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An Archaeological Survey of Friedrich Park, Bexar County, Texas

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An Archaeological Survey of Friedrich Park, Bexar County, Texas

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF FRIEDRICH PARK,
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

HARVEY P. SMITH, JR. AND KENYON McDONALD

CENTER FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT, No. 12
1975

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

This report, prepared by Center staff members Harvey P. Smith, Jr. and Kenyon McDonald, describes an archaeological survey of the Friedrich Park area in northern Bexar County, Texas. This survey was carried out under a contract with the Department of Parks and Recreation, City of San Antonio. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Mr. Ronald Darner, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the members of his staff for permitting the Center to undertake this survey and for providing maps, keys, and other valuable assistance during the course of the field work.

The Center for Archaeological Research has to date conducted numerous archaeological surveys for several governmental agencies and engineering firms. In Bexar County, our work has involved studies along the Salado Creek Watershed (Hester 1974) and in the vicinity of Olmos Dam, on the property of Incarnate Word College (Fox 1975). Additional work by the Center is underway at this time in connection with the planned renovation of Alamo Plaza. These and other activities, in the southern and south-central Texas area represent the Center's continuing commitment to the recording and evaluation of the prehistoric and historic cultural resources of the region.

A final note: during the course of the Friedrich Park survey, the survey teams were beset with ticks. As a result, one of the surveyors, Harvey P. Smith, Jr., suffered a serious case of tick fever, perhaps related to the "Camp Bullis fever" which military personnel have contracted at that nearby military reservation. Professional and amateur archaeologists who plan fieldwork in this region and in similar environments in south-central Texas should be aware of this potential hazard.

Thomas R. Hester
Director

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INTRODUCTION

An archaeological survey of the Friedrich Park property, in north Bexar County, Texas, was conducted by the Center for Archaeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio. These investigations were made at the request of the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of San Antonio. The field work was undertaken by the authors during the months of May and July, 1975. All field activities were carried out under the terms of State Antiquities Permit No. 83.

Friedrich Park is located in northern Bexar County, approximately 10 miles north of IH 410 and west of IH 10. The specific area examined encompassed a total of approximately 200 acres.

The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the existence of any historic or archaeological resources which should be preserved in the interest of the park. Once resources were found, the task of the survey team was to evaluate the nature and the significance of the sites.

Bexar County is located in south central Texas in the southern portion of the Edwards plateau, an extension of the Great Plains Province (Carr 1967). The park area is typical hill country with extensive surface exposures of Edwards limestone, dense vegetation and little permanent surface water. The flora of the area can be included in Blair's (1950) Balconian biotic province. Some of the species include:

Juniper (Texas Cedar): *Juniperus ashei*; Live Oak: *Quercus virginiana*; Shin Oak: *Quercus havardii*; Post Oak: *Quercus stellata*; Honey Mesquite: *Prosopis juliflora*; Texas Mountain Laurel: *Sophora secundiflora*; Autumn Sage: *Salvia greggie*; Ocotillo: *Fouquieria splendens*; Agarito: *Berberis trifoliolata*; Prickly Pear: *Opuntia engelmannii*; Various unidentifiable species of small cacti (*Echinocereus*

and *Mammillaria*).

Fauna observed during the survey included white-tailed deer, tree squirrels, mockingbirds and doves. A more complete description of the flora and fauna of this region may be found in Blair (1950), Vine (1960) and Gould (1969).

The Friedrich Park area is described as a "steep rocky range site" in the *Soil Survey of Bexar County* (Taylor *et al.* 1966:56). Soils are shallow clay loams (of the Tarrant series), often containing gravels and other stony detritus. Some 40% to 70% of the surface is made up of limestone exposures. The terrain is rough, with steep escarpments along the canyons and stream channels.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

We are beginning to get fairly good documentation on the pre-historic Indian populations of the area in and around San Antonio. The range of occupation dates includes the following Paleo-Indian periods: (9200 - 6000 B.C.), Archaic (6000 B.C. - A.D. 500/1000), Late Prehistoric (A.D. 500/1000 - A.D. 1600) and Historic. Most of the sites known around the Friedrich Park locality apparently date from Archaic and Late Prehistoric times. The types of sites include burned rock middens, rockshelters, quarry/workshops, open occupation sites and lithic scatters. These sites are usually located around areas where there is, or was in the past, permanent water (i.e. along stream courses and low stream terraces). There was also apparently considerable 19th century Indian activity documented by early settlers. They identified many of these Indians as Comanche, Lipan Apache, and Tonkawa.

SURVEY PROCEDURES

A check of records on file at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, Austin, indicated that no archaeological or historical resources had been reported from the area of Friedrich Park. Notes on archaeological work in this portion of Bexar County on file at the Center for Archaeological Research were also examined.

