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An Archaeological Survey and Monitoring of the Razing of the Acuna Furniture and Music Company Building, Downtown San Antonio, Texas

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND MONITORING OF THE RAZING OF THE
ACUNA FURNITURE AND MUSIC COMPANY BUILDING,
DOWNTOWN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

I. Wayne Cox

Center for Archaeological Research
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ABSTRACT

In September 1985, the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, was requested to conduct an investigation of the archaeological potential of the Acuña Furniture and Music Company building located at 125 North Flores Street, San Antonio, Texas. An archival search, to determine the construction period of the present building and possible prior structures, was conducted, and an on-site inspection was made. Both indicated that no historic resources would be affected by the demolition of the building. The demolition of the building was monitored to assure that no artifacts were revealed. No further work is recommended at this time.

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection and monitoring of the destruction of the Acuña Furniture and Music Company building was carried out by the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), from September 5 to October 4, 1985. The work was conducted under a contract between the CAR-UTSA and Frost National Bank, San Antonio, Texas. Although the Acuña building was not a historic structure, the monitoring of the demolition of the building was requested because of its location within the Main and Military Plaza Historic District, and the work was done in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and Executive Order 11593.

The field work and research were conducted by Wayne Cox, CAR research associate, under the supervision of Thomas R. Hester, CAR director and principal investigator, and Jack D. Eaton, CAR associate director.

THE SURVEY AREA

The building that previously housed the Acuña Furniture and Music Company occupied the central east side of New City Block (NCB) 122, Lot 6 on the street frontage at 125 North Flores Street, San Antonio, Texas. The block is bounded on the north by Houston Street (formerly Rivas Street), on the east by Flores Street (formerly Calle Real), on the south by Commerce Street (formerly Presidio Street), and on the west by Camaron Street (formerly Aamargura Street; Fig. 1). The building was surrounded on three sides by the paved lot of Frost Motor Bank number 2. NCB 122 is the first block north of the historic Military Plaza and the city hall of San Antonio.

THE SURVEY

On September 5, 1985, the author accompanied by Mr. Larry Black, senior vice president, Frost National Bank, inspected the former Acuña Furniture and Music Company building. The structure had been vacated at a prior date. The basement, which occupied approximately the rear one-third of the building, was examined and found to be of modern construction. No evidence of any prior construction was found. The razing of the building was later monitored by the author. The building was demolished, and the debris was deposited in the basement area. No subsurface excavations were made.

PREHISTORIC BACKGROUND

While there are several reported prehistoric sites in the downtown San Antonio area, for example Brackenridge Park (41 BX 13) and the Incarnate Word College campus (41 BX 24), there has been only one site (41 BX 25) reported near Main and Military Plaza (Schuetz 1966). This site was located at the intersection of St. Mary's and Market Streets, the location of the present San Antonio Main Public Library. The site was revealed as a badly disturbed deposit of both prehistoric and historic occupations. Probably the lack of

