objectives of the survey were: (1) to determine by surface examination if archaeological cultural resources are present within the study area; and (2) to form recommendations for any further work needed in order to determine site(s) potential eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

AREA BACKGROUND

The survey area is in the southwest portion of Converse in Bexar County, Texas. Converse City Park is located 0.5 km north of the intersection of State Highway 78 and Martinez Creek. Converse is in the northeastern part of Bexar County, Texas (Fig. 1).

The drainage systems associated with the survey area are Martinez Creek, within the immediate survey area, and Cibolo Creek which is approximately 5 km to the northeast. There is less than 30 feet of topographic relief occurring within the study area. This may be the result of clearing, plowing, and other land modifying agricultural practices.

The climate of Bexar County is subtropical, with mild winters and hot summers. The daily maximum and minimum temperature averages are 79.2°F and 53.1°F, respectively. Precipitation is usually evenly distributed throughout the year, averaging 27.84 inches per year (Taylor, Hailey, and Richmond 1966).

Bexar County lies in the transition zone between the southern limits of the Edwards Plateau and the northern rim of the South Texas Coastal Plain. The water drainage pattern in Bexar County is in a south to southeastward direction. The major streams of the county are Cibolo Creek, Leon Creek, Medina River, San Antonio River, and Salado Creek. The northern half of the county is characterized by prominent eroding limestone uplifts and a thin, calcareous soil. The southern half of the county is characterized by gently rolling hills and a deep sandy loam soil (Taylor, Hailey, and Richmond 1966).

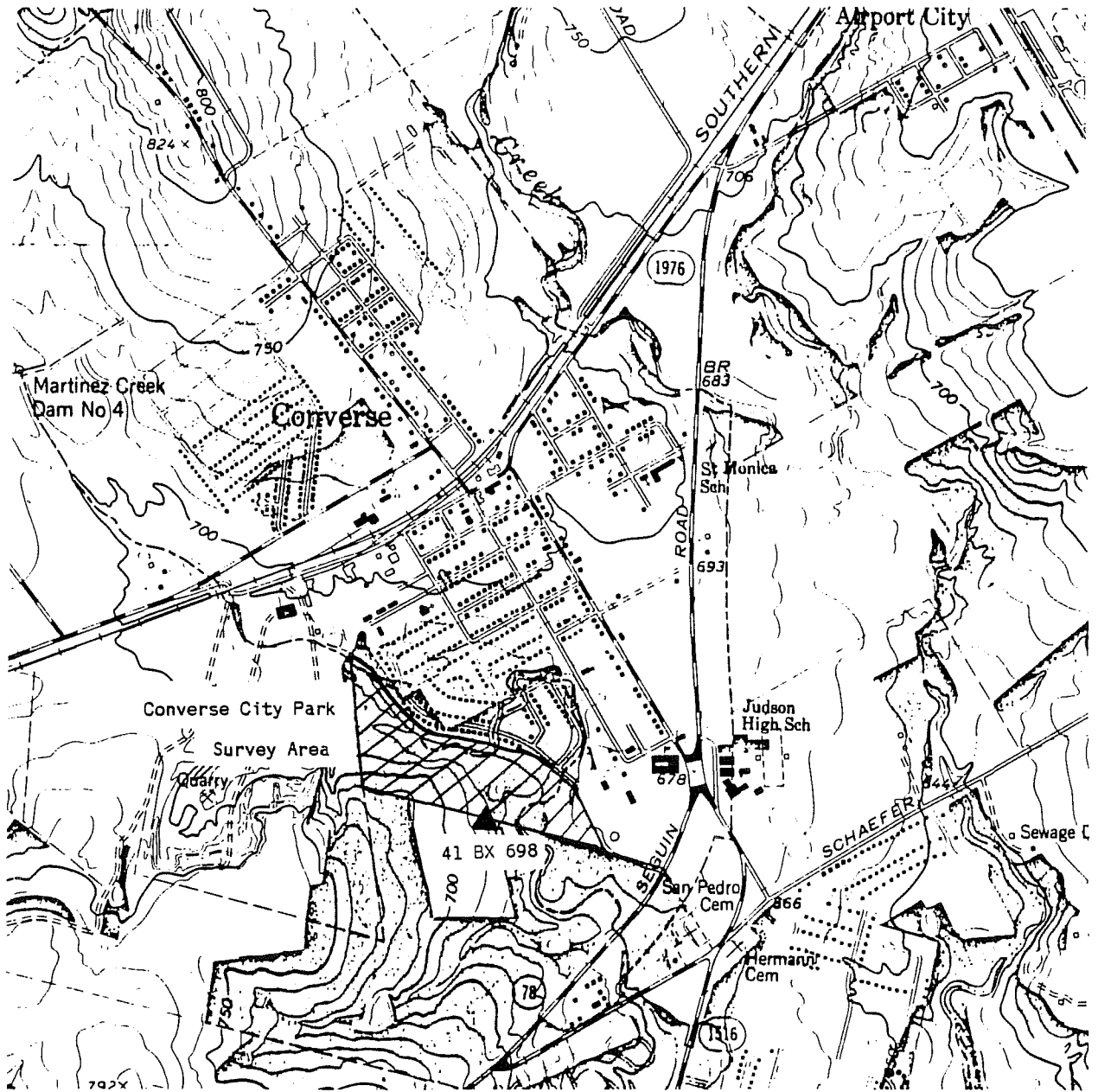


Figure 1. Location of Converse City Park Survey Area and Site 41 BX 698.