Prior to beginning the field reconnaissance, the survey team reviewed a contour map (scale: 1" to 200') of the locality, provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation (see Fig. 1). In preparation for intensive, on-the-ground survey, this contour map was marked for those areas where evidence of prehistoric materials might be expected to occur. For example, it was felt that occupation sites might be found along the drainages, and adjacent shelves, which we observed on the map. The hillslopes and hilltops could yield evidence of either temporary occupation sites or stone-working localities.

The survey locality was first investigated by vehicle. Then, a more intensive search was conducted by foot over the total area. Heavy leaf cover hampered the investigation since only about ten percent of the actual ground area was exposed. Spot observations were made at points of washing and erosion. All recognized sites were marked on the contour map. Surface lithic material was collected to indicate typical artifactual materials for the area. Some of the collected material may be used in a visitor display when the park opens to the public.

All notes and materials resulting from the survey are on file at the Center for Archaeological Research.

SITE DESCRIPTIONS

A total of four sites was recorded during the survey. The artifactual assemblage at all the sites was small, perhaps typical for this area of heavy vegetation and no permanent surface water. Indications are that all the survey area sites were only temporarily utilized areas. Several large, burned rock middens are located adjacent to Leon Creek in this immediate area, though not on park property, and most likely served as the permanent base camps for the early local inhabitants.

Site #1

This site is an area defined by a very light scatter of chert debitage, miscellaneous artifacts and a few projectile points. There is no debris which might have resulted from long-term occupation (i.e. fire-cracked limestone from scattered hearths). All recognizable evidence indicates that Site #1 is a temporary campsite, used only for sporadic hunting and gathering activities.

Collected archaeological materials included one *Frio* type (late Archaic) projectile point and one *Scallorn* (Late Prehistoric) arrow point (Fig. 2). These types would indicate an occupation time span perhaps totally within the Christian era, even as late as A.D. 1000. The site lies at 1190 - 1210 feet above sea level. Estimated length (roughly east-west) is 400 feet and it is about 300 feet wide.

Site #2

Located high on a hillslope (1400 - 1420 feet) in the south central section of the park, Site #2 is a lithic processing area.¹ Chert nodules in the exposed limestone strata have been quarried and broken down for further use. At about the same elevation -- approximately three quarters of the way up the hillside -- horizontal, sedimentary limestone strata are exposed in several areas of the park. Artifactual material exposed on the site surface (an area about 150 feet in maximum diameter) was left untouched. It is evident that Site #2 is an area of short-term use. The site's lithic material indicates that only rough quarrying procedures (chert extraction, core preparation, core reduction) were carried out here and that the large workable flakes were most likely carried to the large base camps lying outside the park along Leon Creek.

Site #3

This site is located along the most westerly portion of the same limestone strata found at Site #2. The abundance of lithic material here indicates an even more extensive lithic processing site than found at Site #2. Numerous cores and quarry blank fragments were observed and left in place in an area roughly 650 feet long (northeast-southwest) and 50 - 75 feet wide. Again the assemblage indicates this site to have been of only temporary use.

¹Patterson (1974:6) has distinguished between aboriginal "quarries" as sites at which cherts were extracted from a hard (usually limestone) matrix, and "lithic resource procurement localities", areas where cherts exposed on the surface were utilized. Our "lithic processing area" refers to sites in which apparently both quarrying and use of loose, available cherts was practiced.

Site #4

This site is located approximately 300 meters northwest and at the same elevation as Site #2. It is quite small, perhaps 50 feet in maximum diameter. The lithic debris here is very scattered (compared to the other three sites found). This site appears again to be non-permanent in use, with the lithic material related to quarrying procedures.

SUMMARY

We have reported here the results of an archaeological survey of Friedrich Park, a park development planned by the City of San Antonio, in northern Bexar County. As a result of the field work, four archaeological sites were found and documented. Three of the sites represent localities where chert (flint) was exploited by pre-historic peoples; the fourth site served as a temporary campsite. None of the four sites will be directly endangered by park development.

We recommend that all of these sites be marked with permanent signs so that they may be noted by park visitors. Such signs should describe the nature and significance of the particular site, and relate it to the prehistory of the Bexar County area. Each sign should clearly state that the collecting of surface materials is strictly prohibited.

It is further suggested that an interpretative archaeological display be set up in the planned park visitor center. This display could exhibit some of the artifacts found at sites in the park, and should include a generalized discussion of these archaeological

resources. An integral part of the display could be a map of this portion of northern Bexar County, showing the approximate locations of other sites in the vicinity of Friedrich Park. A brief caption accompanying the map would indicate the possible relationships between sites in the park and those in the adjacent area.

The inclusion of this type of information on the archaeological remains of early aboriginal occupation in the Friedrich Park area should add another dimension to the understanding and pleasure of the park visitor.

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