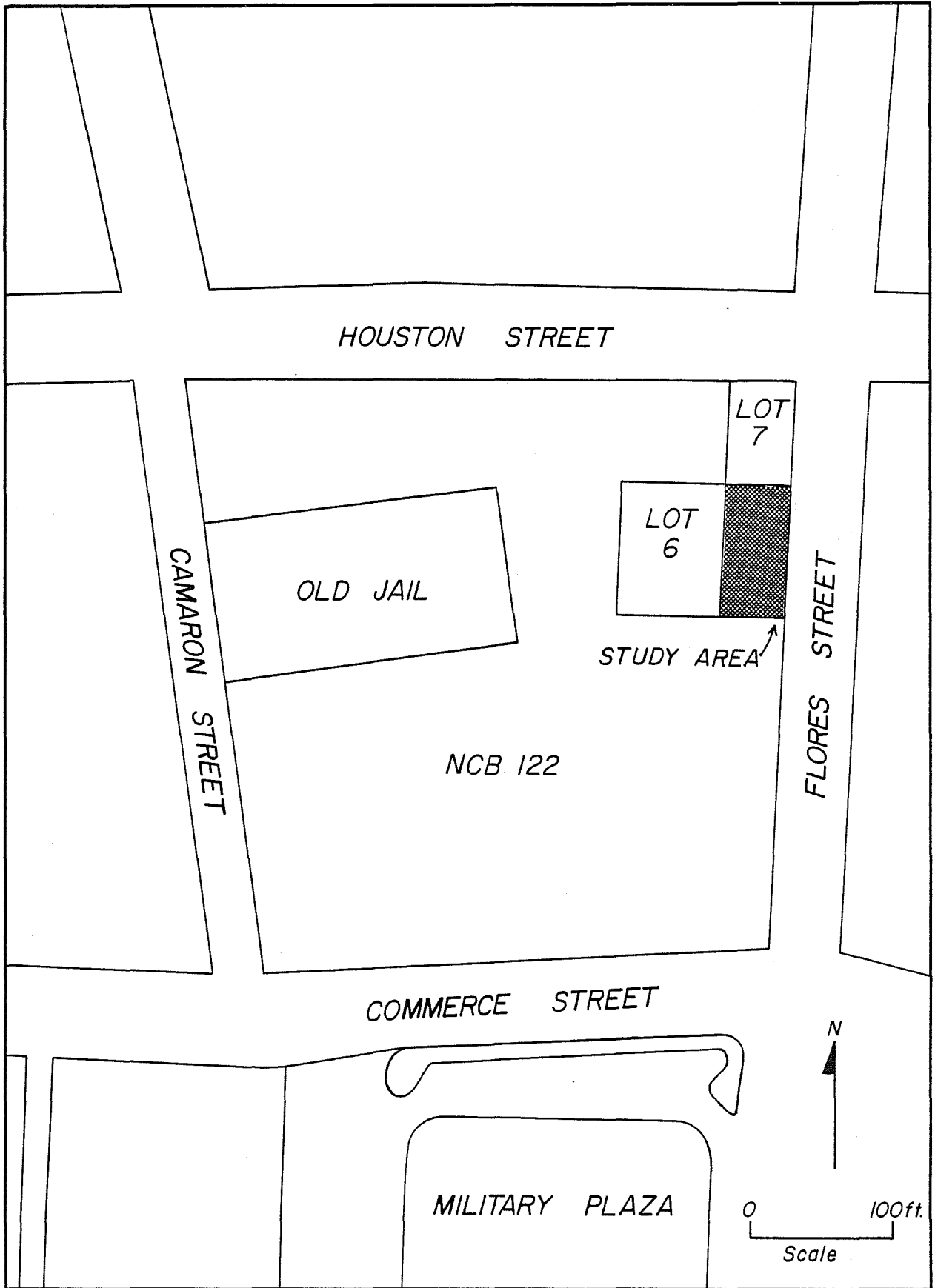


Figure 1. Location of Acuña Furniture and Music Company Building on NCB 122. Lots 6 and 7 are indicated.

identified sites is due to the long intensive occupation of this area from 1719 and continuing to the present.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Villa and Presidio of San Antonio de Béxar were founded on the present site of Military Plaza in 1722 by the Marqués de Aguayo (Webb 1952:541). In March 1731, with the arrival of the colonists from the Canary Islands, the Villa of San Fernando de Béxar was established at the Plaza de las Islas, now Main Plaza (Webb 1952:550). The lands in the vicinity were distributed to the new arrivals for their homes and farms.

The land, which is now NCB 122, Lot 6, was originally granted to Manuel Fuentes, a soldier, by the Spanish government in 1761 (**Spanish Archives** Vol. 2:462). By 1767, two small structures had been erected on the property (Fig. 2; Urrutia 1767). On November 2, 1825, the land was transferred by Doña Ana María Fuentes, Manuel's daughter, to Mariano Seguin, who in turn conveyed it to Juan José María Erasmo de Jesús Seguin in December 1831.

Erasmo Seguin sold the northern half of the lot to Auguste Fretelliere in November 1851 (BCDR Vol. J1:78). Fretelliere constructed a two-story stone house on the site prior to 1852 (BCDR Vol. P1:583; **City Survey Book** 1853 Vol 1:188). The house was later occupied by Judge Isaiah Addison Paschal and his wife, Mary, until 1854 (Chabot 1937:317). The southern half of the lot was conveyed by Mariana Leal Dwyer to Francis Guilbeau in June 1859 (BCDR Vol. F2:31). Guilbeau had previously purchased the lot to the south from Seguin in 1847 (BCDR Vol. F2:31).

By 1877, the Fretelliere house had become the Adams boarding house and remained such until its destruction in about 1905 (**Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.** 1877; **City Directories** 1896-1905). Later, the lot was occupied by a stable owned by Jack Stotts until about 1913. In 1920, a one-story fireproof building was erected on both portions of the lot which was occupied by several small businesses. In 1958, the modern building for the Acuña Furniture Company was constructed (**City Directories** 1905-1975).