A detailed study of the flora and fauna of the survey area is beyond the scope of this report. The study area falls within portions of three biotic provinces as discussed by Blair (1950): the Balconian, Texan, and Tamaulipan. Additional information on the flora and fauna may be obtained from Blair (1950), Davis (1974), and Gerstle, Kelly, and Assad (1978).

Within the study area there are three distinct soil associations: Houston Black-Houston (deep clayey soils over calcareous clay), Venus-Frio-Trinity (deep, calcareous soils on bottomlands and lower terrace), and Lewisville-Houston Black (terrace associated, deep, calcareous soils in old alluvium). These three soil associations are often mixed, a complication resulting from erosion and redeposition of alluvium (for more detail refer to Taylor, Hailey, and Richmond 1966).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

More than 650 archaeological sites have been recorded in Bexar County, making it one of the most archaeologically studied counties in Texas. Most of these sites have only been investigated on the preliminary survey level, but a few authors have studied the archaeology of the area on a county-wide scale. Woolford (1935) produced a general analysis of sites in this area, and in 1972 Fawcett (1972) reviewed all prior work in Bexar County. A number of studies conducted by the CAR-UTSA have contributed a vast amount of archaeological data. These investigations include Hester et al. (1974), Smith and McDonald (1975), Black and McGraw (1985), and Gerstle, Kelly, and Assad (1978).

Sites of major archaeological significance in Bexar County include 41 BX 1, the Olmos Dam site (Lukowski n.d.); 41 BX 17, the Granberg site; 41 BX 22, the Rodgers site; 41 BX 228, the Panther Springs site (Black and McGraw 1985); 41 BX 228, the Walker Ranch site; and 41 BX 229, the St. Mary's Hall site (Hester 1978). These sites represent occupations of a temporal variety from the Paleo-Indian through the Historic Indian periods of south-central Texas. A background on the archaeology of south-central Texas is provided in Hester (1980) and Black and McGraw (1985).

A review of previous archaeological research illustrates several types of prehistoric sites which may be found in Bexar County. The site types of this area and associated cultural remains are described by Fox (1977:1) as follows:

Long-term or traditionally revisited occupation sites (campsites) are characterized by deep deposits containing stone tools, projectile points and the debris resulting from their manufacture and repair. Fragments of animal bones, snails and mussel shells will often be present, along with scattered limestone hearth stones. Temporary camping sites (related to short-term hunting or food gathering activities) are reflected by a thin scatter of chert flakes, hearth stones and tools in a limited area. Occasionally these temporary campsites occur in sheltered overhangs in the bluffs of northern Bexar County streams. Quarries and workshop areas occur near the outcrops of chert, usually in areas of exposed

limestone. Such sites are numerous in the northern part of the county. These sites are characterized by numerous nodules of chert and debris resulting from the primary process of tool manufacture.

Cibolo Creek, a major drainage in northeastern Bexar County, has attracted prehistoric Indians and the animals they hunted as early as the Paleo-Indian period. Although numerous prehistoric sites dating from Paleo-Indian through the Late Archaic periods have been reported along the upper Cibolo Creek (Gerstle, Kelly, and Assad 1978), the archaeology of the lower Cibolo Creek and Martinez Creek is not as well known. There are no recorded sites in the immediate vicinity of the survey area.

THE SURVEY

The field survey consisted of a series of transects, approximately 20 m apart throughout the entire study area of 25 acres. The survey area is dissected by Martinez Creek. The majority of the park is within the Martinez Creek floodplain. A small percentage (approximately 35%) of the City Park land is located above the modern floodplain. A USGS topographic map (Schertz Quadrangle) was consulted to establish the general outlay of the terrain.

Observations were recorded on the occurrence, density, and location of prehistoric remains. Only diagnostic or otherwise significant artifacts were to be collected for analysis. The location of prehistoric remains (lithic debitage) was plotted on a map of the development area.

The study area limits were defined by roads and fences clearly demarcating the property lines. The existing profiles of the creek bank, erosion areas, roadbeds, and other vegetation free areas were inspected for cultural remains. In addition, small probes approximately 10 cm in depth, were made in an area suspected of containing subsurface cultural deposits.

A prehistoric site was located in the southern center part of the survey area evidenced by lithic debris scattered on the ground surface (Fig. 2). Further inspection of the area revealed several primary flakes and one core. No dart points, stone tools, or diagnostics were observed.

The core which was observed was of a good quality chert, commonly found in Uvalde Gravels. Natural deposits of these chert-bearing gravels occur throughout the alluvial floodplain of Martinez Creek.

The surface lithic scatter consists of mostly primary flakes with a few secondary flakes present. This thin lithic scatter may represent a prehistoric chert reduction area.

A series of six trowel probes paralleling the western property line in the area of the site was executed. Each test was approximately 10 cm² and 10-15 cm in depth. No cultural materials were recovered from these probes. The site was recorded, and a permanent state archaeological site designation has been assigned (41 BX 698) by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin. Photographs were taken and are on file at the CAR.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the survey, the entire Converse City Park area was carefully examined. One location with a small amount of cultural materials on the ground surface was recorded as site 41 BX 698. The site contains a light lithic scatter; it is possible that this is the edge of a site which extends south outside of the present survey area. No further work is recommended at site 41 BX 698. However, should cultural resources be uncovered during any land modifying development, the Texas Historical Commission should be notified.

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