The block to the north (Lot 7, NCB 122) was the site of the famous Buckhorn Saloon from 1921 until its destruction in 1957. Its renowned collections are now owned by the Lone Star Brewery. At the time of the demolition of that building, remnants of the San Pedro Acequia were encountered and investigated.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological artifacts or historic substructures were revealed by the demolition of the Acuña Furniture and Music Company building. No further work is recommended at this time because the paving of the lot will seal in and protect any cultural resources that may be in this area. However, since the basement area was confined to the back one-third of the building, the front portion facing on Flores Street still holds the potential of containing valuable archaeological or historical information. Therefore, if any

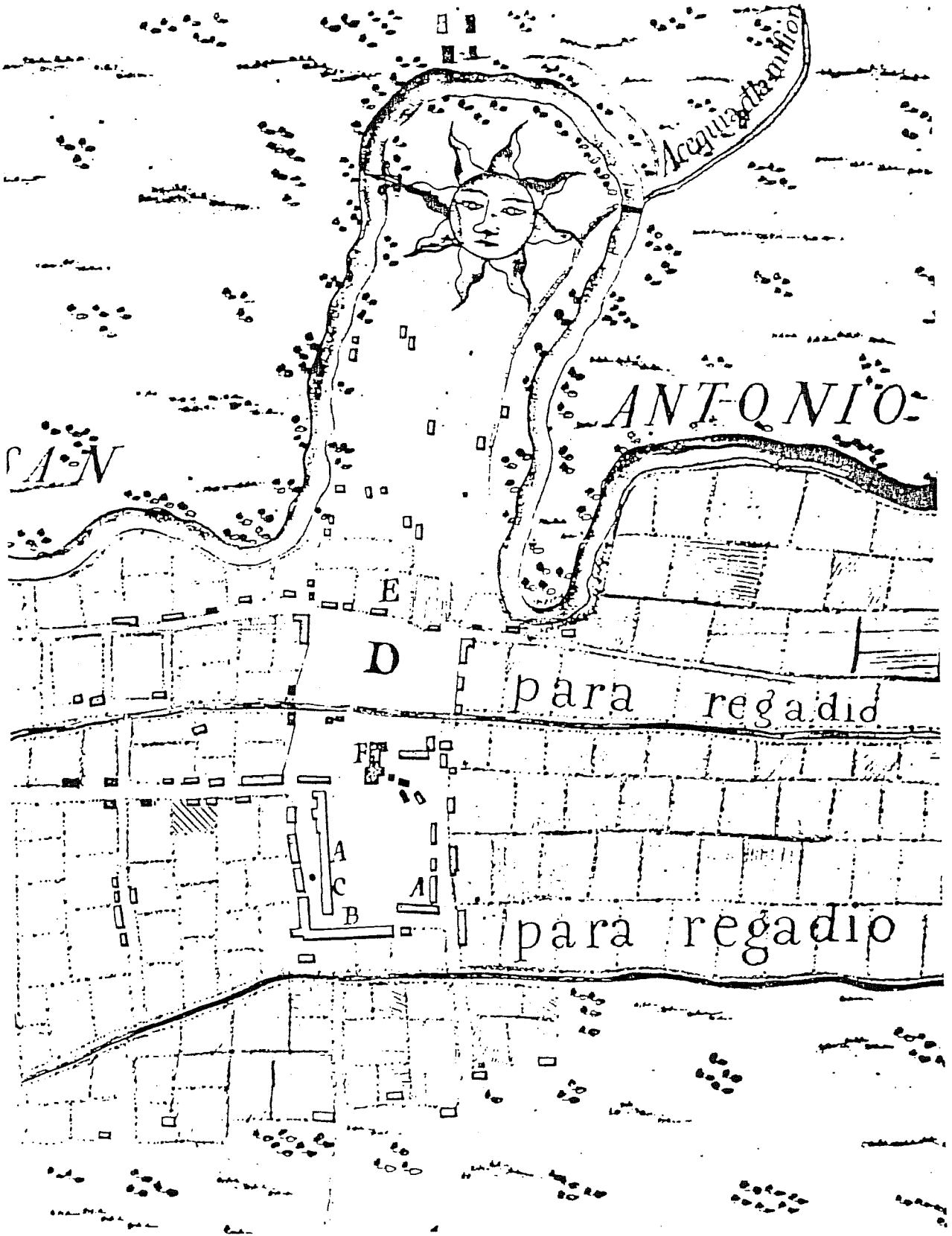


Figure 2. Villa and Presidio of San Antonio de Béxar in 1767. From Urrutia (1767).

subsurface excavations are to be conducted in this area, an archaeological investigation should be conducted prior to such action.

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